CHAPTER – VI

DISCUSSION

The ensuing chapter discusses the results of the statistical analyses as per the design plan implemented in this study. The discussion is organized in accordance with research aims described in chapter three along with the descriptive analyses of all study variables. Each section commences with a brief summary of the statistical analyses, following which the results are considered in context of the existing research findings and theoretical perspectives.

6.1 DISTRIBUTION OF GRATITUDE, FORGIVENESS AND HAPPINESS

6.1.1 GRATITUDE

The results (table-3) of the present study show that 40%, 38% and 22% of youth population comprised of low (mean and standard deviation of 2.72 and 0.62 respectively), moderate (mean and standard deviation of 2.80 and 0.38 respectively) and high (mean and standard deviation of 3.80 and 0.45 respectively) level on the character strength of gratitude. The results clearly indicate that more than 3/4th of youth i.e. 78% (38% and 40% respectively) displayed moderate to low level of gratitude and even less than 1/4th (22%) youth were high on the character strength of gratitude. Researcher looked at the data on character strengths and the mean scores of gratitude for the Indian population amongst fifty four nations and fifty US states is 4.03 with adult respondents as participants (age range 18 – 65 plus) (Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2006). The mean scores of UK sample on gratitude in the (age range of 18 – 20 years and 21 – 24 years) was 3.59 and 3.66 respectively (Linley et al, 2007) and mean scores on gratitude among student teachers of Slovenia (age range 20 – 29 years) is 3.93 (Polona, 2012).

However, in the present research, lesser number of youth i.e. only 22% indicated a similar mean trend as found by Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2006; Linley
et al 2007 and Polona, 2012 and mean scores of almost 78% of youth are found to be slightly lower than the mean scores reported in other researches.

The emerging trend of low character strength of gratitude is fairly unexpected for the youth of our culture. Evidence concerning the correlates and positive outcomes of character strengths is accumulating where as researches concerning the explanation of degree and prevalence of gratitude among youth is scant (Polak & Mc Cullough, 2006; Peterson et al 2007; Froh et al 2009; Proctor et al 2011). The researcher attempts to explain low gratitude from emerging attitudinal patterns and socio-cultural milieu of youth towards their belief system of character strengths and virtues.

Since childhood we are taught our ‘gurujan ethos’ i.e. to communicate gratitude to our elders, our parents and our teachers. We all do adopt certain mannerism and show respect to our seniors and are in most cases prepared to sacrifice time and energy to serve them but the prevailing scenario does not stand equivalent with it. Prevalence of low level of gratitude especially in our collectivistic-oriented culture is surprising and it clearly reflects that the traditional ethos is gradually fading and is held by youth in a very shallow manner. According to Mitchell (2010) four contemporary forces could contribute to the erosion of gratitude in modern culture (a) increasing secularism and loss of absolute moral order (b) loss of contact with the natural world (c) loss of sense of rootedness in a place (d) loss of sense of the past. Each of these losses contributed to an overall inability to feel grateful for life’s blessings.

Reflecting on today’s scenario, developmental theorists like Melanie Klein (1957) points to the fact that gratitude is a capacity present from birth that develops as the child’s cognitive and emotional systems mature. Klein viewed gratitude as a developmental achievement and hallmark of emotional maturity that “underlines the appreciation of goodness in others and in oneself”. Since the sample of the study comprises of youth and they at this age and their experience seems unable to integrate their understanding and competencies towards development of strength like gratitude, hence low scores on the strength is seen.
Another reason that could possibly be that today’s youth seems unable to identify with “internalized theory of mind” (Gergely, 2003). Gratitude occurs when we recognize someone has intentionally done something for us and that is beneficial to us. The ability to recognize what others do for us is dependent upon a consolidation of a sense of self as a causal agent understanding that others are causal agents as well. Youth seems unable to appreciate and realize this sense of self-awareness and awareness of others, and so is becoming narcissistic and view expressions of gratitude as an unnecessary emotion that distracts from performing their expected tasks.

Youth is not only consumer driven but also seems to be lost in today’s competitive world where self image, looking after one’s own interests, striving for material success and avoiding being a loser are important values. Materialism is a lifestyle which is important to attain financial success, nice possessions, the right image and right status (Kasser et al, 2004). These day’s youth do not have to wait for occasions and festivals to arrive in order to get some gifts – ‘gadgets’. They are provided without any special day and date to them by their parents. Their expectations are met very easily; as a consequence, they not just fail to understand the importance of being grateful towards their own parents but also are incapable in inculcating and practicing gratitude in their daily lives. Another reason which could be that since understanding of the strength of gratitude is affected by inputs from adults in the environment, it appears that parents of these youth couldn’t instruct and teach gratitude in a meaningful manner during their child’s early childhood and therefore their children couldn’t acquire the skills of experiencing and expressing gratitude towards others (Greif & Gleason, 1980).

An attempt has been made by the researcher to pictorially present different reasons/psychological perspectives in form of ‘Cognitive Perceptions, Value Inputs and Developmental Perceptions’ that have received attention across the discipline of Positive Psychology for low character strength of gratitude among youth.
On the other hand, even less than $1/4^{th}$ of youth i.e. only 22% were high on the strength of gratitude implying that only 22% of youth practiced and expressed gratefulness and appreciation for the good things that happen in daily lives. It suggests that these 22% of youth did not identify the word ‘thank you’ as ‘parrot-like’ repetition rather understood and expressed gratitude with deeper meaning and purpose of life. The results indicate that this chunk of youth conceptualized gratitude as a dispositional or personality trait which is stable, enduring and in turn lead to happiness. Grateful individuals displayed pro-social behaviours such as giving, comforting, rescuing and helping others, experienced positive affect, and regularly practiced spirituality or religion. One reason could be that parents of these youth participants would be setting examples and serving as positive role models for the development of good character in their children (Bandura, 1977; Sprakfin, Liebert & Poulos, 1975; Froh et al, 2009). After all this famous saying is followed by most of us: “Children may not listen to their parents, but they never fail to imitate them”.

Further, the finding probably also reflects that this set of participants still gives importance to the role played by gratitude in socio-emotional cycle i.e. it stems from
and creates strong social bonds partly by encouraging people to create meaningful experiences for others. For instance, the benefactor may experience happiness after being reinforced for behaving prosocially and onlookers may experience awe and future benefactors may experience gratitude (Mc Cullough et al, 2002; Fredrickson, 2005; Algoe et al 2008). Therefore, the benefits of gratitude extending beyond the self to enhance other’s lives, makes sense for youth to encourage gratitude and other moral behaviour.

**6.1.2 FORGIVENESS**

The results (table-4) of the present study show that 41%, 34% and 25% of youth comprised of low (mean and standard deviation of 2.41 and 0.40 respectively), moderate (mean and standard deviation of 2.36 and 0.20 respectively) and high (mean and standard deviation of 3.47 and 0.37 respectively) level on the character strength of forgiveness. The results clearly indicate that almost 3/4th of youth i.e. 75% (34% and 41% respectively) displayed moderate to low level of forgiveness and only 1/4th (25%) youth were high on the character strength of forgiveness. Researcher looked at the data on character strengths and the mean scores of forgiveness for the Indian population amongst fifty four nations and fifty US states is 3.70 with adult respondents as participants (age range 18 – 65 plus) (Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2006). The mean scores of UK sample on forgiveness in the (age range of 18 – 20 years and 21 – 24 years) was 3.44 and 3.49 respectively (Linley et al, 2007) and the mean scores on forgiveness among student teachers of Slovenia (age range 20 – 29 years) is 3.66 (Polona, 2012). However, in the present research, lesser number of youth i.e. only 25% indicated a similar mean trend as founded by Park, Peterson & Seligman, 2006; Linley et al, 2007 and Polona, 2012 and mean scores of almost 75% of youth population are found to be slightly lower than the mean scores reported in other researches.

The findings of the present study are unanticipated from youth of our culture. Evidence concerning the correlates and positive outcomes of character strengths is well documented where as researches concerning the explanation of degree and prevalence of forgiveness among youth has started to accumulate recently (Sandage &
Worthington, 2011; Szczesniak & Soares, 2011). Hence, the researcher explores the probable reasons for low character strength of forgiveness in context to emerging attitudinal patterns and socio-cultural milieu of youth towards their belief system of character strengths and virtues.

To address the question ‘Why people (youth) don’ forgive’? We begin with the reasoning from the available research evidences i.e. compared on age differences older adults tend to be more forgiving than younger adults in interpersonal experiences and values. Research suggests that people become more reflective and relaxed as they grow older and appear to be more forgiving because they tend to shift towards benefits of forgiveness as part of successful ageing process, causing them to value forgiveness. Scholars have also drawn from the tenants of socio-emotional selectivity theory which posits that people become increasingly motivated to derive affective meaning from life during old age (Carstensen, 1992; Carstensen, Fung & Charles, 2003) and that these motivations are manifested in a range of conflict reducing behaviours, including a focus on close, meaningful social ties (Lansford, Sherman & Antonucci, 1998) and an enhanced tendency towards affective self-regulation (Carstensen et al, 2003) – highlighting the fact that they tend to get more agreeable and less neurotic as they age. Also, Birditt et al, 2005 postulated an empirical evidence, that older adults are seen making use of passive constructive strategies (eg. not saying anything) in response to daily interpersonal tensions where as in comparison, younger adults are more likely to use active destructive strategies (eg. arguing).

Low forgiveness in our sample can be explained by Enright et al, (1989) theory of forgiveness as developmental trajectory of youth. Forgiveness is classified as strength of ‘temperance’ which develops and augments with age and since the sample of the present study is youth, it seems possible that youth’s reasoning about forgiveness differs from adults. At this age with so little experience they might not have deeper understanding of relationships and probably this knowledge widens as they progress in life.
The present results (low forgiveness among youth) can be understood in context of lack of *socio-moral standards*, non adherence to *religious systems* and failure of making *socially desirable image* in eyes of their parents, siblings and friends (Birditt & Fingerman, 2003). At the same time, it is also important to acknowledge that youth population might have *lesser amount of social support* and so depended on self to deal with the transgression in isolation. Internalizing behaviours like negative thoughts and eventually unforgiveness is more likely to develop without a safe and supportive outlet (Yamhure- Thompson & Snyder, 2003). Also modern youth is living a lifestyle where violence is modelled by others (eg. media) which are seen to subsequently translate into aggression, holding on grudges, interpersonal harm and feeling of bitterness – all which demotivates them to forgive (Bandura, 1971; Anderson, Gentile & Buckley, 2007).

