

RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT AND PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING: FORGIVENESS AS A MEDIATOR

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Abstract

The present investigation examined the extent to which forgiveness acts as mediating mechanism of the associations between religious commitment and psychological well-being among Arab Muslim college students. A sample of Jordanian college students (n=209; F = 109) who self-identified as Muslims, responded to measures of Religious Commitment (RCI), Trait Forgiveness (TFS), State Forgiveness (TRIM), Satisfaction with Life (SWLS) and Depression (CESD). Analyses revealed that each of TFS and TRIM plays a full mediating role in the relationships between RCI and each SWLS, and CESD, however, the mediation effects power of degree of self-report of a general tendency to forgive (trait) seems to be somewhat stronger than forgiveness in a specific instance (state). Moreover, results proved that trait forgiveness also mediated the positive effect of religious commitment on decreasing desire to revenge and avoid the offender. These results confirmed the past hypotheses and research that trait forgiveness acts as a strong mechanism of the salutary effect of religiosity on psychological well-being. Findings also provide evidence against the argument that studies relating religion and forgiveness relate only to dispositional forgiveness and do not translate to actual forgiving behavior.

Keywords: Muslim Jordanian college students, religious commitment; trait-state forgiveness, satisfaction with life, depression

Introduction

There is a growing interest in psychological well-being and mental health research in the relationship between religious commitment and mental health variables. Forgiveness has also been considered in such research and hypothesized as a potential mediating variable. However, much of the research in this area has not examined religious commitment, nor the potential mediation effect of forgiveness on psychological well-being with Arab Muslim college samples. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is

to expand the knowledge base regarding the important role of forgiveness processes in the religious commitment relationship with psychological well-being, by testing both trait and state forgiveness as potential mediators affecting the relationship between religious commitment and each of satisfaction with life and depression. The structure of this article is as follows. First, the concepts of religious commitment, forgiveness and the relationship among these two variables and psychological well-being will be introduced. Secondly, we will then describe a literature review on the interrelationship between these variables, and finally we will present and discuss the findings.

Religious Commitment

Religiousness and spirituality have long been important to most humans and are generally associated with better health outcomes (Koenig, & Larson, 2001). Distinctly conceptualized, religiousness is a reflection of a social entity entailing particular beliefs, customs, and boundaries, whereas spirituality is concerned with transcendent aspects of personal existence (Miller & Thoresen, 2003), and refers to personal, subjective aspect of religious experience (Hill & Pargament, 2008). Emphasis is shared, however, on meaningfulness in life and a motivational quality that promotes goal-oriented behavioral activation (Park, 2007). On the other hand, religiosity involves thinking, feeling, and behaving in accordance to doctrinal beliefs, which are endorsed in a religious institution (Zinnbauer, et al., 1997). However, Religious commitment is a term loosely used to reflect degree or level of religiosity. It attempts to capture how internally committed the person is to his religion. One of the best indicators of religious commitment is the estimation of intrinsic religious motivation or intrinsic religiosity. Persons described as having an intrinsic orientation to religion have been described as living their religious beliefs, the influence of which religion is evident in every aspect of their life (Joshi, & Kumari, 2011). Worthington et al. (2003) defined religious commitment as “the degree to which a person adheres to his or her religious values, beliefs, and practices and uses them in daily living” (p. 85). In other words, religious commitment indicates the amount of time spent in private religious involvement, religious affiliation, the activities of religious organization, and importance of religious beliefs, which are practiced in intrapersonal and interpersonal daily living (Worthington et al., 2003). Worthington (1988) used a religious commitment model to look more closely at how religion affects individuals both positively and negatively and under what conditions. He hypothesized that the extent to which individuals were positively affected by religion were those who were the most committed to their religion (Worthington, 1988). Variables that have been used to measure religious commitment include

membership, participation in religious activities, and adherence to religious creed (Hill & Hood, 1999). In this study, religious commitment is measured in terms of these variables.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is defined as prevention of unforgiving emotions by experiencing intense, positive, loving emotions while recalling a transgression (Worthington, Berry, & Parrott, 2001). As the forgiveness literature has evolved, forgiveness has been defined in many ways by a variety of researchers (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; McCullough, 2000; McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003), and accordingly, different understandings of forgiveness and un-forgiveness have emerged. However, most researchers agree on certain core concepts that un-forgiveness and forgiveness include (Wade & Worthington, 2005). Forgiveness is a complex and nuanced process involving not only the act of forgiving or the feeling of being forgiven, but also notions about the conditions under which forgiveness can take place (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). Forgiveness refers to a prosocial change toward a perceived transgressor, and includes the reduction of negative (and in some cases the increase of positive) thoughts, emotions, and motivations toward the offender that might eventuate in changed behaviors (Davis, Worthington, Hook, & Hill, 2013; Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010; McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000). Un-forgiveness is comprised of a variety of negative and often quite painful emotions including a desire to seek revenge for a hurt, feelings of strong dislike, hostility, anger, or even hatred towards an offender, and the desire to avoid contact with the offender (McCullough et al., 1998; Wade, & Worthington, 2005). For the purposes of this study, we used two constructs of forgiveness dispositional or trait forgiveness and state forgiveness in terms of revenge and avoidance composite scores.

Trait forgivingness refers to the degree to which a person tends to forgive across time, situations, and relationships. This construct is often measured with face-valid items (e.g., “I am a forgiving person”) or by having participants rate the degree to which they would forgive across several hypothetical scenarios. A third strategy to assess trait forgivingness, which has been used rarely (e.g., Tsang, McCullough, & Hoyt, 2005), involves aggregating forgiveness ratings for several specific offenses. From other side, State forgiveness refers to a person’s degree of forgiveness of a specific offense. To study state forgiveness, researchers typically ask people to recall an offense. Participants briefly describe the offense qualitatively. Then they rate several measures regarding that offense, such as time since the offense, forgiveness, and empathy. For the purposes of this study, the definition of State Forgiveness from McCullough et al. (1998) partially was used.

