

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA



**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN FORGIVENESS AND MENTAL WELL-BEING
AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN UEW**

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AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN UEW**

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**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of
Master of Philosophy
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**Department of Counselling Psychology
Faculty of Applied Behavioural Sciences in Education**

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DECLARATION

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I, Deborah Eduwaa Odoom, declare that this thesis, with the exception of quotations and references contained in published works which have all been identified and duly acknowledged, is entirely my own original work, and it has not been submitted, either in part or whole, for another degree elsewhere.

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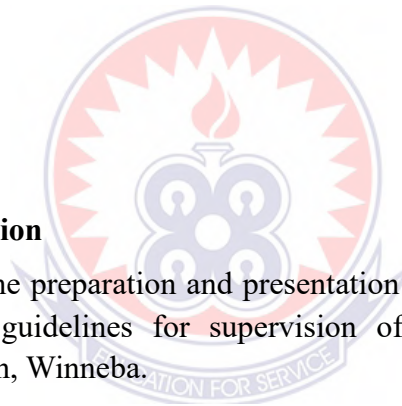
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I hereby declare that the preparation and presentation of this work was supervised in accordance with the guidelines for supervision of thesis as laid down by the University of Education, Winneba.

Prof. P. K. A. Bedu-Addo (Supervisor)

Signature:

Date:



DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents, Samuel and Esther Odoom, and my sister Lydia who have always encouraged me to pursue my academic passions.



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APPROVAL SHEETS

Approval Sheet 1

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on (date of viva voce) to conduct the final examination of (student's name) on his (or her) thesis entitled –Relationship Between Forgiveness and Mental Well-Being Among Undergraduate Students in UEW” in accordance with the School of Graduate Studies guidelines. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Philosophy in Counselling Psychology.

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between forgiveness and mental wellbeing among undergraduate students at the University of Education, Winneba, using a mixed methods approach with an embedded design. From a population of 66,351 students, cluster sampling was used to select 382 participants for the quantitative phase, while purposive sampling guided the qualitative phase. Quantitative data were collected using the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) and the WHO-5 Wellbeing Index, and qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews. Descriptive statistics and one-way ANOVA were used to analyze the quantitative data, while thematic analysis was applied to the qualitative data. The results revealed a weak but statistically significant negative relationship between forgiveness and wellbeing ($r = -0.317$, $p < 0.000$), indicating that higher forgiveness was associated with slightly lower wellbeing, with forgiveness explaining only a small proportion of variance in wellbeing. The qualitative findings identified strategies for enhancing forgiveness, aimed at fostering a supportive campus environment and positive social interactions. Despite the weak association, the findings suggest that forgiveness-focused interventions may support students' mental health. It is recommended that university counselling centers implement programs emphasizing self-compassion and self-acceptance to promote forgiveness and improve mental wellbeing.



CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

Relating to others - whether strangers, friends, or family –inevitably exposes people to the risk of being offended or harmed by those other people. Throughout history and across cultures, people have developed strategies for responding to such transgressions (Baumeister, Stilwell, & Heatherton, 1995). Two classic responses are avoidance and revenge-seeking distance from the transgressor or opportunities to harm the transgressor in kind (McCullough, Kurzban, & Tabak, 2013).

Conflicts have been resolved in various ways throughout history, depending on the time, culture, and nature of the conflict. Negotiation and diplomacy have been employed for centuries to resolve disputes. Historically, conflicts were often resolved through military means, leading to conquest, territorial changes, or peace treaties after significant battles or wars (Clausewitz, 1832). Some cultures had rituals and ceremonies to resolve conflicts, often involving symbolic actions and apologies (Nader, 1997). Leaders and diplomats would engage in discussions to reach mutually acceptable agreements (Fisher, Ury & Patton, 2011). Conflicts were sometimes resolved by avoiding them through diplomacy, compromise, and preventive measures. (Lederach, 1997). In more complex conflicts, legal systems and courts were used to adjudicate disputes and enforce judgments based on established laws. (Tamanaha, 2011).

Third-party mediators, often respected community members or religious leaders, would help facilitate communication and negotiation between conflicting parties (Moore, 2003). In arbitration, a neutral third party makes a binding decision on the conflict, which both parties agree to abide by (Menkel-Meadow, 2004). Many

indigenous societies had traditional conflict resolution methods, such as tribal councils, elder councils, or restorative justice practices. (Avruch, 2002). Some societies practised restorative justice, emphasizing repairing harm caused by the conflict and reconciling victims and offenders (Braithwaite, 2002).

Many religious traditions emphasize forgiveness as a means of conflict resolution. For example, Christianity promotes the concept of forgiveness as a way to heal wounds and reconcile relationships. (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). In Islam, forgiveness is a virtue, not merely an obligation. Both divine and human forgiveness play crucial roles in fostering compassion, healing, and harmonious relationships (Husain, 2018). In Judaism, forgiveness is an important principle, with the concept of teshuva (repentance) and seeking forgiveness from others during essential holidays like Yom Kippur (Radzik, 2015). Forgiveness is emphasized in Hindu teachings, particularly in the concept of ahimsa (non-violence) and the idea of breaking the cycle of karma through forgiveness and compassion (Rye, Pargament, Ali, Beck, Dorff, Halliday, Narayanan, & Williams, 2000). These religious teachings on forgiveness shape cultural practices and have profound implications for individual mental well-being. As contemporary research explores these connections further, it becomes evident that the principles of forgiveness espoused by various faiths can significantly influence mental health outcomes, particularly in vulnerable populations like undergraduate students.

Various cultures have developed unique conflict resolution methods. In Africa, for instance, tribal councils and elders often played a crucial role in settling disputes (Mamdani, 1986). Traditional chieftaincy and tribal systems played a significant role in conflict resolution in Ghana. Chiefs and elders served as mediators and judges in disputes. They often employed customary laws, traditions and methods such as

mediation, negotiation, and compensation to arrive at resolutions (Asante, 2002). These mechanisms emphasized reconciliation and restoration of harmony rather than punishment. Also, traditional religious leaders and priests were often involved in conflict resolution. They conducted rituals and ceremonies to invoke ancestral spirits, mediate disputes, and restore peace (Awedoba, 1997). British and other European colonial powers introduced Western-style legal systems and courts during the colonial period. These coexisted with traditional mechanisms, and people often had to choose between the two systems for conflict resolution (Boafo-Arthur, 2010). While these diverse conflict resolution methods highlight the rich cultural strategies developed over time, they also underscore a universal truth: conflict is inevitable in human relationships, regardless of cultural or historical context. Understanding these methods allows us to see how different societies have approached conflict resolution, providing valuable insights into the nature of conflict and its impact on human interactions.

Personality has been widely recognized as a key psychological factor influencing individuals' tendencies to forgive. Research grounded in the Five-Factor Model of personality suggests that traits such as Agreeableness and Emotional Stability (low Neuroticism) are consistently associated with higher levels of forgiveness, as these traits are linked to empathy, cooperation, and effective emotion regulation (McCullough, Worthington, & Rachal, 1997; Berry et al., 2005). Individuals high in Agreeableness are more likely to respond to interpersonal offenses with compassion and understanding, while those high in Neuroticism, characterized by emotional reactivity and anxiety, often experience greater difficulty letting go of resentment. However, some studies indicate that Neuroticism may also be related to forgiveness as a coping or emotional regulation strategy, reflecting the complex and

sometimes paradoxical role of emotional vulnerability in forgiveness processes (Hill & Allemand, 2011). These findings underscore that forgiveness is shaped not only by situational factors but also by enduring personality dispositions that influence emotional and interpersonal functioning.

Gender differences in forgiveness have also been well documented in the literature. Several studies report that women tend to score higher on measures of forgiveness than men, a pattern often attributed to gender socialization processes that encourage women to value relational harmony, empathy, and emotional expressiveness (Miller, Worthington, & McDaniel, 2008; Kaleta & Mróz, 2022). In contrast, men are often socialized to prioritize independence and emotional restraint, which may reduce the likelihood of engaging in overt forgiveness responses. Nonetheless, evidence suggests that gender effects on forgiveness are culturally contingent and may vary across societies, highlighting the need for culturally grounded research, particularly in non-Western contexts, to better understand how gender roles and expectations interact with personality to shape forgiveness tendencies (Hook et al., 2012).

Conflict is a natural part of human relationships and interactions. It can stem from differences in values, beliefs, and goals or from miscommunication (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Conflict can emerge in various aspects of life, such as personal relationships, workplaces, communities, and even globally (Kiecolt-Glaser & Wilson 2018). Unresolved conflict can lead to adverse outcomes, including emotional distress (anxiety and depression), decreased productivity, and damaged relationships (Folger, Poole, & Stutman, 2011). While conflict may be inevitable, how it is managed and resolved can vary significantly. Anger is a typical emotional response to conflict. When individuals feel threatened, frustrated, or believe their needs are unmet, they

may become angry (Kassin, Fein, & Markus, 2016). Sometimes, people may empathise with others involved in the conflict, particularly if they can relate to their perspective or emotions (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983).

Forgiveness is a process that can help individuals and groups move beyond conflict (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). Forgiveness is the intentional decision to release resentment or anger toward oneself or someone who has harmed you (McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen, 2000). Research suggests that practising forgiveness can have positive effects on mental health; it can reduce feelings of anger, anxiety, and depression, leading to improved overall well-being (Worthington Jr., 2016). In the context of conflict, forgiveness can be particularly beneficial. When individuals choose to forgive those who have wronged them, it can reduce the negative emotions associated with the conflict, alleviate stress, and improve mental health outcomes (McCullough et al., 2018).

In recent years, interest has increased in understanding the complicated relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being, particularly among undergraduate students. In the intricate tapestry of human emotions and experiences, forgiveness stands as a remarkable thread that has the potential to mend, transform, and elevate the human psyche. (Worthington Jr, 2016). Forgiveness is deeply rooted in various cultural, philosophical, and religious traditions and is often celebrated as a virtue that nurtures inner peace and emotional well-being.

It has been challenging to find a broadly recognized definition of forgiveness. Perhaps this is because of the variety of settings where forgiveness concerns emerge; thus, most definitions are context-specific. Forgiveness can be directed at oneself (Hall & Fincham, 2006), others (Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998), God (Exline, Yali, & Lobel, 1999), families, or entire societies and cultures (Sandage, Hill, & Vang,

2003). A comprehensive definition of forgiveness has been difficult to come across due to the wide range of situations in which it can go wrong and the multitude of variables that are probably at play. Forgiveness is a multifaceted construct that involves a deliberate decision to let go of feelings of resentment and hostility toward an offender, which can have profound implications for an individual's psychological health and overall well-being (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

Forgiveness, as a multifaceted construct, can be defined as the conscious and deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment, anger, or vengeance toward someone who has harmed us, regardless of whether they deserve such forgiveness (Worthington Jr., 2005). It is not a synonym for forgetting or condoning harmful actions but rather a process of letting go of the emotional burdens associated with past transgressions. Forgiveness is pivotal in fostering emotional resilience, reducing stress, and promoting overall psychological well-being and mental wellness. Forgiveness manifests in many forms and contexts, so its relevance becomes particularly poignant during critical life transitions. One such period is the transition to adulthood, where young adults, especially undergraduate students, face many challenges and stressors. Understanding how forgiveness operates in this unique developmental phase can provide valuable insights into promoting mental well-being among this demographic.

The transition to adulthood is a critical developmental period marked by various challenges and stressors, including academic demands, social pressures, and personal growth experiences (Arnett, 2000). This phase represents significant change and self-discovery for young adults (primarily undergraduate students), often accompanied by emotional ups and downs. One important psychological factor that

may influence the mental well-being of undergraduate students during this period is forgiveness (Schulenberg, Sameroff, & Cicchetti, 2004).

Mental well-being is a crucial aspect of overall well-being and encompasses emotional stability, life satisfaction, and the ability to cope with life's challenges effectively (Keyes, 2002). Undergraduate students are particularly vulnerable to mental health concerns such as depression, anxiety, and stress (Auerbach, Mortier, Bruffaerts, Alonso, Benjet, Cuijpers, & Kessler, 2016). Undergraduate education is a significant transitional phase marked by numerous changes and challenges. Leaving home for the first time, adapting to a new environment, increasing independence, and the demands of academic life can be overwhelming and contribute to stress, anxiety, and potential depression affecting a student's wellbeing.

Understanding the relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being in this population is of paramount importance, as it may offer insights into potential interventions and strategies to enhance their mental health. Several studies have explored the association between forgiveness and mental well-being, with growing evidence suggesting a positive link between forgiveness and various dimensions of psychological well-being (Toussaint, Worthington Jr, & Williams, 2018; Wohl, DeShea, & Wahkinney, 2008). For instance, forgiving others has been associated with reduced levels of depression and anxiety, increased life satisfaction, and improved overall mental health (Toussaint et al., 2018; Witvliet, Ludwig, & Vander Laan, 2001). On the other hand, self-forgiveness has been linked to greater self-esteem, lower levels of guilt and shame, and enhanced emotional well-being (Webb et al., 2012; Maltby et al., 2005).

1.2 Problem Statement

Mental health challenges among undergraduate students are increasingly prevalent worldwide, with rising levels of depression, anxiety, and psychological distress reported in recent research (Auerbach et al., 2018). In Ghanaian higher education, particularly at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), identifying factors that promote students' mental wellbeing is essential for the development of effective interventions and support systems.

Forgiveness has emerged as a key psychological factor linked to mental health. It is defined as an intentional process of replacing negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviors toward an offender with more positive responses (Worthington & Wade, 2019). Empirical evidence indicates that forgiveness is associated with reduced stress, anxiety, and depression (Davis et al., 2015). Despite these findings, the nature of the relationship between forgiveness and mental wellbeing among Ghanaian undergraduate students remains insufficiently examined.

Significant gaps exist in the literature, particularly regarding contextual and individual differences. While gender differences in forgiveness have been studied in Western contexts (Miller et al., 2008), little is known about how gender operates within Ghanaian universities such as UEW. Similarly, although personality traits have been linked to forgiveness (Hill et al., 2017), their interaction among African university students is largely unexplored. Furthermore, despite Ghana's strong religious orientation, limited research examines how diverse religious beliefs influence forgiveness, as most studies focus on Western Christian populations (Sandage & Williamson, 2010). The dominance of Western-based research also limits understanding of culturally specific influences on the forgiveness–wellbeing

relationship in Ghana (Worthington et al., 2015), and there is a lack of evidence-based, culturally tailored forgiveness interventions for Ghanaian undergraduates.

Evidence from UEW underscores the relevance of forgiveness to student mental health, with approximately 80% of cases at the UEW Counselling Centre involving interpersonal conflicts that often lead to depression, anxiety, bitterness, and suicidal thoughts (Counselling Centre Report, 2023). These challenges are further intensified by academic pressure, relationship difficulties, and adjustment problems (Oppong Asante & Andoh-Arthur, 2015), alongside students' individual traits and affiliations. In response, the present study examines the impact of forgiveness on mental wellbeing among Ghanaian undergraduate students, with particular attention to gender, personality, and religious differences, and seeks to identify culturally relevant strategies to promote forgiveness and support students' mental health within the Ghanaian context.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This study used the mixed methods approach, precisely the embedded design, to explore the relationship between forgiveness, and mental wellness among undergraduate students at the University of Education, Winneba.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

By the end of the study, the researcher was able to:

1. Examine the gender differences in undergraduate students' tendency to forgive.
2. Examine personality differences in forgiveness by undergraduate students.
3. Investigate religious differences in forgiveness by undergraduate students.
4. Identify ways in which forgiveness can be enhanced among undergraduate students.

5. Examine the relationship between forgiveness and mental wellbeing.

1.5 Research Questions

1. What are the gender differences in undergraduate's tendency to forgive?
2. What are the personality differences in student's tendency to forgive?
3. What are the religious differences in forgiveness tendencies among undergraduate students?
4. In what ways can forgiveness be enhanced among undergraduate students?

1.6 Research Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks, this hypothesis guided this study:

H₀: There is no statistically significant relationship between forgiveness and mental wellbeing among undergraduate students.

1.7 Significance of the Study

The study of the relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being among undergraduate students is significant for several reasons. Undergraduate education is a critical developmental stage marked by various challenges and transitions. Understanding how forgiveness affects the mental well-being of students can offer valuable information for educational institutions and mental health professionals working with these students. Mental health issues are a global concern, and Ghana is no exception. Researching mental well-being factors specific to Ghanaian undergraduate students can contribute to addressing these concerns at a local and international level (World Health Organization, 2018).

Post-secondary education is a critical period in a young adult's life, and it often comes with various stressors, including academic pressures, social adjustments, and

personal challenges. Research has shown that mental health concerns, such as anxiety and depression, are prevalent among college students. Understanding the role of forgiveness in mental well-being can provide valuable insights into addressing these issues.

Ghana has a unique cultural and societal context. Investigating forgiveness and its impact on mental well-being within this context can reveal cultural nuances that may influence the relationship differently than studies conducted in other regions (Agyapong et al., 2019). As the study focused on undergraduate students, the findings can inform educational institutions and policymakers in Ghana about the importance of promoting forgiveness and its potential impact on mental well-being (Bunting et al., 2019).

Understanding the relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being can have practical implications for counseling services and mental health interventions for undergraduate students in Ghana (Lundahl et al., 2008). Forgiveness has been linked to various psychological and well-being outcomes. Exploring its relationship with mental well-being can provide insights into potential interventions or strategies to enhance the mental health of undergraduate students (Toussaint et al., 2015).

The study's findings could help the Counselling Center in UEW develop more effective, targeted interventions that incorporate forgiveness strategies, especially for the 80% of cases involving interpersonal relationship problems. The study could inform strategies to reach the 90% of students who don't currently seek help, potentially increasing the Center's impact across the student population. Understanding the role of forgiveness in mental wellbeing could help the Center develop preventive programs to support students before issues escalate to severe depression, anxiety, or suicidal thoughts.

1.8 Delimitation of the Study

The study focuses exclusively on undergraduate students at the University of Education Winneba, Ghana. UEW provides a specific context where forgiveness is already being used as a counseling technique, making it an ideal setting to study its effectiveness. Focusing on one university allows for a more in-depth and manageable study, UEW has a student population that is particularly relevant to the research questions, due to its demographic makeup and the types of programs offered. The existing data of the relationship between forgiveness and mental wellbeing as stated by the acting Director of the Counselling Centre provides a strong foundation for further research at this particular institution.

The study also assumes a potential causal relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being among undergraduate students. It is based on the premise that forgiveness can positively impact mental well-being. The research assumes that participants provided honest and accurate responses to survey questions related to forgiveness and mental well-being. Ethical guidelines and principles were followed in conducting research, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the well-being of participants. The study was delimited to an embedded mixed-methods design, where the quantitative component constituted the primary method while qualitative data were used only to support and explain the quantitative findings; as a result, the qualitative data were not explored in full depth and the findings cannot be generalized beyond the specific population and context studied. The findings were assumed to be applicable to undergraduate students in Ghana, recognizing that individual differences within this group may exist.

1.9 Definition of Terms

- **Forgiveness** is the voluntary and intentional act of letting go of negative feelings, resentment, or the desire for revenge toward someone who has wronged you.
- **Mental well-being** refers to a state of emotional and psychological equilibrium in which an individual experiences a sense of inner contentment, resilience, and the ability to cope with life's challenges. It includes feeling good about oneself, being able to cope with life's challenges, and having positive relationships with others.
- **Wellbeing** refers to a holistic state of health and satisfaction encompassing various aspects of an individual's life. It goes beyond just physical health to include mental, emotional, social, and even environmental dimensions.
- **Undergraduate students** are individuals pursuing their first level of higher education at a college or university.
- **Personality** refers to the long-lasting internal characteristics and patterns of thinking, feeling and behaving that make each individual unique.
- **Openness to experience** refers to an individual's tendency to seek out, appreciate, and be receptive to new ideas, approaches, perspectives, and experiences.
- **Extraversion** refers to an individual's tendency to be outgoing, assertive, energetic, and seek out social interactions and stimulation.
- **Conscientiousness** refers to an individual's tendency to be organized, responsible, hardworking, and goal-directed.

- **Agreeableness** refers to an individual's tendency to be cooperative, trusting, kind, and compassionate towards others.
- **Neuroticism** refers to an individual's tendency to experience negative emotions and emotional instability.
- **Religious affiliation** refers to the specific religious group or denomination that an individual identifies with or belongs to.
- **Conflict** refers to disagreement in forgiving within self, others and situation.
- **Pain** refers to emotional and psychological distress arising from a conflict experienced.

1.10 Organization of Chapters

This research is divided into five chapters. The background of the study is covered in Chapter 1. This chapter's sections include the problem statement and the study's goal, the research objectives and questions, the study's importance, its limitations and delimitations, definitions of terms, and its structure. The conceptual framework and a review of relevant studies are presented in Chapter 2. The empirical research on the effects of gender, religion affiliation, and personality traits on forgiveness and mental health is covered in this chapter. A overview of the literature evaluated for the study is presented at the end of the chapter.

The third chapter examined the study's methodology, which included the research paradigm, approach, research design, population, sample, and sampling methodologies, as well as the procedures for data collecting, instrument validity and reliability, and data analysis techniques. The analysis results and a discussion of the findings are presented in Chapter 4. The study's summary, results, recommendations, and ideas for additional research were the main topics of Chapter 5.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This chapter comprehensively reviews the literature on the relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being. This review synthesizes current literature on the relationship between forgiveness and components of mental well-being, taking into consideration how forgiveness is related to personality, role of gender, and religious affiliation. The chapter is divided into three core main sections. The first section focused on the theoretical review; Enright's Forgiveness Model and Rational Emotive Behavior Theory. The second section focused on various concepts such as forgiveness and mental well-being, the types of forgiveness, and how forgiveness relates to gender, religious affiliation, individual personality, and the well-being of undergraduate students. The final section of this review focused on the researcher's conceptual framework.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

This work was grounded on Enright's Forgiveness Model and Albert Ellis' Rational Emotive Behavioral Therapy (Sommers-Flannagan & Sommers-Flannagan, 2018).