Girard et al, (2002), Gauche & Mullet, (2005); Baharudin et al, (2011) offered few important reasons for youth not to forgive as they considered the offender *betrayed their trust* or the offense is still being committed, did *not apologize* or communicated regret or showed remorse for his/her behaviour or simply considered the offender *not worthy* of forgiveness. Macaskill, Maltby & Day, 2002 in a theoretical orientation points to the fact that youth is tough to the extent that they do not brush aside injury easily. Youth who claim never to have needed forgiveness could be described as lacking in humility, maturity, are impulsive, frustrated, aggressive and egocentric (Tangney, 2002). The prevailing ethos of time can be elucidated from ‘grudge theory’ by Baumiester et al, 1998 which explicates youth’s experience from its interpersonal context. It is observed that at times youth does express forgiveness on the face but does not experience it internally or sometimes if he/she truly forgives someone then simply do not express their inner feelings.

An attempt has been made by the researcher to pictorially present different reasons/psychological perspectives in form of ‘Cognitive Perceptions, Value Inputs and Developmental Perceptions’ that have received attention across the discipline of Positive Psychology for low character strength of forgiveness among youth.
Psychological Perspectives accounting for low character strength of Forgiveness

On the other hand, just $1/4$ of youth i.e. only 25% were high on the strength of forgiveness implying that only 25% of youth practiced and forgave their offenders. First and foremost it’s probable that these 25% of youth forgave as they might have an optimistic approach towards life and also their parents would have been successful to permeate the kind of unassailable character and moral fortitude in their child’s life. It seems as if they were occupied with a number of self oriented reasons of forgiving like life is too short, for convenience, it wasn’t that big of a deal, you will be alone if you never forgive, I don’t have time to worry about this or it is not whom I am to be unforgiving, time is a great healer, turning the issue over to God in hopes of divine retribution. Researchers have identified many factors that influence decisions to forgive and it appears that this chunk of youth population forgave, as for them the ‘relationship’ factor i.e. salience of relationship bonds, length of relationship before offense and relationship quality was too important (Mc Cullogh et al, 1998; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002; Gauche & Mullet, 2005; Baharudin, 2011). The most common reason or motivation to forgive can be for the sake of personal health, peace and harmony i.e. decreased stress and anxiety and increased happiness (Lawler et al,
Also another reason that might also count on forgiveness can be the realization of religious or spiritual beliefs one has in his/her life.

### 6.1.3 HAPPINESS

The results (table-5) of the present study show that 47%, 30% and 23% of youth comprised of low (mean and standard deviation of 3.56 and 0.23 respectively), moderate (mean and standard deviation of 4.24 and 0.21 respectively) and high (mean and standard deviation of 5.26 and 0.55 respectively) level of happiness. *It clearly indicates that almost 3/4th of youth i.e. 77% (30% and 47% respectively) displayed moderate to low level of happiness and only 1/4th (23%) youth were high on happiness.*

Happiness as a construct is intricately woven with strengths and virtues (Lyubomirsky et al, 2011, Froh, Sefick & Emmons, 2008, Sandage & Worthington, 2011, Proctor et al, 2009). Youth with low strengths of gratitude and forgiveness reveal low happiness which significantly affects individual’s basic functional aspects: sense of self in everyday life, cognitive sphere, personal qualities and interpersonal relationships. *Only 23% of youth revealed high level of happiness. This percentage approximately corresponds with 22% and 25% of youth who displayed high strengths of gratitude and forgiveness. The finding of the study stands in parallel to the earlier discussion of relationship between the two strengths and so the percentages led us to realize the growing need of cultivating and promoting such strengths to augment happiness among youth.* Further, the researcher attempts to explain the possible reasons for low level of happiness among youth from available theoretical explanations.

Low happiness among youth may be attributed to multiple reasons. It seems that youth works and struggles very hard to attain happiness, without knowing exactly what happiness means because of their ignorance of the nature of life. The advices and guidelines regarding *happiness are ignored* owing to *youth’s craving, hatred and illusion* in relation to the meaning and understanding of the concept life and construct happiness and well-being.
Talking in terms of today’s scenario, young people are exposed to a large variety of Western influences which are disseminated through mass media such as books and magazines, television, movies, videos and cd’s, resulting in acquisition of distorted ideas regarding happiness. Also, they seem to value extrinsic aspirations such as wealth, fame and image and thus are more likely to experience feelings of distress, intolerance, gloomy – leading to unhappiness (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Also it is necessary to touch on the distinction between two widely accepted tradition of analysis in the study of happiness: hedonic and eudaimonic. Today’s generation gives the impression that they relate themselves with the hedonic conceptualization of happiness i.e. desire to secure pleasure and avoid pain (Bunnin & Yu, 2004) thereby just ignoring another aspect of happiness which is considered as true happiness based on virtues, skills and positive functioning. Therefore, in the present era, it is imperative to design programs that can enhance existing levels of character strengths and translates into tapping the sense of joy for our own happiness and the happiness of those around us.

Another reason for low prevalence could be the exposure to materialistic social models that exerts a direct influence on youth acquiring internalizing materialistic values. When these values become essential to youth’s values’ system, their happiness decreases (Kasser, et al 2004). Character strengths, however, have an opposite effect on happiness as it helps youth fulfil the basic psychological needs of competence, autonomy and relatedness (Kneezel & Emmons, 2006).

The results of the present study can be well thought as an alarming call not only for the researchers, parents, teachers, counsellors but for the society altogether. The current picture portrays that character education ought to be imparted to youth as it will not just make them morally sound but also help them in being a positive and happy human being.

6.2 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GRATITUDE AND FORGIVENESS

The findings of the present study (r = 0.84, p< .001; as shown in table-6) hint at the relationship between gratitude and forgiveness. Examination of the coefficient
reveals that statistically significant relationship exists between the two strengths of character. The relationship is in expected direction with positive correlation being found between the two measures. Gratitude and forgiveness are complementary to each other i.e. they both affect each other and when these two strengths are ‘packaged’ together and practiced with wider variety of activities, subsequently paves way towards improvement in youth’s well being and happiness.

Interventions and training programs that aim to foster happiness, well-being and life satisfaction among adolescents and youth incorporates activities on gratitude and forgiveness as these strengths clubbed together act as a potential ingredient to form an integrated approach that can have a considerable significance impacting youth’s lives. Such types of interventions can enhance the outcome variable i.e. happiness and well-being through demonstration of a package of character strengths and that the rationale of these interventions lies in the specified psychological mechanisms or theory linking these strengths to happiness and well-being.

Its explanation can be offered through existing theoretical conceptualizations, some of which are presented below:

Gratitude and forgiveness are two sides of social coin i.e. a person filled with gratitude cannot help but forgive and if a person is capable of forgiving others, then, he/she is much more able to be grateful. If you look at the cycle of grieving, you will see that forgiveness is the fundamental stage to experience gratitude and the joy of life again (Froh & Emmons, 2007). Gratitude relates to willingness to forgive (DeShea, 2003), which is associated with the absence of psychopathological traits (Maltby et al., 2008), and is integral to positive functioning (Maltby, Day, & Barber, 2005). These strengths produce well-being through a combination of reflection, positive emotions, and adaptive social behaviors and relationships that facilitate well-being and happiness (Fredrickson, 2004; Kashdan, Mishra, Breen, & Froh, 2009; Watkins, 2004). Further, mapping connections between the two constructs appear to share the following general features a) broader vs. more specific forms, b) the potential to be characterized in interpersonal vs. emotional terms, c) their ability to
occur in degrees rather than all or none, d) their potential to be represented as two-
dimensional rather than uni-dimensional constructs.

Peterson & Seligman (2004) categorized the strength of ‘gratitude’ under the
virtue of ‘transcendence’ and ‘forgiveness’ under the virtue of ‘temperance’. However, recently psychologists have reached a consensus that strengths of gratitude
and forgiveness be conceptualized together under the same cluster or factor
(Macdonald, Bore & Munro, 2008) and more recently Brdar & Kashdan (2010) adds
grateitude and forgiveness to ‘Interpersonal’ factor thereby reflecting the importance
of the shared impact of gratitude and forgiveness on relationship processes and well-
being (happiness being its component). Theoretically a strong relationship between
these strengths has been established; therefore, the present study utilizes the
combination of these two strengths and incorporates in Strength Building Program to
be targeted for Indian youth.

6.3 EFFECTS OF STRENGTH BUILDING PROGRAM (SBP) ON YOUTH

The researcher delivered an edifying and enlightening program which
intended to appraise the concept and significance of character strengths of gratitude
and forgiveness with emphasis on fostering happiness among youth.

The findings of the present study have confirmed the queries’ that were set at
the onset of the research. The effect of the program on gratitude, forgiveness and
happiness is discussed in the upcoming sections.

6.3.1 EFFECT OF STRENGTH BUILDING PROGRAM (SBP) ON
GRATITUDE

The results of the present study revealed that ANCOVA for gratitude was
significant during both time-1 and time-2 evaluations (F= 11.984, p<.001) and (F=
12.178, p<.001) as shown in table-9. This indicates that the experimental group who
were subjected to Strength Building Program showed a significant improvement in
scores of gratitude during time-1 evaluation (immediately after administration of the
program) and also sustained those significant enhancements during time-2 evaluation
(approximately after a gap of four weeks) as compared to the control group who were not subjected to Strength Building Program. The effect size of the program for time-1 and time-2 evaluation was 0.68 and 0.90 respectively (as shown in table-18). This implies that average youth in the experimental group who was exposed to Strength Building Program was better of than 76% and 82% of control group participants who were not exposed to the program, both during time-1 and time-2 evaluation. Also, it can be seen that an enhancement in the effect size from time-1 to time-2 evaluation is noteworthy, i.e. additional 6% increase was supplemented to time-2 evaluation, indicating that participants’ benefitted from indulging in gratitude activities and that the program’s impact on the training group led to an enhanced capacity to continue with the practice of gratitude in their daily lives.

