Gratitude, Altruism and Forgiveness among Young and Middle Aged Working Women

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The current study was conducted to determine the relationship of gratitude, altruism and forgiveness among young and middle aged working women. It also aimed to find out that gratitude and altruism are significant predictors of forgiveness. The sample was based on 100 working women, among those 50 were young and 50 were middle aged. The age range of young participants was 18 to 34 years while that of middle aged was 35-65 years with M= 34.37, SD= 9.63 of the total sample. Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Thompson, 2005), The Gratitude Inventory (Emmons, 2002) and Helping Attitude scale (Nickell, 1998) were used for measuring the three traits and the psychometric properties of these scales were satisfactory reliability. The results indicated that gratitude, altruism and forgiveness are positively correlated and both gratitude and altruism are significant predictors of forgiveness. Furthermore, significant effects of age and marital status were found on the traits of gratitude, altruism and forgiveness among working women. The results of the study also indicated that young working women showed more gratitude, altruism and forgiveness as compared to middle aged working women. The study will have its implications in the human resource management departments of different organizations to establish good and positive relations among their colleagues.

Keywords: Gratitude, altruism, forgiveness, young and middle aged working women.

Positive psychology is an emerging field of psychology which helps to remove negativity from the lives of individuals, direct their emotions and channelize their thoughts on positive tracks, hence, helping them live optimistic and happy lives leading to psychological wellbeing (Frederickson, 2004). It also helps in facilitating the environment of a workplace and even of a society as well (Watkins, 2004).

The present era is the era of feminism and women of the present time are multi-talented. The house hold chores are now not the only activities of females but they are leading professionally in all areas of life. A healthy involvement of females in the labor force reflects the inclusive behavior in organizations of many leading economies, like Italy and Japan. These countries are very much concerned in providing educated and skilled women, so that the economy gets boost up in little incremental expenses (Sachs, 2013). If we look at the past five decades, women have prospered professionally. They are now enjoying all those jobs which were at first just confined with male gender. They now work as police, fire fighters, engineers, managers, etc (Jacobs & Linda, 2005). Women, now, are moving closer to men in their accessibility towards reasonable jobs (Floro & Meurs, 2009). Women, these days, no more retain the tags of 'fragile' or 'handle with care', as they have become as stiff and as hard as men. Women of the present moment are quite efficient in managing their duties and they deal with both their houses and work places very positively.

Females in every sphere of life need to develop some traits which are essential in organizational settings. For instance, gratitude, altruism and forgiveness. The traits of gratitude, altruism and forgiveness are inter-related and are positive correlates of each other. An altruistic act by an individual can develop a sense of gratitude in the other and where there is altruism, forgiveness can prevail comfortably. This study was conducted to determine the relationship among these traits in working women of two different age groups.

Gratitude
Basically the word 'gratitude' has been driven from a Latin concept 'gratia' which in itself carries variants of gratefulness, grace and graciousness (Emmons, McCullough & Tsang, 2003). Gratitude is something that emerges out in a situation in which an individual has gained some sort of benefits from another individual, who had acted in a manner that was either costly to the doer, valuable for the benefiter or has been rendered intentionally (Emmons, 2005). Sometimes, the benefits can also be gained from a source that might be non-

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human (Coffman, 1996). For example, a man whose life was saved by his dog can also feel the sense of gratitude for it (Synder & Lopez, 2007). Streng (1989) gave a definition of gratitude in spiritual terms, i.e. in this attitude of gratitude people recognize that they are connected to each other in a mysterious and miraculous way that is not completely determined by physical powers, but is connected to a larger, or transcendent context (Synder & Lopez, 2002). Moreover, the episode and articulation of gratitude may have significant effects on behavior in the moral domains (Lopez, 2013). However, according to Bryant (1989) and Langston (1994), gratitude taps the tendency for appreciation and develops a new distinctive sensation to routine life and experiences (Synder & Lopez, 2007).

McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons and Larson gave a theory on gratitude which was based on three postulates. According to them, gratitude is a moral affect, which means it has moral forerunners and results. They submitted that by experiencing gratitude, a person is compelled or motivated to behave in a pro-social manner and get a spark of energy to maintain moral behaviors. Whereas, experiencing gratitude the individual who has gained the benefits keeps himself from acting in interpersonal catastrophic ways. In their postulates, they referred gratitude as: **(i) a *moral barometer*,** i.e. gratitude provide the people with an affective readout that steer the perception that other people have dealt with them in a way that is pro-social.;**(ii) *moral motive*** which means, gratitude compel individuals to act pro-socially because in past, they themselves have been recipients of other individuals' pro-social acts; and **(iii) *moral reinforce*** i.e., gratitude uplift pro-social acts and behavior by reinforcing them for the good acts they had committed in past (Lopez, 2013).

Trivers (1971) gave the hypotheses that the emotion of gratitude has been appointed to modulate human responses to altruistic moves and the emotion is alive to cost/benefit ratio of such sort of moves (McCullough, Kimeldorf & Cohen, 2008). Schwartz (1967) stated that gratitude is like 'inertia' i.e. it is a force that causes relationship to maintain a positive orientation (McCullough, Emmons, Kilpatrick & Larson, 2001). Mayo (2011) also suggested that forgiveness helps in mental satisfaction of both the transgressor and the victim.

Altruism

The second trait which was considered for study is altruism. It is an important positive correlate of gratitude. For many centuries, altruism has initiated debates among famous philosophers and splendid thinkers like Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes, Nietzsche, Hume, Kant and many more (Lopez, 2013). Altruism is defined as any action or behavior the aim of which is to help or benefiting other individuals (Synder & Lopez, 2007). It actually is a type of motivation for any living being, mostly humans, providing benefits to another (Batson, Ahmad, Lishner & Tsang, 2002). Wilson (1975) defines altruism as a behavior in which an individual gets involve in self-destruction for the sake of comforting others (Piliavin & Chrang, 1990). Altruism can simply be stated as helping others or lending a helping hand to someone who needs help. It can either be self rewarding, i.e. a person who is helping another person in need might do this for personal satisfaction or social appraisal, or can be carried out of empathetic feelings towards the individual in need. Some of the recent studies have stressed on the possibility that motives behind altruistic behaviors towards unknown individuals are identifiable and can be measured, of which the more interesting are mental mechanisms, some of which are learnt socially and others are innate in human nature (Milkulincer, Shaver, Gillath & Nitzberg, 2005).

Lishner and Stocks used the term *'Altruism'* to explain two different processes which are *behavioral altruism*, which means helping behavior that either is very expensive to the one who helps or serves no benefit at all for the benefactor; and second is *psychological altruism,* which means that helper helps just to provide benefits to the one being helped. However, the former kind of altruism is only significant among researchers who aim to study non- human beings, while the latter form of altruism is popular among philosophers and psychologists, i.e. those who intend to study human beings (Lopez, 2013).

The Empathy-Altruism Hypothesis

This hypothesis was proposed by Batson (1991), according to this, feeling empathy for a person who needs or demands help stimulate a desire or motive to cause an increment in that individual's prosperity, security and comfort (Lopez, 2013; Synder & Lopez, 2007). The concept behind this hypothesis and psychological altruism is same, as both state that altruism is helping the other without any personal interest or expecting a reward. And if the help is being done with some personal interest, i.e. if the helper helps for his own benefits then it is considered as the second view point than empathy-altruism hypothesis, which is *egoistic alternatives to the empathy-altruism hypothesis* (Lishner & Shocks, 2013).

The helping behavior is considered altruistic only if the motivation behind is to provide benefits to others, whereas, if the motivation at the back is for the helpers own satisfaction and security, then it is not altruistic but egoistic (Batson, Ahmad, Lishner & Tsang, 2002).

The Pseudo-Altruistic Approach

This approach has been a very powerful and leading force in psychological theory. This approach is defined as that the altruistic behavior is eventually egoistically-motivated, which means that the ultimate goal of the helping behavior is for helper's own interest and advantage (Feigin, Owens, & Smith 2014). The helping behavior may be carried out because of three things, (i) self-benefits, (ii) aversive arousal and (iii) punishment avoidance (Lopez, 2013). The rewards expected can be self- satisfaction and increase in one's own self-esteem. The rewards are if not intended then the incorporation of intrinsic motivations to sponsor others may not be victorious (Feigin, Owens & Smith, 2014).

