

Forgiveness in Children Placed in Children's Homes: Understanding, Process and Motivation for Forgiveness

Joana Salifu Yendork, Selina Owusu Boadu, Margaret Amankwah-Poku & Annabella Osei-Tutu

To cite this article: Joana Salifu Yendork, Selina Owusu Boadu, Margaret Amankwah-Poku & Annabella Osei-Tutu (2019): Forgiveness in Children Placed in Children's Homes: Understanding, Process and Motivation for Forgiveness, *Child Care in Practice*, DOI: [10.1080/13575279.2019.1681362](https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2019.1681362)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13575279.2019.1681362>



Published online: 19 Nov 2019.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 11




View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Forgiveness in Children Placed in Children's Homes: Understanding, Process and Motivation for Forgiveness

Joana Salifu Yendork , Selina Owusu Boadu, Margaret Amankwah-Poku and Annabella Osei-Tutu

Department of Psychology, University of Ghana, Legon, Ghana

ABSTRACT



Children placed in children's homes encounter negative experiences in the form of abuse from caregivers, interpersonal conflicts with peers and victimizations from community members. How these children negotiate forgiveness of these negative experiences is unknown due to limited studies on the subject. The present study explored the nature of negative experiences reported by children in residential care, their understanding of forgiveness, as well as the process and motivations for extending forgiveness. Participants were 10 children in residential care, aged between 9 and 18 years, resident in two Children's Homes in Accra. Results from these interviews show that while participants have cordial relationships with their peers and caregivers, they experience daily relational problems in the form of insults, bullying, being lied about, teasing and denial of gift items. Their knowledge of the meaning of forgiveness is largely different from all the three existing conceptualizations of the concept, and is influenced by religious, contextual factors in their relationships and the perceived benefits of forgiveness. Forgiveness process involved deferral to God, educating or confronting the offender on the impact of their behavior and reporting the offender to an authority. Implications of the findings are discussed.

KEYWORDS

Children in residential care; children's homes; negative experiences; forgiveness

Introduction

Although some authors have argued that there is no global definition of the term "orphan" (Ennew, 2005), a distinction is made between biological and social orphanhood (Salifu Yendork & Somhlaba, 2015–2016). A biological orphan is a child below 18 years, whose mother, father or both parents are deceased by any cause (UNICEF, 1999; UNICEF/UNAIDS, 2006). This definition has been criticized on the basis that it focuses on chronological age and the biological status of parents, thus ignoring the social aspects of orphanhood (Abebe, 2009; Meintjes & Giese, 2006). The African cultural conceptualization of orphanhood goes beyond the death of a parent and the age of a child to include parental neglect and abandonment as well as lack of social support (Meintjes & Giese, 2006; Skinner et al., 2006). As a result, a socially accepted definition of orphanhood

CONTACT Joana Salifu Yendork  jyendork@ug.edu.gh, salifujoana@gmail.com  Department of Psychology, University of Ghana, P. O. Box LG 84, Legon, Accra, Ghana

© 2019 The Child Care in Practice Group

focuses on care and dependency—that considers the mere absence of a parent or lack of social support (as in cases of abandoned children), as constituting enough reason for abandoned children to be regarded as orphans in the African context (Meintjes & Giese, 2006; Skinner et al., 2006). In this study, we adopt the social definition of orphanhood recognizing that in the social context of Ghana some children placed in residential care centers are there for reasons other than parental death. The adoption of the social definition of orphanhood permits us to include children who have been abandoned by parents and those who are unaware of their parents' whereabouts in the current study.

Orphans are a group of people who experience unpleasant encounters from several angles. On one hand is the experience of abandonment originating from parental neglect whereby some parents do not provide for children or some parents are genuinely unable to provide care due to reasons such as poverty or illness (Fuchs, 1987). Neglect of children can also emanate from the family where members of the extended family of unable parents do not provide support for several reasons (DeSilva et al., 2008). On a societal level, orphans experience neglect where the community at large either refuses to care for them or is unable to provide care for reason such as poverty and war (DeSilva et al., 2008; Kidman & Thurman, 2014). In African contexts, the community, which is usually made up of extended families, operates through the culture of interdependency. The role of the community networks in orphan care was previously strong as they were able to provide a “safety net” during crisis, which shielded children from the adverse effects of losing a caregiver (Foster, 2000; Salifu Yendork & Somhlaba, 2015–2016). The lack of such support has been cited as one of the main reasons for the placement of orphaned children in residential care centers (Salifu Yendork & Somhlaba, 2015–2016).