2.2.1 Enright's Forgiveness Model

Enright's Forgiveness Model is a voluntary process involving a willingness to let go of negative feelings and behaviors towards someone who has harmed you, replacing those negative emotions with positive ones like compassion and understanding (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). This model emphasizes the importance of recognizing the injustice, experiencing, and expressing anger, and ultimately letting

go of resentment through a process of forgiveness. The model outlines five (5) stages of forgiveness.

The first stage is Uncovering the Unfairness. In this stage, individuals become aware of the injustice or offense that has occurred against them. This involves acknowledging the pain and hurt caused by the wrongdoing. The second stage is deciding to forgive. Forgiveness is seen as a choice, and individuals decide to let go of their resentment, anger, and desire for revenge.

The third stage is working on forgiveness. This stage involves actively working on forgiving the wrongdoer. It may include understanding the offender's perspective, empathy, and compassion. The fourth stage is discovering forgiveness. As individuals progress through the forgiveness process, they begin to experience emotional relief and healing. This stage involves a deep sense of inner peace and letting go of negative emotions. The fifth and final stage is deepening forgiveness. This stage is about maintaining forgiveness and continuing to work on it because forgiveness is an ongoing process. It may involve further growth in empathy and understanding.

Forgiveness has been linked to improved mental well-being among undergraduate students. Research shows that forgiving others can lead to reduced levels of anxiety, depression, and stress (Worthington, 2005). Forgiveness is associated with higher self-esteem and self-efficacy among undergraduate students. When individuals forgive, they often experience increased self-worth and a greater sense of control over their lives (Toussaint, Williams, Musick, Everson, 2001). Forgiveness is related to better psychological adjustment in undergraduate students. This includes improved emotional regulation and coping skills (McCullough, Hoyt, & Rachal, 2000). Forgiveness can reduce rumination about past hurts. Undergraduate

adults who forgive tend to engage in less negative rumination, which is associated with a lower risk of developing mental health issues (Lundahl, Nimer, & Parsons, 2008). Forgiveness can serve as a coping mechanism for the stressors often experienced during the undergraduate years. Undergraduate students who forgive may find it easier to manage academic, social, and personal challenges (Toussaint, Owen, & Cheadle, 2015). Forgiveness can enhance resilience among undergraduate students, helping them bounce back from setbacks and adapt to new situations more effectively (Freedman & Enright, 1996).

For example, Kwame, a UEW undergraduate student, experienced betrayal when his study partner stole his research ideas and took sole credit, leading to anger, depression, poor sleep, and declining academic performance. Through Enright's forgiveness model, he progressed from uncovering his pain and acknowledging how unforgiveness was damaging his mental health (Phase 1), to deciding to forgive for his own well-being after learning at UEW's counseling center that forgiveness doesn't mean excusing the behavior (Phase 2), then working to understand his partner's academic pressures while choosing not to seek revenge (Phase 3), and finally experiencing psychological freedom, reduced anxiety, improved sleep, and better academic focus (Phase 4). This example directly relates to the UEW study on forgiveness and mental well-being by demonstrating how students who hold grudges (low forgiveness scores) exhibit higher levels of depression, anxiety, and stress, while those who engage in forgiveness interventions show significant improvements in psychological well-being, life satisfaction, and academic performance—supporting the study's hypothesis that forgiveness is positively correlated with mental health outcomes among undergraduate students.

In summary, Enright's Forgiveness Model provides valuable insights into the relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being among undergraduate students. Forgiveness has been linked to various positive outcomes, including improved mental health, self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, and coping with stressors. These findings underscore the importance of forgiveness interventions and education in promoting the mental well-being of young adults during their college years.

2.2.2 Rational Emotive Behavior Theory (REBT)

Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT), developed by Albert Ellis, is a cognitive-behavioural approach that focuses on identifying and challenging irrational beliefs to promote emotional well-being (Sommers-Flannagan & Sommers-Flannagan, 2018). Several key principles can guide the process when applied to forgiveness in undergraduate students.

1. Identifying Irrational Beliefs includes helping individuals recognize irrational beliefs related to forgiveness, such as demanding absolute fairness or expecting others to conform to specific standards. For example, undergraduate students may hold irrational beliefs like “People must always treat me fairly,” which can hinder forgiveness.
2. Disputing Irrational Beliefs entails encouraging undergraduate students to challenge and dispute their irrational beliefs about forgiveness. This involves questioning the validity of absolute demands and promoting more flexible thinking. David, Lynn, and Ellis (2018) emphasized the importance of disputing irrational beliefs to foster healthier emotional responses.
3. Cognitive Restructuring is done by assisting individuals in restructuring their thought patterns regarding forgiveness. Guide them to adopt more rational and

constructive beliefs, such as understanding that people make mistakes and holding onto resentment may hinder personal growth. This aligns with REBT's emphasis on cognitive restructuring to enhance emotional resilience (Dryden, 2014).

Behavioral Techniques include incorporating behavioral interventions, such as encouraging forgiveness exercises or facilitating communication between the parties involved. Ellis (1962) highlighted the integration of behavioral techniques with cognitive restructuring in REBT to bring about lasting change. Applying the ABC model (Activating event, Beliefs, Consequences) to forgiveness situations, help undergraduate students identify the activating events (e.g., a perceived offense), examine their irrational beliefs about the event, and explore the emotional and behavioral consequences. This systematic approach is fundamental to REBT (Ellis, 1994).

For example, Adwoa, a UEW undergraduate student, failed an important exam and immediately thought “I’m a complete failure and will never succeed in life,” leading to severe depression, anxiety, and withdrawal from classes. Using the REBT ABC model, her counselor helped her identify: (A) the Activating event was failing the exam, (B) her irrational Beliefs included “I must be perfect” and “One failure defines my entire worth,” and (C) the emotional Consequences were depression and academic avoidance. Through disputation (D), Adwoa challenged these irrational beliefs by examining evidence—she had passed other courses, one exam doesn't determine her future, and failure is a normal part of learning—replacing them with rational beliefs like “I’m disappointed but this is one setback, not a catastrophe.” This led to (E) new Effects: reduced anxiety, realistic self-evaluation, motivation to seek help and study differently, and improved mental well-being. This example directly relates to the

UEW study on forgiveness and mental well-being by showing how cognitive restructuring (similar to the cognitive reframing in forgiveness) addresses irrational thinking patterns that contribute to psychological distress among students, and demonstrates that interventions targeting maladaptive cognitions—whether about perceived failures or interpersonal hurts requiring forgiveness—can significantly improve depression, anxiety, and overall mental health outcomes among UEW undergraduates.

2.3 Review of Literature

Below is an overview of the literature review and empirical data on the relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being among undergraduate students.

- Forgiveness and Mental Wellbeing
- Forgiveness & Gender
- Forgiveness & Religious Affiliation
- Forgiveness & Personality
- Well-being of Undergraduate Students

2.3.1 Forgiveness and Mental Wellbeing

Barcaccia et al. (2019) investigated the association between dimensions that are especially pertinent to the well-being of teenagers, such as hedonic balance (HB), anger, depression, and forgiveness (dispositional forgiveness). In particular, the fully mediational effect of the various aspects of anger in the association between forgiveness and depression was examined in 773 teenagers, 69% of whom were girls, using a structural equation modelling approach. The findings indicated that forgiveness was positively and negatively associated with HB and depression,

respectively, through a general influence of anger. This suggests that teenagers who were more forgiving had higher HB and lower sadness because they reported a reduced general inclination to experience anger. Through the mediation of all aspects of anger, forgiveness was also favourably correlated with despair and HB. Furthermore, a distinct effect of anger management was only detected for HB, indicating that teenagers who were more forgiving had greater HB because they reported using more effective ways to regulate their anger. Gender-neutral model invariance was validated. According to their findings, forgiveness significantly protects teenagers from depression by assisting them in efficiently controlling and managing their anger, which promotes emotional well-being. The study's focus on adolescents (likely secondary school age) ignores the unique difficulties of emerging adulthood in university settings, where students encounter various stressors (academic pressure, identity formation, independence, romantic relationships) that may modify the relationship between forgiveness and wellbeing.

Additionally, Raj, Elizabeth, and Padmakumari's (2016) study examines the experiences of adults who practise forgiveness, including the signs of forgiveness, the antecedents from childhood, and the advantages of forgiving action. The study employs a phenomenological paradigm and a qualitative research methodology. The study comprised 12 adults, ages 25 to 40, who scored highly on the Heartland Forgiveness Scale. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to examine participants' individual experiences. Thematic analysis was used to examine the data. The emerging themes demonstrated that early experiences and parental effects are the childhood precursors of forgiveness. Positive emotional states, empathy, perspective-taking, and religiosity are all signs of forgiving behaviour. Improved self-acceptance, increased well-being, and the ability to overcome obstacles are the themes that were

found. According to the study's findings, forgiving improved both mental and physical health. The purely qualitative approach with 12 participants cannot establish the prevalence of forgiveness practices, the statistical strength of associations between forgiveness and various mental wellbeing outcomes, or whether the identified themes apply broadly to university students in educational settings. However, this study looks at a broader margin using a mixed method approach.

In a pilot study conducted by Friedberg Suchday and Sriniva (2009), it was found that a forgiveness intervention reduced depressive symptoms among women with fibromyalgia (a disorder that causes pain and tenderness throughout the body, as well as fatigue and trouble sleeping) who were abused in childhood. The study examined the effectiveness of a forgiveness intervention against a fibromyalgia health intervention for women with fibromyalgia who had been subjected to emotional, physical, or sexual abuse as well as emotional or physical neglect as children by one of their parents. Eleven women with fibromyalgia, ages 21 to 68, participated in the once-weekly customised program for 24 weeks after being randomly assigned to either the forgiveness intervention or the fibromyalgia health intervention.

At the pretest, posttest, and 12-week follow-up test, the participants answered questions about forgiveness, general fibromyalgia health, depression, anger, anxiety, self-esteem, and coping mechanisms. At the posttest, which evaluated their understanding of forgiveness and fibromyalgia health, they also finished the final assessments of the therapies. Compared to the fibromyalgia health intervention participants, the forgiveness intervention participants showed greater improvements in forgiveness ($p.001$) and overall fibromyalgia health ($p.046$) from the pretest to the posttest, as well as in forgiveness ($p.018$) and state anger ($p.027$) from the pretest to the follow-up test. The findings show that the forgiveness intervention may be

beneficial for enhancing forgiveness and general fibromyalgia health as well as lowering the level of anger in this specific group of fibromyalgia-affected women who experienced childhood trauma.

The study focused exclusively on women with a chronic pain disorder and childhood abuse trauma—a highly specific clinical sample. This cannot inform how forgiveness relates to mental wellbeing among healthy undergraduate students dealing with normative developmental stressors rather than clinical pathology or trauma recovery. This research gives opportunity to all range of students.

Another study conducted by Rasmussen et al. in 2019 found that more forgiving individuals had higher life satisfaction, an effect partially mediated by relationship quality. The study examined the relationship between forgiveness, relationship quality, and life satisfaction among 18-36-year-olds. The sample consisted of 1,427 participants who completed an online survey assessing their levels of forgiveness, relationship quality, and life satisfaction. The results showed that forgiveness was positively associated with life satisfaction and that this relationship was partially mediated by relationship quality. The findings suggest that forgiveness may be necessary in promoting life satisfaction, mainly through its positive impact on relationship quality.

The online survey likely drew from Western contexts and cannot capture how Ghanaian cultural values around forgiveness (Ubuntu philosophy, communal interdependence, religious teachings), traditional conflict resolution practices, and the specific relational dynamics within UEW's educational environment shape the forgiveness-wellbeing relationship differently.

Furthermore, a study by Kaleta and Mróz (2018) examined the connections between life satisfaction and the inclination to forgive across age groups. 436 people between the ages of 19 and 67 made up the sample. Each age group's analyses were done independently. The study examined the positive and negative aspects of forgiving oneself, others, and circumstances beyond anyone's control. The findings showed connections between several aspects of the forgiveness disposition and life happiness for the whole group. Furthermore, persons aged 19–30 and 41–50 showed strong positive associations between life satisfaction and both positive and negative features of forgiving. Conversely, a strong positive correlation between lower levels of unforgiveness and life satisfaction was seen among respondents between the ages of 31 and 40. On the other hand, positive forgiveness and life satisfaction were significantly positively correlated in the group of those over 50.

The study's focus on general life satisfaction in a non-specified (likely Western) context overlooks how Ghanaian cultural values might shape forgiveness across development, and ignores other mental wellbeing dimensions critical to university students (anxiety, depression, academic stress, psychological flourishing) that require both quantitative assessment and qualitative exploration of lived experiences which this research focuses on.

Also, a study by Silfiasari and Miqdad (2019) aimed to ascertain how gratitude mediates the impact of forgiveness on life pleasure. Fifty University of Muhammadiyah Malang students participated in this study. Using Hayes software and the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.00, a mediation regression test was used to analyse the data. The study's findings show that when passing thankfulness (M), the effect of forgiveness (X) on life contentment (Y) has a probability value of 0.000, indicating that there is an effect of forgiveness on life

satisfaction mediated by appreciation ($p < 0.05$). Partial mediation takes place. According to the R^2 value, forgiving has a 41.1% thankfulness mediation effect on life satisfaction.

The study's Indonesian Islamic context, where religious teachings strongly emphasize both forgiveness and gratitude, may not translate to the Ghanaian context at UEW, where different cultural values (communal harmony, traditional conflict resolution), religious diversity (Christianity, indigenous beliefs, Islam), and educational stressors may create distinct pathways and meanings for forgiveness and wellbeing.

In a nationally representative sample of 1,423 American adults, Toussaint et al. (2020) investigated forgiveness of others, self-forgiveness, sleep, and health. Sleep was thought to act as a mediator in the relationships between self-forgiveness and health and forgiveness of others. Forgiveness of others, self-forgiveness, quantity and quality of sleep, psychological discomfort, life satisfaction, and self-rated physical health were all measured. Sleep was linked to both self-forgiveness and forgiving of others, while self-forgiveness was linked to health. In addition to being linked to health, sleep also served as a mediator between self-forgiveness and other people's forgiveness. It was concluded that self-forgiveness and forgiveness of others may reduce negative emotions like anger, regret, and rumination, act as a buffer between one's own and other people's transgressions during the day, and promote a calm mental state that promotes restful sleep, which is linked to improved health.

The nationally representative U.S. adult sample (general population) cannot address the distinct experiences of undergraduate students facing unique stressors—academic pressures, identity formation, peer conflicts, romantic relationships, financial strain, and the transition to independence—that may create different

forgiveness challenges and mental wellbeing patterns than those found in the general adult population which this research seeks to address.

Additionally, Shah (2022) investigated the relationship between forgiveness and life satisfaction as well as forgiveness and self-esteem among undergraduate and graduate students in the fields of art, science, and business who were between the ages of 18 and 25. Forgiveness of oneself, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of circumstances pertaining to life satisfaction and self-esteem are the three sub-dimensions of dispositional forgiveness that are the subject of this study. The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) was used to gather the data needed to measure forgiveness. On the other hand, life satisfaction and self-esteem were assessed using the Rosenberg self-esteem scale and the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS). For the study, a sample of 60 students (M=15; F=45) were chosen. According to the statistical research, college students' life happiness and self-esteem were significantly positively correlated with forgiveness and its dimensions, which include forgiveness of oneself, others, and circumstances. Additionally, a significant variation in college students' life happiness and self-esteem levels was explained by forgiveness and its dimensions, according to regression analysis.

The small sample (N=60) from an Indian educational context cannot capture how Ghanaian cultural values (communal interdependence, traditional reconciliation practices, religious diversity), the specific academic environment at UEW, and local relationship dynamics shape forgiveness practices and their connections to wellbeing in ways that may differ significantly from South Asian contexts hence the need for this study.

Hirst et al. (2019) conducted a meta-analysis to examine the relationships between attachment dimensions (anxiety and avoidance) and forgiveness of others.

They analyzed data from 33 studies with a total sample size of 7,706 participants. They discovered a strong inverse relationship ($r = -.30$) between forgiveness and attachment avoidance. Reduced forgiveness of others was linked to higher avoidance. Although it was not as strong as it was for avoidance, there was also a significant negative association ($r = -.20$) between attachment anxiety and forgiving. A little lower level of forgiveness was associated with higher levels of worry. These effects remained significant even when controlling for confounding variables like neuroticism and relationship quality. Moderation analyses showed the attachment-forgiveness links did not differ based on gender, age, or forgiveness measures used. The authors conclude that having an insecure attachment orientation, especially higher avoidance, makes forgiving others' offenses and transgressions more difficult. They suggest attachment insecurity may undermine the motivation and ability to forgive through factors like distrusting others' benevolent intentions. Overall, this meta-analysis provides robust evidence that adult attachment patterns relate to the important interpersonal process of forgiveness in close relationships.

The predominantly Western samples in the meta-analysis cannot capture how Ghanaian cultural socialization (communal child-rearing, extended family systems, collectivist values), the unique stressors of university life at UEW (academic pressures, peer conflicts, romantic relationships), and emerging adulthood developmental tasks shape the interplay between forgiveness, and mental wellbeing in ways distinct from general adult populations hence this research.

Tenklova and Slezackova (2016) also investigated the differences between self-forgiveness and interpersonal forgiveness (forgiving others) about mental health. They conducted two studies with university students in the Czech Republic. Study 1 ($N=314$) examined associations between self-forgiveness, interpersonal forgiveness,

and measures of mental health (life satisfaction, anxiety, depression). Self-forgiveness has a negative correlation with anxiety and depression and a positive correlation with life satisfaction.. Interpersonal forgiveness was also positively associated with life satisfaction but was unrelated to anxiety and depression. Study 2 (N=331) explored whether the reasons for self-unforgiveness versus unforgiveness of others differed in their links to mental health. They found that, for self-unforgiveness, feeling inability to forgive oneself was most strongly linked to lower life satisfaction and higher depression/anxiety. For unforgiveness of others, not forgetting the offense was most predictive of poorer mental health outcomes. Across both studies, self-forgiveness demonstrated stronger associations with mental health than interpersonal forgiveness of others. The authors came to the conclusion that forgiving oneself may be more essential to psychological health than forgiving other people. They suggest self-forgiveness allows individuals to reduce harsh self-condemnation which can deplete mental resources. Overall, the research highlights important distinctions between self- and other-forgiveness processes in how they relate to different mental health indicators.

The Czech (European individualistic) context may not translate to Ghana, where collectivist values emphasizing communal harmony and relational interdependence might elevate the importance of interpersonal forgiveness relative to self-forgiveness. The study cannot capture how Ghanaian cultural norms around shame, community accountability, religious teachings about sin and redemption, and traditional conflict resolution practices shape the relative salience and mental health implications of forgiving self versus others hence the need for this research for the Ghanaian population.

Additionally, Macaskill (2012) examined how dispositional self-forgiveness and other-forgiveness relate differently to mental health and life satisfaction. The study had 233 participants from the UK complete the following measures: Trait self-forgiveness, Trait other-forgiveness, Depression, Anxiety, Stress and Life satisfaction. It was found that, Self-forgiveness and other-forgiveness were moderately positively correlated ($r = 0.36$), indicating they are related but distinct constructs. Higher self-forgiveness was associated with lower depression, anxiety, and stress symptoms. Other-forgiveness was not significantly associated with depression or anxiety, but showed a small negative correlation with stress. Both self-forgiveness and other-forgiveness were positively correlated with greater life satisfaction. In regression models, self-forgiveness emerged as a stronger unique predictor of mental health and life satisfaction than other-forgiveness. The author concludes that while both forms of forgiveness are beneficial, the ability to forgive oneself for perceived offenses, mistakes, or shortcomings may be more centrally tied to psychological well-being outcomes. Self-forgiveness may help reduce self-condemnation and enable coping with personal shortcomings in a more emotionally adaptive way. Overall, the study highlights the importance of considering self- and other-forgiveness as distinct processes with potentially different implications for mental health.

The general adult sample (unspecified age range and life contexts) overlooks the unique developmental challenges of undergraduate students—academic pressures, identity formation, peer relationship conflicts, romantic betrayals, financial stress, and transition to independence—that may create distinct patterns of what students need to forgive (themselves or others) and how this connects to their mental wellbeing within the university environment.

Another study by Toussaint, Gall, Cheadle, and Williams (2020) examined the relationships between self-forgiveness and forgiveness of others and health outcomes, with sleep as a potential mediating factor. The study used data from a nationally representative sample of 1,073 adults in the U.S. Participants completed measures of: Forgiveness of others, Self-forgiveness, Sleep quality, Sleep duration, Self-rated health, and Number of chronic health conditions. They found that, higher forgiveness of others and greater self-forgiveness were linked to fewer chronic illnesses and improved self-rated health. These associations remained significant even after controlling for demographic factors and negative traits like neuroticism. Better sleep quality mediated the links between forgiveness (of self and others) and better self-rated health. Longer sleep duration also partially mediated the relationship between self-forgiveness and fewer chronic conditions. The researchers propose that forgiveness may help reduce cognitive rumination and physiological arousal, thereby promoting better sleep which has downstream benefits for physical health outcomes. They also suggest that self-forgiveness in particular may enable better sleep by allowing individuals to psychologically “disengage” from distressing thoughts about past transgressions. In summary, the study highlights forgiveness as a positive psychological factor associated with better sleep and self-rated health, underscoring its potential value for health promotion.

The general adult sample (unspecified age range and life contexts) overlooks the unique personal differences of undergraduate students—transition to independence—that may create distinct patterns of what students need to forgive (themselves or others) and how this connects to their mental wellbeing within the university environment.