McCullough et al. (1998) posited that forgiveness involves three different motivational changes: (a) one's motivation to retaliate against the offender decreases, (b) one's motivation to uphold separation from the offender decreases, and (c) one's motivation for conciliation and positive thinking about the offender increases, even though the offender has caused pain. As such, there is an emphasis on conceptualizing forgiveness as a motivation to heal damaged relationships. However, individuals likely have different reasons or motivations for why they desire such relational healing. The present study was designed to ascertain these individual motivations to forgive such as religious commitment.

Religious Commitment, Forgiveness and Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being or mental health variables are defined consistent with the DSM-IV (American Psychiatric Association, 1994) and may include symptoms of disorders (e.g., depression) or actual disorders (e.g., major depression). Studies that include relevant mental health variables, such as nonspecific psychological distress and life-satisfaction/well-being, are also included. The terms life-satisfaction and well-being are used interchangeably to describe one's perceived satisfaction with life (Toussaint & Webb, 2005). The focus of this section is to understand connections between religious commitment, forgiveness and psychological well-being, broadly defined, and critically to examine the state of our knowledge in terms of the potentially salutary effects of religiosity and forgiveness on well-being as measured in this study by measures of satisfaction with life and low depression.

In the search for the relationship between religiosity/spirituality and mental health, forgiveness is considered a mediator (Worthington, Berry, & Parrott, 2001), in some cases affecting the strength and characteristics of the relationship. Specifically, Worthington and her colleagues (2001) suggest a forgiveness model in which this aspect of forgiveness serving as a mediator. Although this notion was proved across few recent studies (e.g., Chang & Lin, 2012; Lawler-Row, 2010; Toussaint, Marschall, & Williams, 2012), still to date, little work has been conducted in verification this model. In the following section we present empirical findings regarding the relationship between religious commitment, forgiveness and psychological well-being.

Existing research regarding the effect of religious commitment and forgiveness on psychological well-being is few, and has yielded different results, depending upon samples and measures methodology. In the study of Witvliet, Phipps, Feldman, and Beckham (2004), military veterans diagnosed with PTSD were studied to assess mental and physical health correlates of dispositional forgiveness and religious coping responses. The study indicated that the severity of depression, anxiety, and PTSD symptoms is related to

forgiving oneself and others, and religious coping responses. In a quantitative and qualitative study, Kidwell (2009) explored the relationship between religious commitment and forgiveness. In study 1, to understand beliefs and values that may encourage forgiveness in different religious traditions, religious participants who had experienced an offense committed against them were interviewed about factors that motivated them to forgive and strategies they used to reach forgiveness. Results indicated that while many strategies used to forgive were congruent with forgiveness techniques promoted in prior research, participants also reported developing original strategies to achieve forgiveness. In addition, study 2 explored how religious commitment may be associated with forgiveness extended to an offender after participation in an intervention designed explicitly to promote forgiveness. Results suggested that there was no difference in the change in forgiveness-related outcomes for people of high versus moderate to low religious commitment. Also, results indicated that trait forgiveness fully mediated the relationship between religious commitment and revenge, but not the relationship between religious commitment and empathy or avoidance.

Lawler-Row (2010) conducted three separate studies to examine the hypothesis that trait and state forgiveness are two mediators of the religiosity-health relationship. In Study 1, participants (n = 605) completed measures of forgiveness, religiosity, and health. Feeling forgiven by God fully mediated associations between frequency of attendance, frequency of prayer, and belief in a watchful God with successful aging. Self-forgiveness and forgiveness of others partially mediated the religion–health relationships. In Study 2, 253 older adults completed measures of trait forgiveness, religiosity, and health. Trait forgiveness fully mediated associations between prayer and intrinsic religiosity with illness symptoms and 5 dimensions of successful aging. In Study 3, 80 middle-aged men and women completed state and trait forgiveness measures, as well as religiosity and health measures. State forgiveness fully mediated the relationships between existential well-being and both symptoms and medications, and trait forgiveness fully mediated the relationship between religious well-being and both intrinsic religiosity and quality of sleep. State forgiveness partially mediated the relationships between spirituality and both sleep and depression. In the majority of cases, forgiveness either partially or fully mediated the religion–health relationships.

Finally, Toussaint and colleagues (2012) examined the associations of religiousness/spirituality with depression and the extent to which various dimensions of forgiveness act as mediating mechanisms of these associations. Data are from a nationally representative sample of United States adults who were first interviewed in 1998 and re-interviewed six

months later. Measures of religiousness/spirituality, forgiveness, and various socio-demographics were collected. Results showed that religiousness/spirituality, forgiveness of oneself and others, and feeling forgiven by God were associated, both cross-sectionally and longitudinally, with depressive status. After controlling for initial depressive status, only forgiveness of oneself and others remained statistically significant predictors of depression. Also, path analyses revealed that religiousness/spirituality conveyed protective effects, prospectively, on depression by way of an indirect path through forgiveness of others but not forgiveness of oneself.

To summarize, the available evidence from correlational, experimental, and intervention studies suggests that religious commitment and forgiveness and psychological well-being are significantly intercorrelated and that majority of these studies conducted with Christian samples. However, the evidence does not yield clear conclusions regarding the distinct effects of forgiveness on religious commitment or the effects of religious commitment on forgiveness while affecting psychological adjustment in Muslim or non-Western samples. As such, studying motivations underlying forgiveness and the role that religious commitment plays in the forgiveness process will provide new information on why people forgive. This information could help to illuminate possible therapeutic interventions involving forgiveness (Covert, & Johnson, 2009), and may encourage therapists to use religion as a therapeutic tool with their patients.