Specifically, Ghanaian orphans are at risk of experiencing poor mental health due to the breakdown of the extended family system that formally provided care to orphans following parental death, limited available caregivers for a large number of orphans and the adverse experiences encountered following parental loss (Salifu Yendork & Somhlaba, 2014, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2015–2016). Children may also lack parental and/or familial care due to parental abandonment, abuse, misplacement or poverty, and are placed in residential care centers referred to as “Children’s Home” (Government of Ghana, 2007; UNICEF, 2017). There are both public residential institutions which are mainly financed by the government and private institutions which are run by churches or charity organizations. Following the breakdown of the extended family system, the use of residential care centers as a form of care arrangement has increased (Ansah-Koi, 2006). However, with the introduction of the Care Reform Initiative in 2006 (Government of Ghana, 2007), there is a move to avoid as much as possible (or use as a last resort) the use of residential care facilities but rather encourage family and community based care. The aim is therefore to provide orphans and vulnerable children a home and a family. One of the components of the Care Reform Initiative is to reintegrate children separated from their families with extended family members who can provide them with a caring and stable environment. Although this goal has not been fully achieved, Adongo (2011) reported that about 415 children living in residential care facilities had been reunited with their families.

Following placement in residential institutions, several adverse experiences that can negatively affect the wellbeing of children have been reported. For example, relationship problems with, and abuse from caregivers, as well as teasing, insults, fighting and

stigma from their peers in the residential care center and at school have been found (Adu, 2011; Kristiansen, 2009; Salifu Yendork & Somhlaba, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d). Additionally, stress, loneliness, lack of sleep and poor concentration have been reported (Tadesse, Dereje, & Belay, 2014). There are also instances of victimization from community members which could be caused by two main factors. First, some residential institutions tend to be more resourced and provide better quality care with means (e.g. schools, basic needs, playground, clinic, exposure to foreigners, English language) that are not available to the rest of the community members (Carpenter, 2014). This leads to envy and causes community members to discriminate against children in residential care, especially when the institutions' resources are not shared with the rest of the community (Carpenter, 2014). Second, some children in residential care are stigmatized on the basis of their HIV/AIDS status (Hong et al., 2015) or perceived to be unclean and unworthy to mingle with other children in the community (Carpenter, 2014). These negative experiences have been found to be associated with internalizing and externalizing problems (Hermenau, Eggert, Landolt, & Hecker, 2015).

Orphaned children may manage these negative experiences through revenge, bitterness, anger, forgiveness, or harbor unforgiveness motives (Erzar, Yu, Enright, & Erzar, 2019). On the other hand, the cultural context in Ghana emphasizes social harmony (Gyekye, 1998) and as such the children may feel compelled to practice forgiveness in order to restore broken relationships. Although some studies have examined forgiveness in children (Banerjee, Bennett, & Luke, 2010; Denham, Neal, Wilson, Pickering, & Boyatzis, 2005; Reik & DeWit, 2018), studies completed in Ghana have tended to focus on coping techniques rather than the mechanism of forgiveness (e.g. Salifu Yendork & Somhlaba, 2014, 2015c, 2015d, 2017). Despite the relative significance of forgiveness, there is a dearth of research on forgiveness in West Africa (Worthington et al., *in press*) and specifically in the population of children placed in residential care who often experience offences from different sources. Furthermore, a review of the literature reveals no study to date has examined the concept of forgiveness in Ghanaian children placed in residential care. Therefore, this current study aimed to investigate understandings of forgiveness in children placed in Children's Homes, and explore their knowledge of the concept, their motivations for practicing it; and the process they follow to extend forgiveness.

The exploration of forgiveness in the population was necessitated because of their unique experiences. First, for many children in residential care, the reason for their placement is a great source of concern. Many hold beliefs that they live in a residential care facility because they are not wanted by their parents and family. Following placement, some report feelings of abandonment by parents, family and God which results in continuous emotional suffering (Lumbi, 2007). Second, following placement, literature has documented they are confronted with negative experiences both inside and outside the residential facilities (Adu, 2011; Carpenter, 2014; Hong et al., 2015; Kristiansen, 2009; Salifu Yendork & Somhlaba, 2014, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d, 2015–2016; Tadesse et al., 2014). These experiences, if not managed well, can lead to internalizing and externalizing disorders. Third, children placed in residential care have limited opportunities to address their concerns. This is due to high caregiver-to-child ratio in the residential institutions which limits contact with an adult figure for redress opportunities (Government of Ghana, 2007; Merz & McCall, 2010). They also tend to have limited contact with their families (Luecken, 2008) and access to adults outside of the residential institution for

external support due to stigma and restrictions of movement because of institutional regulations (UNICEF, 2017). Due to these limitations, peers become a very important source of contact and support to children in residential care (Salifu Yendork & Somhlaba, 2015a, 2015c, 2015d). As a result, relationship problems with peers are a great source of stress which results in children going to considerable length to restore broken relationships with peers. Based on all the above factors highlighted, forgiveness becomes an important construct to explore in this population.