The hypotheses of the present research, outlined as “Gratitude among youth receiving Strength Building Program in experimental group would significantly increase from pre to post-training period as compared to the control group” and “Increase in gratitude would be maintained in post-training sequential evaluation i.e. from time-1 to time-2” has been supported.

The researcher in the following section attempts to explain augmentation in the character strength of gratitude vis-a-vis researcher’s observations of participants’ remarks about the exercises on *four feedback questions* (refer to administration of SBP, chapter- IV) framed for the feedback session of the program could have impacted.

At the outset of the Strength Building Program, cognitive-behavioural exercise of “Following Four Step Approach” was targeted to arouse an inner reflection and realistic self perception of substituting the gratitude-supporting thoughts for the non-grateful thoughts. Experimental group participant’s feedback remarks on four post-training questions revealed that the exercise promoted positive self-talk which helped them in exploring and translating their hidden feelings into an outward action of appreciation and gratefulness. They noticed that an inner reflection of their behaviour pattern in the past as well as present helped them distinguish between grateful (good memories) vs non-grateful (negative) thoughts. As participants reached to an
experiential level from mere cognitions, they reported that they felt lighter and good and wished they had known it before. They also showed their interest that they practice such gratitude activities in real world settings. Feedback from the participants hinted that they acknowledged utilizing this strength in future. Since the control group did not receive any such program and were devoid of the stimulation, exposure and opportunity to perform the exercises which the experimental group received; therefore the trend of ANCOVA and effect size did not increase as compared to the experimental group who willingly practiced to cultivate gratitude for upcoming four weeks.

Experiential exercise “Writing a letter: expressing Thanks” targeted to acquaint the experimental group participants with the fact that gratitude is a deeper and complex phenomenon. Having written a letter, youth expressed feeling of ‘personal empowerment’. They discovered that practicing being grateful to people for specific situations and resources made them aware of a safe and novel way of expressing gratitude that was not initially used by them and even wish to continue in the upcoming weeks. While writing gratitude letter, participants noticed a change in their mental set i.e. their thoughts and feelings had a more positive perspective than before and were now better able to relate to the values of goodwill and benevolence. They also expressed their eagerness to repeat the same act of writing and posting gratitude letter and card on occasions such as (mother’s day, father’s day, wedding anniversary of parents, teacher’s day or birthday of our hero) via e-mail and facebook. Experimental group participants got a chance to learn a novel method to convey gratitude message where as control group participants just described their living room or shared some of their earlier memories. Therefore the difference in post training scores and improvement is seen only in the experimental group who valued the importance of the exercise and even were motivated to perform in future.

Further, experimental group participants’ narrated their experience and outlook for this cognitive-affective and experiential exercise of “Counting Blessings versus Burdens” to the researcher – while performing this activity, they realized that there are so many things in life to be grateful for, which they had taken granted till date. They also expressed that till now they would focus only on misfortunes - feel
sad, negative and unhappy. This realization took them to a different tangent i.e. they numerically counted their blessings and one blessing would lead to the next, and so they experienced joy, positivity and happiness. Most importantly, participants learned to acknowledge the goodness in their lives and tackle an unenthusiastic attitude towards life. Experimental condition participants got a chance to experience; feel and notice a change in them where as participants of control condition didn’t get any opportunity to experience and feel the same. Hence, experimental condition scores are reported higher than the control condition scores.

Lastly, participant’s of experimental group communicated to the researcher that the situation-based exercise of “Practice downward Comparisons” brought them at a level which motivated personal change through capacity to feel empathetic about people who are caught in hardships and adversities of their life. The visualization and realization of such set-up facilitated them to discover and understand that they are far better among many and that they should be thankful about it. Listening anecdotes and examples from daily lives, participants found themselves to be more adept in building connections to the larger universe and this feeling of acceptance thereby provided meaning to their lives. This activity raised their overall sense of judging many facets of life in general and communicated that they were now in a better position to understand the virtue of Transcendence to which the character strength of gratitude belonged to. They informed that this activity will go a long way in their life i.e. they can now easily connect the concept of gratitude to real life situations. As the control group was not part of this program so couldn’t develop methods to cultivate gratitude and even scored lower than the experimental group who on the other hand were fortunate to join as a participant and become skilled at fostering gratitude in their lives.

Amongst the various exercises delivered to youth population “Counting Blessings versus Burden” stood out as an exercise of paramount importance to them. This exercise emotionally touched them and they found it as a safeguard against the erosion of valuing connections to people, personal growth, and social capital. It is also evident that participant’s emotions, expressions and personal experiences being part of the program are clearly reflected in the results of the present study. It can be
accounted to the ‘will’, ‘motivation’ and ‘objective sustained effort’ that participants showed not only as being a participant for the program but also practiced and utilized it later as a significant human need. Since the researcher maintained regular contact with the participants and updated with the feedback regarding their task assignments and daily action plans, the outcomes of the experiences they had did not wear off entirely with the passage of time.

The researcher attempts to elucidate another important feature of the results i.e. table-18 suggest that youth (76 and 82 percentile; during time-1 and time-2 evaluation respectively) proved to be gainers, implying that they benefitted being part of the program and youth (24 and 18 percentile; during time-1 and time-2 evaluation respectively) turned as non-gainers, implying that they didn’t benefit from the exercises carried out during Strength Building Program and were almost equal to the control group. *There could be various reasons for this and is explained in the following session through existing theoretical orientations.*

Broaden-and-build theory by Fredrickson (2001) asserts that the regular experience of positive emotions can make people healthier and more resilient, fueling an upward spiral of optimal functioning, well-being, and development. The theory of positive emotions suggests that, unlike negative emotions which narrow our focus and restrict our behavioral range, positive emotions yield nonspecific action tendencies beyond physical action that help in build *social resources, motivation, purposefulness and spark an upward spiral of positive outcomes* such as wellbeing and happiness. Further, positive emotions like gratitude generate broad thought-action repertoires that ultimately build enduring physical, intellectual, and social resources (Fredrickson, 2001). For instance, positive emotions broaden problem-solving strategies (Fredrickson & Branigan, 2005) and can undo the aftereffects of negative emotions (Fredrickson et al, 2000). Experience of gratitude is posited to broaden youth’s (gainers) mindset that includes feeling of indebtedness, increasing hope and optimism for a benevolent world which results in *prosocial behaviour*. Their repeated experience of expressing gratitude stimulates the development of skills that is used to respond to kindness to others where as youth’s (non-gainers) negative emotions restricted their behaviour to feel socially connected to others. Even prosocial
behaviour of others could not build interpersonal bonding because of their narrowing of their thought action repertoires.

Algoe, Haidt & Gable (2008) Find-remind-and-bind theory can be offered to explain above findings. This theory suggests that gratitude helps people develop new relationships (find), build on existing relationships (remind), and maintain both (bind). Gratitude may be the key to human cooperation as it improves satisfaction for both the recipient of appreciation and the person expressing the appreciation. Expressing thanks signals the potential for relationships, paves the way for collaboration and strengthens personal relationships including work relationships, and personal friendships (Gordon et al., 2011). The theory asserts that gratitude serves to alert people to the possibility of high-quality social bonds. Saying thank you may be a cornerstone of civilization – the basis for human teamwork that enabled progress as well as the rock upon which friendships stand. It appears that youth is embedded in relationships as it’s the closeness which enhances their motivation for relationship preservation and fosters long-term relationships. Therefore (gainers) give importance to gratitude which helps both at the start of a new relationship and later when one is working to keep a relationship strong as beyond what it does for relationships, it improves personal happiness and overall health as well (Wood et al, 2010). Reason that seems for non-gainers might be that for them salience of relationships bonds and relationship quality to find new contacts and remind old contacts of their friendship doesn’t holds that much of an importance in their life.

As per McCullough Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001 perspective, its probable that youth (gainers) might have experienced gratitude when they recognized that someone intended to promote their well-being and experienced higher levels of gratitude when the benefits were described as (a) intentionally provided (b) costly to the benefactor and (c) valuable to the recipient (d) given gratuitously (rather than out of role-based obligations). Although participants (non-gainers) were carried from thoughts and imagination to an experiential level but seem they were unable to notice intentions, appreciate costs and recognize the value of benefits. It appears they
couldn’t appreciate the contributions made by others and didn’t feel grateful for the sacrifice of time and effort done by significant others at an experiential level.

Another reason can be ascribed from *Social-cognitive model* by Wood et al (2008) wherein characteristic interpretive biases in appraising prosocial situations mediate the relationship between trait and state levels of gratitude. Firstly, after a person is helped, he or she makes several attributions about the nature of the aid, and the attributions naturally group together to form a benefit appraisal. Secondly, the benefit appraisals cause the experience of state gratitude. Thirdly, characteristic interpretive biases lead people higher in trait gratitude to make more positive benefit appraisals. Fourthly, more positive benefit appraisals explain why trait and state levels of gratitude are linked. Essentially, Wood et al, 2008 suggest that a similar process occurs in which grateful people have specific appraisal tendencies leading to gratitude-relevant interpretations of the behavior of other people. Specifically grateful people make distinct benefit appraisals, perceiving the help they receive as more costly to the benefactor, more genuinely intended to help them (rather than ulteriorly motivated), and more valuable. Participants were provided with similar situations for the exercises youth (gainers) interpreted situations as more beneficial as they appraised the situations with positive information processing bias (grateful schema) in comparison to youth (non-gainers) who appraised the situations with negative information processing bias hence didn’t benefit and were almost equal to the control group.