Kim et al. (2024) also investigated the role of apology in explaining the link between self-forgiveness and physical health. They proposed that self-forgiveness may promote better mental health, which in turn leads to improved physical health outcomes. The study had 355 adults complete measures of Self-forgiveness, Likelihood to apologize to self, Mental health symptoms (depression, anxiety), and Physical health symptoms. They found that, higher levels of self-forgiveness were associated with better physical health. This relationship was mediated by mental health - greater self-forgiveness predicted lower depression and anxiety symptoms, which in turn predicted fewer physical health issues. The effect of self-forgiveness on physical health through mental health was further mediated by the likelihood to apologize to oneself. Individuals with greater levels of self-forgiveness were more likely to apologize to themselves, which facilitated the self-forgiveness, mental health, and physical health pathway. The authors suggest that apologizing to oneself after a perceived transgression may represent a crucial component of the self-forgiveness process that allows for emotional healing. This emotional repair enabled by self-apology appears to benefit both mental and physical well-being. They conclude that self-forgiveness is a valuable self-regulatory resource, and facilitating it through self-apology could have clinical applications for improving overall health.

The exclusive focus on self-forgiveness overlooks interpersonal forgiveness (forgiving others), which may be equally or more critical for university students navigating peer conflicts, roommate tensions, romantic betrayals, and group project disputes. The study did not address how forgiving others relates to mental wellbeing in students' lives but this research looks at forgiveness as a whole— self, others, and situations.

Furthermore, Mróz and Kaleta (2023) examined the relationships between forgiveness of self and others with physical and mental health, exploring self-consciousness as a potential mediator. The study included 497 adults (282 women, 215 men) in Poland who completed measures of: Forgiveness of self, Forgiveness of others, Private and public self-consciousness, Physical health symptoms, and Mental health (depression, anxiety, stress). The findings indicated that, higher forgiveness of self and others was associated with better physical and mental health for both women and men. These relationships were mediated by lower levels of private self-consciousness (harsh self-evaluation). For women, the forgiveness → better mental health link was also mediated by lower public self-consciousness (anxiety about how one appears to others). Forgiveness revealed more robust correlations with outcomes related to mental health than physical health. The authors propose that an unforgiving stance involves frequent negative self-evaluation and rumination, which can heighten public and private self-consciousness. This self-focused attention may drain the self-regulatory resources needed for effective coping. In contrast, higher self-forgiveness and forgiveness of others appears to reduce critical self-consciousness. This may alleviate stress/tension and free up cognitive resources, leading to better emotional and physical well-being. The study highlights forgiveness as a potentially valuable self-regulatory strategy, with self-consciousness as one key mechanism linking forgiveness to health benefits, especially for mental health.

The Polish adult sample (general population, unspecified age range) did not capture how Ghanaian collectivist values, religious diversity (Christianity, traditional beliefs, Islam), communal accountability practices, and the unique pressures of undergraduate life at UEW shape both forgiveness processes and their pathways to

mental wellbeing in culturally and developmentally distinct ways which is the focus of the research.

2.3.2 Forgiveness and Gender

A study by Miller, Worthington, and McDaniel (2022), examined the gender differences in interpersonal forgiveness. The researchers conducted a meta-analysis examining gender differences in interpersonal forgiveness based on 46 studies with over 12,000 participants. Forgiveness was conceptualized as a prosocial change toward an offender. The studies compared men and women's tendencies to forgive across diverse interpersonal transgressions. The results demonstrated a small but statistically significant effect indicating women report being more forgiving than men overall. This effect was consistent across different age groups and types of offenses. There was some evidence the gender difference may be slightly larger in adulthood compared to adolescence. Moderator analyses found the gender difference remained consistent regardless of publication date of the studies or geographic location of the samples.

However, differences were less pronounced when examining complex multifaceted forgiveness versus direct forgiveness reactions. Limitations are the analysis relied solely on self-report measures of forgiveness. The researchers suggest implicit measures may offer additional insight into true attitudinal gender differences. They encourage further research into factors that facilitate forgiveness for both men and women which this research seeks to address.

The predominantly Western samples cannot capture how Ghanaian gender roles, cultural socialization (masculinity/femininity norms), religious teachings about gender

and forgiveness, and the specific gender dynamics within UEW's educational environment hence this research to close the population gap.

Again, a study by Kaleta & Mróz (2022) examined the degree of dispositional forgiveness and its affective correlates, including anxiety, emotional control, and positive and negative affect, in men and women. There were 625 people in the sample, ages 19 to 69, with 478 (76.5%) women and 147 (23.5%) men. The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS), the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), the Courtauld Emotional Control Scale (CECS), and the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI) were administered in Polish. Positive aspects of the disposition to forgive did not significantly differ between men and women, however men demonstrated a larger degree of general forgiveness and a stronger willingness to overcome unforgiveness. Positive affect was positively correlated with forgiveness, while negative affect, anxiety, and control over anger and despair were adversely correlated with dispositional forgiving in both genders. Anxiety control was positively correlated with aspects of forgiveness in men and negatively correlated in women. Numerous relationships between affective qualities and forgiving of oneself and uncontrollable circumstances were mediated by gender, but not forgiveness of others.

The Polish adult sample (19-69 years, predominantly women 76.5%) spanning diverse life stages cannot capture how Ghanaian gender norms, cultural expectations about masculinity/femininity in teacher education contexts, religious teachings about gender and reconciliation, and the unique challenges of undergraduate life at UEW shape both forgiveness practices and their mental wellbeing implications differently for male and female students in the critical developmental period of emerging adulthood hence the research conducted.

According to a study by Barber, Maltby, and Macaskill (2005), the relationship between forgiveness and anger rumination was investigated. This study examined gender differences in the association between forgiveness tendencies and anger rumination among undergraduate students. The sample consisted of 148 female and 75 male undergraduates who completed self-report measures of forgiveness and anger rumination in response to a past hurt. Analyses revealed female undergraduates were less likely to ruminate on angry memories and desires for revenge when they had higher dispositional forgiveness. However, there was no significant link between forgiveness tendencies and anger rumination found for the male undergraduate students.

This suggests an increased capacity to forgive may inhibit vengeful thought patterns more prominently for tertiary women relative to their male peers when reflecting on past interpersonal offenses. Overall, this research provides initial evidence of a gender difference indicating forgiveness dampens anger rumination linked to revenge motivations among hurt female undergraduates to a greater degree compared to hurt male undergraduates. More work is needed to replicate and explain the mechanisms underlying this phenomenon which is one of the objectives in this present study.

The study examined only anger rumination without assessing how this gendered forgiveness pattern relates to comprehensive mental wellbeing outcomes which this study seeks to address.

Furthermore, in a study by Strelan and Vanhooymissen (2020), gender differences in offence type on forgiveness were investigated. This meta-analysis synthesized findings from 18 studies examining gender differences in forgiveness of emotional vs pragmatic offenses among university students. Across samples totaling

2,891 participants, results showed female undergraduates were more likely to forgive emotional hurts like betrayal or criticism compared to male undergraduates. However, there were no significant gender differences observed in the forgiveness of pragmatic offenses such as being turned down for a loan or not receiving pay owed. The researchers suggest female students' socialized emphasis on maintaining interpersonal harmony makes lack of forgiveness harder in the face of emotional hurts that damage relationships.

On the other hand, the gender difference disappears for pragmatic offenses which are perhaps viewed as less personal by female students. Further research is needed into interventions fostering forgiveness among male undergraduates experiencing emotional transgressions. Overall, this meta-analysis establishes gender and type of offense both play a key role in forgiveness processes among university students.

The predominantly Western university samples cannot capture how Ghanaian gender socialization at UEW—cultural masculinity norms religious teachings about gender and reconciliation, communal conflict resolution practices, and the specific offense types prevalent in teacher education settings shape both gendered forgiveness patterns and their mental wellbeing implications in culturally distinct ways. This research aims to capture the African university samples specifically the Ghanaian setting on gender differences on forgiveness.

Another study by Ntamu (2017), investigated the relative contribution of emotional intelligence and gender on conflict resolution strategies of Nigerian undergraduates. This study examined associations between emotional intelligence, gender, and conflict resolution approaches among a sample of 324 Nigerian undergraduate students aged 16-35 years old. Self-report measures assessed emotional

intelligence, while hypothetical scenario responses were used to categorize constructive versus destructive conflict resolution tendencies. Controlling for age, analyses showed that higher emotional intelligence scores significantly predicted increased use of constructive conflict resolution strategies for the entire undergraduate sample.

Additionally, female undergraduates were significantly more likely to utilize constructive conflict resolution approaches compared to their male peers, regardless of emotional intelligence levels. The researchers discuss how gender socialization provides Nigerian female undergraduates more opportunities to develop emotional intelligence and constructive communication patterns to maintain relationships. In contrast, Nigerian male gender norms tend to emphasize aggression and save-face needs - sabotaging conflict resolution. Overall, this research indicates both greater emotional intelligence and female gender are independently associated with more constructive, relationship-preserving conflict resolution strategies among Nigerian university students.

While the study was conducted in Nigeria (a neighboring West African country), the quantitative-only approach cannot capture the specific cultural nuances at UEW in Ghana—distinct Ghanaian gender socialization patterns, ethnic diversity, religious influences, traditional Ghanaian conflict resolution practices (e.g., palaver systems), and teacher education culture. It also cannot explain how male and female students subjectively experience forgiveness and the relationship it has on mental wellbeing among undergraduate students which this research sought to achieve.

2.3.3. Forgiveness & Religious Affiliation

According to a study by Davis, Hook, Worthington, Van Tongeren, Gartner, Jennings (2010), the relationship between relational spirituality and forgiveness was

investigated. They synthesized findings from 10 studies (n = 2,013 participants) examining how religiousness and spirituality predict interpersonal forgiveness tendencies among undergraduate students. Across studies, measures of both organizational religiousness (service attendance) and subjective spirituality (perceived closeness to the Divine) positively correlated with increased forgiveness. However, the link was strongest for students showing a relational spirituality marked by appraisals of perceived intimacy and partner responsiveness from the Divine.

Students high in relational spirituality viewed the Divine as caring, trustworthy and reliable - similar to a healthy human relationship. In turn, these divine relational appraisals facilitated forgiveness of human transgressors by calming angry arousal, reducing vengeful motivations, and modeling reconciliation virtues. Conversely, viewing the Divine as detached, cruel or unresponsive weakened the positive effects of religiousness on forgiving motivations among undergraduate adults. In conclusion, this review establishes that undergraduate students' appraisals of the Divine Being's reliability and care within a spiritual relationship strongly predict proclivity to forgive interpersonal offenses. This highlights the importance of relational dimensions in explaining links between religion, spirituality and forgiveness during the university years.

The meta-analysis aggregated religiousness/spirituality broadly without distinguishing between specific religious affiliations (Christianity, Islam, traditional African religions, no affiliation) that may have fundamentally different teachings about forgiveness, and mental wellbeing. This research however addressed religious difference.

Sutton, Jordan, and Worthington (2014) also investigated the contributions of Pentecostal spirituality to godly love. This review examined 5 studies involving

Pentecostal Christian university students ($n = 1,573$) to analyze associations between components of Pentecostal spirituality and interpersonal forgiveness. Pentecostal spirituality emphasizes direct divine experience through spiritual gifts and rituals. Across studies, students self-identifying with Pentecostalism consistently demonstrated greater forgiveness tendencies compared to students from other Christian denominations and non-religious students. Aspects of Pentecostal spirituality tied to enhanced forgiveness included hope appraisals of a better future, compassionate responses to human fallibility, and vertical forgiveness from God to people that models horizontal forgiveness between people.

The researchers propose Pentecostal rituals and beliefs may foster caring emotions, optimism, and spiritual modeling that ultimately facilitate forgiving motivations toward human transgressors. However, additional research is needed to directly test mediating mechanisms and forgiveness among other religions. Overall, this review highlights promising evidence that adult university students who embrace Pentecostal Christian spirituality show an increased willingness to forgive interpersonal offenses.

By focusing exclusively on variations within Christianity (Pentecostal vs. other denominations vs. non-religious), the study overlooks other major religious traditions present at UEW—particularly Islam, traditional African religions, and syncretic practices that blend Christianity with indigenous beliefs. This study however looked at the variation in religious affiliation with forgiveness.

Davis, Worthington Jr., Hook, Emmons, Hill, Bollinger, & Van Tongeren, (2013) also explored the relationship between humility and the strengthening and mending of social ties. They examined findings from 9 longitudinal studies involving religious undergraduate students ($n = 1,312$) to analyze how spiritual humility

predicted temporal changes in interpersonal forgiveness over time. Humility was characterized by modest self-focus, openness to others' ideas, and ability to acknowledge personal faults and limitations. Across one-semester to year-long studies, the students embracing spiritual humility demonstrated significant increases in interpersonal forgiveness of romantic partners, friends, and strangers over time relative to less humble peers.

Humility facilitated forgiveness by reducing angry reactions to offenses and increasing empathetic, compassionate perspectives on the offender's flaws and struggles. The researchers propose humility principles rooted in religious teachings and role modeled by divine beings allow students to extend grace and forgiveness to mortal transgressors. However, causality requires further investigation with experimental interventions fostering spiritual humility. There is a need for the relationship between religious affiliation and forgiveness. Overall, this review establishes promising effects of religiously-supported humility on temporal gains in interpersonal forgiveness among undergraduate students.

The longitudinal study examined only humility-forgiveness trajectories without assessing how these patterns relate to mental wellbeing. However this research filled the gap at UEW with different faith tradition, the religious difference of forgiveness on the mental wellbeing of undergraduates were evaluated.

Furthermore, in a study by Lefoko, Mokhele, and Matoane (2021), the role of religion and spirituality in handling conflict among the youth was investigated. The study found that religion and spirituality play an important role in conflict resolution and forgiveness among the youth in South Africa. This study qualitatively examined how religion and spirituality shape conflict attitudes and forgiveness among South African youth. In-depth interviews were conducted with 15 young adults aged 18-35

about how their religious beliefs impacted interpersonal conflicts. Thematic analyses indicated religious youth tended to view conflicts as opportunities for growth, emphasize forgiveness as a religious imperative, believe God can reconcile relationships during conflict, and utilize prayer and other spiritual practices to facilitate conflict resolution.

Specifically, integrating religion/spirituality into the conflict resolution process enhanced youths' ability to forgive and pursue reconciliation with parties who caused harm. The authors discuss how religious/spiritual youth internalize sacred teachings and divine exemplars to extend grace and achieve peaceful conflict resolution. More research is needed with larger, generalizable samples. However, initial findings highlight the important role of religion and spirituality in motivating forgiving, conciliatory responses during interpersonal conflicts among South African undergraduate young adults.

The small qualitative sample (N=15) from South Africa cannot establish the prevalence or strength of religion-forgiveness-wellbeing associations, identify predictive patterns, or determine whether findings apply broadly to Ghanaian university contexts where religious expression, denominational diversity, campus spiritual life, and educational culture at UEW hence a mixed method approach to understand better outcome which this research addressed.

Additionally, Gebremikael et al. (2022), examined forgiveness among Eritrean youth is associated with enhanced mental health and religiosity. This study examined correlations between religiosity, forgiveness, and mental health in a sample of 601 Eritrean youth aged 18-35 years. Self-report surveys assessed religiosity (religious commitment/involvement), forgiveness (willingness to forgive interpersonal transgressions), depression, and life satisfaction. Analyses showed religiosity had

significant positive associations with forgiveness and life satisfaction, and negative links to depressive symptoms among Eritrean youth. Structural equation modeling further established religiosity as positively predicting greater forgiveness, which in turn was tied to better mental health indicators.

The authors discuss how religious involvement likely reinforces forgiveness norms and coping behaviors that support youth mental wellbeing following interpersonal hurts. However, causation and mediating mechanisms need further exploration. Overall, this study provides initial evidence of interrelated associations between enhanced religiosity, forgiveness tendencies, and potential mental health benefits among young adults in Eritrea.

By measuring religiosity as a general construct (religious commitment/involvement) without distinguishing specific religious affiliations, the study cannot reveal whether forgiveness-mental health pathways differ across Christianity, Islam, traditional African religions, or secular students. However, this study sought to reveal religious affiliation difference with forgiveness.

Commey and Opoku (2018) also investigated the relationship between religiosity and forgiveness among students in Ghana. This study examined associations between religiosity, gender, and forgiveness among a sample of 210 university students in Ghana aged 18-29 years old. Self-report surveys assessed religiosity levels and dispositional forgiveness. Analyses showed religiosity significantly and positively predicted forgiveness tendencies for both male and female undergraduate students in Ghana. Specifically, students who rated themselves higher on religious commitment, involvement, and beliefs also scored higher on their likelihood to forgive interpersonal transgressions.

However, there was no evidence of a gender difference, as the positive relationship between religiosity and dispositional forgiveness was similar for both genders. The researchers suggest religious teachings that encourage forgiveness may strengthen forgivingness for Ghanaian male and female students alike. In conclusion, higher religiosity appears tied to more forgiving attitudes in this sample of Ghanaian university students, irrespective of gender differences. This contrasts some findings showing female students are overall more forgiving than males. More intercultural work in this area is warranted which this study will be explored.

By measuring religiosity as a general construct without distinguishing specific religious affiliations, the study cannot reveal whether forgiveness-wellbeing dynamics differ across denominations and faith traditions prevalent at UEW—Pentecostal-Charismatic Christians, Catholics, Protestants (Presbyterian, Methodist), Muslims, traditional African religion practitioners, and non-religious students which is one of the objectives of this study.

2.3.4 Forgiveness & Personality

Mullet, Neto, and Rivière (2005), reviewed the links between Big 5 traits and forgiveness across 15 studies, including with undergraduates. Across studies, the trait agreeableness consistently demonstrated positive links with increased forgiveness of transgressions, while neuroticism showed negative relationships. Agreeable people's cooperation and concern for social harmony make forgiving easier after hurts. Conversely, neurotics' tendency toward anger, hostility, and insecurity impedes forgiveness. There was some evidence that extraversion and openness also facilitate forgiving by increasing empathy and perspective-taking regarding why offenses occurred. However, links with conscientiousness were negligible. The review highlights agreeableness and emotional stability as especially vital personality factors

tied to enhanced interpersonal forgiveness among university students and adults more broadly. Further research can clarify the causal mechanisms. However, findings strongly suggest innate dispositions shape people's responses when forgiving real or perceived wrongs.

The reviewed studies were conducted primarily in Western contexts. There is a notable absence of research examining whether these personality-forgiveness relationships hold true within African/Ghanaian cultural contexts, where collectivistic values, religious orientations, and indigenous conceptions of forgiveness may moderate these relationships differently. Hence this research was conducted to bridge the gap.

In a study by Wang (2008), the aim aimed to investigate the connections between forgiveness and the Big Five personality traits in a sample of Taiwanese undergraduates. 155 college students with a mean age of 19.6 years—112 women and 43 men—participated. The degree of forgiveness for a particular offender (also known as State Forgiveness) is measured by the 15-item Forgiveness Scale (FS). The dispositional propensity to forgive, or trait forgiveness, is measured by the 10-item Forgiveness Likelihood Scale (FLS). The current study used the total scores of each scale, with the Cronbach alphas for FS and FLS being .84 and .77, respectively.

Five personality traits (Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness, Agreeableness, and Conscientiousness) were measured using the 44-item Big Five Inventory; the Cronbach alphas of the five subscales varied from .63 to .83 in the present group. The author translated every measure into Chinese. According to the results, people who are more amiable and emotionally stable are more likely to forgive and have done so in the past. Further research is required considering the geographical location.

Wang (2008) explicitly acknowledges that “further research is required considering the geographical location,” having studied only Taiwanese undergraduates. There is a complete absence of research examining whether the agreeableness-forgiveness and neuroticism-forgiveness relationships hold true among Ghanaian students at UEW, where Ubuntu philosophy, communal living arrangements, Christian/traditional religious frameworks, and collectivistic values may fundamentally alter how personality expresses itself in forgiveness processes.

Again, Oral and Arslan (2017) investigated the relationship between the forgiveness levels of university students and their self-compassion, rumination, and personality traits. The purpose of the study was to examine university students' forgiveness levels in relation to personality factors, self-compassion, and rumination. This study included self-administered questionnaires and a descriptive-correlational methodology. 840 university students—460 girls and 380 males—from various Pamukkale University faculties participated in the study. They were selected using a random cluster sampling technique.

This study used the Heartland Forgiveness Scale to measure forgiveness, the Self-compassion Scale to test self-compassion, the Rumination over an Interpersonal Offence Scale to measure rumination, and the Adjective Based Personality Scale to measure personality traits. Hierarchical regression analysis was employed to investigate the predictive ability of self-compassion, rumination, and personality factors on forgiveness. The study's findings indicate that extraversion and self-compassion are important indicators of self-forgiveness among college students. Additionally, they both positively predict self-forgiveness.

However, self-forgiveness is not predicted by neuroticism, conscientiousness, agreeableness, openness to new experiences, or rumination. The findings also show

that among college students, self-compassion, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness are important predictors of forgiving others. Rumination and conscientiousness are negative predictors of forgiveness of others, whereas self-compassion, extraversion, and agreeableness are good predictors. Further research is needed in relation to the personality types explored.

Oral and Arslan (2017) examined predictors of forgiveness (self-compassion, rumination, personality) but did not measure mental wellbeing as an outcome. This study completed this essential link by examining whether forgiveness mediates the personality and mental wellbeing relationship among UEW undergraduates.

Another study by Bajwa & Khalid (2015) examined how young adults' personalities affected their need for vengeance and forgiveness. The purpose of this study was to determine which personality factors influence young people's acts of vengeance and forgiveness. In order to determine the personality traits that influence forgiving and vengeful behaviour, 159 male and female students were given the Big Five Personality Inventory, Vengeance Scale, and Trait Forgiveness Scale. Forgiveness was found to be predicted by the agreeableness trait, whereas vengeance showed a significant negative correlation with agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness. The study also revealed that personality traits are important in determining young adults' forgiving and vengeful behaviours.

Bajwa and Khalid (2015) examined personality→vengeance and personality→forgiveness relationships, but did not investigate the ultimate psychological health outcomes which this research investigated.

The study by Neto (2007) examines the relationship between personality traits, gratitude, and dispositional forgiveness among college students. The study

administered the Big Five Personality Inventory, Gratitude Questionnaire, and Heartland Forgiveness Scale to 152 Portuguese college students to identify the personality traits that affect dispositional forgiveness and the role of gratitude in the relationship between personality and forgiveness. The study found that personality traits, particularly agreeableness and neuroticism, were significantly correlated with dispositional forgiveness. Additionally, gratitude was found to explain a significant amount of variance in dispositional forgiveness beyond that of personality traits. The study also indicated that gratitude plays a crucial role in the relationship between personality and dispositional forgiveness. The research failed to highlight the relationship between personality traits and forgiveness only which this research sought to study.