Forgiveness in children

Forgiveness has been conceptualized as a response, a personality disposition and characteristics of social units (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). As a response, forgiveness is a coping response to hurtful feelings resulting in an inward transformation characterized by an increase in prosocial and constructive change in a victim's thoughts, emotions and behavior toward an offender and the cessation of negative emotions, thoughts, judgments and motivations (Denham et al., 2005; Flanagan, Hoek, Ranter, & Reich, 2012). Forgiveness as a trait refers to a tendency to forgive others across a wide variety of interpersonal issues and can be scaled on a continuum of forgiving to unforgiving (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). As a social unit, forgiveness is defined as an attribute that is comparable to intimacy, trust or commitment (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002).

The literature demonstrates that school-aged children are capable of conceptualizing forgiveness but that this understanding becomes refined as they age (Flanagan & Loveall, 2012; Reik & DeWit, 2018). By elementary school, children have the needed emotional development for forgiveness (Denham et al., 2005). At this stage, they begin to understand rules and conventions as well as appreciate the functions of motives and apology in mitigating the actions of someone who has hurt them. They also experience relevant complex emotions including guilt, shame and empathy (Shaffer & Kipp, 2014), which are needed for forgiveness. Despite these developments, Denham et al. (2005) argue children still do not understand the concept of forgiveness. The emergence of forgiveness occurs during the middle childhood stage where the child meets new developmental tasks which are more challenging and demand him or her to employ forgiveness. At this stage, the demand for social interactions, emotion regulations and understanding of other's unique emotional viewpoints becomes necessary for smooth peer relations (Denham, von Salisch, Olthof, Kochanoff, & Caverly, 2002). Peer interactions are further complemented by increased capability to identify, evaluate and enact solutions for social problems (Crick & Dodge, 1994) and more sophisticated forgiveness reasoning (Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1994). Hence, the need for development and maintenance of mature friendships among older children underscore their forgiveness potential (Denham et al., 2005). Additionally, Enright and the Human Development Study Group (1994) found children progress along six soft stages of forgiveness: Revengeful forgiveness (Soft stage 1), conditional or restitutive forgiveness (Soft stage 2), expectational forgiveness (Soft stage 3), lawful expectational forgiveness (Soft stage 4), forgiveness as social harmony (5) and forgiveness as love (Soft stage 6). These stages reflect different motivations children have to forgive with the first two stages stemming intrinsically from the forgivers whereas the other four stages are extrinsic motivations.

Forgiveness has both positive and negative effects. Regarding the positive effects, forgiveness dissolves anger and resentment (Worthington & Wade, 1999), is associated with physical, mental, relational and spiritual healing (Worthington, 2005) and can aid maintenance of relationship and lessening of violence (Denham et al., 2005). On the other hand, unforgiveness has been associated with higher psychopathology (Maltby, Macaskill, & Day, 2001) and eating disorders (Worthington, Mazzeo, & Klewer, 2002). Despite a significant amount of forgiveness literature highlighting positive effects, it is also worth noting forgiveness of offences might not always be helpful. Katz, Street, and Arias (1997) found forgiveness in an abusive relationship increased the occurrence of the abuse.

In the present study, forgiveness was conceptualized as a response, a trait and a characteristic of social units. With this in mind, and given the exploratory nature of the study, we took an inductive approach to interviewing and data analysis. Hence, we explored participants' understanding of the concept without giving them clues of the existence of types. To achieve this, participants were not asked specific questions on the types of forgiveness but rather invited to share their own understanding of "forgiveness". The rationale behind this decision was the limited research that has been carried out on the subject in West Africa and the fact that we could not find any study on children placed in residential care. We wanted to explore their candid understanding of forgiveness and later ascertain through data analysis whether or not their conceptualization of the concept fit all or any of the three existing conceptualizations of forgiveness.

Methodology

Research design

This exploratory study adopted a qualitative design, in which in-depth interviews were conducted with children living in residential care institutions in Accra. This approach allows for the exploration of issues in which little is known or present understanding is inadequate (Patton & Cochran, 2002).

