RATIONALE, AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Adolescence is period of great joy, excitement and optimism during which the delights of autonomy, intimacy and the future are fresh and possibilities are created for happiness, success and psychological growth throughout the remainder of life. Adolescence is an age bubbling with energy and it is in this transitional phase, that youth’s energies have to be channelized towards positive emotions in order to equip the youth with positive life skills to lead a well functioning adult life. Yet, it is considered to be the most turbulent, challenging, stressful and uncertain of all phase of life, both for youth themselves and for their parents, teachers and health professionals (Mohan, 2003).

A core debate in adolescent research has been the issue of the quality of experience during this time and it has mainly focused upon problem behaviors (Santrock, 1997). For instance, there have been volumes and volumes written upon adolescent problems like unwanted pregnancy, substance abuse, violence among youth and delinquency, suicide, eating disorders and academic difficulties (Santrock, 1997).

Recently, scholars have become increasingly interested in studying the positive aspects of human nature rather than the negative aspects (Rich, 2003). By focusing exclusively on eradication of the negative, we often risk overlooking remediable deficits of strengths that may be essential for health and well being, also the growth and maintenance of positive characteristics and behaviors may ensure the absence of the negative characteristics and behaviors (Harris and Thoresen, 2006).

Character Strengths are now receiving attention from psychologists interested in positive youth development. They may contribute to a variety of positive outcomes as well as a buffer against a variety of negative outcomes including psychological disorders.

Forgiveness has been conceptualized as an important human virtue and recently, with the advent of Positive Psychology, it has risen to major
Forgiveness issues are relevant to the contexts of marriage and dating relationships, parent-child relationships, friendships, professional relationships and others (Baskin and Enright, 2004). Therefore, it is receiving considerable attention in the psychotherapy literature with a growing number of intervention programs focusing on forgiveness as the major goal of the intervention or as a component of a broader intervention.

According to psychotherapy literature, forgiveness helps to restore relationships; release bitterness and anger heal inner emotional wounds (Di Blastio and Procter, 1993) and is being effectively used as an intervention for helping couples, families and individuals to bridge gaps created by imperfect relational processes (Hargrave and Sells, 1997).

Applied researchers seem to agree that forgiveness is a positive method of coping with a hurt or offense that primarily benefits the victim through a reorientation of emotions, thoughts and or actions toward the offender. It may be a fundamental means of conflict resolution especially for deep hurt from an unfair injury (Hope, 1987). The utility of forgiveness has also been recognized by physicians working with cancer patients and by therapists interested in anger reduction in clients (Hope, 1987). It has been argued that anger management interventions focus exclusively on the reduction of negative states and seldom get at the core forgiveness related issues that exist in many individuals who have experienced being a crime victim or who have suffered from war or social injustice, from marital infidelity or from medical mistakes. Therefore, forgiveness is also integral to emotional constructs such as anger. It allows anger and resentment to dissipate (Baskin and Enright, 2004).

Also, thoughts of revenge are among the strongest elicitors of anger and entertaining one’s grudges and thoughts of revenge lead to cardiovascular and SNS arousal that may have physical health implications (Witvliet et al , 2001). Forgiveness also relates to improved

status as a concept and has attracted a great deal of attention overseas, as it has been found to have a lot of positive implications for psychological and physical well being (Peterson and Seligman, 2004).
mental health such as reduced anxiety, reduced anger, (Thoresen et al., 1998), reduced depression and grief (Coyle and Enright, 1997) increased hopefulness (Al Mabuk et al., 1995) increased well being (Rye and Pargament, 2002). Forgivers are more adjusted, securely attached, other oriented and unselfish (Tangney et al., 1999).

Having realized the significance of forgiveness in leading a virtuous life, one feels severely handicapped due to lack of studies in the area, especially in the non-western samples.