It appears that (gainers) seem to experience gratitude (*frequency*), are sensitive in recognising life experiences which evoke gratitude (*span*), experience it as an effective state (*intensity*) and recognize more number of individuals that have contributed to their personal achievements (*density*) (McCullough et al 2002). They also seem to have an orientation towards noticing and appreciating the positive in the world (Wood et al 2010). Expressing and receiving gratitude with authenticity doesn’t seem to be easy for non-gainers. In both expressing and receiving gratitude a mental effort is required to put our mind into the other person who either receives our gratitude or expresses his gratitude to us. Thus is felt as a “burden” to them.
As the researcher explored the probable reasons from the available research evidences, results indicate that youth (gainers) were taken to an experiential level from a lower level of mere understanding of the construct and the prevailing situation energized to sustain their gratitude mood and motivated to carry out prosocial behaviour implying the persistence of positive affective state build over time. In comparison, (non-gainers) seems higher on negative affect and unable to cause direct reciprocity leading them to respond in non philanthropic behaviour towards their benefactors (Froh, Yurkewicz & Kashdan, 2009).

The empirical evidence of augmentation of gratitude comes from experimental and intervention studies which includes ‘cognitive and behavioural exercises of gratitude’ and practicing these exercises subsequently lead to improvement in youth’s happiness and well-being, some of which are presented below:

Watkins et al (2003) conducted a study on 200 participants to support the proposition that gratitude improves subjective well-being. They were instructed to engage in one of three experimental conditions: (a) thinking about someone to whom they felt grateful; (b) writing about someone to whom they felt grateful; or (c) writing a letter to someone to whom they felt grateful. The results revealed that participants who engaged in the gratitude exercise showed increase in their experiences of positive emotion such as happiness immediately after the exercise, and this effect was strongest for the participants who were asked to think about a person for whom they were grateful.

Emmons & McCullough (2003a) conducted a study on college students to see the effect of gratitude on well-being. Students were randomly placed into one of three conditions, (gratitude, hassles, or events), each of which lasted for nine weeks. Participants were given weekly packets in which they were to write down different things depending on their condition. In the gratitude condition, students were asked to write down several experiences for which they were grateful. In the hassles condition, students wrote down annoyances they experienced in the previous week. Finally, in the events condition, students wrote down a number of events that affected them in the past week. No instruction was given about what types of events to include. Results
revealed that students in the grateful condition reported significantly greater life satisfaction, greater optimism for the upcoming week, fewer physical symptoms, and, perhaps most surprisingly, exercised significantly more than students in either the events condition or the hassles condition.

Emmons & McCullough (2003b) in a subsequent study with (N= 157; 52 in gratitude condition, 49 in hassels condition, 56 in downward social comparison condition ) replaced the weekly exercises from the previous study with daily diaries that were used for two weeks. This study kept the gratitude and hassles conditions, but replaced the events condition with instructions to write about ways in which the students were better off than other people (downward social comparison). This study found a significant difference in levels of positive affect between participants in the gratitude condition and participants in the hassles condition. Based on these two studies, the causal link between gratitude and well-being is clearly present.

Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson (2005) delivered five happiness exercises and one placebo control exercise via internet and could be completed within one week. Two of these exercises focused on building gratitude, two focused on increasing awareness of what is most positive about oneself, and one focused on identifying strengths of character. Out of these conditions, it was found that the biggest short-term effects came from a “gratitude visit” where participants wrote and delivered a letter of gratitude to someone in their life. Out of the six conditions, the longest lasting effects were caused by the act of writing “gratitude journals” where participants were asked to write down three things they were grateful for every day. This exercise was so successful that although participants were only asked to continue the journal for a week, many participants continued to keep the journal long after the study was over.

Sheldon & Lyubomirsky (2006a) found the students of (experimental group) who regularly practiced an exercise of ‘counting one’s blessings’ (gratitude) experienced an increase in gratitude which in turn led to greater positive affect as compared to the control group and that continuing to perform such exercises predicted stronger positive mood in follow up sessions.
Froh, Sefick & Emmons (2008) conducted a study using quasi-experimental design, and randomly assigned the subjects to (gratitude, hassles or control conditions) for two weeks and then examined the effect of the intervention at both an immediate post-test and three week follow-up. Those in the gratitude condition were asked to "count up to five things you are grateful for." Students in the hassles group were asked to focus on irritants. After 2 weeks of counting blessings, the gratitude condition was associated with enhanced self-reported gratitude, optimism, life satisfaction, and decreased negative affect. At the 3-week follow-up, students instructed to count their blessings showed more gratitude toward people who had helped them, which in turn predicted more gratitude in general. These results suggested that counting blessings in adolescence may be related to appreciating specific gifts (e.g., gratitude for receiving aid) via priming them to acknowledge the specific instances of kindness in daily life. 

Froh, Kashdan, Ozimkowski, & Miller, (2009a) in their intervention study randomly assigned children and adolescents to a gratitude intervention or a control condition. Participants in the gratitude condition were asked to write a letter to a benefactor whom they have never properly thanked, to read the letter to him/her in person, and to then share their experience with others in the same condition. Findings indicated that youth low in positive affect in the gratitude condition reported greater gratitude and positive affect at post-treatment and even larger gratitude and positive affect at the 2-month follow-up than youth in the control condition. This study suggested that there may be specific individuals—namely, those low in positive affect—who may benefit more.

Proctor, Tsukayama, Wood, Maltby, Fox Eades, & Linley, (2011) examined the impact of Strengths Gym, a character strengths-based positive psychological intervention program, on adolescent life satisfaction with an aim to encourage students to build their strengths, learn new strengths and to recognize strengths in others. The activities for students are called Strengths Builders and Strengths Challenges. Activities such as ‘counting blessings’, ‘writing three good things that went well for each day’, ‘counting one's own acts of kindness’ and ‘cultivating gratitude through daily gratitude diaries’ were included. Results revealed that
adolescents who participated in character strengths-based exercises experienced an enhancement in feelings and expression of gratitude and significantly increased life satisfaction compared to adolescents who did not participate in character strengths-based exercises.

Proyer, Ruch, and Buschor (2012) used an experimental approach to tackle the question of whether all strengths are created equal with respect to fostering subjective well-being. Researchers trained a group of adults with the strengths most correlated with happiness (curiosity, gratitude, hope, zest, and also humor). This group was compared to a group that trained with strengths that typically yield low correlations with happiness (appreciation of beauty and excellence, creativity, kindness, love of learning, and perspective) and a wait-list control group. When life satisfaction scores before and after the treatments were contrasted, only the group trained with the strengths most correlated with happiness improved significantly in comparison to the control group. These experimental findings reinforce earlier observations that although virtues in general appear to contribute to happiness, some virtues are more promising in that regard in comparison to other virtues (gratitude).

A recent study by Layous, Lee, Choi & Lyubomirsky (2013) examined the role of culture–activity fit by testing two positive activities across two cultures. Participants (14 to 15 year old) from the United States (n = 250) and South Korea (n = 270) were randomly assigned to express gratitude, perform kind acts, or engage in a neutral activity for the first half of a 6-week positive activity intervention. U.S. participants increased in well-being from both activities, $\gamma_{11} = 0.19, SE = 0.06, t(511) = 3.04, p = .0006; \gamma_{12} = 0.11, SE = 0.06, t(511) = 1.73, p = .03$ (compared with the control group), but South Korean participants benefited significantly less from practicing gratitude than did U.S. participants, $\gamma_{13} = -0.24, SE = 0.07, t(511) = -3.36, p = .002$. South Korean participants, however, showed similar increases in well being as did U.S. participants when performing kind acts, $\gamma_{14} = -0.06, SE = 0.07, t(511) = -0.82, ns$. Finally, although greater self-reported effort yielded significantly larger increases in well being for U.S. participants, the effect of effort was not as strong for South Korean participants. It is posited that, due to their dialectical philosophical tradition, South Koreans might have been more prone to feel mixed emotions (e.g.,
indebtedness and gratitude) while engaging in the gratitude letter activity than did U.S. participants.

6.3.2 EFFECT OF STRENGTH BUILDING PROGRAM (SBP) ON FORGIVENESS

The results of the present study revealed that ANCOVA for forgiveness was significant during both time-1 and time-2 evaluations (F = 10.782, p<.001) and (F = 28.362, p<.001) as shown in table-12. It suggests that the experimental group who were subjected to Strength Building Program showed a significant improvement in their scores of forgiveness during time-1 evaluation (immediately after administration of the program) and also sustained the enhancement during time-2 evaluation (approximately after a gap of four weeks) as compared to the control group who were not subjected to Strength Building Program. The effect size of the program for time-1 and time-2 of evaluation was 0.76 and 0.94 respectively (as shown in table-18). It implies that average youth in the experimental group who was exposed to Strength Building Program was better of than 76 % and 82% of control group participants who were not exposed to the program, both during time-1 and time-2 evaluation. The enhancement in the effect size from time-1 to time-2 evaluation is noteworthy, i.e. additional 6 % were supplemented to time-2 evaluation, indicating that participants’ benefitted from indulging in forgiveness activities and that the program’s impact on the training group led to an enhanced capacity to understand, feel and continue with the practice of mercy and forgiveness in their daily lives.

The hypotheses of the present research, outlined as “Forgiveness among youth receiving Strength Building Program in experimental group would significantly increase from pre to post-training period as compared to the control group” and “Increase in forgiveness would be maintained in post-training sequential evaluation i.e. from time-1 to time-2” has been supported.

The researcher in the following section attempts to explain augmentation in the character strength of forgiveness vis-a-vis researcher’s observations of participants’ remarks about the exercises on four feedback questions (refer to
administration of SBP, chapter- IV) framed for the feedback session of the program could have impacted.

“Forgiving oneself”, a cognitive-behavioural exercise was the first exercise being delivered to the experimental group participants as self forgiveness (struggle forgiving our own past mistakes; inner protector to put our weaknesses and misdeeds in perspective, to highlight our good qualities surrounding our lapses) is considered the starting point as to how forgive others? Initially participants laughed on hearing the name of the exercise as they believed that who does wrong to their own selves and therefore arises no need to forgive oneself but after putting into practice the exercise, their perspective changed as they discovered that so far they were not aware that there is also a need to forgive our own selves. During the exercise, they were brought to an experiential level where they noticed a shift in their mental set and attitude towards real life settings to a new sense of clarity and understanding of inner self. They found it as a safest method which protected their ego from guilt, regret and shame. Having practiced the activity, after a gap of a month’s time, few participants in a group reported that ‘they felt at peace with our past actions and found it as one of the most positive steps we can take toward living a life free from frustration and disappointments’. For them, the whole process was deeply rejuvenating and rewarding. Participants also informed that in future they would like to add this ‘self-forgiveness’ practice as part of their ‘gratitude diet’. Experimental condition participants got a chance to experience; feel and notice a change in them where as participants of control condition didn’t get any opportunity to experience and feel the same. Hence, experimental condition scores are reported higher than the control condition scores.