Emmerik and Jawahar (2005) found that women spend three times more time in helping others than males do. They also concluded that women get more involved in helping others as compared to men. In another study, Heilman and Chen (2005) found that women are more altruistic when it comes to the altruistic behavior in organization. The results of their study suggested that altruism is less of an option but a compulsion for working women. Nelson (1999) stated that true form of altruism does have an existence and it is unintentionally connected to the feelings of empathy for the loser. Eckel and Grossman (1998) found that women are more generous and helpful than men as they are the ones who donate more. Aranoff and Tedeschi (1668), Meux (1973) and, Ortmann and Tichy (1996) all found as a result of their studies that women are more cooperative, selfless and altruistic (Eckel & Grossman, 1998). Darwin (1874, pg 586) said that woman is different from man in case of mental dispositions, particularly in her excessive warmth, benevolence, fondness and less self-absorption, whereas as man enjoys competitiveness which takes towards goals and ambitions and this easily falls into the category of self-absorption (Eckel & Grossman, 1998).

Rioux and Penner (2001) found that paid employees of an organization tends to get involved in altruistic behavior. Taehee, Park and Chang (2011) stated that altruism has a very vital effect on the functioning of an organization (Chin & Chou, 2013). Yen and Neihoff (2004) altruism is said to make work system more smoothly because slow time may be distributed to crucial assignments (Chin & Chou, 2013). Cherry, Frykblom and Shogren (2002), conducted a study on the Dutch population and found that altruism in monetarily terms is highly self-interested and helping someone financially is rare among people even if the individual is highly deserving and in need of help extremely (Bekkers, 2007).

The acts of altruism keeps the workplace cool and friendly because the person who will be gaining the benefits will have a sense of gratitude and will never try to harm others. Besides, the word '*Altruism*' is not commonly heard in the working environment because while working in an organization the field is competitive and expecting altruism in workplaces is quite rare (Kanungo & Conger, 1993).

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the third trait under consideration in our study. It is an approach in which individuals suppress or extricate their natural negative reactions or responses towards the miscreant and become highly motivated to mount positive ones instead (Synder & Lopez, 2002). There is a huge bundle of definitions of forgiveness but the consensus is that it is beneficial to people (Worthington, 2005). Some people believe forgiveness to be laudable yet difficult (Worthington, Wade, & Hoyt, 2014). In the framework of positive psychology it is an important aim to make people experience forgiveness as it is one of the 24 strengths of character (Worthington, Wade, & Hoyt, 2014). Another study suggests that forgiveness is preferred over revenge in many organizational settings as viewed as restoration of justice, but only when the transgressor admits the fault is held accountable (Bradfield & Aquino, 2015).

Stone (2002) highlighted that forgiveness is appreciated by most of us these days, but it is quite rare to be seen in the organizational setting. He pointed out that the present era requires people to practice the art of forgiveness so that good employees can be retained, profits of an organization can be increased, novelty and creativity could find rooms in order to make the organization successful. He also proposed that in an unforgiving setting, it is not comforting for the individuals to express their ideas, creativity and thoughts. In his view, forgiveness gives us and our colleagues the chances to change our failures and breakdowns into success, insight and tolerance. Forgiveness if practiced gives rise to freedom of ideas and expressions and it allows individuals to

enjoy the work they have been hired for. He proposed that if we do not forgive others then we drain our energy in negatively thinking about the transgressor and the act of transgression, hence, we become unable to focus on our tasks whole heartedly and with full attention.

However, forgiveness does not involve forgetting (Lopez, 2013). Forgiveness, as a quality of social unit, may be considered as an attribute that is similar to intimacy, trust or commitment (Witvliet, 2002). Aquino, Tripp and Bies (2015) proposed that forgiveness depends upon relative hierarchical status of the transgressor. The delinquent is only forgiven if he or she is lower in rank in the organization, than the one who had been hurt. They also said that if the organization holds certain laws to deal with the delinquent then also there are chances for forgiveness to prevail.