Neto (2007) examined personality, gratitude and forgiveness pathways but stopped short of measuring the ultimate outcome that matters most for students mental wellbeing. This study would complete this essential chain by examining mental wellbeing as the key outcome.

Hodge, Captari, Mosher, Kodali, Hook, Davis, & Van Tongeren, (2020) provides a comprehensive review of the relationship between personality traits and forgiveness. The study examined the impact of personality variables, conceptualized through the Big Five model of personality, on forgiveness. The study presents meta-analytic data analysing the connections between forgiveness and each of the Big Five. The empirical data supporting the influence of personality on forgiveness is highlighted in the meta-analytic review. The main predictors of forgiveness were found to be neuroticism and agreeableness, with agreeableness having a positive link and neuroticism having a negative one. The study also takes into account three forms of forgiveness (i.e., of oneself, others, and circumstances), as well as attributes and

state forgiveness. The study concludes that personality traits play a crucial role in determining forgiveness.

The meta-analyses aggregate existing studies, and Hodge et al.'s review likely draws predominantly from Western (North American and European) samples. Indigenous Ghanaian personality constructs beyond the Big Five might better predict forgiveness and mental wellbeing hence the need of this study.

The study by Abid, Shafiq, Naz, & Riaz (2015) investigated the connection between college students' degree of forgiveness and personality traits. Two standardised questionnaires were used in this study to examine the relationship between the big five personality traits and forgiveness. These are the Hartland Forgiveness Scale and the Universiti Sains Malaysia Personality Inventory (USMaP). Using a proportionate stratified sampling technique, 500 college students—200 males and 300 females—between the ages of 15 and 22 were chosen from five major Gujarati colleges. The big five personality traits and forgiving degree were found to be significantly correlated. The findings showed that conscientiousness, extroversion, openness, agreeableness, and degree of forgiveness were significantly and favourably correlated. It was found that there was a substantial negative correlation between neuroticism and forgiving. Unlike most studies that find only agreeableness and neuroticism as strong predictors, Abid et al. found all five personality factors significantly correlated with forgiveness. This raises questions and hence this research was conducted to know the personality differences with forgiveness.

A study by Gbadamosi (2021) investigates the relationship between personality traits, religiosity, and forgiveness among students in undergraduate institutions in Ekiti State, Nigeria. The study administered the Big Five Inventory, Religious Commitment Inventory, and Heartland Forgiveness Scale to 400 students to

identify the personality traits that affect forgiveness and the role of religiosity in the relationship between personality and forgiveness. The study found that personality traits, particularly agreeableness and neuroticism, were significantly correlated with dispositional forgiveness. Additionally, religiosity was found to explain a significant amount of variance in dispositional forgiveness beyond that of personality traits. The study also indicated that religiosity plays a crucial role in the relationship between personality and dispositional forgiveness.

While both are West African countries, there are important distinctions between Ekiti State, Nigeria and Ghana that limit generalizability. Ekiti State is predominantly Yoruba with specific cultural practices, while UEW serves diverse Ghanaian ethnic groups (Akan, Ewe, Ga, etc.) each with distinct forgiveness traditions therefore the research was needed.

2.3.5. Well-being of Undergraduate Students

A study by Brito & Soares (2023) examined the relationships between depression, character strengths, well-being, and young adulthood dimensions and confirmed the variations in these components' levels across various depressive symptomatology groups. 1,060 people between the ages of 18 and 30 participated in this study (741 females and 305 males). The data was analysed using Kruskal-Wallis with paired post-hoc analysis, linear regression, and Spearman's correlation. Character qualities, well-being, and young adulthood characteristics were significantly positively correlated, while depression and these factors were negatively correlated. The means of the assessed constructs varied significantly among the symptom groups as well. The results indicate that depression in young adults is related to young adulthood aspects, well-being, and character qualities. These findings have significant implications for the provision of health and education treatments for young people.

Brito & Soares (2023) examined “character strengths” broadly but did not specifically investigate forgiveness as a discrete variable, despite forgiveness being recognized as a core character strength in positive psychology. This study directly addresses this omission by centering forgiveness.

Laidlaw, McLellan, and Ozakinci (2016) investigated undergraduate students' comprehension of mental health concepts and where they would seek assistance for issues related to their mental well-being. Twenty undergraduate students from five different subject areas participated in semi-structured interviews. After being transcribed, the interviews were thematically examined. The majority of participants saw mental health and mental well-being as two different concepts, according to the results, but their opinions had little bearing on where they would seek assistance for issues related to mental well-being. Medical students disclosed that getting care for mental health issues is stigmatised by the public. It is more common for undergraduate students to turn to their peers for support when they are struggling with mental health issues, although it is unclear if this approach is beneficial. It's also unclear how this strategy affects the person being asked for help.

While Laidlaw et al. (2016) explored help-seeking patterns and conceptualizations of mental health, they did not investigate what specific factors or psychological processes (like forgiveness - of self, others, or situations) contribute to mental well-being among undergraduates. This study filled this gap by examining forgiveness as a potential protective or promotive factor.

Again, Durand-Bush, McNeill, Harding, & Dobransky, (2015) conducted two studies to use an online survey to evaluate undergraduate students' stress levels, psychological health, mental health functioning, and capacity for self-regulation. In all, 647 undergraduate students took part in Study 2 and 469 in Study 1. The students

in both groups showed moderate to high levels of stress and poor mental health functioning, but they also retained a modest ability to self-regulate and a relatively high level of well-being. Stress levels, psychological well-being, and mental health functioning were all strongly predicted by students' ability to self-regulate. It is suggested that formal courses and counselling be used to enhance this skill.

While the study made general recommendations for “developing self-regulation competency through counselling and formal courses,” it provided limited guidance on what specific content these interventions should address. This study sought to identify forgiveness as a concrete, teachable component of self-regulation that could be incorporated into counselling or psychoeducational programs.

Furthermore, a survey was carried out at the start and finish of the academic year at a sizable metropolitan university in South Africa (Eloff & Graham, 2020). Undergraduate students from a range of scientific fields were tested using the Mental Health Continuum-Short Form, the Flourishing Scale, and the Fragility of Happiness Scale. Based on the baseline data ($n = 551$) and the follow-up data ($n = 281$), two distinct comparisons were conducted. Two separate, biographically (very) comparable groups were compared in Comparison 1 (baseline, $n = 443$; follow-up, $n = 173$). The results from the baseline and follow-up of the same set of students who completed the instruments at both time points were compared in Comparison 2 ($n = 108$). Over the course of the academic year, both the independent and dependent groups' mental health and well-being significantly declined, according to the results. When compared to the baseline groups, it was discovered that both follow-up groups had worse mental health, psychological flourishing, and psychological, emotional, and social well-being.

While Eloff & Graham (2020) documented a significant decline in mental health throughout the academic year, they did not investigate which psychological resources or coping mechanisms might protect students from this decline. This study explored whether forgiveness has a relational effect on mental wellbeing.

Additionally, Sydney-Agbor, Ebeh, and Onyeonu (2019) examined predictors of students' mental wellness among 348 undergraduates chosen by random cluster sampling from the social science faculties of three higher education institutions in Eastern Nigeria. With a mean age of 23.15 and a standard deviation of 3.46, the participants' ages ranged from 16 to 33. Academic stress, substance addiction, age, and institution type are among the variables taken into account. For data collection and analysis, Standard Multiple Regression was used in conjunction with a descriptive cross-sectional design. The findings showed that while mental wellness did not vary by gender ($P < .01$), academic stress, substance usage, and age had a significant negative link with mental health. The researchers suggested reorganising academic programs to reduce stress and raising awareness of the consequences of drug usage. Additionally, it was argued that students should have access to a free functional counselling section so they can get expert guidance that will support their mental health.

Sydney-Agbor et al. recommended establishing counselling units but didn't specify what interventions these units should offer. This study identifies forgiveness-based interventions as specific, evidence-based content for counselling services.

Kugbey, Osei-Boadi, and Atefoe (2015) investigated how social support from friends, family, and significant others affected University of Ghana undergraduate students' levels of stress, anxiety, and depression. Standardised questionnaires evaluating social support, depression, anxiety, and stress were given to a sample of

165 students from all levels. 57% of respondents reported light to extremely severe depression, 84% reported mild to extremely severe anxiety, and 49% reported mild to extremely severe stress, according to the results of the analysis utilising descriptive statistics, regression analysis, independent t-test, and MANOVA. Support from friends and significant others was a major predictor of depression, while social support from family was a significant predictor of students' stress levels. Anxiety was not significantly predicted by any type of social support. Subsequent study revealed that there are notable sex variations in stress, anxiety, and depression levels. However, depression levels were significantly impacted by students' academic standing, but not stress or anxiety. The conclusion is that in order to assist students in resolving their psychological problems, peer counsellors and counselling and placement centers should be encouraged.

Kugbey et al. found significant sex differences in depression, anxiety, and stress but didn't explain why. Your study explored whether men and women differ in forgiveness practices.

In order to ascertain the lifetime and present prevalence of suicide ideation or attempts as well as the related risks and protective factors among Ghanaian university students, Owusu-Ansah, Addae, Peasah, Asante, and Osafo (2020) conducted a study. A cross-sectional design was used to present questionnaires measuring suicide, psychological distress, self-esteem, and subjective wellbeing to 1003 university students (507 males and 496 females) with a mean age of 20.5 years ($SD = 5.95$). The prevalence rates of suicidal behaviours were found to be 15.2% for ideations, 6.3% for attempts, 24.3% for death wishes, and 6.8% for suicide plans. Suicidal thoughts and attempts were associated with psychological discomfort. Suicidal ideation was protected by self-esteem, but suicide attempts were protected by subjective wellbeing.

These results highlight the necessity of school-based mental health initiatives that improve young people's subjective wellbeing, lower psychological distress, and raise self-esteem.

While the original study was conducted in Ghana, it did not deeply explore cultural dimensions. This research at University of Education, Winneba could examine the role of religious beliefs (Christianity, Islam, traditional spirituality) in forgiveness and mental wellbeing.

2.3.6. Forgiveness in the African Context

Osei-Tutu & Ho (2020) found that traditional forms of forgiveness in Ghana are deeply ingrained in the country's cultural fabric, reflecting a blend of linguistic diversity and collectivistic values. In Ghana, forgiveness is often symbolized by physical gestures like kneeling, prostrating, and clasping hands, which accompany apologies to demonstrate remorse and submission. The Akan language, spoken in Ghana, translates forgiveness as *“bɔne fa kye”* or *“bɔne fa firi,”* with *“bɔne”* meaning *“wrong”* or *“transgression,”* and *“fa kye”* and *“fa firi”* conveying nuanced meanings of *“gifting”* and *“borrowing”* or *“giving someone a loan,”* respectively. In Ghanaian culture, forgiveness is often seen as a means of maintaining social harmony, especially in situations where a younger person may offer forgiveness to an older person, regardless of who was at fault. This is done to preserve the social order and respect for elders

Osei-Tutu, Dzokoto, Oti-Boadi, Belgrave, and Appiah-Danquah (2019) investigated marital forgiveness in forty southern Ghanaian married people. Several conceptualisations of forgiveness were found through analysis: (1) eliminating negative feelings; (2) mending relationships; (3) forgetting; (4) avoiding retaliation,

punishment, or revenge; (5) not bringing up the offence in the future; and (6) downplaying the offence. Forgiveness was noticed for three reasons: personal well-being, marital harmony, and marital stability. Ghanaian culture had an impact on the forgiveness process, which varied for men and women. More women than men demanded pacification when they were harmed, and participants focused on physical displays and actions (such as ~~kneeling~~) in the forgiveness process.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

Based on the theoretical frame of reference, the study was grounded on this conceptual framework:

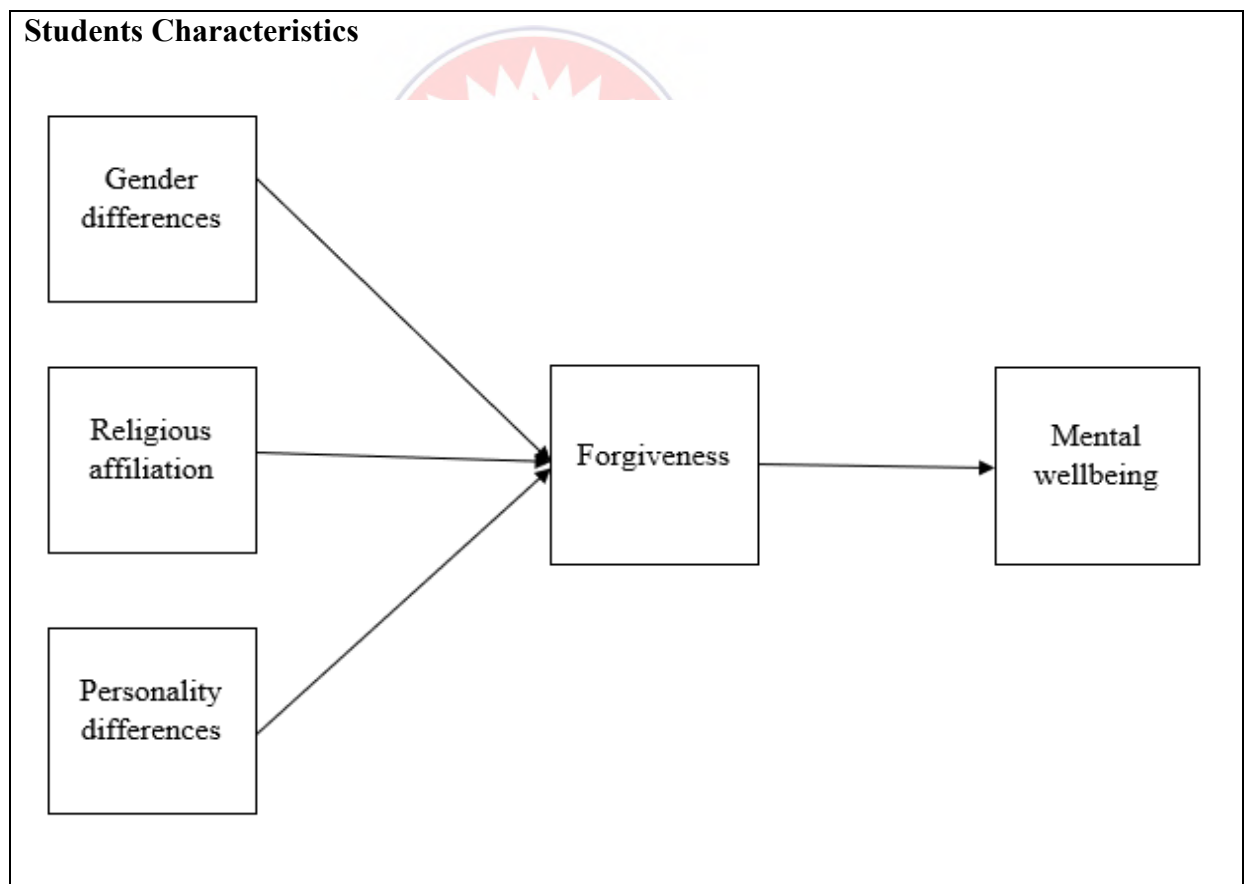


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework of Researcher's Constructs

This study's conceptual framework examines the relationship between forgiveness and mental wellbeing among undergraduate students at the University of

Education, Winneba, with student characteristics serving as mediating variables. The framework posits that forgiveness acts as an independent variable that directly influences mental wellbeing (the dependent variable), while student characteristics—including gender, personality traits, and religious affiliation—mediate this relationship. This conceptual model is grounded in two complementary theoretical perspectives: Enright's Forgiveness Process Model and Ellis's Rational Emotive Behavioral Theory (REBT).

Integration with Enright's Forgiveness Process Model

Within this study's conceptual framework, Enright's model helps explain the mechanisms through which forgiveness influences mental wellbeing. As students at UEW navigate interpersonal conflicts—which account for approximately 80% of cases at the Counselling Centre (Counselling Centre Report, 2023)—their progression through Enright's forgiveness phases can facilitate the replacement of negative emotions such as bitterness, anxiety, and depression with more adaptive psychological states. The model suggests that forgiveness is not merely the absence of negative feelings but an active transformation process that promotes psychological healing and improved mental wellbeing.

Furthermore, Enright's model acknowledges individual differences in forgiveness capacity and process, which aligns with the mediating role of student characteristics in this framework. Gender differences may influence how individuals progress through the forgiveness phases, with research suggesting variations in emotional processing and conflict resolution strategies (Miller et al., 2008). Personality traits, particularly those related to empathy, emotional regulation, and openness, may facilitate or hinder movement through Enright's phases (Hill et al., 2017). Religious affiliation and beliefs may particularly influence the decision and

deepening phases, as spiritual frameworks often provide moral imperatives and meaning-making resources that support forgiveness (Sandage & Williamson, 2010).

Integration with Rational Emotive Behavioral Theory (REBT)

REBT with the study's conceptual framework explains how forgiveness improves mental wellbeing by addressing the cognitive processes underlying psychological distress. When undergraduate students experience interpersonal conflicts such as betrayals or academic disputes, they often develop irrational, absolutist beliefs like "I must never be treated unfairly" or "I cannot tolerate this injustice," which generate negative emotional consequences including depression, anxiety, bitterness, and suicidal ideation observed at UEW (Counselling Centre Report, 2023).

From an REBT perspective, forgiveness involves challenging and replacing these irrational beliefs with more rational, flexible alternatives—a cognitive restructuring process that aligns with Worthington and Wade's (2019) definition of forgiveness. Through this transformation, students develop more realistic expectations of relationships and cultivate rational beliefs that promote psychological resilience, thereby reducing psychological distress and enhancing mental wellbeing.

REBT also explains how student characteristics mediate the forgiveness-wellbeing relationship. Personality traits influence tendencies toward rational or irrational thinking patterns and cognitive flexibility (Hill et al., 2017), while gender socialization shapes the specific irrational beliefs individuals develop and their receptivity to cognitive restructuring. Religious frameworks can either support rational forgiveness through promoting acceptance and realistic expectations or

reinforce irrational beliefs through rigid moral absolutism, depending on interpretation and application.

Gender Differences and Forgiveness Tendency

This aspect explores whether male and female students differ significantly in their inclination to forgive others, themselves, or situations. Prior studies often show that socialization processes and cultural expectations surrounding gender can impact forgiveness styles and tendencies, possibly leading to observable differences in forgiveness levels and approaches. By examining gender differences, the study aims to uncover any statistical patterns that may reveal distinct forgiveness behaviors linked to gender among undergraduates.

Personality Differences and Forgiveness Tendency

Personality traits, such as empathy, openness, and agreeableness, have been consistently linked to forgiveness in psychological research. This study examines how specific personality factors influence students' ability to forgive, positing that individuals with traits such as emotional stability and resilience may be more forgiving than those with lower levels of these traits. Through this exploration, the study seeks to identify personality traits that correlate with a stronger or weaker tendency to forgive, providing a psychological perspective on forgiveness behaviors within the student population.

Religious Differences and Forgiveness Tendency

Religion often plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes and values related to forgiveness. For many students, religious beliefs provide a moral framework that encourages forgiveness as a virtue. This study assesses how religious affiliation or intensity of belief affects students' forgiveness tendencies. By examining religious

differences, the study aims to understand whether certain religious backgrounds are more closely associated with a propensity to forgive, thereby highlighting cultural or faith-based motivations for forgiveness.

Forgiveness among Students

Beyond examining these variables, the study investigates ways to encourage and foster forgiveness among students. This involves identifying specific interventions, programs, or practices that could be integrated into university life or counseling services to promote forgiveness as a coping strategy. Such strategies could range from promoting empathy and emotional intelligence to incorporating mindfulness or faith-based reconciliation practices.

2.5. Conclusion

Investigating the relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being among undergraduate students remains a relevant and important area of research. The transition to adulthood and the university experience can be challenging, marked by increased stress, interpersonal conflicts, and potential negative psychological outcomes (Dzingirai, Rufaro, Mudhovozi, & Kasayira, 2020). Forgiveness, as a coping mechanism and virtue, has been linked to improved mental well-being and resilience (Briggs, Akos, Czyszczonek, & Eldridge, 2021). Given the unique developmental stage and demands faced by undergraduate students, investigating the relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being in this population is crucial.

This research can provide valuable insights into the role of forgiveness in promoting psychological adjustment, emotional regulation, and positive interpersonal relationships during this formative period (Denton & Martin, 2018). Findings could inform the development of interventions and assistance programs designed to meet

the unique requirements of undergraduate students, ultimately enhancing their overall well-being and academic success (Briggs et al., 2021).

Furthermore, as the university environment continues to evolve, with increasing diversity and changing societal norms, ongoing research is necessary to understand the contextual factors that influence the relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being among undergraduate students (Shamsuddin et al., 2022).



CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, MATERIALS AND METHODS

3.0 Overview

This chapter discusses the research methods used in this mixed study. The researcher's philosophical assumptions, target population, sampling strategies, instrumentation, data collection processes, and data analysis methodologies are all covered in this chapter.

3.1 Philosophical Assumptions/ Research Paradigms

The pragmatic paradigm is well-suited for a mixed-method research study investigating the relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being among undergraduates. Mixed methods research is guided by a pragmatic assumption, emphasizing the importance of using multiple methods to address the research problem and answer the research questions effectively (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2010).

In this study, the researcher aimed to maintain an objective and value-free stance, separating personal biases or values from the research process. The pragmatic approach allowed for the integration of quantitative and qualitative data to explore the relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being comprehensively.

3.1.1 Ontological Stance

The ontological stance in mixed methods research acknowledges different realities or perspectives related to the research topic, and both objective and subjective views are valid (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009).