A cognitive-behavioural exercise i.e. “Following five steps of REACH” targeted to acquaint the experimental group participants’ about the objective of this 5-step model i.e. replacement of resentment, bitterness, hostility, hatred with love, compassion, sympathy and empathy. Participants realized that forgiveness is a complex act as forgiving someone, whether or not they deserve it, calls upon the highest good within them. They strongly felt that an actual act of forgiveness is very tough as grudges lie deep inside them. But progressing through each step of the
exercise of REACH, participants became self aware, made choices, became willing and open to let go off ill-will and resentments that have build up over the time. They noticed a change in their thinking and attitude towards others during the exercise, i.e. switching from negative unforgiving emotions to positive-oriented emotions. They even reported making commitment to themselves by completing certificates or letters that state in writing that they want to forgive (decisional forgiveness) and that too by understanding the perpetrator’s point of view (emotional forgiveness). They also understood that the experience of being forgiven by another is a valuable reinforcement to forgiveness. They assured that they would constantly practice the strength of forgiveness in future as they feel time is a great heeler and small steps can create big effects. As the control group was not part of this program so couldn’t develop methods that would foster forgiveness and even scored lower than the experimental group who on the other hand were fortunate to join as a participant and become skilled at practicing forgiveness in their lives.

Experimental condition participants’ comments on the three questions allied with the exercise of “Performing Naikan” unveils that the technique leads to introspect, self relaxation and induce a cognitive and an emotional transition. They discovered that it is this forgetfulness and inattentiveness to their indebtedness to others, as well as an increasing egocentric approach in relationships that have resulted in an ungrateful and unappreciative response towards life. Basically, the researcher observed cognitive restructuring in terms of how imagination and memory affect healing. Participants communicated that painful thoughts and memories spontaneously came flooding; constant sitting and reflection replaced these old believes and patterns of sorrow, regret and slowly made space for a fresh, loving, and respectful attitude towards ourselves and others. Youth population narrated their experience of this exercise in a sequence: (a) insight (b) sense of indebtedness (c) became conscious of the "giftedness" of our existence, our interdependency with others, and our responsibility for our own actions (d) experience a profound sense of appreciation and gratitude for our lives. Most importantly, participants reported that Naikan has encouraged them to face their past and present with a sense of honesty and truth and wished to carry on with it in future also. Since the control group did not receive any such program and were devoid of the stimulation, exposure and
opportunity to perform the exercises which the experimental group received; therefore the trend of ANCOVA and effect size did not increase as compared to the experimental group who willingly practiced to cultivate forgiveness for upcoming four weeks.

Lastly, experimental group participants’ narrated their experience and outlook for this experiential exercise of “Writing an apology: Asking for forgiveness” to the researcher – they informed that they have heard about writing an apology letter but always thought that it would be a futile exercise and so never practiced it. Participants discovered that as human beings we all have harmed each other couple of times and move on in life in a normal way but we remember the word ‘forgiveness’ when we expect grace from others. Only then we acknowledge that we should also grant that grace and mercy to others. While performing the activity, they understood that ‘granting’ and ‘receiving’ forgiveness both are equally important. Having written a letter, youth expressed feeling lighter, relaxed and calm and most importantly less burden on their shoulders as they could see their future with a renewed sense of purpose focussed on change, improvement rather than being held back by past hurts. They expressed that the exercise might also help them in developing compassionate relationships with others. Participants articulated their eagerness to repeat the same act of writing an apology letter or card in future as feedback from them hinted that the activity would prove to be an important step in living a healthy lifestyle. In an experimental comparison, participants who performed and embraced the exercise of “Writing an apology: Asking for forgiveness” showed an increase in post training scores, compared to participants of control group who did not practice any of such sort. They were not benefitted like experimental group as they were not part of the program and so were not exposed and enlightened like the other group.

Amongst the various exercises delivered to youth, “Writing an apology: Asking for forgiveness” stood out as an exercise of paramount importance to them. This exercise motivated to accept moral responsibility and perform interpersonal reparative actions and behaviour. They found the exercise as an essential mechanism with which they seek to repair and maintain essential relationships. It is also evident
that participant’s emotions, expressions and personal experiences being part of the program are clearly reflected in the results of the present study. It can be accounted to their continued effortful practice of the exercises and adherence to its application in daily life. As the researcher maintained regular contact with the participants and updated with the feedback regarding their task assignments and daily action plans, the outcomes of the experiences they had did not wear off entirely with the passage of time.

The results (as shown in table-18) suggest that youth population (76 and 82 percentile; during time-1 and time-2 evaluation respectively) proved to be gainers, implying that they benefitted being part of the program and youth (24 and 18 percentile; during time-1 and time-2 evaluation respectively) turned as non-gainers, implying that they didn’t benefit from the exercises carried out during Strength Building Program and were almost equal to the control group. There could be various reasons for this and is explained in the following sessions through existing theoretical orientations.

According to Mc Cullough et al. 1998, forgiveness can be offered as a consequence of these four sets of determinants. According to the degree of proximity and immediacy, these determinants promoted (gainers) and inhibited (non-gainers) forgiveness among youth. (a) More-proximal determinants (socio-cognitive variables), it is quite possible that youth (gainers) acknowledged attributive processes i.e. explained the offensive event by attributing it to specific causes or responsibilities (Girard & Mullet, 1997); and youth (non-gainers) explained the same event by attributing it to specific faults and deep harm severity caused by the offender. Gainers encompassed empathy, i.e. were able to put themselves in offender’s place and have benevolent feelings towards him/her where as non-gainers ruminated over issues i.e. brooding and obsessively repeatedly thinking over what happened (Caprara, 1986; Collins & Bell, 1997 Greenberg, 1995); (b) Moderately- proximal determinants, gainers would have granted forgiveness as they considered the offence not that serious enough and that the offender showed sorry or offered sincere apology to the victim (Girard & Mullet, 1997). On the other hand, non-gainers would have associated the offensive act accounting to deep bruised harmful long term
consequences and that the offender would have not shown any regret for his/her behaviour. (c) Moderately-distal determinants (interpersonal), it appears these participants (gainers) would have been close, committed and satisfied with their relationship and share strong intimacy, therefore this relational quality motivated them to forgive (Nelson, 1993; Rackley, 1993) and non-gainers simply wouldn’t have been bound by any relational constraints i.e. they might have perceived the offender and offense done consciously and deliberately. (d) Lastly, most-proximal determinants explain their behaviour (eg. ethical principles, religious beliefs, attitudes towards revenge, submissiveness and way of reacting to anger). It can be believed that the above stated determinants along with these personal characteristics influence granting of forgiveness among youth i.e. (gainers) where as youth population (non-gainers) might be prone to anger in everyday life and desire for revenge in order to satisfy their ego and see justice after a wrong has been committed. They also might not believe in morals, values and religious systems which exert a social pressure on victims to perform in a socially desirable manner.

The tripartite typology of forgiveness (Fehr, Gelfand & Nag, 2010) explains why youth might somehow fail or are able to forgive their offenders. The theoretical underpinnings put forward (a) mitigating cognitions (what happened?) which focuses on victims attitudes and thoughts surrounding an offender and offense. Underlining this factor is a sense-making process whereby youth keeps a track of concepts like intent, responsibility and severity and even utilizes these cues to interpret the nature of the offense and how their offenders should be viewed and treated (Weick, 1995). It seems forgiveness is examined by youth (non-gainers) through theoretical lens of attribution theory (Weiner, 1995) which focuses on the constructs of responsibility i.e. attributing high degree of responsibility to one’s transgressor for his/her behaviour and intent i.e. emphasizing on goal directed purpose of the transgressor and harm severity i.e. clear negative effect; facilitating negative impressions of the offender such that he/she is viewed as unworthy of forgiveness (McCullough, Fincham & Tsang, 2003). It appears that youth (gainers) might have attributed less degree of responsibility towards their offenders and perceived offender’s intent and role of severity as not damaging and serious towards them. (b) The affective theory of forgiveness describes moods and emotional experiences youth feels in terms of (how
do I feel?). Consistent with the mood-as-input model (Martin et al, 1993), unforgiveness is the result of a negative mood where youth (non-gainers) feels displeasure, distressed and lethargic. Reflecting on today’s scenario, social psychologists points to the fact that youth lacks the empathetic concern i.e. the general ability to connect with other people (Davis, 1993). Beyond the cognitions and emotions that youth population experience in the wake of an offense, they may also be constraint by the question (what if I don’t forgive?). In this context, interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978) and accommodation theory (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney & Lipkus, 1991) suggests that youth (non-gainers) might not share (c) embeddedness in relationships i.e. commitment and closeness with the offender, as it is only closeness which enhances victim’s motivation for relationship preservation and foster long-term relationships and for youth (gainers) it seems that they could forgive because of motivation to preserve and maintain relationships.

Another reason can be ascribed from the theory of personality correlates (Brown, 2003) as certain dispositions that either enhance or inhibit victims’ tendencies to engage in cognitions that facilitate forgiveness. There is a debate regarding significance of personality and situation in determining forgiving behaviour but the variance in forgiveness scores in the experimental group may be due to regarding relative importance of trait vs state in determining behaviour. Though participants were provided with similar contexts for the exercises (state), individuals (youth) high on trait forgiveness interpreted offenses as worthy of forgiveness where as individuals (youth) low on trait forgiveness interpreted offenses as unworthy of forgiveness, hence accounting for youth who benefitted being part of the program (gainers) and youth (non-gainers) who didn’t benefit and were almost equal to the control group.