Research settings and participants

The study was carried out in two Children's Homes in Accra, Ghana, which care for orphans, abandoned children and children who need care and protection such as children rescued from abusive homes. One of the Children's Homes gets its financial resources from the government and external donors. The term "Children's Home" is the official term used in Ghana for homes that provide care and protection for children in need of care (Bettmann, Mortensen, & Akuoko, 2015; Government of Ghana, 2007, p. 14). The other institution is fully funded by private and external donors. The ages of children in the two Children's Homes ranged from zero to 27 years. The laws regulating the activities of Children's Homes in Ghana stipulate that such Homes should house children from zero to 18 years after which such individuals who have attained adulthood status should be given vocational training or higher education and set-up to leave the Children's Home (Government of Ghana, 2007). However, due to financial challenges, the Children's Homes are unable to prepare children for life outside of the institution when children

turn 18 years. Hence, Children's Homes in Ghana continue to accommodate older individuals even after tertiary education or following graduation from vocational institutions. With regards to the size of the institutions, one institution cares for over 150 children whereas the other had 15 children at the time of data collection.

Convenient and purposive sampling techniques were used to recruit ten (10) participants for the in-depth interviews. Children were included in the study if they were aged between nine (9) and eighteen (18) years, resided in the Children's Home for reason of parental death, were unaware of the whereabouts of their parents, and were willing to participate in the study. This age range was chosen because the literature on forgiveness in children has shown that forgiveness emerges only in the late middle childhood (9–13 years) (Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1994; Flanagan & Loveall, 2012). Children in the middle childhood stage and above are believed to have the cognitive maturation for forgiveness (Enright & The Human Development Study Group, 1994). Of the ten participants, 6 were males. Five were in primary school level, four were in the Junior High School (JHS) level and one was in the Senior High School (SHS) level. In Ghana, primary school is from age 6–11 and lasts 6 years (equivalent to Primary Education in the UK and Elementary School in the USA). Junior High School is from 12 to 15 years and lasts 3 years (equivalent to Secondary Education in the UK and Middle School in the USA). Senior High School ranges from 16 to 18 years and lasts 3 years (equivalent to Further Education in the UK and High School in the USA). Other demographic information can be found in Table 1 below.

Ethical considerations

Ethics clearance was sought from the Ethics Committee for Humanities in the University of Ghana (Certificate reference number ECH 026/15-16). Permission to access children placed in the Children's Homes in Accra was sought from the Department of Social Welfare, Accra and Administrators of the Children's Homes. Before data gathering, measures were put in place to ensure that children spoke freely and that none of the information provided by participants could be traced to them by their peers and caregivers in the Children's Homes as well as any other person who read the outcome of the research. Participants were assured that participation was voluntary and that they were free to withdraw from participation without any repercussions. This was emphasized during the initial briefing process before participants assented to taking part in the study. The identity

Table 1. Summary of demographic characteristics of participants.

Participant ID	Gender	Age	Religion	Education	Parent status
Kojo	Male	9	Christian	Primary	Unknown
Akos	Female	18	Christian	JHS	Deceased
Ama	Female	17	Christian	JHS	Alive
Kwame	Male	12	Christian	Primary	Alive
Kwesi	Male	14	Christian	Primary	Unknown
Kofi	Male	16	Christian	Primary	Alive
Abena	Female	18	Christian	JHS	Unknown
Kwame	Male	14	Christian	JHS	Unknown
Kweku	Male	13	Christian	Primary	Unknown
Yaa	Female	18	Christian	SHS	Unknown

Note: All names are pseudonyms in order to ensure anonymity.

of participants was held anonymously and information obtained from participants was treated with utmost confidentiality. To ensure anonymity, identifiers (including pseudonym, sex and age) were used to label participants' accounts instead of their personal information. To ensure confidentiality, interviews were held in a private space (an empty room in a newly constructed building) without the presence of other children, caregivers and administrators of the Homes. We also ensured that conversations could not be heard by other people. Informed consent was sought from the administrators of the Children's Homes and informed assent was sought from participants before data gathering. Participants received a monetary value of five Ghanaian Cedis (equivalent of USD1 at the time of data gathering) as a form of appreciation for their participation in the study.

Procedure

After obtaining ethical clearance and institutional approvals, days were scheduled for data collection. The objectives of the research were explained to participants prior to consent and permission was sought for interviews to be recorded and notes taken with the assurance of confidentiality. Each child was attended to in a quiet place to ensure confidentiality and privacy. Interviews were conducted by the first and second authors, and lasted between 15 and 25 minutes. There was an intermittent break for about 5–10 minutes to cater for fatigue during data collection. Sample questions included: How would you describe the relationship between you and your peers in the Children's Home? What is your understanding of forgiveness? Why would you forgive someone who hurts your feelings? and How do you go about forgiving someone who has wronged you? After data gathering, audio-taped interviews were transcribed and analyzed.