Empathy, altruism, gratitude, closeness, commitment, satisfaction, love, humility, joy, happiness and courage are some of the determinants and positive correlates of forgiveness (Lopez, 2013; McCullough, 2000). Whereas, the negative correlates of forgiveness are hostility, vengeance, hatred and rumination (Thompson, Synder & Hoffman, 2003). Forgiveness, if prevails in an organization, will facilitate peaceful and transgression free environment. People around if do not hold grudges, can perform their tasks in a better way because all their energies and cognitions work for good.

Gratitude and Altruism

Researches have shown that gratitude generates as well as leads to pro-social behavior (Grant & Gino, 2010). The one receiving the benefits of any altruistic action will feel a sense of gratitude and hence, will indulge more in pro-social behavior. In another study, Breen, Kashdan, Lenser and Fincham (2010), states that individuals who reported high levels of gratitude and forgiveness also inclined to proclaim less anger and feelings of hostility, as well as less symptoms of depression. This helps in keeping the environment of workplace productive and facilitating.

Bartlett and DeSteno (2006) proposed that gratitude plays a very vital role in facilitating expensive helping behavior in a way different from a common or general positive condition or simple awareness of pro-social norms. Individuals, who experience gratitude more often or on regular basis, gets involved in pro-social behavior more than those who feel the gratitude less frequently. In another study Grant and Gino (2010) found that displaying the expression of gratitude, not only experience of gratitude, possess significant effects over pro-social behavior. They also suggested that if gratitude is displayed even on a few occasions this will be perceived by the helper in a sense that he or she is being valued socially, hence reinforcing pro-social behavior.

Gratitude and Forgiveness

Neto (2007) proposed that gratitude and forgiveness are interpersonal strengths and are empirically related (Rey & Extremera, 2014). Rey and Extremera (2014) found that gratitude has a positive and significant relation with forgiveness and negative correlation with motivation to revenge. Tripp and Bies (2010) conducted a study in context of revenge at workplace, in which they proposed that revenge is a part of social fabric of organizational environment which if not seen as evil, then is usually seen as irrational and forgiveness is the only way to resolve such a tension in the organizational settings.

McCullough et al (2002), in agreement with Batson (1990), proposed that forgiveness and gratitude, both are related to emotional vulnerabilities i.e. to empathic emotions that are inclined to produce increment in positive while decrease in negative effects, therefore, grateful individuals are less prone to express anger after being harmed by others (Breen, Kashdan, Lenser & Fincham, 2010). Another study conducted by Madsen, Gygi, Hammond and Plowman (2015), titled as 'Forgiveness as a Workplace Intervention: The Literature and Proposed Framework', concluded that forgiveness in organization enhances the performance of individuals and job productivity. The authors suggested the management and Human Resource Departments (HRD) to focus on practicing forgiveness in organizational settings.

Forgiveness and Altruism

Forgiveness promotes more pro-social behaviors and motivations by reducing the desire to take revenge or harm the transgressor and increases the desire to behave in a good and positive manner (Synder, & Lopez, 2007). If a person takes revenge, then the revenge is perceived more harmful than the original transgression made (Linley & Joseph, 2004). When someone forgives the person who had harmed him, the offender becomes

less negative and more pro-social with the passage of time (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). Moreover, forgiveness can also be a proclamation of altruism (Lopez, 2013).

Given such increasing cycles of retribution, it is not surprising that revenge is implicated in many of our most debasing acts as species, including homicide, suicide, terrorism, and genocide (Fincham & Kashdan, 2003). Taking revenge as mentioned earlier, is a cyclical process and it never ends from either sides, whereas, forgiveness puts a full stop to this cycle of revenge and transgression (McCullough, 2000). Forgiveness is different from other words which are confused with it, according to Enright and Coyle, like pardoning (which is a legal concept, strictly speaking, something related to law and order); condoning (which is considered as a justification of the act of transgression); excusing (which means that the harm received is because of the circumstances and situation not the responsibility of any individual or a group of individuals); forgetting (which means that the memory of the transgression lies no more in conscious awareness); and denial (totally not accepting the idea of harm occurred), and it even is different from reconciliation, i.e. rejoining a broken relationship (Synder & Lopez, 2002). Forgiveness provides good grounds for a person to recover from psychological traumas (Synder, & Lopez, 2007).