As per Exline et al, 2008 perspective, it is possible that youth (gainers) might be ‘perspective-taking’ i.e. would have considered another person’s point of view in terms of their goals and intentions where as youth (non-gainers) perhaps wouldn’t be captivating perspective and could have found it difficult to understand why their offenders offended them, thus mitigating downward comparisons that facilitate negative offender perceptions.
Although researcher didn’t explore this area but found it imperative to quote from existing theoretical explanation that among the Big Five personality factors, agreeableness among victims is most frequently linked to forgiveness (Mc Crae & Costa, 1987). When faced with a conflict event, agreeable people (gainers) tend to be trusting, altruistic and perceive cooperative and integrative techniques as most appropriate in comparison to less agreeable people (non-gainers) who don’t behave in a helpful fashion and often favour assertions or disengagement (Graziano, Jensen-Campbell & Hair, 1996).

It can also be said that individuals (gainers) possess high self esteem, are confident in their own worth (Baumeister, Tice & Hutton, 1989) experience relatively minor shifts in mood and self concept when faced with an offense, thereby facilitating forgiveness and victims (non-gainers) with lower self esteem experience more extreme mood shifts, demonstrate low self worth and so feel disinterested and demotivated to forgive (Campbell, Chew & Scratchley, 1991).

It also appears on reflecting on today’s scenario that participants (gainers) from collectivistic culture would have forgiven as they view forgiveness as a way to overcome loss of face, restore social harmony and heal a damaged relationship (Sandage et al, 2003; Fu, Watkins & Hui, 2004), in contrast to participants (non-gainers) who follow western culture and value individualism (Enright & Coyle, 1998; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Worthington, 1998, 2009).

The empirical evidence of augmentation of forgiveness comes from experimental and intervention studies which includes ‘cognitive and behavioural exercises of forgiveness’ and practicing these exercises subsequently lead to improvement in youth’s happiness and well-being, some of which are presented below:

Worthington, Sandage & Berry (2000) summarized in a meta-analysis the effects of 12 different forgiveness group interventions. It was found that the interventions were, on average, effective in improving participants forgiveness scores by 43% of a standard deviation (Cohen’s d= .43) over the control group. Among the eight intervention studies that involved six hours or more of client contact, group members forgiveness scores were 76% of a standard deviation higher than the scores
o control group members (Cohen’s d= .76). in contrast, the four intervention studies that involved less than six hours of client contact were substantially less efficacious (Cohen’s d= .24). Participation in short term intervention (particularly those involving at least six hours of client contact) appears to be moderately effective in helping people to forgive specific individuals who have harmed them.

Witvliet et al. (2001) carried out a study and examined the effects of forgiveness on those who received it. A within-subjects psychophysiology study was done on college students who reflected on and imagined a particular transgression they had committed against someone. Part of this study compared imagery of (a) receiving an unforgiving response from one’s victim, with imagery of (b) receiving forgiveness and (c) experiencing reconciliation. It was found that forgiveness and reconciliation imagery each prompted improvements in basic emotions (e.g., sadness, anger) and moral emotions (e.g., guilt, shame, gratitude, hope), with reductions in negative emotions and increases in positive emotions.

McCullough & Witvliet (2002) carried out a study on college students using randomized block design with repeated measures. The three conditions given to the participants were empathy forgiveness seminar, self enhancement forgiveness seminar, and wait-list control. Assessment was conducted pre seminar; post seminar and a six week follow up. Group interventions were delivered. Seminar consisted of six, one hour sessions conducted during one weekend composing of 12 to 15 participants. The results indicated that self enhancement forgiveness seminar increased forgiveness to quite an extent but the empathy forgiveness seminar boosted forgiveness and increased their happiness level also.

Baskin and Enright (2004) reviewed the effectiveness of nine empirical studies of forgiveness interventions and gave a process model of forgiveness that was applied to forgiveness interventions with individuals and groups of college students. Nine steps towards forgiveness were explained to students and after a period of six weeks of practice of forgiveness steps, it was found that students taking such intervention steps not only increased in forgiving others but also developed self forgiveness which paved the way towards peace and happiness. Further it was also found that the existing interventions could be grouped into three primary categories: (1) decision-
based interventions (interventions that focused primarily on making the decision to forgive), (2) process-based individual interventions (interventions that involved an affective/empathic component), and (3) process-based group interventions. Interventions that emphasized the process of forgiveness tended to be more effective than cognitive, decision-based interventions. Within the process-based studies, three were group based with an average effect size \( d \) of 0.82 \((N=120)\) for emotional health outcomes, and two were individually based with an average effect size of 1.66 \((N=22)\) for emotional health outcomes. And among the process-based interventions reviewed, the one-on-one interventions were more effective than the group-based interventions.

Berry, Worthington, O’Connor, Parrott & Wade (2005) used psycho-educational intervention known as ‘REACH’ which is an empathy focused intervention to promote forgiveness in college students who have experienced hurts because according to them empathy is important for building and maintaining forgiveness. Early studies of Worthington’s model (comprising only three steps [REA] recall the hurt, empathize with the one who hurt them, offer an altruistic gift for forgiveness,) showed small gains in forgiveness after brief (1-2 hour) interventions. Furthermore, psychophysiological data indicate that adopting the REA steps after an offense leads to lower physiological stress responses and greater perceived control than does holding a grudge. Studies that tested the full REACH model i.e. (recall the hurt, empathize with the one who hurt them, offer an altruistic gift for forgiveness, make a commitment to forgive and hold on to the forgiveness) in 6-8 hour psycho-educational interventions produced “moderate to strong effects for helping participants overcome their unforgiveness across time. The outcome of the psycho-educational intervention resulted in increased level of forgiveness, which led to feelings of happiness and joy.

Luskin (2006) carried out a series of research studies from his Stanford Forgiveness Projects that investigated the effectiveness of a group psycho-education forgiveness methodology. The intervention uses a combination of narrative therapy (telling and reclaiming one’s stories), guided imagery to create conditions where forgiveness of an offender is more likely. 55 college students were randomly assigned
to either an immediate treatment condition or to the waitlist control for treatment control condition. Students were recruited who had an unresolved interpersonal hurt with someone in their life. The treatment condition consisted of one; 50 minute session intervention per week for 6 week period and a subsequent 2 month follow up period. Findings revealed that treatment group showed significant reduced hurt, anger complimented in significant increases in compassion, forgiveness and happiness. Follow up months of the intervention period showed stable gains.

Lundahl, Taylor, Stevenson & Roberts (2008) carried out a study to investigate the impact of forgiveness interventions designed to help individuals who have suffered because of betrayals, offenses, or victimization. Forgiveness is believed to be a mechanism through which individuals can experience increases in hope and positive emotions and relief from negative emotions, cognitions, and behaviors. Fourteen published reports of process-based forgiveness interventions that included a comparison group are meta-analyzed. Results found that samples that received forgiveness interventions forgave more (effect size = .82) and enjoyed increased positive affect (effect size = .81) and self-esteem (effect size = .60) and less negative affect (effect size = .54). Such gains were largely maintained at follow-up periods. Individually delivered programs are superior to group delivery.

Sin & Lyubomirsky (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of 51 independent positive psychology intervention (PPI) studies which demonstrated a significant increase in well-being (49 studies; r = .29; Cohen’s d = medium). The interventions that were included in the meta-analysis focused on cultivating positive feelings, behaviours or cognitions, as opposed to interventions that addressed pathology or deficiencies. The results demonstrated that it is possible to enhance well-being via PPIs. The duration of the interventions varied from 1-week to over 12 weeks, with greater well-being effects for longer interventions. This effect is possibly due to participants having more time to practice the interventions and therefore process and integrate them into their life, creating lasting changes in cognition and/or behaviour (i.e., creating new habits). This idea is supported by several other studies that found the more effort put into practicing an intervention, the greater the improvement in well-being (Lyubomirsky, Dickerhoof, Boehm, & Sheldon, 2008; Seligman et al.,
A second moderator of effectiveness identified by Sin and Lyubomirsky (2009) is the intervention format; they found face-to-face individual delivery was most effective, followed by group delivery, and then self-administered interventions.

Sandage & Worthington (2011) carried out a study on undergraduate student volunteers (N = 97). They were randomly assigned to one of two six-hour forgiveness psychoeducational seminars or to a wait-list control group. Based on attachment theory, forgiveness was conceptualized in relation to the care-giving behavioral system (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Both the Empathy Forgiveness Seminar and the Self-enhancement Forgiveness Seminar facilitated forgiveness to a greater degree than the wait-list control group at post-test and six-week follow-up. Empathy mediated changes in participants' forgiveness scores regardless of seminar condition. Shame-proneness was negatively related to post-test forgiveness scores and guilt-proneness was positively related to forgiveness at post-test and follow-up.

Recently, Wade, Hoyt, Kidwell, & Worthington (2014) conducted a meta-analysis which aimed to help people forgive others and to examine moderators of treatment effects. Studies reported quantitative data on forgiveness of a specific hurt following treatment by a professional with an intervention designed explicitly to promote forgiveness. Random effects meta-analyses were conducted using k = 53 posttreatment effect sizes (N = 2,323) and k = 41 follow-up effect sizes (N = 1,716) from a total of 54 published and unpublished research reports. Results revealed that participants receiving explicit forgiveness treatments reported significantly greater forgiveness than participants not receiving treatment (Δ_+ = 0.56 [0.43, 0.68]) and participants, receiving alternative treatments (Δ_+ = 0.45 [0.21, 0.69]). Also, forgiveness treatments resulted in greater changes in depression, anxiety, and hope than no-treatment conditions. Findings concluded that using theoretically grounded forgiveness interventions is a sound choice for helping clients to deal with past offenses and helping them achieve resolution in the form of forgiveness.

6.3.3 EFFECT OF STRENGTH BUILDING PROGRAM (SBP) ON HAPPINESS

The hub of the present research was to evaluate the efficacy of Strength Building Program which consisted of building two strengths of character i.e.
‘Gratitude’ and ‘Forgiveness’ illustrating an increasing focus at fostering happiness among youth. As with any valuable goal, the achievement of happiness takes design and work. It requires the application of a finely cultivated set of skills (strengths) toward a carefully constructed intention. In this view, an important caveat in the present study is the development and application of these two strengths that help facilitate the shift in mind-set necessary for achieving happiness.