In light of these studies, and forgiveness mediation model suggesting that forgiveness serving as a mediator in the relationship between religion and mental health (Worthington et al., 2001), the purpose of the present research is twofold. First, given the paucity of research on religious commitment, forgiveness and psychological well-being in non-Western populations, we chose to test the theoretical mechanisms proposed above, or ways by which religious commitment might affect health through forgiveness, specifically, the current study attempted to replicate some of these results and expands in it by examining the mediating role of the trait forgivingness, and motivations to forgive a specific offense in the relationship between religious commitment and depression and satisfaction with life as two indicators of psychological well-being. Secondly, we tested for the first time the mediating role of trait forgivingness, in the relationship of religious commitment and motivations to forgive a specific offense in Muslim Jordanian college students' context.

Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1: Religious commitment and trait forgiveness will be associated positively, and both will be correlated positively with satisfaction with life, and negatively with depression; while religious commitment and

trait forgiveness will be associated negatively with state forgiveness which in turn will be correlated negatively with satisfaction with life, and positively with depression

Hypothesis 2: Each of trait and state forgiveness will mediate the relationship between religious commitment and satisfaction with life.

Hypothesis 3: Each of trait and state forgiveness will mediate the relationship between Religious commitment and depression.

Hypothesis 4: Trait forgiveness will mediate the relationship between religious commitment and state forgiveness.

Method

Participants and Procedures

Total convenient samples of 209 students from faculty of educational psychology attending Hashemite University (HU) a State university located in Zarqa- Jordan, were recruited as volunteer participants in this study. The sample was comprised of approximately equal proportions of females (52%) and males (48%), 59.8% fall into the age range of 19-20 years, with a mean age of 20.3 (SD = 1.02) years. Following informed consent, and voluntarily willingness to take part in the research, all participants who self-identify as Muslims completed a set of questionnaires which were distributed and administered with the assistance of their class teachers during one of several scheduled class hours through two-weeks lasted from 23 November to 4 December, 2014. Out of the 240 copies of the questionnaire administered, 209 copies were found useful for analyses. This is a response rate of approximately 87.1%. The participants did not receive any remuneration for participating in the study. The faculty of educational sciences was chosen because of its students' better understanding of study concepts which facilitates data gathering and accuracy as required by the research design.

Following the completion of the questionnaire, participants were fully debriefed regarding the purpose of the study. The demographic variables of age, gender and study year were not found to be significantly correlated with the study variables and were not included in further analyses.

Measures

Five instruments of the Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10; Worthington et al., 2003); Trait Forgiveness Scale (TFS); Berry, Worthington, O'Connor, Parrott, & Wade, 2005), Transgression Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM; McCullough et al., 1998); Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985), and Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression Scale (CESD; Radloff, 1977), were used to collect the data in this study. For the purpose of this study, by using the 'forward-backward' procedure, the English versions

of the first three instruments were translated into Arabic language by an expert in bilingual language, and then another bilingual expert translated the Arabic version into English without accessing to the original versions. A third bilingual faculty member compared the translated Arabic and the translated English versions and corrected any incongruence in the translation. No significant variation between the two was detected. These instruments have been translated into many languages, and for many of these translations validation studies confirm the internationally applicable nature of these tools. Also, these scales are in the public domain. Therefore, they may be used without copyright permission. Additionally, both the (SWLS) and (CES-D), were used in previous study conducted in Jordan (e.g., Alaedein-Zawawi & Hamaydeh, 2009), and their validity and reliability were proved to be high among representative sample of Jordanian college students.

1. *The Religious Commitment Inventory-10* (RCI-10; Worthington et al., 2003) describes the level of one's religious commitment. That is, it is used to assess the degree to which a person adheres to his or her religious values, beliefs, and practices and uses them in daily living. The authors report the development of the Religious Commitment Inventory—10 (RCI-10), used in 6 studies. Sample sizes were 155, 132, and 150 college students; 240 Christian church-attending married adults; 468 undergraduates including (among others) Buddhists ($n = 52$), Muslims ($n = 12$), Hindus ($n = 10$), and nonreligious ($n = 117$); and 217 clients and 52 counselors in a secular or 1 of 6 religious counseling agencies. RCI subscales measure intrapersonal religious commitment with 6 items, and interpersonal religious commitment with 4 items. Thus, RCI-10 consists of a total of 10 items rated on a five-point scale from 1 = Not at all true of me to 5 = totally true of me. All items of Intrapersonal religious commitment had factor loadings of .59 or above and those of Interpersonal religious commitment had factor loadings of .62 or above. The coefficient alphas were .93 for the full scale, .92 for Intrapersonal Religious Commitment, and .87 for Interpersonal Religious Commitment (Worthington et al., 2003). For the purpose of this study only total full score was used. A Pearson correlation coefficient for intercorrelation between the two subscales indicated them highly correlated, $r(154) = .72$. Typical items include, "My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach to life" and "I spend my time trying to grow in understanding of my faith" from the Intrapersonal subscale, and "I enjoy working in the activities of my religious organization" and "I enjoy spending time with others of my religious affiliation" from the Interpersonal subscale. In the current study the coefficient alphas were .89 for the full scale .76 for Intrapersonal Religious Commitment, and .87 for Interpersonal Religious Commitment. Due to the number of variables measured in the current study,

the various aspects of religiosity will be measured in terms of religious commitment scores for full scale.