Struthers, Dupuis and Eaton (2005) stated that forgiveness is a trait that initiating to manifest promise as a health and relationship booster within the premises of the workplace. Aquino, Grover, Goldman and Folger (2015) said that forgiveness might be a trait that help repair defaced workplace relationships as a result of personal fight.

A few studies in the past have been conducted in the area of positive psychology in Pakistan. However, none of the previous studies focused on applying the concepts and phenomenon of positive psychology in workplace setting and especially for the welfare of women. This study aimed to find out the differences between young and middle aged working women on the traits of gratitude, altruism and forgiveness. It also investigated the relationship among gratitude, altruism and forgiveness; moreover, it focuses on exploring the predictability of forgiveness from altruism and gratitude in young and middle aged working women.

Hypotheses

In the light of the objectives mentioned above following hypotheses were formulated:
1. The traits of gratitude, altruism and forgiveness would be positively correlated.
2. Gratitude and altruism would be significant predictors of forgiveness.
3. Age and marital status would have a significant effect on gratitude, altruism and forgiveness of young and middle aged working women.
4. Middle aged working women would score higher on the traits of gratitude, altruism and forgiveness as compared to young working women.

Method

Participants

Cross-sectional survey method was used in order to conduct this study. The participants of this study were 100 working women, among which 50 were young and 50 were middle aged working women. The age range of young women would be 18 to 34 and of middle aged working women would be 35-65, with different education and qualification levels. The sample was collected from different places involving both public and private sector.

Table 1
Demographics Characteristics of Sample (N=100)

Variables	Categories	f (%)	M	SD
Age Range in years (18-60)			34.37	9.63
Age in Categories	Young	50(50)		
	Middle Aged	50(50)		
Marital Status	Single	50(50)		
	Married	46(46)		
	Divorced	4(4)		

Table 2.1 shows that all the participants were working females (*N=100)* of two different age groups, i.e. young (*N=50*) and middle aged (*N=50*) with different marital status.

Instruments

Three different scales were used to assess the traits of altruism, gratitude and forgiveness among young and middle aged working women.

1. Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS).
2. The Gratitude Questionnaire—Six Items Form (GQ-6).
3. The Helping Attitude Scale (HAS)

The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) was developed by Thompson, Synder and Hoffman (2005), to measure the levels of forgiveness in individuals**.** It consists of 18 items with 7 points rating ranging from "almost always false of me" to "almost always true of me". It further consists of 3 subscales that measure forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others and forgiveness of the situation subscales.

1. Forgiveness of Self : The sum of scores of item 1-6 will indicate one's self forgiveness scores.
2. Forgiveness of Others: The sum of scores of item 7-12 will indicate one's forgiveness of others' scores.
3. Forgiveness of Self: The sum of scores of item 13-18 will indicate one's forgiveness of the situation scores.

Items 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 and 17 are to be reversely scored. Total score of 93 on this scale is considered to be as an average score. The scale has a good internal reliability and the value of alpha goes up to 0.88.

The Gratitude Questionnaire—Six Items Form (GQ-6), constructed by McCullough, Emmons and Tsang (2002), measures the level of gratitude in individuals. It consists of 6 items with 7 points rating ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree", and no subscales. Among these six items, item 3 and 6 are to be reversely scored. The GQ-6 has a good internal reliability, with alphas ranging from 0.82 to 0.87. There also exist evidences about its positive correlations with forgiveness, empathy and pro-social behavior.

The Helping Attitude Scale presented by Nickell (1998), was designed to measure the feelings, beliefs and behaviors of respondents related with helping. It consists of 20 items with 5 points rating ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". It does not possess any subscales. Items 1, 5, 8, 11, 18 and 19 are reverse scored. The sum of all 20 items depict the total score and the score 60 is considered as neutral score. The scale possess a good internal reliability and it alpha approximately is 0.93

Procedure

The data were collected from different workplaces like schools, colleges, university, management departments of different organizations, clinics, hospitals, etc irrespective of the sector, either public or private, of the organization. Different organizations and different professions were considered to keep the study versatile and not bound to any specific profession or occupation. However, candidates were selected by keeping under consideration their ability to understand English language. The participants were instructed to be honest in their responses and were also made to sign consent forms. All the participants were assured that their information will be kept confidential.