The quantitative component of the study aimed to identify objective patterns or relationships between forgiveness and mental well-being among undergraduate students. This was achieved through the use of standardized measures or surveys, which provided numerical data and allowed for statistical analysis. The qualitative component of the study recognized that individuals have diverse experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of forgiveness and its impact on their mental well-being. The participants' subjective realities were explored and understood in depth through interviews.

The mixed method approach acknowledged multiple perspectives on the phenomenon under investigation. For example, students with different personalities, religious affiliation, gender or personal experiences had varying views on forgiveness and its relationship with mental well-being.

By adopting an ontological stance of multiple realities or perspectives, the mixed methods study captured both the objective patterns and relationships between forgiveness and mental well-being, and undergraduate students' subjective experiences and interpretations. This comprehensive understanding provided a more holistic and nuanced exploration of the research topic.

3.1.2 Epistemological stance

The epistemological assumption in this study was pragmatism which recognized that knowledge can be acquired through objective and subjective means (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009). Quantitative data provided numerical evidence of the relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being. In contrast, qualitative data offered an in-depth understanding of the

participants' lived experiences and the context in which forgiveness and mental well-being were experienced.

3.2 Research Approach

The mixed method approach, which aligns with the pragmatic paradigm, was used in the study to investigate the connection between undergraduate students' mental health and forgiveness. Hence, the quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis happen simultaneously. The quantitative phase involved administering questionnaires to measure levels of forgiveness and mental well-being among undergraduate students. (Dasborough et al., 2017). The qualitative phase, involved conducting interviews to explore the participants' experiences, perceptions, and interpretations of forgiveness and its impact on their mental well-being. The qualitative data assisted to explain or elaborate on the quantitative findings, providing a deeper understanding of the relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being.

3.3 Research Design

This study utilized the embedded research design. Embedded research design refers to a mixed method research approach where a smaller focus study is nested within a larger overarching study to provide additional depth, insight, or validation. The primary data for the study was the quantitative data. The qualitative data was embedded in the quantitative data to explain or provide an understanding of the quantitative results regarding undergraduate students' mental health and forgiveness. This design was used because the researcher recognized that the quantitative data alone could not comprehensively explain undergraduate students' mental health and forgiveness. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings occurs through

techniques such as joint displays or narrative integration (Fetters et al., 2013), allowing researchers to corroborate, expand, or explain the quantitative results with lived experiences. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of the forgiveness-wellbeing relationship, combining the statistical power of quantitative methods with the depth and context offered by phenomenological inquiry (Worthington et al., 2007). The embedded design thus offers a holistic view, capturing both the measurable associations and the subjective meanings individuals attribute to forgiveness and its impact on their mental health (Akhtar & Barlow, 2018).

The embedded mixed method design allows for the integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches, providing a more complete understanding of the forgiveness-wellbeing relationship than either method could achieve independently (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The embedded mixed method design is appropriate when quantitative and qualitative data address distinct but complementary research questions within a single investigation (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). In this study, research questions one, two, and three are addressed through quantitative methods, while research question four is explored qualitatively.

3.3.1 Quantitative Research Design

A cross-sectional design was used for this study. A cross-sectional survey design is well-suited for investigating the relationship between forgiveness and mental wellbeing, offering a snapshot of these variables at a single point in time (Levin, 2006). This approach typically employed validated self-report measures such as the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Thompson et al., 2005) to assess forgiveness, alongside mental health measures, WHO-5 Wellbeing index questionnaire.

A cross-sectional design is particularly suitable for investigating the relationship between forgiveness and mental wellbeing as it allows for the examination of associations between multiple variables at a single point in time (Levin, 2006). Since the primary objective of this study is to examine the relationship between forgiveness and mental wellbeing—rather than establishing causality—this design provides an efficient and appropriate method for identifying correlational patterns. The design enables simultaneous collection of data on both the independent variable (forgiveness) and dependent variable (mental wellbeing), facilitating statistical analysis of their associations

3.3.2 Qualitative Design

An embedded mixed method design incorporating phenomenology was utilized to comprehensively investigate the relationship between forgiveness and mental wellbeing. In this design, a phenomenological component is embedded within a larger quantitative study, allowing for a nuanced exploration of lived experiences alongside broader statistical trends (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). The quantitative aspect typically involves a cross-sectional survey using validated measures such as the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Thompson et al., 2005) and WHO-5 Wellbeing Index. Concurrently, a subset of participants is selected for in-depth phenomenological interviews, focusing on their personal experiences of forgiveness and its perceived impact on their wellbeing (Moustakas, 1994).

3.4 Population

The target population for this study was undergraduate students of UEW. The target population were specifically students enrolled at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW), a large public university located in Winneba, Ghana. According to

the 28th Congregation in January, 2024 the population of students numbered 66,351. Focusing on undergraduate students allowed for the examination of forgiveness and mental health associations within a population experiencing newfound independence, increased interpersonal interactions, and unique stressors related to the university environment.

3.4.1 Accessible Population

The accessible population comprised all undergraduate students (Levels 100-400) actively enrolled at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW) during the 2024/2025 academic year who were physically present on campus or accessible through institutional channels during data collection. From the target population of 66,351 UEW undergraduate students, the accessible population was defined as the portion realistically available to the researcher (Asiamah, Mensah, & Oteng-Abayie, 2017; Etikan & Bala, 2017), determined by geographical proximity, institutional access, and the academic calendar (Sharma, 2017). The researcher's institutional affiliation with UEW facilitated efficient data collection and contextual familiarity (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018). This population was appropriate because undergraduate students experience critical developmental transitions (Arnett, 2000; Schulenberg, Sameroff, & Cicchetti, 2004) and face elevated mental health risks (Auerbach et al., 2016), while as future educators, their psychological health influences professional effectiveness (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Roeser et al., 2013).

3.5 Sample Size

For a population of 66,351, using standard sample size calculation methods, an appropriate sample size would be approximately 382 participants was used for the quantitative phase. This sample size provides a 95% confidence level with a 5%

margin of error (Krejcie & Morgan, 1970; Israel, 1992). The sample size formula used for determining the appropriate sample size is based on Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) approach formula $n = \frac{X^2 NP(1-P)}{d^2(N-1) + X^2 P(1-P)}$

Where:

- n = required sample size
- X^2 = chi-square value for 1 degree of freedom at the desired confidence level (3.841 for 95% confidence level)
- N = population size (66,351)
- P = population proportion (assumed to be 0.50 for maximum variability)
- d = degree of accuracy/margin of error (0.05 or 5%)

For the qualitative part of an embedded mixed method design, Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) suggest purposively selecting a small number of participants who can best explain the quantitative results. Typically, this ranges from 6 to 10 participants for interviews or focus groups (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). This approach aligns with the guidance provided by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018) for embedded mixed method designs, where a large sample is used for the quantitative phase to generalize to the population, followed by a small qualitative sample to explore the results in more depth. For this research, six (6) participants out of the sample were interviewed.

3.6 Sampling Technique

The embedded mixed-methods design ensured that the quantitative results, gathered through the questionnaire, were complemented by qualitative data that provided deeper insights into the personal experiences of forgiveness and mental well-being. This combination helped to explore both the statistical relationships and

the subjective dimensions of the variables under study, enhancing the overall understanding of the topic.

3.5.1 Quantitative Sampling Technique

In studying the relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being among undergraduate students using an embedded mixed-methods design, cluster sampling was employed as the best sampling procedure for the quantitative phase, with data collected via Google Forms (Creswell & Plano, 2017). The university population is divided into natural clusters, such as gender, religious affiliation, personality, academic departments, or faculties, and a random selection of these clusters was made. Within the chosen clusters, all students were invited to participate in the survey through their social media platforms, providing access to the Google Forms questionnaire. This approach allowed for efficient data collection across a diverse population while maintaining representativeness. Google Forms was chosen for its accessibility, ease of distribution, and capacity to handle large datasets, which streamlined data collection.

3.5.2 Qualitative Sampling Technique

For the qualitative phase of the embedded mixed-methods study on the relationship between forgiveness and mental well-being among undergraduate students, purposive sampling was employed as the best sampling procedure (Creswell & Plano, 2017). This approach allowed the researcher to intentionally select participants based on specific criteria derived from the quantitative phase, such as students with different personality traits, genders, and religious affiliations. The aim was to explore diverse experiences and perspectives on how these variables interact.

This approach was chosen over convenience sampling because it allows strategic, intentional selection of participants based on specific criteria rather than mere accessibility, ensuring quality and diversity of experiences. It was preferred over snowball sampling because it gives the researcher greater control in ensuring variation across key characteristics such as gender, religious affiliation, personality traits, and forgiveness levels (Palinkas et al., 2015). Theoretical sampling, used primarily in grounded theory, was inappropriate because this study employs phenomenology with predetermined research questions.

Participants were invited to take part in semi-structured interviews, providing deeper insights into the personal and emotional dimensions of forgiveness and mental well-being that could not be fully captured through the quantitative data alone. By focusing on individuals who could offer relevant and rich information, the qualitative phase contributed to a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under study, complementing the statistical results with nuanced, context-specific narratives.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

The instruments used for this study were the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Thompson et. al., 2005), the WHO-5 Well-being Index, and an interview guide. The Heartland Forgiveness scale and the WHO-5 wellbeing index were adopted for this study as they scored high reliability coefficient after pilot testing.

3.6.1 Quantitative Data Collection Instrument

For the quantitative aspects the Heartland Forgiveness Scale and WHO-5 Wellbeing Index questionnaire were administered to students through google forms online. The credibility of the Google Form online instrument was ensured through several procedural and technical measures. The form link was distributed through

official and controlled institutional platforms to ensure that only the targeted undergraduate students had access to the survey. Response settings were configured to limit submissions to one response per participant, thereby reducing the risk of duplicate entries. In addition, students' unique institutional email addresses were used as part of the access and verification process, which helped to confirm participant eligibility and further enhanced the authenticity of responses.

Furthermore, the form included an informed consent section and clear instructions to promote ethical participation and accurate responses. After data collection, responses were screened for missing data, inconsistent patterns, and outliers to identify and exclude careless or invalid entries. Collectively, these measures strengthened the credibility, reliability, and integrity of the online data collection process.

The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) is an 18-item self-report test that measures a person's dispositional forgiveness, or their overall propensity to be forgiving, as opposed to forgiveness of a specific incident or individual. The items on the HFS represent a person's propensity to forgive others, himself, and uncontrollable circumstances (such a natural tragedy).

The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) assesses forgiveness across three related but distinct aspects, reflecting how individuals typically respond to interpersonal offenses. Forgiveness of Self refers to the degree to which people can release self-blame, guilt, and resentment toward themselves for past mistakes. Forgiveness of Others measures the tendency to let go of anger and negative feelings toward people who have caused harm or offense. Forgiveness of Situations captures forgiveness directed toward uncontrollable circumstances (such as illness, accidents, or fate), reflecting how individuals cope with negative events that are not caused by a

specific person. Together, these three aspects provide a comprehensive assessment of dispositional forgiveness across personal, interpersonal, and situational domains.

Convergent validity between the HFS and other forgiving measures and associated categories including empathy, agreeableness, and well-being has been shown. (Berry et. al., 2005). Additionally, the HFS has demonstrated discriminant validity through low to moderate correlations with measures of unrelated variables, like anger and neuroticism. (Thompson et.al., 2005). Studies have found that the HFS is associated with various outcome measures, such as psychological well-being, interpersonal functioning, and physical health, providing evidence for its criterion validity. (Lawler-Row et. al., 2008).

The HFS has shown good internal consistency, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha coefficients Forgiveness of Self: 0.72 to 0.76, Forgiveness of Others: 0.78 to 0.81, and Forgiveness of Situations: 0.79 to 0.82. (Thompson et.al., 2005). The HFS has also demonstrated good test-retest reliability over various time intervals. The test-retest reliability coefficients for the HFS subscales over a 10-week interval were: Forgiveness of Self: 0.83, Forgiveness of Others: 0.72, Forgiveness of Situations: 0.77. (Witvliet et. al., 2014). The HFS has been translated and validated in various languages and cultures, demonstrating good reliability across different populations with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.60 to 0.90 for the subscales. (Etzion, & Hirsh, 2021).

In summary, the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) has proven to be reliable in terms of test-retest reliability and internal consistency, and cross-cultural reliability, supporting its use as a reliable measure of dispositional forgiveness

Well-being is seen as a reliable indicator of a person's capacity to manage stress in daily life and contribute positively to society at large (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2013). It has also been explored as a potential predictor of general health and mental health, including an individual's and society's overall quality of life (QOL). (Sischka et al., 2020).

The World Health Organization (WHO) created the WHO-5 Well-Being Index, a quick self-reported indicator of present mental health and quality of life. Each of the five straightforward questions is scored on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (not present) to 5 (constantly present). Higher scores indicate greater well-being. The total score ranges from 0 to 25.

The WHO-5 is an extremely brief instrument that takes only a couple of minutes to complete. Despite its brevity, it has undergone extensive validation across many countries and languages. Numerous studies have found the WHO-5 to have good psychometric properties.

With Cronbach's alpha coefficients often falling between 0.82 and 0.94 across many research and demographics, the WHO-5 has shown strong internal consistency. (Topp et al., 2015; Löwe et al., 2004; Awata et al., 2007).

Several studies have reported good test-retest reliability coefficients for the WHO-5, ranging from 0.83 to 0.91 over different time intervals, indicating the measure's stability (Bech et al., 2003; Henkel et al., 2003; Löwe et al., 2004).

3.6.2 Qualitative Data Collection Instrument

The interview guide was used for the qualitative phase of the study. The interview guide was designed to explore forgiveness among undergraduate students at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW). There were two major parts to it.

Participants' basic demographic data, such as gender, age, and marital status, were gathered in Section A.

Section B focused on enhancing forgiveness among undergraduate students. It explored participants' personal understanding of forgiveness, its importance, and their experiences with hurt and forgiveness. The questions probed into strategies for forgiveness, specific practices to enhance forgiveness among students, and opinions on forgiveness-related workshops. The guide also sought advice for students struggling with forgiveness and allows for additional thoughts on the topic.

3.7 Data Collection

Institutional permission was sought from the Department of Counselling Psychology (Appendix A) and granted (Appendix B).

3.7.1 Quantitative Data Collection

The questionnaire was distributed electronically as an online questionnaire. To ensure that respondents did not answer the questionnaire multiple times, a one-time response mechanism was activated. This typically involved using email addresses which each respondents had unique addresses. The electronic data collection process took four months (April to July, 2024) to complete.

3.7.1 Qualitative Data Collection

There were interview sessions with selected participants who consented to it. There were interview sessions with selected participants who consented to it. Each interview took between 30 to 45 minutes and participants were met on campus in July. These sessions were recorded and the data was transcribed.

3.8 Pilot Testing

A pilot test (Appendix 3) was conducted before data collection. This pilot test aimed to evaluate the reliability of two widely used psychological measures: the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) and the WHO-5 Well-being Index. Assessing the reliability of these instruments is crucial for ensuring consistent and stable measurement of the intended constructs, forgiveness, and psychological well-being. To assess the reliability, data was collected using these instruments from ninety (90) undergraduate students from the University of Ghana.

3.8.1 Reliability of Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS)

The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) demonstrated good reliability in a pilot study involving 90 university students. The HFS showed a high level of internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.912 as shown in Table 1. This indicates that the items within the scale are consistently measuring the underlying construct of forgiveness.

Table 1:

Reliability of HFS

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.912	.910	18

The pilot study results provide evidence that the Heartland Forgiveness Scale is a reliable measure of forgiveness, demonstrating both strong internal consistency among its items and stable scores across different time points. This findings support the use of the HFS as a reliable instrument for assessing forgiveness in research and applied settings.

3.8.2 Reliability of WHO-5 Well-being Index

The WHO-5 Well-being Index demonstrated good reliability in the pilot study involving 90 university students. The WHO-5 showed high internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.855 (as shown in Table 2). This indicates that the 5 items within the scale are consistently measuring the underlying construct of psychological well-being.

Table 2

Reliability of WHO-5 Well-being

Reliability Statistics		
Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.855	.853	5

The results of the pilot study show that the WHO-5 Well-being Index is a valid indicator of psychological well-being, with high internal consistency among its questions and consistent scores throughout various time periods. These results reinforce the reliability of the WHO-5 as a valid tool for evaluating psychological well-being in this research.

3.9 Data Analytic Procedure

Data analysis was done using the SPSS version 29 and thematic analysis respectively.

3.9.1 Quantitative Analysis

The table below details the type of analysis undertaken to answer each of the study objectives as well as the hypotheses.

Table 3*Data Analytic Procedural Format*

This section details how the various researcher's questions and hypothesis were answered.

Research Questions/ Hypothesis	Type of Analysis
1. What are the gender differences in undergraduate's tendency to forgive?	Independent samples t-test
2. What are the personality difference in student's tendency to forgive?	One-way analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA)
3. What are religious differences in forgiveness tendency by undergraduate students?	One-way analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA)
4. Is there any statistically significant difference between forgiveness and mental wellbeing? H ₀ : There is no significant relationship between forgiveness and mental wellbeing among undergraduate students.	Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Pearson's Product Moment Correlation

Data screening also involved assessing the data to ensure that assumptions for the different tests have not been violated (e.g., no significant outliers in groups; dependent variable to be approximately normally distributed for each group of independent variables; (Field, 2018).

3.9.2 Qualitative Analytic Procedure

For the qualitative phase, thematic analysis was employed. Using this approach, patterns or themes in the qualitative data were found, examined, and reported. (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The researcher used an inductive type of thematic analysis where themes were derived from the content of the data itself.

The researcher employed the two levels of coding (i.e. open and axial coding). The researcher started coding transcribed data an open coding where data was broken down into discrete parts and labeled. Axial coding was also used where the researcher made connections between the initial codes. Data was further grouped into similar codes into categories or subcategories. The relationship the different codes and categories were explored. The researcher then used selective This method is helpful for emphasizing similarities and contrasts throughout the data set and summarizing important aspects of a sizable amount of qualitative data..

The researcher used in vivo coding where participants' own transcribed words or phrases are used as codes. These words or phrases were significant and summed up what the participants said individually.

3.10 Ethical Considerations

It is crucial to follow ethical guidelines to protect the rights, safety, and well-being of the participants involved in research. For this research, measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality of participants' personal information and responses throughout the study. Anonymous or assigned codes were used to represent participants' data to protect their identities. Participation in the study was voluntary, without coercion or undue influence. Prospective participants were informed about the study's goals, methods, possible risks, and advantages. Prior to their participation in the study, each subject gave their informed consent. Participants should be made aware of their freedom to leave the study at any moment without facing any repercussions. The freedom to leave the study at any moment and without repercussions was explained to the participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.0 Overview

The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between forgiveness and mental wellbeing. This chapter presents and discusses the result with relevant literature. The analysis sought to investigate the gender differences in undergraduate students' tendency to forgive, examine personality differences in forgiveness by emerging undergraduate adults, investigate religious differences in forgiveness by undergraduate students, and identify ways in which forgiveness can be enhanced among emerging undergraduate adults.

4.1 Demographic Data

This section presents the results of the demographic data of respondents. These include, gender, age group, faculty / School of UEW, level, religious affiliation, residential status, and intimate relationship status.

Table 4

Gender of Students

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	96	25.1
Female	286	74.9
Total	382	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2024

The gender distribution of the respondents is summarized in Table 4. Out of the 382 undergraduate students who participated in the study, 96 students (25.1%) were male, while 286 students (74.9%) were female. This significant difference in gender representation suggests that the majority of the respondents are female, which might

influence the study's findings related to gender differences in forgiveness. Given the higher number of female respondents, the study's findings on gender differences in forgiveness tendencies may predominantly reflect the perspectives and experiences of female students. This is crucial to consider because previous research has suggested that females are generally more inclined to forgive than males (Miller et al., 2008; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). If this trend is observed in the current study, it could support the existing literature. Conversely, if no significant gender differences are found, it might suggest that other factors, such as personality or religious beliefs, play a more substantial role in forgiveness among undergraduate students.

Table 5

Age Group of Students



Age group	Frequency	Percent
Below 21 years	79	20.7
21-30 years	249	65.2
31-40 years	54	14.1
Total	382	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2024

The age group distribution, as shown in Table 5, indicates that the respondents fall into three age categories. The majority, 249 students (65.2%), are between 21-30 years old. Meanwhile, 79 students (20.7%) are below 21 years, and 54 students (14.1%) are between 31-40 years. This concentration of respondents in the 21-30 years age group suggests that findings related to age differences in forgiveness may primarily reflect the experiences and tendencies of this group. Given that most respondents are young adults between 21 and 30 years, this age group, often characterized by significant life transitions and developmental changes, may have

unique perspectives on forgiveness and conflict resolution. The smaller proportion of students below 21 years and those between 31-40 years indicates that the study's findings on age differences in forgiveness may largely represent the 21-30 years age group.

The faculty or school affiliation of the respondents, as summarized in Table 6, shows a diverse distribution across various academic units at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW). The data indicates the following:

Table 6

Faculty / School of Affiliation of students

Faculty / School of Affiliation	Frequency	Percent
Applied Behavioural Sciences in Education	32	8.4
Foreign Languages Education	26	6.8
Health, Allied Sciences and Home Economics Education	149	39.0
Science Education	33	8.6
Social Science Education	63	16.5
School of Business	53	13.9
School of Communications and Media Studies	26	6.8
Total	382	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2024

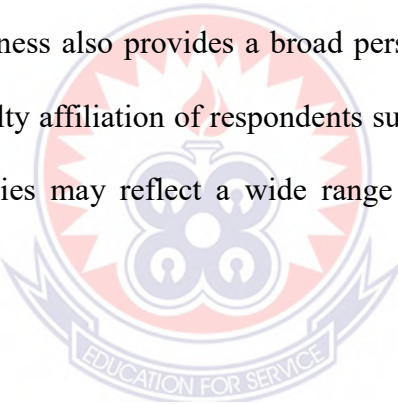
The Health, Allied Sciences, and Home Economics Education faculty has the highest representation, with 149 students, accounting for 39.0% of the total sample. This indicates a strong presence of students from health-related and home economics fields in the study. The Social Science Education faculty is the second most represented, with 63 students, making up 16.5% of respondents, reflecting substantial interest from students in social sciences. The School of Business follows with 53 students, representing 13.9% of the sample, showing a significant number of participants from

the business field. Science Education has 33 students, comprising 8.6% of the respondents, indicating moderate participation from science students. Applied Behavioural Sciences in Education includes 32 students, which accounts for 8.4% of the sample. Both the School of Communications and Media Studies and Foreign Languages Education have 26 students each, representing 6.8% of the sample. This distribution highlights a diverse range of academic affiliations among the study participants.