2. *Trait forgiveness* was assessed with the Trait Forgiveness Scale (TFS); Berry et al., 2005), is a 10-item scale, measures trait forgiveness and was adapted from a longer scale employed in previous research (Berry & Worthington, 2001). Respondents rate each TFS item using a 5-point Likert-type scale, with 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. Some sample items from the TFS include “I can usually forgive and forget an insult” and “There are some things for which I could never forgive even a loved one.” Higher scores on the TFS indicate higher positive trait forgivingness; The coefficient alpha reliability ranges from .74 to .80 among college-aged samples (Berry et al., 2005). Internal consistency for the current sample was alpha =.896.

3. *State Forgiveness of Revenge and Avoidance Motivations* was assessed with Transgression Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM; McCullough et al., 1998). In TRIM Forgiveness state operationalizes forgiveness as the desire (or motivation) to seek revenge against and to avoid an offender. The TRIM is a 12-item scale two subscales, Revenge (REV) and Avoidance (AVD). It has good internal consistency, and good convergent and discriminant validity (McCullough et al., 2000). TRIM measures the motivation to seek revenge against someone (REV) and avoid (AVD) someone who has caused a personal hurt or psychological injury. Items such as “I'll make him/her pay” (Revenge, five items; total score ranges from 5-20) and “I don't trust him/her” (Avoidance, seven items; total score ranges from 7-35) are measured on a 5-point scale (1, strongly disagree to 5, strongly agree), with higher full-measure 12- scores indicating state of unforgiveness (Wade & Worthington, 2003). The Revenge and Avoidance subscales' internal reliabilities have been reported to range from .83 to .94. In previous study, the internal reliability estimates for the two subscales ranged from .88 to .92. The subscales are correlated with measures of theoretically related variables, such as empathy, apology, and dyadic adjustment (McCullough et al., 1998). In the current sample, we used only total score of the Revenge (REV) and avoidance (AVD) subscales, which demonstrated adequate reliability with both having a Cronbach's alpha of .87; .86, respectively, and .88 for total score. Participants were instructed to recall the most serious transgression by their family member, close friend, and to briefly describe it.

4. *Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)* was used to assess life satisfaction (Diener et al., 1985). This scale which is used to assess the level of satisfaction with life, consists of 5 items scored on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). A total score is calculated by summing the individual responses to the 5 items that ask

respondents to rate their global life satisfaction from their subjective perspective. Scores on the total scale ranged from 5 to 30. Items include "In most ways my life is close to my ideal ". The higher the score, the more satisfied the individual with his/her life. In previous study with Jordanian college students (Alaedein- Zawawi & Hamaydeh, 2009), Cronbach's alpha for SWLS was 0.79, and Guttman split-half alpha was 0.77. In addition, average three-week test-retest reliability coefficient for SLS was 0.78. In the current sample the scale has acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .80.

5. *Depression.* The Center for Epidemiological Studies- Depression Scale (CESD; Radloff, 1977) is a 20-item measure used to assess depressive symptomatology (e.g., "I was bothered by things that don't usually bother me," "I felt that everything I did was an effort"). Respondents were asked to consider how they had felt within the last week and responses ranged from 1 = *less than 1 day* to 4 = *most or all of the time* with total score ranges from 20-80. It has been shown to have adequate test-retest reliability. For males, the Cronbach's alpha ranged from .83-.87, and the females' Cronbach's alpha ranged from .87-.91. During initial research with the scale, the CESD correlated significantly and positively with another measure of depression, Hamilton's (1960) Clinician's Rating Scale ($r=.44$). The CESD was shown further to discriminate between general and patient populations, with significantly higher mean scores noted for patient groups (Radloff, 1977). In previous study with Jordanian college students (Alaedein- Zawawi & Hamaydeh, 2009), Cronbach's alpha for CES-D was 0.86 and Guttman split-half alpha was 0.87; with high internal consistency: Average three- week test-retest reliability coefficient for CES-D total scores was 0.88. In the current sample the scale has acceptable internal consistency, with a Cronbach's alpha of .81.

Data Analysis

The study employed Pearson product moment correlation (Pearson, r), regression analysis, to test the direction and magnitude of the relationships between the variables of study, and to determine if the religious commitment predicts psychological well-being variables (of high satisfaction with life and low depression) among the sample and to show if trait and state forgiveness mediate the relationship between the variables. We followed Baron and Kenny's (1986) framework for each mediation analysis, and the Sobel (1982) procedure was then used to statistically investigate the effect of the proposed mediator on the predictor-outcome relationship. Prior to each analysis, we screened data for outlying or influential data points and examined the data for adherence to the assumptions of correlations or regressions. No outlying or influential data points were identified, and

assumptions of statistical tests were met. We conducted all statistical tests at the $p < .05$ level.

Results

The reliabilities (Cronbach's Alpha) of the scales used in the study were very satisfactory in all cases, in addition, results indicated values of homogeneity of variance (skewness) and normality (kurtosis) in acceptable ranges that do not exceed the value of 1.00 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001) (see Table 1). The means, standard deviations, and reliabilities of the various scales are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations and reliabilities for scales of study

Scale	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha (α)	
1. The Religious Commitment Inventory-10 (RCI-10)	3.2	32.34	3.76	0.891
2. Trait Forgiveness (TFS)	3.1	31.38	5.27	0.896
3. State Forgiveness (TRIM-12)	2.5	29.91	4.03	0.884
4. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)	3.3	20.29	3.66	0.803
5. Depression (CESD)	2.3	43.69	8.10	0.815

Scale breadth: Religious Commitment 1 (Not at all true of me)-5 (totally true of me); Trait Forgiveness; State Forgiveness 1 (strongly disagree)-5 (strongly agree); Satisfaction with Life 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree); Depression: 1 (less than 1 day)-4 (most or all of the time).No=209

Table 2 shows that scores on religious commitment (RCI) were positively correlated with TFS ($r = .49, p < .01$); and SWLS ($r = .24, p < .01$), and negatively correlated with TRIM ($r = -.20, p < .01$) and CEDS ($r = -.50, p < .01$). Scores on Trait Forgiveness (TFS) were negatively correlated with TRIM ($r = -.37, p < .01$), and CEDS ($r = -.38, p < .01$), and positively correlated with SWLS ($r = .63, p < .001$). Scores on the State Forgiveness (TRIM) were negatively correlated with SWLS ($r = -.24, p < .01$), and positively correlated with Depression (CESD) ($r = .29, p < .01$). Finally, Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) was negatively correlated with Depression (CESD) ($r = -.23, p < .01$), accordingly, these results confirming the first hypothesis.