The results of the present study revealed that ANCOVA for happiness was significant during both time-1 and time-2 evaluations (F= 8.739, p<.001) and (F= 8.455, p<.001) as shown in table-15. This indicates that the experimental group who were subjected to Strength Building Program showed a significant improvement in happiness scores as compared to the control group who were not subjected to the Strength Building Program during time-1 evaluation and maintained it during time-2 evaluation. The effect size of the program for time-1 and time-2 evaluation was 0.58 and 0.67 respectively (shown in table-18). It implies that average youth in the experimental group who was exposed to Strength Building Program was better of than 73 % and 76% of control group participants who were not exposed to the program, both during time-1 and time-2 evaluation. There has also been an enhancement in the effect size from time-1 to time-2 evaluation, i.e. additional 3 % were supplemented to time-2 evaluation, indicating that participants’ benefitted from indulging in both ‘gratitude’ and ‘forgiveness’ activities and that the program’s impact on the training group made them concerned with ethics, morals, values and virtues, and to which we had often forgetting that these good-things are simply and ultimately means of facilitating happiness.

The hypotheses stating that “Happiness among youth in experimental group would significantly increase from pre to post-training period as compared to the control group” and “Increase in happiness would be maintained for both post-training sequential evaluation i.e. from time-1 to time-2” was confirmed.

The researcher in the following sections attempts to contemplate on reasons for the influence of ‘gratitude’ and ‘forgiveness’ on happiness of youth.

The first and foremost evidence comes from the fact that the initial sample comprised of selected youth with low character strengths of gratitude and forgiveness
and coincidentally it was found that their score on happiness was also low at this initial stage of forming groups for Strength Building Program. Interestingly, later on after the post intervention, it was seen that the selected sample not only showed an enhancement in gratitude and forgiveness but also an augmentation in their happiness scores among the experimental group was seen. The results clearly imply that the Strength Building Program framed for the present research had the potential not only to enhance the said strengths but the enhancement also lead to an increase in happiness. Thus, it can be said that level of gratitude and forgiveness are causal factors for level of happiness and most importantly when these strengths are cultivated and nurtured, they possess the potential to boost one’s happiness. Therefore, low gratitude and forgiveness connote less happiness and an enhanced gratitude and forgiveness foster happiness.

Secondly, further deeper analysis of the results gives us an insight that gratitude and forgiveness are two sides of social coin i.e. a person filled with gratitude cannot help but forgive and if a person is capable of forgiving others, then, he/she is much more able to be grateful. Peterson & Seligman, 2004 classified six virtues (clusters) consisting of twenty four different strengths that are ultimately important factors in achieving sustained happiness (Seligman, 2002). They have categorized character strength of ‘gratitude’ under virtue ‘transcendence’ i.e. in essence the belief in a purpose or meaning beyond oneself and ‘forgiveness’ under the virtue ‘temperance’ i.e. with which comes self-control, prudence, humility and modesty. However, recently psychologists have reached a consensus that strengths of gratitude and forgiveness be conceptualized together under the same cluster or factor. Hence, the findings of the present study are in line with the conceptualizations proposed by Macdonald, Bore & Munro, 2008 who have identified four factors on analysis of twenty four character strengths and clubbed gratitude and forgiveness under the factor of ‘Niceness’ and more recently Brdar & Kashdan (2010) adds gratitude and forgiveness to ‘Interpersonal’ factor thereby reflecting the importance of the shared impact of gratitude and forgiveness on relationship processes and well-being (happiness being its component).
Furthermore, beyond gratitude and forgiveness being in interpersonal in nature, its common focus on ‘goodwill’ makes them strongly related as gratitude is experienced when you receive others goodwill toward you whereas forgiveness is experienced when you give goodwill to others. Though these strengths are complementary to each other i.e. forgiveness being the flip side of gratitude but cumulative development of the two further promotes a constructive response that facilitates the development of positive emotions such as joy, contentment and happiness (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002).

Thirdly, the findings throw light on the underlying mechanisms that lead positive activities to successfully improve happiness. The results clearly indicate that activities on the strengths of ‘gratitude’ and ‘forgiveness’ is a potentially important route to enhanced life experiences and self-concepts thereby contributing to an enhanced level of happiness - for example, youth whose invested efforts (firstly, the effort put in to initiate an activity and secondly, the effort needed to carry out and maintain that activity) led to a positive mind-set and now they thought of acting upon them because those activities proves worthwhile, meaningful and enjoyable to them. Furthermore, ‘gratitude’ and ‘forgiveness’ exercises had the capacity to create positive “bottom-up” and “top-down” influences on happiness which posit that global judgements of well-being (happiness) are made by summating across one’s recent positive experiences (Sheldon, Elliot, Kim & Kasser, 2001). However, these positive experiences are likely to transform the intentional activities (consciously performed) to a habitual activity (unconsciously part of daily life). Thus, now, it can be alleged that Strength Building Program stimulated positive thoughts (cognitive), lead to an increase in positive emotions (affective), which in turn triggered positive behaviours (connative) among youth. Therefore, increase in positive emotions triggered by eight positive activities on ‘gratitude’ and ‘forgiveness’ mediated the relationship between the activity and the subsequent improvements in resources such as well-being and happiness.

Fourthly, results further highlight the extent to which ‘gratitude’ exercises reaped benefits and produced sustained gains in happiness among youth. The act of engaging in expressing gratitude heightened sense of interdependence and
cooperation and a perception to view them as more confident, efficacious, and contended about their ability to appreciate. Most importantly, it helped youth to construe life events more positively and satisfy basic human need for relatedness thereby contributing to enhanced happiness. Similarly, practicing exercises on ‘forgiveness’ on regular basis produced a steady stream of experiences which operated as an adaptive coping strategy where by which youth positively reinterpreted problematic life experiences, bolster coping resources, and strengthen social relationships. It suggests that forgiving one’s offender may be one way to generate an upward spiral towards recovery from wrongdoing and hence greater happiness. Thus, the findings clearly imply that though gratitude and forgiveness possess distinct attributions yet share a common and fundamental component of empathy and philanthropic behaviour (Karremans, Van Lange & Holland, 2005). Beyond the “head” strengths (love of learning, open mindedness, perspective) that are intellectual and self-oriented, the present findings showed that strengths of (gratitude and forgiveness), are the strengths of the “heart”, i.e. ‘emotional’ and ‘interpersonal’ in nature, that plays an important role and are the key factors in determining youth’s happiness level (Park & Peterson, 2010).

Fifthly, the findings raise an important point that happiness may be influenced by the norms and traditions of the culture to which the participants of the program resides to. Our culture being collectivistic in nature, considers social support to be an important factor that can aid an individual in initiating and maintaining a positive activity (Putnam, 2000) and also lays emphasis on relationships and relationships are a cause of great distress and of great happiness and majority of qualitative studies have found that the success of interpersonal relationships is an important factor in people’s lay understanding of happiness across eastern and western cultures (Delle Fave, Brdar, Freire, Vella-Brodrick & Wissing, 2011; Pflug, 2009). Further, ‘gratitude’ and ‘forgiveness’ provide relatedness need-satisfaction and are said to be interpersonal strengths which help strengthen our relationships with our significant others. Likewise, Uchida, Norasakkunkit & Kitayama (2004) found evidence that in Asian countries (Eastern culture) the key word for happiness is relationship or togetherness and they ground their life satisfaction more in interpersonal factors than intrapersonal factors (Suh, Diener, Oishi & Triandis, 1998). Another most intriguing
aspect of the our findings is that it defies the research evidence which states that Westerners gain more in positive activity (namely expressing gratitude and optimism) than Easterners (Boehm et al, 2012).

It is vital to mention here that the results of the present study can be a support of The Sustainable Happiness Model (SHM) (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schkade, 2005b) which states that happiness is affected by three factors i.e. first being genetic or heredity factor (S), which is the original set point that a person returns to, after the process of hedonic adaptation. It accounts for 50% of the population’s variance. Second, life circumstances factor (C), which is the constant reality for any person and it accounts for 10% of the population’s variance. This leaves as much as 40% of the variance for the third factor namely, the intentional activities factor (V), which supports the idea that volitional efforts offer a promising possible route to longitudinal increases in happiness (Lyubomirsky, 2011).

Figure 18
Theoretical framework for the present study

SHM argues that increasing one’s set point and changing one’s life circumstances are unfruitful, since they are typically stable. In contrast, the intentional activities are the most promising means, not only to attain happiness, but a sustainable degree of happiness (i.e. by overcoming the hedonic adaptation phenomenon). This is because intentional daily activities account for a considerable (40%) of individual differences. The model proposed that intentional activities can be
cognitive (such as holding a grateful outlook towards one’s life), behavioural (such as writing a gratitude letter or an apology), or motivational (such as pursuing a goal). The benefits of intentional activities are that they are actually variable and tend to have beginning and ending points (i.e. they are episodic). These two characteristics alone have the potential to work against adaptation. These activities allow people to act on their circumstances (i.e. make them better), rather than simply reacting to them. More recently, Lyubomirsky et al, 2011 also emphasize that happiness can be increased through simple intentional positive activities such as expressing gratitude or practicing kindness. Hence, this last factor, of the model i.e. positive “intentional activities” has been the linchpin of recent research efforts and also served as the focus of the current study.

Presented below are some theoretical conceptualizations that support the results of the present study:

Deci & Ryan (2000), theory of Self Determination states that practicing positive activities (such as gratitude and forgiveness activities) may boost optimal well-being (happiness) by satisfying innate psychological needs, such as autonomy (i.e. feeling that one’s actions are under control), relatedness (i.e. feeling close and connected to others) and competence (i.e. feeling effective and skilled). The daily feelings of competence and relatedness induced by activity are important sources of judgements of well-being (happiness being its component). Indeed an experiment was conducted which found that the effect of expressing gratitude or optimism on improvements in well-being was mediated by the feelings of autonomy and relatedness, but not competence (Boehm & Lyubomirsky, 2011).