The demographic data on faculty or school affiliation highlights that the majority of the respondents come from the Faculty of Health, Allied Sciences, and Home Economics Education. The substantial representation from Social Science Education and the School of Business also provides a broad perspective from students in these fields. The diverse faculty affiliation of respondents suggests that the study's findings on forgiveness tendencies may reflect a wide range of academic and professional perspectives.

Table 7

Level in the university



Level	Frequency	Percent
Level 100	123	32.2
Level 200	112	29.3
Level 300	78	20.4
Level 400	69	18.1
Total	382	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2024

The respondents' academic level distribution at the university, as summarized in Table 7, shows a varied representation across different levels of study. Out of the 382 respondents, Level 100 students make up the largest group, with 123 students

accounting for 32.2% of the total sample. This suggests strong participation from first-year students. Following this, Level 200 students are the second largest group, with 112 students representing 29.3% of the respondents, indicating significant involvement from second-year students. Level 300 students comprise 78 students, making up 20.4% of the sample, while Level 400 students account for 69 students, representing 18.1% of the respondents. The demographic data on the level of study indicates that a substantial portion of the respondents are first-year and second-year students. The distribution of respondents across different academic levels suggests that the study's findings on forgiveness tendencies may primarily reflect the perspectives and experiences of first- and second-year students. It is essential to consider how academic maturity and experiences differ across levels, as students in higher levels (Level 300 and Level 400,) may have different attitudes towards forgiveness due to their more advanced academic and personal development.

Table 8 presents the distribution of respondents by their religious affiliations, highlighting the diversity within the student population at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW).

Table 8

Religious Affiliations of students

Affiliation	Frequency	Percent
Christianity	233	61.0
Muslim	121	31.7
Traditionalist	26	6.8
Atheist	2	0.5
Total	382	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2024

Result in Table 8 show that the majority of students identified as Christianity, constituting 233 individuals representing 61.0 % of the total sample. This substantial representation underscores Christianity's predominant influence among the student body. Muslim students accounted for 121 (31.7%) of the respondents, indicating a smaller yet notable presence of Islamic faith among the student population. Traditionalist students represented 26 (6.8%) of the sample, reflecting adherence to traditional African religious beliefs. Atheist students were the smallest group, with 2 (0.5%) of the total sample, highlighting a minimal presence of atheistic beliefs among respondents. The demographic composition of religious affiliations among students at UEW reveals a predominant Christian majority, with significant but comparatively smaller representations from Muslim, Traditionalist, and Atheist affiliations. This distribution is crucial for understanding how religious beliefs may influence attitudes towards forgiveness and mental wellness among undergraduate students. Table 9 provides a comprehensive breakdown of the status of intimate relationships among respondents at the University of Education, Winneba (UEW). The data reveals a diverse representation within the student population.

Table 9

Status of intimate relationship of students

Relationship status	Frequency	Percent
Single and not searching	111	29.1
Single and searching	89	23.3
In a relationship	129	33.8
Officially engaged	11	2.9
Married	40	10.5
Separated	2	0.5
Total	382	100.0

Source: Field Data, 2024

The largest group of students reported being in a relationship, comprising 129 of them, which represents 33.8% of the total sample. This indicates a significant portion of students actively involved in romantic relationships while pursuing their academic studies. Single and not searching students accounted for 111, making up 29.1% of the respondents. This group includes students who are currently single and not seeking romantic partners. Single and searching students represented 89 individuals, constituting 23.3% of the sample, indicating a notable percentage of students actively looking for romantic relationships. Married students were the next largest group, with 40 individuals, which constitutes 10.5 % of the total sample. This reflects students who have committed to marital relationships alongside their academic pursuits. Officially engaged students comprised 11, accounting for 2.9% of the sample, indicating a small percentage of students who are currently separated from their partners. Separated students were the smallest group, with 2 individuals, representing 0.5% of the total sample. This reflects students who have formally announced their intention to marry. The demographic data on intimate relationship statuses among UEW students underscores a varied landscape of romantic involvement and marital commitments. The diverse relationship statuses among students provide valuable insights into how varying degrees of romantic involvement may influence forgiveness behaviours.

4.2 Analysis of research questions

The interpretation of means for this study is based on the Heartland Forgiveness scale which consists of 18 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale. Thompson et al. (2005) note that researchers should interpret higher mean scores as indicating stronger dispositional tendencies toward forgiveness in the respective domains. For this study, applying the equal interval approach to a 7-point scale yielded the following

interpretation framework which was used in interpreting the mean scores. Three-level interpretation:

- 1.00 - 2.33 = Low forgiveness
- 2.34 - 4.66 = Moderate forgiveness
- 4.67 - 7.00 = High forgiveness

Research Question 1: What are the gender differences in undergraduate's tendency to forgive??

Research Question 1 sought to investigate the gender differences in forgiveness tendency among undergraduate students. This inquiry aimed to uncover whether gender influences forgiveness tendencies. Understanding how forgiveness behaviours vary between male and female students is crucial for exploring potential differences in empathy, relational dynamics, and emotional processing. Table 10 presents an independent samples t-test which assessed whether there is a significant difference between gender and forgiveness behaviours.

Table 10

Gender Differences in forgiveness by undergraduate students

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	T	Df	Sig-Value
Male	96	2.92	0.91	1.542	379	0.024
Female	286	3.47	0.83			

Source: Field Data, 2024

The result of the independent samples t-test as indicated in Table 10 shows that there was statistically significant difference in forgiveness scores between male and female undergraduate students, $T(379) = 1.542$, $p = .024$. The mean forgiveness score for male students was 2.92 (SD = 0.91) while the mean forgiveness score for female

students was 3.47 (SD = 0.83). It can be seen from the result that female students had higher mean forgiveness score compared to male students and this difference was statistically significant. These results suggest that gender has a significant effect on forgiveness behaviours among undergraduate students.

Research Question 2: What are the personality differences in student's tendency to forgive?

Research Question 2 sought to investigate the personality differences in student's tendency to forgive. This inquiry aimed to determine whether specific personality traits influence the tendency and type of forgiveness behaviours exhibited by students. Understanding how personality impacts forgiveness can provide insights into the underlying psychological processes that govern interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution among students. In order to answer this question, a number of analyses were carried out to investigate the connection between undergraduate students' forgiving styles and personality factors. Tables 11, 12, and 13 provide a summary of the findings.

Table 11

Descriptive statistics of Forgiveness based on Personality type

Personality Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Openness (O)	117	2.96	0.90
Conscientiousness (C)	53	2.87	0.91
Extraversion (E)	48	2.96	0.70
Agreeableness (A)	95	3.15	0.85
Neuroticism (N)	69	3.41	0.78
Total	382	3.07	0.86

Source: Field Data, 2024

The descriptive statistics provided in Table 11 outline the average forgiveness scores and their respective standard deviations across different personality types among undergraduate students. Among the personality traits examined, students categorized as high in neuroticism displayed the highest average forgiveness score at 3.41 (SD = 0.78), indicating a tendency towards greater forgiveness behaviours. Following closely, students categorized as high in agreeableness reported an average forgiveness score of 3.15 (SD = 0.85), suggesting a similar inclination towards forgiveness. With the same mean of 2.96, students classified Openness and Extraversion at the same level. However, the standard deviation for openness was 0.90 while extraversion gathered a standard deviation of 0.70. In contrast, students classified with high conscientiousness showed the lowest average forgiveness score at 2.87 (SD = 0.91). The total mean forgiveness score across all students was 3.07 (SD = 0.86). These findings suggest that personality traits, particularly neuroticism and agreeableness, may play significant roles in shaping forgiveness tendencies among undergraduate students. Further analysis, such as post hoc tests, was done to discern specific differences between these personality traits and their impact on forgiveness behaviours in greater detail.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of personality type on forgiveness scores among undergraduate students. The personality types included Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism. The result is shown in Table 12.

Table 12*ANOVA of Forgiveness and Personality type*

Group	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2282.608	4	570.652	2.711	.031
Within Groups	53466.403	377	210.498		
Total	55749.012	381			

Source: Field Data, 2024

The result in Table 12 shows the ANOVA conducted to explore forgiveness scores across different personality types among surveyed undergraduate students yielded statistically significant findings ($F(4, 377) = 2.711, p = .031$). This analysis indicated notable variability in forgiveness tendencies associated with different personality types. Specifically, the between-groups comparison showed a mean square of 570.652, derived from a sum of squares of 2282.608 across 4 degrees of freedom. In contrast, within groups, the mean square was 210.498, reflecting a sum of squares of 53466.403 with 254 degrees of freedom. The total variability in forgiveness scores was encompassed by a sum of squares of 55749.012 across 381 degrees of freedom. These results underscore the influence of personality traits on forgiveness behaviours among undergraduate students, suggesting that individual psychological characteristics play a significant role in how students perceive and respond to interpersonal conflicts and emotional experiences within academic settings.

The significant differences warrant that a further investigation through post hoc tests like Tukey's HSD is conducted to elucidate specific personality type that exhibit

distinct forgiveness tendencies. The Post hoc comparism using Tukey's HSD is presented in Table 13.

Table 13

Tukey HSD Post Hoc Comparisons for Personality types and Forgiveness

(I) Personality	(J) Personality	Mean (I-J)	DifferenceStd. Error	Sig.
Openness	Conscientiousness	1.48869	3.08577	.989
	Extraversion	-.00269	3.32177	1.000
	Agreeableness	-3.28790	2.28652	.604
	Neuroticism	-7.65745*	2.69727	.039
Conscientiousness	Openness	-1.48869	3.08577	.989
	Extraversion	-1.49138	4.00366	.996
	Agreeableness	-4.77659	3.19739	.567
	Neuroticism	-9.14614	3.50291	.071
Extraversion	Openness	.00269	3.32177	1.000
	Conscientiousness	1.49138	4.00366	.996
	Agreeableness	-3.28521	3.42571	.873
	Neuroticism	-7.65476	3.71249	.240
Agreeableness	Openness	3.28790	2.28652	.604
	Conscientiousness	4.77659	3.19739	.567
	Extraversion	3.28521	3.42571	.873
	Neuroticism	-4.36955	2.82429	.533
Neuroticism	Openness	7.65745*	2.69727	.039
	Conscientiousness	9.14614	3.50291	.071
	Extraversion	7.65476	3.71249	.240
	Agreeableness	4.36955	2.82429	.533

Source: Field Data, 2024

Table 13 shows the results of Tukey's HSD post hoc comparisons conducted to examine pairwise differences in forgiveness scores across different personality types among undergraduate students. Significant mean differences ($p < .05$) were observed between Neuroticism and Openness, indicating that students high in Neuroticism tend to have significantly higher forgiveness scores compared to those high in Openness. Other comparisons did not reach statistical significance, suggesting no significant differences in forgiveness scores between these personality types. These findings highlight the nuanced relationship between personality traits and forgiveness behaviours, emphasizing the importance of individual psychological characteristics in shaping how students perceive and respond to interpersonal conflicts and emotional experiences within academic environments.

Research question 3: What are the religious differences in forgiveness tendencies among undergraduate students?

Research Question 3 examined the religious differences in forgiveness among undergraduate students. This analysis aimed to investigate whether and how religious affiliation impacts forgiveness levels, contributing to a broader understanding of how spirituality intersects with psychological variables in educational settings. Understanding how religious beliefs influence forgiveness is crucial for addressing psychological well-being and interpersonal relationships among young adults. The results of the religious differences in forgiveness by undergraduate students is presented in Table 14.

Table 14*Descriptive Statistics of forgiveness*

Religion	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Christian	294	3.13	0.85
Muslim	73	2.43	0.83
Traditionalist	15	2.99	1.03
Total	382	2.85	0.90

The descriptive statistics presented in Table 14 provide insights into forgiveness scores categorized by religious affiliation among the surveyed undergraduate students. Among Christian students (N = 294), the average forgiveness score was 3.13 (SD = 0.85), indicating a relatively higher tendency towards forgiveness within this group. In contrast, Muslim students (N = 73) displayed a lower average forgiveness score of 2.43 (SD = 0.83), suggesting a lesser inclination towards forgiveness compared to their Christian counterparts. Traditionalist students (N = 15) showed an average forgiveness score of 2.99 (SD = 1.03), though caution is warranted due to the smaller sample size. Across all religious affiliations surveyed (Total N = 382), the mean forgiveness score was 2.85 (SD = 0.90). These findings suggest potential variations in forgiveness behaviours influenced by religious affiliation among undergraduate students, with Christian students demonstrating higher forgiveness tendencies on average compared to Muslim students, and Traditionalist students showing intermediate levels of forgiveness.

Table 15*ANOVA of Forgiveness and Religious affiliation*

Group	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	2710.865	2	1355.432	6.542	.002
Within Groups	53038.147	379	207.180		
Total	55749.012	381			

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine the effect of religious affiliation on forgiveness scores among undergraduate students. The results indicated a significant effect of religious affiliation on forgiveness scores, $F(2,256) = 6.542$, $p = .002$. Descriptive statistics showed that Christians ($M = 3.13$, $SD = 0.85$) had higher forgiveness scores compared to Muslims ($M = 2.43$, $SD = 0.83$) and Traditionalists ($M = 2.99$, $SD = 1.03$). Given the significant ANOVA result, a post hoc test using Tukey's HSD was conducted to determine which specific groups differ significantly from each other. The results are presented in Table 16.

Table 16*Tukey HSD Post Hoc Comparisons for Religious Affiliation and Forgiveness*

9-	(J) Religious	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Christianity	Muslim	11.84127*	3.27889	.001
	Traditionalist	2.47222	7.25813	.938
Muslim	Christianity	-11.84127*	3.27889	.001
	Traditionalist	-9.36905	7.85244	.458
Traditionalist	Christianity	-2.47222	7.25813	.938
	Muslim	9.36905	7.85244	.458

The results in Table 16 shows that there is a significant difference in forgiveness scores between Christians and Muslims, with Christians ($M = 53.22$, $SD = 14.37$)

scoring higher on forgiveness than Muslims ($M = 41.38$, $SD = 14.17$), $p=.001$. The mean difference between these groups is 11.84127. However, there is no significant difference in forgiveness scores between Christians and Traditionalists ($M = 50.75$, $SD = 17.46$), $p=.938$. The mean difference between these groups is 2.47222. Similarly, there is no significant difference in forgiveness scores between Muslims and Traditionalists, $p=.458$. The mean difference between these groups is -9.36905.

The Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the forgiveness scores for Christians were significantly higher than for Muslims, $p=.001$. Specifically, Christians had a mean forgiveness score that was 11.84127 points higher than Muslims. However, there were no significant differences between Christians and Traditionalists, $p=.938$, with a mean difference of 2.47222, or between Muslims and Traditionalists, $p=.458$, with a mean difference of -9.36905.

4.2.5. Research Question 4: In what ways can forgiveness be enhanced among undergraduate students?

Research Question 4 sought to explore strategies and methods that can enhance forgiveness among undergraduate students. This inquiry delved into identifying effective approaches, interventions, and practices that could potentially promote forgiveness behaviours within this demographic. Gaining insight into how forgiveness can be cultivated and enhanced among undergraduate students is crucial for developing targeted programs and initiatives aimed at fostering emotional resilience, interpersonal relationships, and overall psychological well-being. Thematic analysis was conducted to analyze data collected. The coding regime for the coding regime is shown in table 17.

Table 17:**Coding Regime**

Meaning Unit	Condensed meaning unit. Description close to the text	Condensed meaning unit. Interpretation of the underlying meaning	Theme
<i>So, when it comes to forgiving others, some of the strategies that have been helpful for me are practicing empathy to understand the other person's perspective, engaging in self-reflection to process my emotions, and practicing mindfulness to stay present and let go of negative thoughts</i>	Involve introspection to understand one's emotions and mindfulness to stay present, fostering the ability to let go of negative thoughts and perceptions	The journey towards forgiveness is deeply supported by practices of self-reflection and mindfulness, as articulated by the participants	Self-reflection and Mindfulness
<i>I find that taking time for self-reflection is crucial in forgiving others. It allows me to understand where the other person might be coming from and how their actions affected me. Mindfulness practices help me stay grounded in the present moment, preventing me from dwelling on past grievances."</i>			
<i>"Self-reflection has been instrumental in my journey towards forgiveness. It enables me to process my emotions and understand the deeper reasons behind someone's actions. Practicing mindfulness helps me cultivate compassion and release resentment, fostering a more forgiving mindset."</i>			
<i>"I think one technique that will help me or other people to forgive is to seek support from trusted friends, therapists, or family members. They can help you overcome challenges and forgive the person who wronged you.</i>			

<i>Reflecting on the lessons learned from past experiences can also facilitate forgiveness.”</i>	It underscores the importance of seeking assistance from trusted individuals such as friends, therapists, or family members to navigate emotional challenges and gain perspective and reflecting on past experience.	They emphasize the significance of turning to friends, family members, or therapists who can provide understanding and guidance during challenging times	Seeking Support and Reflection
<i>“Seeking support from those I trust has been crucial in my journey towards forgiveness. Talking to friends and family members who understand my emotions helps me gain perspective and move past resentments. Reflecting on my past experiences allows me to learn from them and grow, making forgiveness easier.”</i>			
<i>“When it comes to forgiving others, seeking support from my close circle has been invaluable. Their encouragement and advice have helped me navigate difficult emotions and find forgiveness within myself. Reflecting on how past experiences have shaped me has also been instrumental in letting go of grudges.”</i>			
<i>“I have found that seeking support from others is essential for forgiveness. Whether it’s discussing my feelings with friends or seeking guidance from a therapist, their insights and empathy have helped me heal and move forward. Reflecting on the lessons learned from past conflicts has enabled me to forgive and grow from those experiences.”</i>			
<i>“One technique I always use and recommend is taking your mind off the wrongs people do to you. Live in a world where you can be wronged by anybody at any time. Free your mind and heart from such issues to live peacefully within yourself.”</i>	It explores techniques that individuals use to detach from negative emotions and engage in positive activities to facilitate forgiveness. Participants emphasize the importance of	Engaging in hobbies and activities that one enjoys, such as playing sports or socializing, serves as a distraction from negative thoughts and emotions, promoting emotional	Mental Detachment and Engagement
<i>“Engaging in hobbies or activities helps move past hurts. Doing something you enjoy, like playing basketball or swimming, distracts your mind from negative thoughts. Socializing more also prevents</i>			

<i>dwelling on past hurts. ”</i>	mentally freeing oneself from grievances by focusing on the broader perspective that anyone can be wronged at any time	healing and forgiveness	
<i>“I find that socializing more helps me forgive. Interacting with others keeps me from dwelling on negative feelings. It’s easier to forgive when you’re surrounded by supportive people who distract you from the hurt.”[</i>			
<i>“Yes, workshop or seminars on more forgiveness will indeed be beneficial for students as they provide a structured platform for learning and practicing forgiveness. So, this session will help students to understand the importance of what forgiveness and what learn effective communication or conflict resolution skills and explore the strategies to let go grudges and move forward positively.”</i>	The participants shared their views on the usefulness of workshops or seminars on forgiveness, emphasizing their positive impact on students.	The participants agree that workshops and seminars on forgiveness are beneficial for students, offering them valuable education and support in developing forgiveness and emotional resilience.	Workshops and Seminars
<i>“Yes, workshops and seminars help because errm, students can share their experiences and emotions about their past situations and other things so it can help build their errm self-confidence and help them overcome the challenges they faced.”</i>			
<i>“Yes, a workshop is very important because some people actually have zero knowledge on forgiveness. Some don’t know how to forgive and some too don’t know the importance of forgiveness. So, I think if a little education is given to students through workshops and seminars it will really help to promote mental wellbeing.”</i>			

(Bedu-Addo, 2010)

Thematic Analysis of Data

This section describes some of the survey participants' experiences. The interview results were to provide the study's participants' perspectives and provide a detailed

appraisal of how forgiveness may be improved among undergraduate people. During the presentation, the participants' stories are mixed with crucial quotations to elucidate their particular perspectives on the amount to which their behaviour is concerned. It is worth mentioning that the analysis only includes vital replies, and all names included are participants' pseudonyms (SP1, SP2, SP3, SP4, SP5, SP6) rather than their real names. The data was analysed thematically. The analysis was based on Research Question 4. What distinguishes the data is the respondents' broad agreement on the concerns. There was total unanimity in the responses to the interview questions or items, which lent significant power to the findings.

Enhancing Forgiveness among Undergraduate students

Forgiveness plays a pivotal role in undergraduate adults' personal and social development, shaping their abilities to navigate interpersonal conflicts, manage stress, and foster healthier relationships. As young adults transition into higher education, they encounter diverse social dynamics and challenges that can impact their emotional well-being and academic success. This theme explored strategies to enhance forgiveness among undergraduate students for fostering a supportive campus environment conducive to personal growth and positive social interactions.