Although the correlations between all study variables in question exhibit statistically significant relationships, these values were moderate, thus, indicating relatively minimal overlap between scales. These results showed that greater religious commitment was associated with greater reported tendency to forgive others. On the other hand, higher religious commitment was also related to lower desire to seek revenge against, and to avoid contact with the offender. In addition, these results indicated that Individuals with higher levels of religious involvement, tendency to forgive,

to lower desire to seek revenge to avoid offender, have better life-satisfaction with life and lower rates of depression compared to Individuals with lower levels of religious involvement and trait-state forgiveness.

Table 2. Correlations among religious commitment, forgiveness and psychological well-being (N=209)

Variables	1	2	3	4
1.Religious Commitment (RCI)	-			
2.Trait Forgiveness (TFS)	.489 **	-		
3.State forgiveness (TRIM)	-.202**	-.371**	-	
4. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)	.243**	.633**	-.244**	
5. Depression (CESD)	-.503**	-.379**	.288**	-.231**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$.

The second hypothesis addresses the mediation role of each trait forgiveness (TFS) and state forgiveness (TRIM) in the relationships between religious commitment (RCI) and satisfaction with life (SWLS). Multiple regressions were used to assess mediational effects of TFS and TRIM. The basic causal link involved in the mediating role of forgiveness is presented in figure 1.

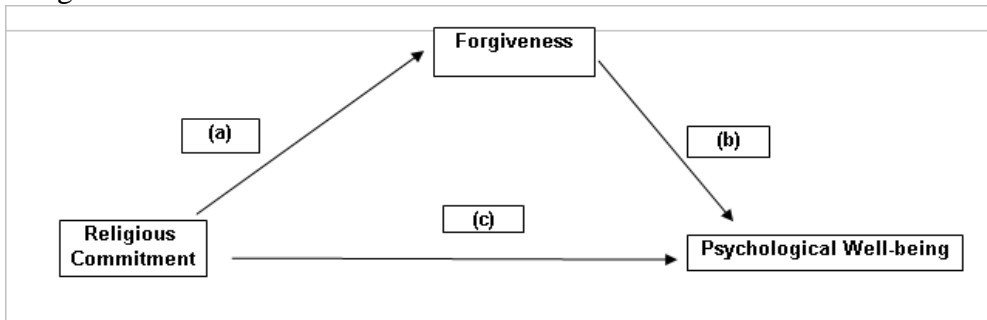


Figure 1. Mediation role of forgiveness

Figure 1 assumes a three-variable system such that there is a direct path of the religious commitment on each trait and state forgiveness (path a), a direct path of the religious commitment to psychological well-being variables (of high life satisfaction and low depression) (path c) and an indirect path of the religious commitment to psychological well-being variables through the impact of the mediator two variables –trait and state forgiveness (path b).

In order to test the mediation model, we first established that the conditions for mediation were met (Baron & Kenny, 1986). For the first mediator trait forgiveness (TFS), religious commitment (RCI) was positively related to satisfaction with life (SWLS) which satisfies the first requirement ($\beta=.138$; $t= 2.01$, $p<05$). Fulfilling the second requirement, religious commitment was also related to trait forgiveness (TFS) ($\beta=.535$; $t= 9.10$,

$p < .01$) = *a*. Satisfying the third requirement, forgiveness (TFS) was related to SWLS, controlling for religious commitment ($\beta = .443$; $t = 5.86$, $p < .001$) = *b*. The next requirement was that the relation between religious commitment and SWLS be significantly smaller, with forgiveness (TFS) entered as a predictor. Results showed that total score RCI beta weight changed from the first step in the mediation analysis ($\beta = .138$ to $\beta = .099$), and it had an insignificant semi-partial correlation with total score SWLS ($sr = .091$, $t = 1.31$, *ns*). The Sobel test revealed a significant indirect effect indicating full mediation ($Z = 4.95$, $p < .000$). Thus TFS seemed to be a full mediator of the relationship between religious commitment (RCI) and satisfaction with life (SWLS).

For the second mediator state forgiveness (TRIM), religious commitment (RCI) was positively related to satisfaction with life (SWLS) which satisfies the first requirement ($\beta = .138$; $t = 2.01$, $p < .05$). Fulfilling the second requirement, religious commitment was also related to state forgiveness (TRIM) ($\beta = -.164$; $t = -2.40$, $p < .05$) = *a*. Satisfying the third requirement, state forgiveness (TTIM) was related to SWLS, controlling for religious commitment ($\beta = -.182$; $t = -2.66$, $p < .05$) = *b*. The next requirement was that the relation between religious commitment and SWLS be significantly smaller, with TTIM entered as a predictor. Results showed that total score RCI beta weight changed from the first step in the mediation analysis ($\beta = .138$ to $\beta = .111$), and it had an insignificant semi-partial correlation with total score SWLS ($sr = .112$, $t = 1.61$, *ns*). The Sobel test revealed a significant indirect effect indicating full mediation ($Z = 1.81$, $p < .03$). This suggests that TRIM seemed thus to be a full mediator of the relationship between religious commitment (RCI) and satisfaction with life (SWLS).