Results

The present study computed reliability analysis of the three scales used to measure gratitude, forgiveness, and altruism, Pearson correlation to find out the relationship among these traits, multiple linear regression to find out the predictors of forgiveness and multivariate analysis of variance to investigate the impact of age and marital status on gratitude altruism and forgiveness.

Table 2

Reliability of Heartland Forgiveness Scale, Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6) and Helping Attitude Scale

Variable	k	M	SD	α
Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS)	12	52.89	8.22	.52
Gratitude Questionnaire	6	28.60	5.94	.57

(GQ-6)				
Helping Attitude Scale (HAS)	20	74.85	10.80	.82
Forgiveness of Self Subscale	2	7.89	2.73	.45
Forgiveness of Others Subscale	4	18.23	4.48	.53
Forgiveness of the Situation	2	8.16	3.01	.62

Internal consistency of all the scales and subscales was estimated by using Cronbach Alpha Coefficient. The Alpha internal consistency reliability estimate of Heartland Forgiveness Scale is considerably moderate i.e., .52, Gratitude Questionnaire Scale is moderate .57, Helping Attitude Scale is .82, which is considerably high. The reliability of subscales is as follows: Forgiveness of Self .45, Forgiveness of Others .53 and Forgiveness of the Situation .62.

Table 3

Inter Correlations among Forgiveness, Gratitude and Altruism

Variables	I	II	III
I Forgiveness	-	.47**	.42**
II Gratitude		-	.76**
III Altruism			-

*p<.01

Table 3 indicates that forgiveness has significant positive and moderate correlation with gratitude (r=.47, p<.05). It also has a positive and moderate correlation with altruism (r=.42, p<.05). Moreover, gratitude has significant positive and high correlation with altruism (r=.76, p<.01).

Table 4

Predictors of Forgiveness among Young and Middle Aged Working Women (N = 100)

	Forgiveness			
			95% CI	
Variables	B		LL	UL
Constant	56.18		47.76	64.60
Gratitude	.76*		.47	1.05
R²		.22		
F		27.4		
Variables	Forgiveness			
Constant	50.00		37.60	62.30
Altruism	.37*		.21	.54
R²		.17		
F		20.6		

*p<.05

The results of multiple linear regression analysis indicated that gratitude is a highly significant predictor of forgiveness β =.76, p <.001, F (1,98) =27.4. The value of R^2 indicates that gratitude explains 22% variance in forgiveness. Results further indicated that altruism is also a significant predictor of forgiveness β =.37, p < .001, F (1,98) =20.60. The value of R^2 indicates that altruism explains 17% of variance in forgiveness.

Table 5

Effect of Age and Marital Status on Gratitude, Altruism and Forgiveness of Working Women

Source of variance	DV	SS	df	MS	F	Partial η²	Observed Power
Age							
	Gratitude	1362.60	32	42.58	1.64*	.50	.95
	Altruism	1468.25	32	130.26	1.64*	.50	.95
Marital Status							
	Altruism	569.45	2	284.73	3.58*	.12	.64
Error							

	Forgiveness	4373.17	53	82.51
	Gratitude	1377.75	53	26.00
	Altruism	4214.67	53	79.52
Total				
	Forgiveness	616559.00	100	
	Gratitude	85231.00	100	
	Altruism	571779.00	100	

*p < .05.

Results of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) indicated that the main effect of age was significant on gratitude $F (32, 100) =1.64$, $p < .05$, and altruism $F (32,100) =1.64$, $p < .05$. The main effect of marital status on altruism was significant, $F (2,100) = 3.58$, $p< .03$. Results also showed that young working women scored higher on gratitude ($M=31.04, SD=6.44$) than middle aged working women ($M=26.14, SD=4.20$), $t (98) =4.51$, $p < .001$. Young working women also scored higher on altruism ($M=78.70, SD=12.28$), than middle aged working women ($M=71.00, SD=7.36$), $t (98) =3.80$, $p<.001$. Further results indicated that young working women scored higher on forgiveness ($M=81.50, SD=10.35$) as compared to middle aged working women ($M=74.36, SD=7.46$), $t (98) =3.96$, $p<.001$.