Theme 1: Self-Reflection and Mindfulness

Self-reflection and mindfulness are pivotal practices in the journey toward forgiveness. They involve introspection to understand one's emotions and mindfulness to stay present, fostering the ability to let go of negative thoughts and perceptions. These practices enable individuals to process their feelings effectively and gain insight into the perspectives of others, facilitating a path toward forgiveness and emotional healing. The participants said:

–So, when it comes to forgiving others, some of the strategies that have been helpful for me are practising empathy to understand the other person’s perspective, engaging in self-reflection to process my emotions, and practising mindfulness to stay present and let go of negative thoughts.”[SP1]

“I find that taking time for self-reflection is crucial in forgiving others. It allows me to understand where the other person might be coming from and how their actions affected me. Mindfulness practices help me stay grounded in the present moment, preventing me from dwelling on past grievances.”[SP2]

“Self-reflection has been instrumental in my journey towards forgiveness. It enables me to process my emotions and understand the deeper reasons behind someone’s actions. Practising mindfulness helps me cultivate compassion and release resentment, fostering a more forgiving mindset.” [SP3]

The journey towards forgiveness is deeply supported by practices of self-reflection and mindfulness, as articulated by the participants. They emphasize the importance of these practices in fostering understanding and emotional healing. For instance, participants noted that practicing empathy helps them grasp the perspectives of others, while engaging in self-reflection enables them to process their own emotions and comprehend how others’ actions have impacted them. Mindfulness, on the other hand, keeps them rooted in the present moment, preventing them from dwelling on past grievances and facilitating the release of negative thoughts and perceptions. These combined practices not only aid in emotional processing but also in cultivating compassion towards oneself and others, crucial elements in the path towards forgiveness and fostering a mindset conducive to healing and reconciliation.

Theme 2: Seeking Support and Reflection

Theme 2, –Seeking Support and Reflection,” focuses on the strategies and techniques individuals employ to facilitate forgiveness. It underscores the importance of seeking

assistance from trusted individuals such as friends, therapists, or family members to navigate emotional challenges and gain perspective. Additionally, reflecting on past experiences plays a crucial role in forgiveness, helping individuals learn from their interactions and grow emotionally. The participants had these to say:

“I think one technique that will help me or other people to forgive is to seek support from trusted friends, therapists, or family members. They can help you overcome challenges and forgive the person who wronged you. Reflecting on the lessons learned from past experiences can also facilitate forgiveness.”
[SP2]

“Seeking support from those I trust has been crucial in my journey towards forgiveness. Talking to friends and family members who understand my emotions helps me gain perspective and move past resentments. Reflecting on my past experiences allows me to learn from them and grow, making forgiveness easier.”[SP3]

“When it comes to forgiving others, seeking support from my close circle has been invaluable. Their encouragement and advice have helped me navigate difficult emotions and find forgiveness within myself. Reflecting on how past experiences have shaped me has also been instrumental in letting go of grudges.”[SP4].

“I have found that seeking support from others is essential for forgiveness. Whether it’s discussing my feelings with friends or seeking guidance from a therapist, their insights and empathy have helped me heal and move forward. Reflecting on the lessons learned from past conflicts has enabled me to forgive and grow from those experiences.” [SP5]

Seeking support from trusted individuals is pivotal in the forgiveness process, as highlighted by several participants. They emphasize the significance of turning to friends, family members, or therapists who can provide understanding and guidance during challenging times. These conversations not only offer perspective on their emotions but also aid in overcoming resentments towards those who have wronged

them. Reflecting on past experiences further enhances this journey by allowing individuals to learn valuable lessons from conflicts, fostering personal growth, and ultimately making forgiveness a more attainable goal.

Theme 3: Mental Detachment and Engagement

Theme 3, “Mental Detachment and Engagement,” explored strategies that individuals employ to mentally detach from negative emotions and actively engage in positive activities as a pathway to forgiveness. The participants said:

“One technique I always use and recommend is taking your mind off the wrongs people do to you. Live in a world where you can be wronged by anybody at any time. Free your mind and heart from such issues to live peacefully within yourself.” [SP1]

“Engaging in hobbies or activities helps move past hurts. Doing something you enjoy, like playing basketball or swimming, distracts your mind from negative thoughts. Socializing more also prevents dwelling on past hurts.” [SP5]

“I find that socializing more helps me forgive. Interacting with others keeps me from dwelling on negative feelings. It’s easier to forgive when you’re surrounded by supportive people who distract you from the hurt.” [SP6]

Theme 3, “Mental Detachment and Engagement,” explores techniques that individuals use to detach from negative emotions and engage in positive activities to facilitate forgiveness. Participants emphasize the importance of mentally freeing oneself from grievances by focusing on the broader perspective that anyone can be wronged at any time. This mindset shift allows them to live more peacefully within themselves (SP1). Engaging in hobbies and activities that one enjoys, such as playing sports or socializing, distracts from negative thoughts and emotions, promoting emotional healing and forgiveness (SP5, SP6). These practices highlight the role of

mental detachment and active engagement in fostering forgiveness and maintaining emotional well-being.

The participants had these to say when they were asked the specific practices that they think could enhance forgiveness among students:

“So, I think the specific practices that I think could enhance forgiveness among student one has to do with what implementing conflict resolution workshops and what empathy building activities can also help students develop the skills needed to navigate conflict and cultivate forgiveness. Moreover, promoting culture of empathy.” [SP1]

“I think showing gratitude to what happened to you before is like being grateful to the things you have been through. It may promote a positive mindset and its strong relationship with others.” [SP2]

“There are fewer techniques. But I prefer empathy. That’s understanding the feelings of one another.” [SP4]

“They should speak to the person who offends them about it. There are some people that they don’t voice out but always looking for others to rant it to which does not always help so they should learn to speak about it.” [SP6]

The participants provided insightful responses on specific practices that could enhance student forgiveness, highlighting various approaches to fostering a forgiving environment. SP1 emphasized the importance of implementing conflict resolution workshops and empathy-building activities, as these structured programs can equip students with the skills needed to navigate conflicts effectively and cultivate forgiveness. SP2 suggested that showing gratitude for past experiences, even those that were challenging, can promote a positive mindset and strengthen relationships. Gratitude helps individuals focus on the positive aspects of their experiences, making forgiving and maintaining strong social bonds easier. SP4 highlighted empathy as a key technique in enhancing forgiveness, as understanding and acknowledging the

feelings of others can bridge the gap between conflict and reconciliation. Empathy allows individuals to see situations from different perspectives, facilitating a forgiving attitude. Lastly, SP6 advocated for direct communication with the person who caused the offense, emphasizing that speaking directly to the offender about the issue rather than venting to others can lead to more effective resolutions. This approach encourages transparency and honesty, which are crucial for forgiveness and healing.

Overall, these responses underscore the importance of empathy, gratitude, structured conflict resolution, and direct communication in fostering forgiveness among students, as each practice contributes uniquely to creating an environment where students can navigate conflicts, understand different perspectives, and develop stronger, more forgiving relationships.

Theme 4: Workshops and Seminars

Additionally, the participants shared their views on the usefulness of workshops or seminars on forgiveness. They have these to say:

“Yes, workshop or seminars on more forgiveness will indeed be beneficial for students as they provide a structured platform for learning and practicing forgiveness. So, this session will help students to understand the importance of what forgiveness and what learn effective communication or conflict resolution skills and explore the strategies to let go grudges and move forward positively.”[SP2]

“Yes, workshops and seminars help because errm, students can share their experiences and emotions about their past situations and other things so it can help build their errm self-confidence and help them overcome the challenges they faced.”[SP3]

“Yes, a workshop is very important because some people actually have zero knowledge on forgiveness. Some don't know how to forgive and some too don't know the importance of

forgiveness. So, I think if a little education is given to students through workshops and seminars it will really help to promote mental wellbeing.”[SP4]

“Yes, I think so because some people do not know how to deal with it, the emotional torture that the hurt it could bring to them. So, if there is a seminar on issues like this, maybe it will help the person to know that this situation that I am in if I go and see a counselor, I might be able to pull through or something like that. So, I think it’s equally important and it’s very helpful.”[SP6]

The participants shared their views on the usefulness of workshops or seminars on forgiveness, emphasizing their positive impact on students. SP2 noted that such sessions provide a structured platform for learning and practicing forgiveness, helping students understand its importance, learn effective communication, conflict resolution skills, and explore strategies to let go of grudges and move forward positively. SP3 highlighted that workshops and seminars allow students to share their experiences and emotions about past situations, which can build self-confidence and help them overcome challenges. SP4 pointed out that many students have little to no knowledge about forgiveness, and educating them through workshops and seminars can promote mental well-being by teaching them how to forgive and understand its importance. Finally, SP6 mentioned that seminars can be particularly helpful for students who struggle with emotional turmoil caused by unresolved conflicts. These sessions can inform them about seeking counselling and provide them with the tools to cope with emotional distress. The participants agree that workshops and seminars on forgiveness are beneficial for students, offering them valuable education and support in developing forgiveness and emotional resilience.

The following topics should be covered at workshops to enhance forgiveness among themselves. The participants added:

“So at the workshop topic could be covered include understanding the concept of forgiveness and its benefit, learning effective communication skills for conflict resolution, and practicing empathy and perspective talking to foster understanding.”[SP2]

“Errmm so if a workshop is to be organized it should be on what forgiveness is, how to forgive people when they hurt you so that you can live your life and be cool again and the consequences of not forgiving people.”[SP3]

“So, for a workshop, topics I would like to be treated are meaning of forgiveness, the need to forgive someone and also the effects of keeping someone’s wrong doing against you in you.”[SP4]

“How unforgiveness can affect your mental health, ways to easily let’s go of grudges and how to maintain trust.”[SP6]

The participants offered insightful suggestions on topics that should be covered at workshops to enhance forgiveness among students. SP2 highlighted the importance of understanding the concept of forgiveness and its benefits, learning effective communication skills for conflict resolution, and practicing empathy and perspective-taking to foster understanding. SP3 emphasized the need to cover what forgiveness is, how to forgive others, and the consequences of not forgiving, aiming to help students live peacefully and move on from hurtful experiences. SP4 suggested addressing the meaning of forgiveness, the necessity of forgiving others, and the effects of harboring resentment. SP6 pointed out that workshops should include discussions on how unforgiveness can impact mental health, strategies to let go of grudges, and ways to maintain trust. These responses collectively underscore the importance of comprehensive education on forgiveness, focusing on its

definition, benefits, and practical approaches to implementing it in daily life, ultimately fostering a healthier and more supportive student community.

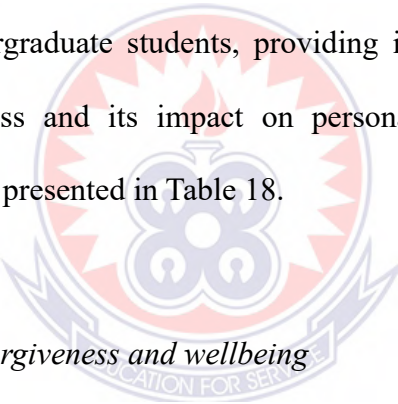
4.3. Testing Hypothesis

H01: There is no statistically significant relationship between forgiveness and mental wellbeing among undergraduate students.

Testing the hypothesis aimed to investigate the presence of a significant relationship between forgiveness among undergraduate students and their overall wellbeing. The null hypothesis (H01) posits that no such relationship exists, suggesting that forgiveness levels do not correlate with measures of wellbeing in this demographic. This analysis sought to explore whether forgiveness practices influence wellbeing outcomes among undergraduate students, providing insights into the psychological dynamics of forgiveness and its impact on personal welfare. The result of the correlational analysis is presented in Table 18.

Table 18

Relationship between forgiveness and wellbeing



Variable	Mean	Sd	R	R ²	P
Forgiveness	52.22	14.70	-0.317	0.100	0.000
Well-being	15.91	5.76			

Source: Field Data, 2024

The results in Table 18 shows a mean forgiveness score among participants was 52.22 (SD = 14.70), while the mean wellbeing score was 15.91 (SD = 5.76). These statistics provide insights into the central tendency and variability of forgiveness and wellbeing scores within the sample. The correlation coefficient (R) was -0.317, indicating a weak negative relationship between forgiveness and wellbeing among undergraduate

students. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.100, suggesting that approximately 10% of the variance in wellbeing scores can be explained by forgiveness levels. The correlation was statistically significant ($r = -0.317$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the observed relationship is unlikely to be due to chance. Based on this result, the null hypothesis, which states that, “There is no statistically significant relationship between forgiveness among undergraduate students and their overall wellbeing”, was rejected. The findings suggest that higher levels of forgiveness are associated with slightly lower levels of wellbeing among undergraduate students. However, the strength of this relationship is weak, with forgiveness explaining only a small proportion of the variability in wellbeing scores.

4.4. Discussion of Results

This section discusses the findings of various dimensions of forgiveness among undergraduate students, including gender differences in forgiveness tendencies, personality influences, religious affiliations, strategies for enhancing forgiveness, and the relationship between forgiveness and overall wellbeing among emerging adults.

4.4.1. Gender differences in undergraduate students’ tendency to forgive

Research question 1 aimed to explore gender differences in forgiveness tendencies among undergraduate students. The findings revealed that while female students had slightly higher mean forgiveness scores compared to male students, this difference was statistically significant. This suggests that gender does substantially influence the propensity to forgive among this population. This finding aligns with some recent studies in the field of forgiveness research. . For example, a study by Fehr, Gelfand, and Nag (2010) suggested that women might be more predisposed to forgive due to higher levels of empathy and relational orientation, which are often fostered through socialization. Additionally, a meta-analysis by Hyde (2014) found

modest gender differences in forgiveness, with women generally scoring higher in forgiveness measures, indicating that gender may play a role in certain contexts or populations.

However, contrasting findings exist in the literature. For instance, a study by Toussaint et al. (2017) found that gender differences in forgiveness were minimal, suggesting that both men and women exhibit similar capacities for forgiveness when controlling for variables such as empathy and religiosity. Similarly, a more recent study by Lawler-Row and Piferi (2006) reported no significant gender differences in forgiveness, emphasizing that individual personality traits and situational contexts might have a more substantial impact on forgiveness behaviours than gender alone.

The study's findings revealed notable gender differences in forgiveness among undergraduate students, adding to the body of research that suggests males and females process and express forgiveness differently. These results align with segments of existing literature highlighting distinct patterns in how men and women approach forgiveness, while providing new insights into the complexity of this psychological construct.

From a counseling perspective, these gender differences indicate the importance of tailoring forgiveness interventions to account for gender-specific approaches. Counselors should consider how gender influences the forgiveness process when developing strategies, while still remaining attentive to individual differences and situational contexts. Understanding these gender-based variations can enhance the effectiveness of interventions while acknowledging that individual personality traits and cultural influences also play significant roles.

Enright's Forgiveness Model, which involves uncovering, decision, work, and deepening phases, provides a structured framework to understand how gender differences manifest throughout the forgiveness process. The model reveals that while both genders progress through similar phases, they may experience and express each phase differently, reflecting gender-specific patterns in emotional processing and interpersonal dynamics.

These gender differences may reflect persistent cultural influences and traditional gender roles that continue to shape how males and females approach forgiveness. While broader social changes towards gender equality are occurring, the study suggests that gender-specific patterns in forgiveness behaviors remain significant. This understanding can inform future research directions, particularly in exploring how gender interacts with other factors such as personality traits, cultural background, and specific situational contexts to influence forgiveness processes.

The observed gender differences call for continued investigation into how socialization, biological factors, and cultural expectations contribute to distinct forgiveness patterns between males and females. Future research could further examine these gender-specific aspects to better understand their implications for therapeutic interventions and interpersonal relationships across different demographics and contexts.

Albert Ellis' Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) reveals distinct patterns in how males and females approach the cognitive aspects of forgiveness. While both genders engage in identifying and changing irrational beliefs, research suggests that men and women differ in their cognitive restructuring processes. Males tend to approach forgiveness through more rational, logic-based pathways, while females

often integrate emotional processing more prominently into their cognitive restructuring.

These gender differences manifest in how REBT principles are applied to forgiveness work. Female students typically demonstrate greater attention to emotional nuances when challenging irrational thoughts that prevent forgiveness, whereas male students often focus more directly on the logical inconsistencies in their thinking patterns. This variation suggests that while REBT's core principles remain constant, their application may need to be tailored to address gender-specific cognitive and emotional patterns.

The effectiveness of REBT in promoting forgiving behaviors varies between men and women, with each gender showing distinct responses to different aspects of cognitive restructuring. Understanding these gender-based variations enables practitioners to adapt REBT techniques accordingly, maximizing their effectiveness by accounting for gender-specific approaches to rational thinking and emotional processing in the context of forgiveness.

4.4.2. Personality differences in forgiveness by undergraduate students

Research question 2 aimed to examine personality differences in forgiveness among undergraduate students. The results revealed statistically significant differences in forgiveness scores across different personality traits. Specifically, significant mean differences were observed between students high in Neuroticism and those high in Openness, with students high in Neuroticism tending to have significantly higher forgiveness scores. Other comparisons between personality traits did not reach statistical significance, indicating no substantial differences in forgiveness scores among these other traits.

The findings align with some current research on personality and forgiveness. For instance, a study by Ashton et al. (2020) suggests that individuals high in Neuroticism may engage more in self-reflection and rumination, which could facilitate the forgiveness process as they work through their emotional responses. Similarly, Lavelock et al. (2016) found that Neuroticism is associated with a greater tendency to seek resolution and forgiveness, perhaps due to a heightened need to alleviate emotional distress.

On the other hand, some studies have shown contrasting results. For example, a study by Neto and Mullet (2004) indicated that individuals who are high in Openness might be more forgiving due to their tendency to be more empathetic and open to new experiences, which can include understanding and forgiving others. This discrepancy suggests that the relationship between personality traits and forgiveness may be more complex and context-dependent than initially thought.

Enright's Forgiveness Model can help explain these personality-based differences in forgiveness. In the Uncovering Phase, students high in Neuroticism might experience intense negative emotions, prompting them to engage deeply with the forgiveness process. During the Decision Phase, their high Neuroticism may drive a stronger desire to move past hurtful experiences to reduce emotional turmoil. In the Work Phase, the emotional engagement of Neurotic individuals could facilitate empathy development, aiding in forgiveness. Finally, in the Deepening Phase, achieving emotional relief may be particularly important for those high in Neuroticism, driving them toward forgiveness.

Albert Ellis' REBT provides additional insight into these findings. Through Rational Thinking, Neurotic individuals might engage in more cognitive restructuring to manage their intense emotions, aiding in forgiveness. Emotional Regulation, a key

component of REBT, helps individuals manage their emotional responses, which is crucial for those high in Neuroticism. Additionally, Behavioral Changes in REBT suggest that individuals high in Neuroticism might be more motivated to adopt forgiving behaviors to alleviate their emotional distress.

4.4.3. Religious differences in forgiveness by undergraduate students

Research question 3 examined the religious differences in forgiveness among undergraduate students. The results indicated a significant effect of religious affiliation on forgiveness scores, with Christians scoring higher on forgiveness than Muslims. This finding suggests that religious teachings and community practices may influence forgiveness tendencies differently across religions. Christians often emphasize forgiveness as a key virtue in their religious doctrine, may internalize these teachings more profoundly, resulting in higher forgiveness scores. For example a study by Gebremikael et al. (2022) showed that religiosity had significant positive associations with forgiveness. Similarly, Commey and Opoku (2018) found that religiosity significantly and positively predicted forgiveness tendencies for undergraduate students. This indicates that an individual's religion had a role to play in his or her tendency to forgive as this research also found.

Linking to Enright's Forgiveness Model, religious teachings may influence the different phases of forgiveness. For Christians, the Uncovering and Decision Phases might be deeply rooted in religious practices and beliefs. The Work and Deepening Phases may be reinforced by community support and religious rituals that promote forgiveness.

Albert Ellis' REBT also highlights the role of cognitive and emotional frameworks shaped by religious beliefs. Rational thinking and emotional regulation, informed by

religious teachings, can facilitate the forgiveness process for individuals within these religious contexts.

4.4.4. Ways in Which Forgiveness Can Be Enhanced Among Undergraduate students

Research question 4 identified several ways to enhance forgiveness among undergraduate students, including self-reflection and mindfulness, seeking support and reflection, and mental detachment and engagement. These strategies align with current literature suggesting that self-awareness, social support, and adaptive coping mechanisms are crucial for fostering forgiveness (Worthington & Scherer, 2004).

Linking to Enright's Forgiveness Model, these strategies can be integrated into the different phases of forgiveness. Self-reflection and mindfulness are particularly relevant in the Uncovering and Work Phases, helping students process their emotions and develop empathy. Seeking support and reflection can enhance the Decision and Deepening Phases by providing social reinforcement and validation. Albert Ellis' REBT further supports these strategies, emphasizing the importance of rational thinking and emotional regulation. Cognitive-behavioural techniques can help students reframe negative thoughts, manage their emotions, and adopt behaviours that promote forgiveness.

4.4.5. H0: There is no statistically significant relationship between forgiveness and mental wellbeing among undergraduate students.

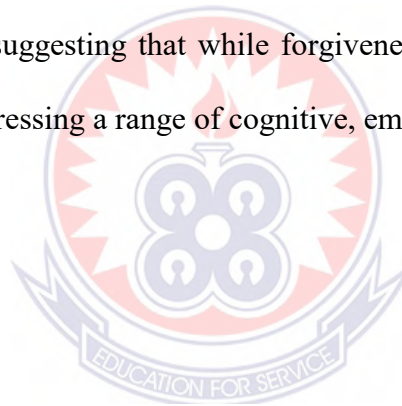
Contrary to the hypothesis the findings indicated a weak negative relationship between forgiveness and overall wellbeing among undergraduate students. This suggests that while forgiveness is beneficial, it may not be the sole factor influencing overall wellbeing. Other dimensions of psychological and emotional health also play

significant roles. This is contrary to with literature suggesting that, forgiveness of self, other, and situations had a significant positive correlation with life satisfaction and self-esteem of college students (Shah, 2022). It also aligns and contradict the findings of a study conducted by Kaleta & Mroz (2018). They found that significant positive correlations between positive and negative aspects of forgiveness and life satisfaction. On the other hand, they found a significant positive relationship between reduced unforgiveness and satisfaction with life.

The weak negative correlation challenges simplistic models of forgiveness as universally beneficial and supports more nuanced theoretical frameworks. Forgiveness should not be conceptualized as an unqualified virtue but rather as a context-dependent psychological process whose adaptiveness varies based on transgression severity, relationship context, offender behavior, cultural norms, and individual psychological resources (McNulty, 2011). The finding underscores the importance of examining forgiveness within broader psychological frameworks rather than in isolation. Self-compassion, emotional regulation, boundary-setting, social support, and meaning-making all interact with forgiveness processes to influence well-being outcomes (Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Future theoretical models should incorporate these interactions explicitly. The negative correlation may also reflect the fact that forgiveness is a process rather than a state. Cross-sectional measurements capture individuals at various stages of this process, some of whom may be experiencing the difficult emotional work of attempting to forgive. Longitudinal theoretical models that account for the trajectory of forgiveness over time—including initial injury, emotional processing, decision to forgive, and eventual emotional transformation—may better predict well-being outcomes than dispositional measures (Worthington, 2006).