The third hypothesis addresses the mediation role for each of trait forgiveness (TFS) and state forgiveness (TRIM) in the relationships between religious commitment (RCI) and depression (CESD). Following Baron and Kenny (1986), to test for mediation for the first mediator trait forgiveness (TFS), religious commitment (RCI) was negatively related to depression (CESD) which satisfies the first requirement ($\beta = -.143$; $t = 2.1$, $p < .05$). Fulfilling the second requirement, religious commitment was also related to forgiveness (TFS) ($\beta = .535$; $t = 9.10$, $p < .01$) = *a*. Satisfying the third requirement, forgiveness (TFS) was related to CESD, controlling for religious commitment ($\beta = -.201$; $t = -2.50$, $p < .05$) = *b*. The next requirement was that the relation between religious commitment and CESD be significantly smaller, with forgiveness (TFS) entered as a predictor. Results showed that total score RCI beta weight changed from the first step in the mediation analysis ($\beta = -.143$ to $\beta = -.035$), and it had an insignificant semi-partial correlation with total score CESD ($sr = -.030$, $t = -.438$, *ns*). The Sobel

test revealed a significant indirect effect indicating full mediation ($Z = -2.32$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that TFS seemed to be a full mediator of the relationship between religious commitment (RCI) and depression (CESD).

For the second mediator state forgiveness (TRIM), religious commitment (RCI) was negatively related to depression (CESD) which satisfies the first requirement ($\beta = -.143$; $t = 2.1$, $p < 0.05$). Fulfilling the second requirement, religious commitment was also related to state forgiveness (TRIM) ($\beta = -.164$; $t = 2.40$, $p < 0.05$) = *a*. Satisfying the third requirement, TRIM was related to CESD, controlling for religious commitment ($\beta = .206$; $t = -3.02$, $p < 0.01$) = *b*. The next requirement was that the relation between religious commitment and CESD be significantly smaller, with state forgiveness (TRIM) entered as a predictor. Results showed that total score RCI beta weight changed from the first step in the mediation analysis ($\beta = -.143$ to $\beta = -.109$), and it had an insignificant semi-partial correlation with total score CESD ($sr = -.110$, $t = -1.59$ ns). The Sobel test revealed a significant indirect effect indicating full mediation ($Z = -1.88$, $p < 0.05$). This suggests that TRIM seemed to be a full mediator of the relationship between religious commitment (RCI) and depression (CESD).

Lastley, the fourth hypothesis states that trait forgiveness will mediate the relationship of religious commitment (RCI) and state forgiveness (TRIM). Following the same previous mediation procedures. Religious commitment (RCI) was negatively related to state forgiveness (TRIM) which satisfies the first requirement ($\beta = -.164$; $t = 2.40$, $p < 0.05$). Fulfilling the second requirement, religious commitment (RCI) was also related to trait forgiveness (TFS) ($\beta = .535$; $t = 9.10$, $p < 0.01$) = *a*. Satisfying the third requirement, trait forgiveness (TFS) was negatively related to state forgiveness (TRIM), controlling for religious commitment (RCI) ($\beta = -.208$; $t = -2.60$, $p < 0.05$) = *b*. The next requirement was that the relation between Religious commitment (RCI) and state forgiveness (TRIM) be significantly smaller, with trait forgiveness (TFS) entered as a predictor. Results showed that total score RCI beta weight changed from the first step in the mediation analysis ($\beta = -.164$ to $\beta = -.053$), and it had an insignificant semi-partial correlation with total score TRIM ($sr = -.046$, $t = -.661$ ns). The Sobel test revealed a significant indirect effect indicating full mediation ($Z = -2.37$, $p < 0.02$). This suggests that TFS seemed to be a full mediator of the relationship between religious commitment (RCI) and state forgiveness (TRIM).

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to explore the relationships between religious commitment and trait-state forgiveness by examining their association with satisfaction with life and depression. Therefore, the study

examined four major hypotheses regarding the intercorrelations among study's variables, and testing each of trait forgiveness, and state forgiveness as potential mediator of the relationship between religious commitment and satisfaction with life and depression, and lastly, testing trait forgiveness as potential mediator of the relationship between religious commitment and state forgiveness.

With regard to the first research hypothesis, a correlation analysis revealed that statistically significant relationships were found between specific independent and dependent variables in the same direction we hypothesized. As mentioned earlier, results of correlations showed that scores on the RCI were positively correlated with the TFS ($r = .49$); and negatively with state forgiveness ($r = -.20$). In other words these findings support the idea that there are strong connections between religious commitment or involvement and forgiveness, and also indicate that robust associations appear to exist between one's religiosity, tendency to forgive transgressions that is stable over time and across situations, and motivations to forgive a specific offense. Given that many religious traditions espouse similar values, these results shows that regardless of one's specific religious culture, being a religious person is associated with endorsement of specific values, such as forgiveness (Cohen et al., 2006). These results are relatively consistent with past works (e.g., Ayten, 2012; Berry et al., 2001; Cohen et al., 2006; Hayward, & Krause, 2013; McCullough et al., 1998; Tsang et al., 2005; Wade, Meyer, Goldman, & Post, 2008; Witvliet, Hinze, & Worthington, 2008). And overall, these findings are relatively consistent with prior reviews that have suggested a moderate relationship between R/S and trait forgivingness and a smaller relationship between R/S and state forgiveness (Fehr et al., 2010; McCullough & Worthington, 1999). In the same vein, regarding the overall magnitude of the relationship between religion and forgiveness, Davis et al. (2013) reported that the average correlation between R/S and trait forgivingness was .29, whereas the average correlation between R/S and state forgiveness was .15. However, Tsang et al. (2005) found a mean correlation of $r = -.20$, $p < .05$, when religious commitment was correlated with an aggregated measure of revenge and avoidance; and Witvliet et al. (2008) found a somewhat stronger relationship between religious commitment and state forgiveness ($r = -.26$, $p < .05$) in Christian college students. The same is true for Cohen et al. (2006) religious commitment was positively correlated ($r = .29$, $p < .004$) with scores on the Transgression Narrative Test of Forgivingness.