In a collectivistic society like India, good relationships with the members of the group(s) are highly valued and forgiveness may be conceived as one of the most valuable skills for maintaining harmony. Also, it constitutes a coping strategy that allows relief from resentment towards a member or several members of the group. This may considerably ease life, where contacts with other members of the group are conceived as an everyday necessity (Suwartono et al., 2007). Studying forgiveness may allow us to understand not only factors associated with the developmental course of aggression and distress but also pathways toward health (Denham et al., 2005).

In studying the social and emotional development, researchers have focused more on how things go wrong and how they go right. There is a diffused body of research on pathways whereby children and adolescents become motivated, directed, socially competent, compassionate and psychologically vigorous adults.

Also, psychologists investigating this construct have focused mainly on middle and late adolescents in particular because this is the time of individuation and reflection regarding the family. Hurts encountered in childhood now become conscious and therefore the emotional pain can be acute during this developmental period. (Al-Mabul et al., 1995). Furthermore, youth violence is an increasing concern in our society. An important element in these tragic situations seems to be inability to resolve conflict, which might deescalate if forgiveness was involved as many
adolescents involved in violence say they were motivated by anger and revenge (Pfefferbaum et al., 1999).

As Duck (1983) noted, friendships in adolescence provide the healthy basis for belonging, communication, a sense of worth and altruism. Repair in conflicted friendships is important for continued growth in adolescence and forgiveness is one strategy for such repair (Brenton, 1974). Especially when a close friendship has been unjustly ended by a partner, an adolescent may be at risk for psychological difficulties (Duck and Lea, 1982). Early adolescence is a time of greater self-centredness than later adolescence, as seen in such constructs as adolescent egocentrism (Lapsley et al., 1988), identity formation (Waterman, 1982), peer conformity (Brown et al., 1986), and social perspective-taking (Selman, 1980). Such developmental findings would suggest that early adolescents will be lower on the forgiveness progression than older adolescents.

More specifically, the adolescents’ understanding of forgiveness seems to develop from a revengeful to an external, to the beginnings of an internal forgiveness pattern. Junior high students are in a transitional period between revengeful and external forgiveness, relying more on the use of compensation and peer pressure in effecting forgiveness than college students. On the other hand, college students are consolidated in external forgiveness with some movement toward internal forgiveness, relying more on principles of beneficence in forgiving than the junior high school participants. This pattern is consistent with developmental patterns reported in the United States by Enright et al. (1989). Perhaps the greatest challenge is both to provide support and encourage the youth to more complexly view forgiveness, not as a passive waiting game, but as an active stance of beneficence in the face of deep, unjust hurt. An important implication is that an adolescent’s complexity of reasoning about hypothetical situations involving forgiveness relates directly to how problems are solved with actual friends (Park and Enright, 1997).
As adolescents progress in their understanding of forgiveness, they may better be able to take the lead in repairing a damaged friendship. Studies have shown that there are developmental trends for adolescents’ understanding of forgiveness. However, in order to generalize developmental progressions cross-culturally, longitudinal research is needed with diverse samples. The study also showed that one’s forgiveness pattern is related to how one tries to solve real life conflicts with friends. This supports Droll's (1984) argument that acquiring an appropriate forgiveness schema is the first necessary step in learning how to forgive (Park and Enright, 1997).

Also forgiveness research may assist in developing interventions to improve peer relationships and deter negative long-term outcomes. Though forgiveness is important at every stage of life, but to study it at a developmental stage of adolescence becomes more important, in order to enable today’s youth to make use of this dynamic approach of forgiveness in stabilizing themselves and their relationships. Therefore, keeping this in view, middle and late adolescents have been studied in the present investigation.

Therefore, the present study aimed to identify correlates of Interpersonal Forgiveness in relation to Personality, Religiosity and Emotions.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main objectives of the present study were:

1. To identify the correlates of Interpersonal Forgiveness in terms of Personality, Religiosity, Spiritual Well Being, Positive Mental States Viz Happiness, Optimism, Hope, Gratitude and Negative Mental States Viz Anger Experienced And Expressed, Subjective Well Being, Psychological Well Being, Mental Health and Perceived Health Status.

2. To study gender differences in Interpersonal Forgiveness and its correlates.