Discussion

The traits of gratitude, altruism and forgiveness in workplace settings are very crucial as all three of these traits help improve the performance of the employees. This study aimed to find out the relationship among gratitude, altruism and forgiveness on the age difference of young and middle aged working women, to explore the predictability of forgiveness from altruism and gratitude, and also to investigate the difference between young and middle aged working women on the traits of gratitude, altruism and forgiveness. The first hypothesis was that the traits of gratitude, altruism and forgiveness are positively correlated, and the findings of this study supported this hypothesis. The results showed that forgiveness has positive and moderate correlation with gratitude, and also has a positive and moderate correlation with altruism. Moreover, gratitude has positive and high correlation with altruism. Some previous literature also found positive correlations among gratitude, altruism and forgiveness. Breen, Kashdan, Lenser and Fincham (2010) stated that forgiveness and gratitude are positively correlated and interlinked characteristics.

The second hypothesis was that gratitude and altruism are significant predictors of forgiveness. Our results supported this hypothesis. The results showed that gratitude and altruism are strong predictors of forgiveness. Witvliet (2003) stated that altruism is a predictor of forgiveness and also said that forgiveness can also be considered an expression of altruism. Allemande, Amberg and Zimprich (2007) suggested that people who are altruistic tends to exhibit forgiveness more as compared to those people who are not altruistic. Moreover, Emmons (2013) suggested that gratitude is a moral affect and forgiveness is one of its consequences, as it reinforces individuals to carry out positive and pro-social behaviors.

The third hypothesis was that age and marital status would have a significant difference on gratitude, altruism and forgiveness among working women and the results supported this hypothesis. The results of this study supported this hypothesis. McCullough and Witvliet (2002) had found by noting down many studies that forgiveness increases with age and that age has a significant effect on forgiveness. Moreover, they also suggested that degree forgiveness varies in accordance with Kohlberg theory of moral reasoning. McNulty (2008) found that people who are married tend to be more adjusting and forgiving than unmarried ones. Allemand and Hill (2014) found that gratitude is subjective to wide variety to developmental influences from childhood to adulthood. However, Hill and Allemand (2011) suggested that marital status has no significant effect on gratitude. Chou (1998) found in a study on Chinese adolescents that age has a significant positive effect on altruistic behavior. Bishop of Catholic Church (2000) suggested that married individuals are more altruistic as compared to single people.

The fourth hypothesis was that middle aged working women will score higher on the trait of gratitude, altruism and forgiveness as compared to young working women. The results did not support this hypothesis and young working women came out to be scoring more on these three traits in contrast with middle aged working women. Existing research literature had suggested that forgiveness, altruism and gratitude increases with age

(McCullough, Emmons & Witvliet, 2002; McCullough & Witvliet (2002). However, results of this study have not supported this finding. This finding can be explained in the light of Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning. The person's high level of forgiveness does not depend upon on age.

Conclusion

The findings of this study showed that the traits of gratitude, altruism and forgiveness are positively correlated. Additionally, gratitude and altruism are significant predictors of forgiveness. Moreover, age and marital status had significant impact on gratitude, altruism and forgiveness among working women, whereas young working women were more altruistic, forgiving and had stronger sense of gratitude as compared to middle aged working women.

Limitations and Future Recommendations

This study has a few limitations. The data were collected from a single city (Lahore) of Pakistan. So the findings can be generalized only on working women of Lahore. For future research, the data would be collected from other cities of Punjab and if possible form all over Pakistan, to make results capable of generalization. In future, the relationship among gratitude, altruism and forgiveness would be investigated on a sample of male employees.

Implications

This study will help the human resource management (HRM) officials to provide a healthy work environment by developing an organizational culture embedded in core values of gratitude, altruism and forgiveness. Gratitude is also very important in order to keep discipline in professional relations and pleasant environment among colleagues. When a working woman would be grateful for others, she will try to return the favor in a good manner. Such exchange of favors will give rise to a happy, comforting and hostility free environment.

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