Moreover, the significant correlations between religious commitment and each of satisfaction with life, and depression are consistent with other work (e.g., Abdel-Khalek, 2009; Kamble, Watsonb, Marigoudara, & Chenc, 2014; Koenig & Larson, 2001; Phillips & Henderson, 2006; Rasic, Kisely, &

Langille, 2011; Sahraian et al., 2013; Vasegh & Mohammadi, 2007). In same line with these results, recently, Ghorbani Watson, Geranmayepour, and Chen (2014) found in a sample of 627 Iranian university and Islamic seminary students that Muslim experiential religiousness correlated positively with satisfaction with life, and negatively with depression. These results support the argument for religious commitment being protective against depression among college students (e.g., Kamble et al., 2014; Phillips & Henderson, 2006), and that religious people are more likely to have greater hope or optimism about their future, and greater indicators of psychological well-being (life-Satisfaction; purpose and meaning of life) than non- or less religious ones are (Koenig & Larson, 2001). Also, researchers find that people who report close relationships with God experience less depression and other mental health problems (Hill & Pargament, 2008). Taken together, it seems that participation in religious activities may predict better adaptation to stressful situations, in particular, university students experience unique stress as they adapt to a new environment and new challenges and demands. Emerging psychological explorations claim that religion and coping can congregate to enhance resilience, healing, and daily functioning through the course of stressful incidents (Van Dyke et al., 2009). Religious communities may provide social support which may decrease the level of loneliness, and less depression, fewer suicides were related to religious involvement (Koenig & Larson, 2001).

Regarding forgiveness, trait forgiveness (TFS) were negatively correlated with state forgiveness ($r = -.37$), and both were correlated positively and negatively, respectively, with SWLS ($r = .63; -.24$), and negatively and positively, respectively, with CEDS ($r = -.38; .29$). Consistent with these findings, prior research has suggested that trait forgivingness appears to predict certain forgiveness-related variables (Berry et al., 2001; Berry et al., 2005). Specifically, Berry et al. (2005) found that trait forgivingness predicts revenge, such that persons with high trait forgivingness exhibit less revenge than persons with low trait forgivingness. Furthermore, in related research, Berry et al. (2001) also examined trait forgivingness and concluded that trait forgivingness predicts situation specific forgiveness, and furthermore, that trait forgivingness is correlated with the forgiveness-related constructs of anger and hostility. Wade and Worthington (2003) found trait forgiveness (TFS) were negatively correlated with state forgiveness ($r = -.29$), when measured by TRIM aggregated score.

Also, these results are congruent with studies and reviews that found propensity to forgive others or dispositional forgiveness associated with mental and physical health (e.g., Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000; Hirsch, Webb, & Jeglic, 2011; Thompson et al., 2005; Witvliet et al., 2004). Studies

actually, suggest that forgiveness is negatively correlated with poor health habits, subsequently, affecting well-being (Toussaint, & Webb, 2005). These results endorse that forgiveness, as a voluntary coping process involving offering, feeling, or seeking a change from negative to positive cognitions, behaviors, and affect toward a transgressor, may buffer such poor mental health outcomes (Hirsch et al., 2011).

The second focus of this research, after examining the relationship of religious commitment, forgiveness and psychological adjustment, was to test two hypotheses by examining directly two mediators or mechanisms of trait forgiveness; state forgiveness by which religious commitment could have an impact on psychological adjustment. Results supported the mediation hypotheses that trait and state forgiveness would mediate the relationship between religious commitment and psychological well-being. Specifically, as religious commitment increases, the satisfaction with life increases and symptoms of depression decrease. In keeping with the mediation hypothesis, higher level of both trait forgiveness and state forgiveness fully mediated the positive relationship between higher religious commitment and better satisfaction with life; and fully mediated the relationship between higher religious commitment and lower depression.

To summarize, these results of forgiveness mediation model suggest that religious persons secure better psychological adjustment benefits through their increased likelihood to forgive others, and their efforts to overcome desire to revenge or avoid those who caused hurt to them. Specifically, trait-dispositional forgiveness or the ability to forgive others and making decisions and acts to forgive the negative situations that individuals experience and stopping revenge and avoidance desires in a particular salient context appear to be critical factors in the salutary relationship between religious commitment and satisfaction with life and deression, while trait or dispositional forgiveness seems more effective in activating the beneficial role of religious commitment on increasing satisfaction with life or alleviating levels of depression. Taken together, this may reflect the emphasis on forgiveness of others that is present in organized religion (Toussaint, & Williams, 2008), and suggests that absence of negative responses toward an offender shares some moral and religious principals with forgiveness as a stable trait.

These significant mediation results regarding forgiveness support previous work (e.g., Chang, & Lin, 2012; Lawler-Row, 2010; Toussaint, Marschall, & Williams, 2012), that proved that tendency to forgive others mediates the relationship between religiosity and various mental health indicators. In the majority of cases in Lawler-Row (2010) study, trait and state forgiveness either partially or fully mediated the religion–health relationships. In the same vein, researchers have consistently demonstrated

that forgiveness interventions lead to reductions in depression, and hostility, as well as increases in hope (Enright, & Coyle, 1998; Freedman & Knupp, 2003; Rye & Pargament, 2002). Likewise, Lawler-Row et al. (2005) demonstrated that forgiveness promotes positive psychological health by decreasing the anger associated with un-forgiveness.