Mental health professionals should not assume that promoting forgiveness will automatically enhance client well-being. Comprehensive assessment should include the nature of the transgression, ongoing safety concerns, client readiness, cultural values, and individual psychological resources before encouraging forgiveness (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015). Practitioners should recognize forgiveness as a potentially lengthy process requiring emotional validation, safety establishment, and often external support. Rushing clients toward forgiveness may be counterproductive.

Linking to Enright's Forgiveness Model, the process of forgiveness can contribute to emotional relief and personal growth, but it must be considered alongside other aspects of wellbeing. Albert Ellis' REBT underscores the multifaceted nature of psychological health, suggesting that while forgiveness is important, comprehensive wellbeing requires addressing a range of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral factors.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Overview

This chapter discusses the summary, findings, and conclusions of the study. The chapter also makes recommendations for practice and policy and suggestions for further research.

5.1 Summary of the Study

The study explored the relationship between conflict, pain, forgiveness, and mental wellness. Specifically, the study examined the gender differences in undergraduate students' tendency to forgive, examined personality differences in forgiveness by undergraduate students, investigated religious differences in forgiveness by undergraduate students, and identified ways in which forgiveness can be enhanced among undergraduate students. A hypothesis was tested to ascertain the relationship between forgiveness among undergraduate students and their overall wellbeing. Literature review included; forgiveness and mental wellbeing, forgiveness and gender, forgiveness and religious affiliation, forgiveness and personality, and well-being of undergraduate emerging adults. This study utilized an embedded research design with a sample of 382 students selected through simple random and purposive sampling techniques. The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS), the WHO-5 Well-being Index, and a Semi-structured interview guide were used for data collection. Data were analyzed using means, standard deviation, independent samples t-test, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), Post hoc test, thematic analysis, Pearson's correlation, and thematic analysis. The data analysis revealed the following findings which are presented in the section below.

5.2 Findings

The analysis of the study revealed the following findings:

1. Female students had a higher mean forgiveness score than male students, indicating a statistically significant difference in forgiveness levels between the genders. Thus, female students tend to exhibit higher levels of forgiveness compared to their male counterparts, according to the data from the study.
2. The forgiveness scores across different personalities among surveyed undergraduate students yielded statistically significant findings. Significant mean differences ($p < .05$) were observed between Neuroticism and Openness, indicating that students high in Neuroticism tend to have significantly higher forgiveness scores compared to those high in Openness. Other comparisons did not reach statistical significance, suggesting no significant differences in forgiveness scores between these personality types.
3. The results indicated a significant effect of religious affiliation on forgiveness scores, $F(2,256)=6.542$, $p=.002$. Specifically, there is a significant difference in forgiveness scores between Christians and Muslims, with Christians ($M = 53.22$, $SD = 14.37$) scoring higher on forgiveness than Muslims ($M = 41.38$, $SD = 14.17$), $p=.001$.
4. Self-reflection and mindfulness, Seeking Support and Reflection, and mental detachment and engagement, workshop, and seminar were identified to enhance forgiveness among emerging students.
5. There is a significant weak inverse relationship between forgiveness and wellbeing among undergraduate students.

5.3 Limitations

The study's findings on forgiveness among undergraduate students offer valuable insights but are accompanied by several noteworthy limitations. Primarily, reliance on self-reported forgiveness measures introduces potential biases such as social desirability and inaccurate self-perception, possibly skewing the reported levels of forgiveness. Furthermore, the cross-sectional design provides only a snapshot of forgiveness attitudes, failing to capture how these attitudes might evolve over time or vary across different life stages. Moreover, the study's Miller emphasis on a weak inverse relationship between forgiveness and overall wellbeing may narrow the focus on other dimensions of wellbeing or psychological outcomes that forgiveness could impact differently.

5.4 Conclusions

The study found significant differences in forgiveness among undergraduates, with female students scoring higher than males, Christians scoring higher than Muslims, and certain personality traits (notably Neuroticism) being linked to higher forgiveness than Openness. It also identified practical strategies for promoting forgiveness, including self-reflection, mindfulness, seeking social support, and engaging in hobbies or social activities. However, forgiveness showed only a weak negative relationship with overall wellbeing, suggesting that its broader impact on wellbeing is complex and requires further investigation.

This study makes several important contributions to the empirical knowledge base on forgiveness in emerging adulthood by documenting gender differences (with female students exhibiting higher forgiveness scores, extending Western research to Ghanaian contexts), religious differences (with Christian students scoring higher than Muslim students, demonstrating that religious affiliation shapes forgiveness attitudes

beyond mere religiosity), and personality correlates (particularly the association between Neuroticism and forgiveness, suggesting emotional vulnerability may paradoxically motivate forgiveness as an emotional regulation strategy). Most significantly, the study challenges the assumed positive relationship between forgiveness and well-being by documenting a weak negative correlation ($r = -0.317$), a counterintuitive finding that contributes critical empirical evidence to emerging debates about the conditional nature of forgiveness benefits (McNulty, 2011; Luchies et al., 2010) and suggests that high dispositional forgiveness may reflect premature forgiveness, pressured forgiveness, or forgiveness without adequate boundary-setting—all of which can compromise well-being. This finding necessitates reconceptualizing forgiveness from an unqualified virtue to a context-dependent coping strategy whose adaptiveness varies across situations, individuals, and cultural contexts, thereby advancing both theoretical understanding and practical applications of forgiveness among emerging adults.

Again, this study yields several actionable implications for practice across educational, clinical, and religious contexts. Campus mental health services should develop gender-sensitive and culturally-responsive forgiveness interventions that account for documented differences between male and female students and between students from different religious backgrounds, incorporating the identified forgiveness-enhancing practices—self-reflection and mindfulness, seeking supportive relationships, and active engagement strategies—into psychoeducational materials and intervention protocols as concrete skills for students navigating interpersonal conflicts. The weak negative correlation between forgiveness and well-being has critical implications for therapeutic practice, indicating that mental health professionals should not assume forgiveness automatically enhances client well-being

but should instead conduct comprehensive assessments before encouraging forgiveness, adopt process-oriented approaches that validate emotions and support boundary-setting, monitor for signs of premature or pressured forgiveness (particularly among students high in Neuroticism), and integrate forgiveness work with broader well-being interventions addressing self-compassion, healthy boundaries, and social support rather than treating forgiveness in isolation. Religious leaders and campus ministry personnel should present forgiveness as a complex spiritual practice requiring discernment rather than as an unqualified moral obligation, emphasizing empowerment over obligation and teaching about conditions under which forgiveness serves flourishing versus enabling harm. Finally, forgiveness intervention programs for undergraduate students should be multidimensional, incorporating skills training, psychoeducation about forgiveness complexity, assessment tools for evaluating readiness, and attention to personality, gender, and cultural factors, moving beyond one-size-fits-all approaches to offer differentiated pathways based on student characteristics, transgression contexts, and individual goals.

5.5 Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions drawn, the following recommendations were made:

1. It is recommended that researchers investigate factors influencing forgiveness attitudes among genders to understand better why differences exist. This will help counsellors develop targeted educational programs that address gender-specific perspectives on forgiveness and promote empathy and understanding across genders in the educational institutions.

2. It is therefore recommended that researchers conduct longitudinal studies to explore how personality traits interact with forgiveness tendencies over time. This will help counsellors tailor forgiveness interventions to cater for personality traits, emphasizing empathy-building exercises for students high in Neuroticism and resilience-building for those high in Openness.
3. It is also recommended that, heads of educational institutions create interfaith dialogue platforms and workshops that promote understanding and mutual respect among students from different religious backgrounds. Again, teachings on forgiveness within religious education programs to foster a culture of forgiveness and tolerance can be incorporated.
4. It is recommended that campus-wide programs that integrate self-reflection, mindfulness practices, and peer support networks developed. These initiatives will provide students with practical tools and strategies for managing interpersonal conflicts, processing emotions, and fostering forgiveness in their daily lives.
5. It is recommended that, research expand to include broader wellbeing indicators such as mental health, academic performance, and social integration among undergraduate students. Holistic wellbeing programs that incorporate forgiveness education as a component to promote overall student resilience and wellbeing can also be developed by counsellors to improve students' mental wellbeing.

5.6 Implication for Counselling

The implications of the findings on forgiveness among undergraduate students for counselling are significant. These include:

1. Counsellors can integrate forgiveness-focused interventions into their practice to help students navigate interpersonal conflicts, manage emotional distress, and promote psychological wellbeing. Techniques such as cognitive-behavioural therapy (CBT) and forgiveness-based approaches can be tailored to address specific forgiveness challenges identified in the study.
2. Counselling sessions can emphasize the importance of self-reflection and mindfulness practices in fostering forgiveness. Encouraging students to explore their emotions, understand their perspectives, and practice mindfulness can facilitate the forgiveness process and enhance emotional resilience.
3. Counsellors can advocate for and contribute to creating a supportive campus environment where forgiveness is valued and practiced. This can involve collaborating with university administrators, faculty, and student organizations to promote forgiveness education, workshops, and peer support networks.
4. Recognizing the influence of gender and religious affiliations on forgiveness attitudes, counsellors can tailor their approaches to be culturally sensitive and inclusive. Understanding these differences allows counsellors to offer more effective guidance and support to students from diverse backgrounds.
5. Counsellors should consider the long-term implications of forgiveness on students' overall wellbeing beyond immediate emotional relief. Helping students develop skills in forgiveness can contribute to their lifelong resilience, interpersonal relationships, and mental health outcomes.

5.7 Suggestion for Further Studies

It is suggested that future researchers should:

1. Conduct longitudinal research to track how forgiveness attitudes evolve over time among undergraduate students. This approach would provide insights into the stability and changes in forgiveness levels across different stages of academic and personal development.
2. Evaluate forgiveness interventions or educational programs aimed at enhancing forgiveness skills among students. Assessing the effectiveness of various interventions could provide practical insights into promoting forgiveness and its benefits in educational settings.
3. Use qualitative methods to delve deeper into the subjective experiences and meanings of forgiveness among undergraduate students. Qualitative research can offer rich descriptions of personal narratives and perceptions related to forgiveness.
4. Investigate the relationship between forgiveness and various dimensions of wellbeing beyond the scope of the current study.
5. Use qualitative methods to delve deeper into the various impact of the various personality traits on student's tendency to forgive.
6. Evaluate the influence of religious affiliation in terms of forgiveness.

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APPENDICES

Appendix	Description
Appendix 1	Request for Introductory Letter
Appendix 2	Letter of Introduction from Department
Appendix 3	Result of Pilot Study
Appendix 4	Informed consent and research package



Appendix 1

Request for Introductory Letter

23rd April, 2024

The Head of Department
University of Education
Department of Counselling Psychology
Winneba

Dear Madam,

REQUEST FOR AN INTRODUCTORY LETTER

I am Deborah Eduwaa Odoom, an MPhil student at the University of Education, Winneba. I am conducting a research on the topic 'The Relationship between Forgiveness and Mental Well-Being among Emerging Undergraduate Adults in UEW'.

I write to apply for an introductory letter from the Department to enable me to collect data from students of the University of Education, Winneba.

I would be grateful if my request is considered.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,



Deborah Eduwaa Odoom

0271265299/0202541104

Through:

Prof. P.K.A Bedu-Addo

Research Supervisor

HOD
I would be most grateful if an introductory letter were given to the above student to enable her collect data for her MPhil thesis.


Prof. P.K.A Bedu-Addo
23rd April, 2024

Appendix 2

Letter of Introduction from Department

1 of 2

 UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA
FACULTY OF APPLIED BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCES IN EDUCATION
DEPARTMENT OF COUNSELLING PSYCHOLOGY
P.O. Box 25, Winneba, Ghana

12th June, 2024

The Dean
Student Affairs
University of Education, Winneba
Winneba

Dear Sir,

LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

I write to introduce to you **Deborah Eduwaa Odoom**, the bearer of this letter, who is pursuing a Master of Philosophy Degree Programme, in the Department of Counselling Psychology of the University of Education, Winneba.

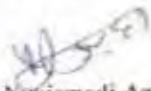
As part of the programme, she is conducting a research on the topic: **The Relationship between Forgiveness and Mental Well-Being among Emerging Undergraduate Adults in University of Education, Winneba.**

She needs to administer questionnaire to enable her gather information for her data analysis and she has chosen to conduct this exercise in your outfit.

I would be grateful if she is given the needed assistance.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,


Nyimmedi Agordzo Edoh-Torgah, PhD
Ag. Head of Department

Appendix 3

Results for Pilot Testing

The pilot study involved a sample of 90 University of Ghana students who were affiliated to twelve (12) regions in the country, Ghana. (Figure 1)

Region

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Ashanti	6	6.7	6.7	6.7
	Bono East	2	2.2	2.2	8.9
	Central	9	10.0	10.0	18.9
	Eastern	16	17.8	17.8	36.7
	Greater Accra	15	16.7	16.7	53.3
	North East	4	4.4	4.4	57.8
	Northern	8	8.9	8.9	66.7
	Oti	3	3.3	3.3	70.0
	Savannah	6	6.7	6.7	76.7
	Upper East	2	2.2	2.2	78.9
	Western	3	3.3	3.3	82.2
	Volta	16	17.8	17.8	100.0
	Total	90	100.0	100.0	



Appendix 4

Informed Consent and Research Package

The relationship between forgiveness and mental wellbeing among emerging adults in a Ghanaian public university

You are being invited to participate in a research study. The study is voluntary so you can choose to take part or not.

Purpose of the study: The purpose of this study is to assess how your personality and ability to forgive affect your mental wellbeing.

What you will be asked to do in the study: When you take part in this study, you will be asked to complete 3 sets of questionnaires. Please note that the information obtained in this research may be used in future research. You will be asked to complete a set of demographic questions, and two sets of questionnaires about some hurts you have experienced as well as your perceptions about forgiveness. Should you have any discomforts with the questions on hurts, please reach out to Deborah Odoom at deborahodoom14@gmail.com.

You will not be given any incentive in taking part in this study.

Time required: We expect that you will do the questionnaire in no more than 30 minutes

Age requirement and Inclusion: You must be from 18 years above old and a student at the University of Education, Winneba, to do this survey.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem: If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has impacted you negatively in any way, communicate with Deborah E. Odoom.

THANK YOU for taking part in this study

Demographic Information

1. What is your gender?
 - a. Female []
 - b. Male []
2. How old are you (in years)? _____
3. What level are you at in the university?
 - a. Level 100 []
 - b. Level 200 []
 - c. Level 300 []
 - d. Level 400 []
 - e. Masters []
 - f. Doctoral []
4. What religious faith/belief do you subscribe to?
 - a. Buddhist []
 - b. Christian []
 - c. Muslim []
 - d. Traditionalist []
 - e. Hindu []
 - f. Atheist []
5. What is your residential status when school is in session?
 - a. On campus accommodation []
 - b. Rented premises off campus []
 - c. Live at home in this town []
 - d. Live with friends / relatives []
6. When you are not in school, where do you live?
 - a. Live at home with biological parents []
 - b. Live with relatives []
 - c. Live with friends []
 - d. Live by myself []
7. What is your intimate relationship like?
 - a. Single and not searching []
 - b. Single and searching []
 - c. In a relationship []
 - d. Engaged []
 - e. Married []
 - f. Separated []
 - g. Divorced []
 - h. Widowed []

There are multiple hurts that can happen in life. Indicate, with a tick, as many of these as you remember happened to you in the past 2 years of your life.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| a. Betrayal by non-romantic friend | [] |
| b. Broken heart by romantic partner | [] |
| c. Disappointment in self | [] |
| d. Betrayal by adult I look up to | [] |
| e. Unfairness by teacher/professor | [] |
| f. Betrayal by religious leader | [] |
| g. Unjust situation | [] |
| h. Disappointment by God | [] |

ASSESSING FORGIVENESS

Directions:

In the course of our lives negative things may occur because of our own actions, the actions of others, or circumstances beyond our control. For some time after these events, we may have negative thoughts or feelings about ourselves, others, or the situation. Think about how you typically respond to such negative events. Next to each of the following items write the number (from the 7-point scale below) that best describes how you typically respond to the type of negative situation described. There are no right or wrong answers. Please be as open as possible in your answers.

1	2	3	4	5
Almost always false of me	More often false of me	Neither false nor true of me	More often true of me	Almost always true of me

- ___ 1. Although I feel badly at first when I mess up, over time I can give myself some slack.
- ___ 2. I hold grudges against myself for negative things I've done.
- ___ 3. Learning from bad things that I've done helps me get over them.
- ___ 4. It is really hard for me to accept myself once I've messed up.
- ___ 5. With time I am understanding of myself for mistakes I've made.
- ___ 6. I don't stop criticizing myself for negative things I've felt, thought, said, or done.
- ___ 7. I continue to punish a person who has done something that I think is wrong.

- ___ 8. With time I am understanding of others for the mistakes they've made.
- ___ 9. I continue to be hard on others who have hurt me.
- ___ 10. Although others have hurt me in the past, I have eventually been able to see them as good people.
- ___ 11. If others mistreat me, I continue to think badly of them.
- ___ 12. When someone disappoints me, I can eventually move past it.
- ___ 13. When things go wrong for reasons that can't be controlled, I get stuck in negative thoughts about it.
- ___ 14. With time I can be understanding of bad circumstances in my life.
- ___ 15. If I am disappointed by uncontrollable circumstances in my life, I continue to think negatively about them.
- ___ 16. I eventually make peace with bad situations in my life.
- ___ 17. It's really hard for me to accept negative situations that aren't anybody's fault.
- ___ 18. Eventually I let go of negative thoughts about bad circumstances that are beyond anyone's control.

WELLBEING QUESTIONNAIRE

This group of questions assess how your general wellbeing has been

Please respond to each item by marking <u>one box per row</u> , regarding how you felt in the last two weeks to a month.	All of the time (5)	Most of the time (4)	More than half the time (3)	Less than half the time (2)	Some of the time (1)	At no time (0)
1. I have felt cheerful in good spirits	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. I have felt calm and relaxed	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. I have felt active and vigorous	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. I woke up feeling fresh and rested	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. My daily life has been filled with things that interest me.	5	4	3	2	1	0

PERSONALITY TRAIT

People have different personalities and can be classified differently depending on the expert. For the sake of this research study, we will classify personality into five main types. Please read the descriptor by each and choose the ONE that BEST describes you most of the time by using a cross (X) to indicate your choice.

Personality Descriptor	Personality Name	Choice
You enjoy trying new things. You probably have a good imagination and are creative. You are willing to consider new ideas.	Openness to Experiences	
You like to keep things in order. You are goal driven and try to achieve all your goals. You are persistent and do not give up easily. You like things to be as predictable as possible.	Conscientiousness	
You enjoy excitement and can be described as ‘the life of a party’. You make friends easily and enjoy being active with others.	Extraversion	
You are always ready to help others out, even when it inconveniences you sometimes. You are known to be caring and honest. You believe the best about others and are interested in the people around you.	Agreeableness	
You feel things more intensely than others. You don’t like difficult or uncomfortable situations. You or others can’t seem to understand your moods many times and can get stressed easily. You are sensitive and often feel vulnerable.	Neuroticism	

UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATION, WINNEBA

The Relationship between Forgiveness and Mental wellbeing among Emerging

Undergraduate Adults in University of Education, Winneba

My name is Deborah. I am a graduate student at the University of Education, Winneba. I am conducting a study on the topic: “The Relationship between Forgiveness and Mental wellbeing among Emerging Undergraduate Adults in University of Education, Winneba”. You are requested to kindly help by participating in this oral interview as honest as possible. Your responses will be treated confidential. You do not have to panic because no attempt will be made to disclose any information related to you in my final report. Please be as accurate as possible to enable me get valid information.

Thank you for your cooperation

Interview Questions

Section A: Background details of Interviewees

1. Gender
2. Kindly tell me your age.
3. Please, tell me your marital status
4. Which Faculty / School of UEW are you a student of?
5. Please which level are you?

Section B: Enhancing Forgiveness among Emerging Undergraduate Adults

6. Can you kindly tell me, what does forgiveness mean to you personally?
7. Why do you think forgiveness is important for you as an individual?
8. Everyone at one point in life has been hurt by others. Could you please briefly narrate one event that affected your well-being?
9. Could you please think of any strategies or techniques that have helped you or could help others forgive?
10. Could you tell me specific practices that you think could enhance forgiveness among students?
Probe: counseling, mediation, peer support
11. In your opinion do you think workshops or seminars on forgiveness would be useful to help students forgive? If so, how?
 - a. What topics should be covered at the workshop?
12. If you were called upon in one of your departmental meetings to advise students struggling with forgiveness, based on your past experiences, what advice would you give to them?
13. Is there anything you would like to add to our discussion on forgiveness and wellbeing?

Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within data. It's widely used in psychology, sociology, and other social sciences to examine interview transcripts, field notes, or other textual data.

Types of thematic analysis:

- Inductive: Themes are derived from the content of the data itself
- Deductive: Themes are derived from existing theoretical ideas that the researcher brings to the data

The levels of coding in thematic analysis typically include:

Open coding (or initial coding):

- The first level where researchers break down data into discrete parts
- Identify and label concepts in the data
- Often done line-by-line or paragraph-by-paragraph

Axial coding (or focused coding):

- The second level where researchers start to make connections between the initial codes
- Group similar codes into categories or subcategories
- Explore relationships between different codes and categories

Selective coding (or theoretical coding):

- The final level where researchers identify core themes or central concepts
- Integrate and refine the categories into a coherent theoretical framework
- Develop overarching themes that capture the essence of the research question

There are several types of coding used in qualitative research. The main types include:

In Vivo Coding:

- Uses participants' own words as codes
- Preserves participants' voices in the research
- Particularly useful in action research

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

Total forgiveness

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
.120	2	256	.887