The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions (Fredrickson, 2001) underscores the ways in which positive affective experiences are essential elements of optimal functioning. The theory suggests that positive emotions: (a) broaden people’s attention and thinking (b) undo lingering negative emotional arousal (c) fuel psychological resilience (d) build consequential personal resources (e) trigger upward spirals towards greater well being in future (f) seed human flourishing. Gratitude and forgiveness produce well-being through a combination of reflection, positive emotions
and adaptive social behaviours. The theory carries an important message that people should create positive emotions in their own lives and in the lives of those around them, not just because doing so makes them feel good in the moment, but also because doing so transforms people for the better and sets them on paths toward flourishing, happiness and healthy longevity.

*Authentic Happiness theory* (Seligman, 2002) holds that there are three distinct kinds of happiness: The Pleasant Life, the Good Life and the Meaningful Life. The first two are subjective, but the third is partly objective and belongs to serve what is larger and more worthwhile than the just the self's pleasures and desires. In this way, Authentic Happiness synthesizes all three traditions: The Pleasant Life is about happiness in Hedonism's sense, the Good Life is about happiness in Desire's sense, and the Meaningful Life is about happiness in Objective List's sense. To top it off, Authentic Happiness further allows for the "Full Life," a life that satisfies all three criteria of happiness. Life will only appear meaningful to the individual, and will only be satisfying in the long term, if his/her goals or priorities in life are pro-social (altruistic) and are perceived to have intrinsic value, rather than being purely self-oriented and materialistic. *Effective engagement in pursuit of these goals/priorities is hypothesized to benefit from the development of various character strengths, which include gratitude, humility and forgiveness.*

*The PERMA Model* (Seligman, 2011) is a well being theory that highlights five elements which help in experiencing well-being and satisfaction with life. Together, they form the foundation upon which a happy and flourishing life is build. “PERMA” stands for Positive Emotions (P), which have an impact that goes far beyond bringing a smile to our faces. Positive Psychology research has identified certain skills and exercises that can boost our experience of positive emotions. We can learn to feel them more strongly, and to experience them for longer. Cultivating positive emotions makes it easier to experience them naturally. Engagement (E), i.e. we don't thrive and feel useless when we are doing nothing, but when we engage with our life and work, we become absorbed. In Positive Psychology, 'flow' describes a state of blissful immersion in the present moment. *It involves identifying and cultivating personal strengths, virtues and talents. When we identify our own greatest*
strengths (such as gratitude and forgiveness) we can consciously engage in work and activities that make us feel most confident, productive and valuable. Positive Relationships (R), i.e. key to all relationships is balance. It is not enough to surround ourselves with 'friends' - we must also listen and share, make an effort to maintain our connections, and work to make those connections strong. Meaning (M), i.e. people who belong to a community and pursue shared meaningful goals are happier than people who don't. It is also very important to feel that the work we do is consistent with our personal values and beliefs. From day to day, if we believe our work is worthwhile, we feel a general sense of well-being and confidence that we are using our time and our abilities for good. Lastly, Achievement/Accomplishment (A) i.e. creating and working toward goals helps us anticipate and build hope for the future. Past successes make us feel more confident and optimistic about future attempts.

The results of the present study certainly support the research literature concerning strategies that can be utilized to enhance aspects of well-being (happiness). For example, positive activities like “writing gratitude letters” (Boehm, Lyubomirsky & Sheldon, 2011; Lyubomirsky, Dickerhoof, Boehm & Sheldon, 2011; Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005), “counting blessings” (Emmons & McCullough, 2003; Lyubomirsky et al, 2005b; Seligman, et al, 2005), “performing acts of kindness” (Della Porta, Bao & Lyubomirsky, 2012; Lyubomirsky, 2005b; Sheldon Boehm & Lyubomirsky, in press), “cultivating strengths” (Seligman et al, 2005) and “visualizing ideal future selves” (Boehm et al, 2011; King, 2001; Layous, Nelson & Lyubomirsky, 2011) have been found to improve well-being in multiple randomized controlled intervention studies.

A metaanalysis conducted by Lyubomirsky, King & Diener, (2005) on 225 studies found that happiness precede, correlate with and cause many beneficial outcomes such as more prosocial behavior, more satisfying relationships with others and better health. Thus, a large and persuasive body of work suggests that being happy does not just make the individual feel good, but benefits himself, his family, and his community in myriad ways. The findings were also aligned and in support of Sustainable Happiness Model. Sheldon & Lyubomirsky, (2006a) conducted a study which followed students over the course of 12 weeks and asked them to track positive
changes in their lives – both those that entailed beginning new activities (e.g., pursuing an important new goal) and those that entailed improvements in their life circumstances (e.g., obtaining a new roommate). The results revealed that activity changes are associated with bigger and longer-lasting increases in happiness than circumstantial changes. Also providing evidence for the sustainable happiness model are numerous studies in which participants are instructed to engage in a positive activity, such as performing acts of kindness or writing gratitude letters.

A recent meta-analysis of the benefits of positive interventions revealed that such activities typically show a moderate effect size (mean $r = .30$; Sin & Lyubomirsky, 2009), suggesting that performing them leads to robust improvements in well-being. Likewise, Lyubomirsky & Dickerhoof, (2010) reported in their study that participants who practiced gratitude or optimism became happier over time, and this effect was mediated by their ability to derive positive emotions from their daily experiences and to find those experiences satisfying. Similarly, in another study by Della Porta & Lyubomirsky, (2011), findings suggest that practicing happiness strategies (e.g., expressing gratitude to family members) leads people to derive joy and satisfaction from their daily experiences (e.g., enjoying spending time with family), the more likely those strategies are to foster happiness. Thus, the ability of positive activities to successfully increase and sustain positive emotions is an important factor in determining and sustaining later well-being.

Parallel trends were reported by Lyubomirsky et al, (2011) where participants who deliberately chose to complete “happiness-increasing” strategies (rather than neutral ones) and who put more effort into them (as assessed by judges) showed bigger gains in well-being. However, attributes of the person engaging in the activity also matter. People to benefit from a positive activity have to effort fully engage in (Layous, Lee et al, 2012; Lyubomirsky et al, 2011), be motivated to become happier (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Lyubomirsky et al, 2011), and believe that their efforts will pay off (Ajzen, 1991; Bandura, 1986; Layous, Nelson & Lyubomirsky, 2013).

Nelson & Lyubomirsky (2012), helped to uncover the present findings from their research paper titled “Finding Happiness: Tailoring Positive Activities for
Optimal Well-Being Benefits” on ‘how’ and ‘why’ positive activities works effectively and yields an enhanced level of happiness. (a) The principle of self-concordance leads to maximize the utility of positive activities and participants showed greater commitment to performing exercises when intervention is more congruent with their values and needs. Self-concordance is enhanced when intervention is tailored and a rationale is given related to individuals’ values (Sheldon, 2004). Also, activities that are timed in a way that generate the greatest boost in positive emotion and minimize boredom when striving to optimize happiness (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002). (b) Similarly, Tkach (2006) reported that the degree to which participants received positive reactions from others after performing positive activities is another important mediator of intervention effectiveness. (c) Participants who were motivated to become happier and mustered effort towards their goal benefitted more from such activities (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2010; Lyubomirsky et al, 2011).

Similar trends were reported by Lyubomirsky et al, 2008 from their research paper “How do simple positive activities increase well-being’ where in engaging in different types of activities (variety) by changing up a particular positive strategy is emphasized in order to boost happiness (Parks, Della Porta, Pierce, Zilea & Lyubomirsky, in press). Variety matters not only to the practice of a single positive activity, but also to the practice of multiple activities. Indeed, participants in the naturalistic study reported performing almost eight different positive activities simultaneously (Parks et al, in press), and online participants obtained the biggest benefits when practicing two or four concurrent activities (Schueller & Parks, 2012). Further evidence suggests that certain positive activities might be good starter activities. U.S participants who began a 6-week happiness intervention by writing gratitude letters increased more in well-being than those who began by performing acts of kindness (Layous, Lee, Choi & Lyubomirsky, 2013). Expressing gratitude first might have served as a ‘trigger’ that precipitated as an immediate upward spiral of positive emotions and galvanized people to ‘pay it forward’, thereby exerting more effort and ultimately reaping greater benefits.
Closing Remarks:

The present research sought to examine the effectiveness of Strength Building Program which comprised of activities on ‘gratitude’ and ‘forgiveness’ that focussed to enhance youth’s lesser developed character strengths. Also, the present study worked on the lines of West where researchers have found gratitude and forgiveness clubbed together to be highly effective among young and adult participants (Chan, 2010; Wnuk, Marcinokowski & Kalisz, 2010; Hill & Allemand, 2011; Breen et al, 2011; Szczesniak & Soares, 2011). The research further aimed to explore how these two strengths together effect youth’s happiness by converging and diverging at cognitive and behavioural level and if inculcation of these strengths offer any positive psychological processes that leads to an augmentation among study participant’s happiness level?

It is worth noting that prior to the program; screening of youth through pilot study was carried out to identify students who are low on character strengths. Approximately 65 to 70 % of students were low on both gratitude and forgiveness and coincidentally they were also found with low levels of happiness. In nutshell, it can be said that the findings contribute in the following ways:

The findings of the present study indicate that exercises on ‘gratitude’ in combination with ‘forgiveness’ incorporated in Strength Building Program uniquely influenced Indian youth. The exercises on ‘gratitude’ and ‘forgiveness’ confirmed as a method beneficial to study participants for potential change in happiness. Feedback from participants regarding imbibing new skills on these strengths indicates that participants gained as they were motivated and willing to put forth effort and persistence towards the goal of the program. Related to the previous point, ‘counting blessings versus burdens’ and ‘writing an apology: asking for forgiveness’ contributed to the validity of intentional activity. The findings suggest that the effect of ‘gratitude’ and ‘forgiveness’ activities was seen both right after the program and as long as a month subsequent to it, thereby indicating that the underlying gain from these intentional activities was not just immediate but also had the capacity to procure an extended effect on their happiness. Lastly, in nutshell it can be said that
performing various exercises during the program produced need-satisfying experiences that jump-started an upward spiral of positive emotions among youth. Furthermore, repeatedly practicing these exercises with commitment even after termination of the program had an encouraging effect on not just the above said strengths but also added to their happiness level.