Moreover, results showed also the buffering effect of trait forgiveness on the mutual relationship between religious commitment and state forgiveness constructs: revenge and avoidance, and that the personality that have tendency and ability to forgive and its associated beliefs play a key role in promoting the effect of religious commitment on decreasing un-forgiveness behaviors. To summarize, the results of mediation model suggest that religious persons would be more able to control their desire to abandon the offender or revenge against him through their increased likelihood to adhere to their forgiveness beliefs. Actually, in similar view of this study, Kidwell (2009) found that trait forgivingness fully mediated the relationship between religious commitment and revenge. Also, in similar way but opposit and promising direction, religiosity was considered a mediator in the relationship between forgiveness and other related forgiveness variables, Davis and colleagues (2008, 2014) provide an initial test of a theoretical model of religious coping and forgiveness, and highlight the ways in which religion may promote or hinder forgiveness process. They conducted three studies and found that religious coping fully mediated the relationship between forgiveness and negative spiritual appraisals of the transgression. These results prove the importance of forgiving others in religious commitment and add to the validity of these mutual effects between religious commitment and forgivingness processes, which support also the mediating and critical role of forgiving in religious commitment, we found in this study. Specifically, this study adds further insight derived from the findings of trait forgiveness that acts as a strong mechanism of the salutary effect of religious commitment on inhibiting the ability or changing motivation to seek revenge or to avoid contact with the transgressor.

Limitations

Despite the fact that this study revealed in general significant relationships between religious commitment, forgiveness, and psychological well-being, limitations must be considered. A major limitation of the present study that may restrict the generalizability of the study findings was its non-randomized sample, and the probability of a self-selection bias since the participation in the study was voluntary. A second limitation was its exclusive reliance on Muslim undergraduate students enrolled in the same university, whose experiences with religious commitment, forgiving, interpersonal offenses, vengeance and avoidance, satisfaction with life and

depression might differ from those of the general population or students with other religions enrolled in other universities located in different Jordanian cities. Further studies should attempt to replicate these findings with randomized and more diverse samples. Finally, a third limitation to consider includes the measures used in the present study. For example, the Arabic versions of RCI, TFS, TRIM measures were derived from the most widely used and empirically supported Western measures for the study major variables, their cross-cultural validity has not been fully tested, and in spite of their proven good statistical reliability and validity in the current sample, all of these measures relied on self-report method, so participants' responses to some questionnaire items may have been affected by a social desirability bias, and to some degree of a Western bias. Using tools that were developed in accordance to the specific culture and religious values of Arabs might yield better reliable findings and better understanding of the relations among religiosity, forgiveness and psychological adjustment. In particular, results suggest the need to use alternative measures of Islamic religiosity and to take real situations of revenge against or avoid transgressor into account when testing state of forgiveness. Research is needed to establish how religious commitment influences forgiveness and whether religious persons not only report being highly forgiving, but actually forgive real-life transgressions committed against them more readily. Specifically, Worthington et al. (2012) encourage researchers to situate their findings within the interpersonal contexts of the transgressions, the historical contexts of the transgressions, and the religious and sociocultural contexts in which the transgressions and forgiveness responses occur (p.30). Also, the depression and satisfaction with life results may apply only to college students, and perhaps more specifically, college students at Hashemite State University located in Zarqa- Jordan. As a result of these constraints, these results may not generalize to college students or populations outside this particular region of Jordan or outside this university.

Conclusion and Implications

Although the results of this study revealed the critical role of trait and state forgiveness two important factors affecting the associations between religious commitment and psychological well-being, and stressed the importance of forgiveness processes in religious college students, some of which bear similarities with previous hypotheses and research, and other that are novel, the researcher feels confident that the results of this study accurately represent study participants' religious culture-based values. Cohen et al. (2006) claim that person's religion, like his or her country or region of origin, represents an important cultural influence on values and personality processes. Religious commitment and forgiveness are two dimensions of

religiosity that have rarely been assessed within Islamic piety (El-Menouar, & Stiftung, 2014), yet forgiveness was fully mediated religious commitment associations with satisfaction with life and low depression, and its relationship with successful control the negative desire to revenge or to avoid the transgressor in the context of hurtful relationships in this study. In addition, on the basis of this study, one would have to conclude that religious involvement is predictive of psychological well-being in Muslim college youth. Furthermore, religious involvement is consistently related to trait forgiveness and state forgiveness. Also, satisfaction with life and low depression was consistently related to trait and state forgiveness. Discord between oneself and one's religious belief system, specifically regarding forgiveness, could be a productive area for spiritual assessment by clinical specialists. Also, while most research on forgiveness has focused on a person's capacity/act of forgiving others, the present research brings into the fore the value of forgiveness processes in adherence to one's religious belief system. These are two avenues by which counselors and therapists engaged in research may find a practical foothold in the further investigation of forgiveness. However, this study did not involve patients per se, in the context of clinical treatment, and that could be an attractive next step for mental health care providers. These findings show that future research on religiosity and forgiveness among Arab college students, which is currently lacking, should retest these findings and look for associations that have not yet been examined.

Taken together, these results may have some implications for mental health and counseling therapists working with youth in universities. The findings supported the incorporation of religious teachings and forgiving interventions within psychological therapies and highlighted the importance of therapists creating space to discuss religion with clients who wish to. In particular, therapists recognized that religion could be a useful resource, however, often felt ill-equipped to engage with a religious framework within therapy (Meer, & Mir, 2014). Counselors should find intriguing the proposal that "people who are committed to a religious belief system that has forgiveness at its core will benefit from religion most when they perceive themselves as behaving consistently with those tenets" (Lawler-Row, 2010, p. 12).

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