Data analyses

Transcribed interviews were thematically analyzed manually following Braun and Clarke's (2006) recommended phases of thematic analyses. The steps included data familiarization, initial code generation, searching for themes based on initial codes, review of themes, definition and naming of themes. During the familiarization stage, the first and second authors read through the transcripts over and over again to identify excerpts of the data that made meaning. These excerpts were then labeled as codes. The codes were compared across interviews to identify codes with similar focus which were grouped as themes and labeled. The first and second authors met to review the generated themes to ensure initial quotations and themes sufficiently represented participants' perspectives on the research aims. During this process, some themes were relabeled and redefined in line with issues identified. The third and fourth authors then reviewed the themes and made suggestions for further refinement of themes.

Trustworthiness of the data

To ensure credibility of the qualitative data, we followed the three steps outlined by Maxwell (1992, 1996), including providing accurate and complete representation of respondents' accounts, making interpretations based on participants' perspectives that emerged from the data, and providing alternative perspectives in experiences that

emerged from the data. We also obtained detailed data through the use of a quality tape recorder and detailed transcriptions of interviewed data as recommended by qualitative research authors (Creswell, 2007; Green & Thorogood, 2009). Among ourselves as co-investigators, we engaged in a peer check of the data by investigating the interviews and examining each excerpt to ensure credibility.

Results

Data analyzed was categorized based on the study aims and emerging themes. Themes were presented by means of excerpts from the interviews and were organized as: (1) nature of relationship with peers, (2) nature of relationship with caregivers, (3) understanding of forgiveness, (4) motivation to forgive, (5) the process of forgiving a wrongdoer and (6) the process of seeking forgiveness.

Nature of relationship with peers

Participants described their relationship with peers as generally cordial although there were instances of sharing negative experiences. Positive periods were characterized by instance of sharing stories, supporting each other to solve problems and performing activities together. Participants described this relationship pattern as normal because they were able to reconcile and perform activities together after a misunderstanding:

When it is time for us to go for a programme, we all move together. ... sometimes if somebody behave in a certain way, [that is inappropriate], we all come together and solve the problem ... and move on. ... They are good to me and I am nice with them. We all share stories together, when we all meet together, we have fun. ... (Kofi, male, 14 years)

Peer conflicts usually emanated from inappropriate behaviors shown towards participants by their peers during everyday encounters. These behaviors included fighting, bullying, insults, teasing, stinginess, gossip, perceived malicious intentions of peers and taking one's personal items without permission. Participants reported feeling offended and distressed by these behaviors. The following excerpt describes instances of insults and teasing that led to a fight and negative emotions among some participants:

If I am reading a book, then, one of my friends say if I am coming to school, I should bring storybooks to him. And if I bring the storybooks ... then they will be calling me that, this girl is my girl. That is why I am bringing the book to her. I feel so sad. (Kwabena, male, 14 years)

Like, they will be insulting you and those kinds of things, you can forgive them. (Kwesi, male, 14 years)

Instances of bullying were also reported as being characterized by an older child taking items of and/or from a younger child without permission:

... they are annoying. Like if you put something there that doesn't belong to them, then they will go and take it. And sometimes they feel like they are grown-ups so they can do whatever they want. (Yaa, Female, 18 years)

Stealing and use of personal items without the individual's permission was also cited by one participant:

... taking my stuff, maybe using my phone to call someone without my permission or stealing my stuff ... (Akos, Female 18 years)

Another participant also complained of being cautious in how he interacted with peers due to the perception that some of his peers have malicious intent and could steal opportunities meant for him. This belief, he reported, limited him from opening up to his peers:

... I like moving with people¹ but ... sometimes I don't like to move with people because maybe there is an opportunity for me and if I move with [that person] that opportunity would be given to [him/her] but not myself. And [the person] would go and hide somewhere telling people that "look at this boy I have taken his position from him" ... (Kwesi, Male, 14 years)

A participant also reported sometimes they tell lies either about their fellow peers to the caregivers or about issues they experience:

... Maybe they will say I should come and call you and I come and call you and you say you are coming. Then I will go and change the story that you said you would not come. ... When the thing is true they want you to say it's false. At that time I tell them that I would not talk to them for an hour ... (Kwesi, Male, 14 years)

Another participant also described how he uses religion as a tool for correction and repair of broken relationships. The participant referred to his beliefs in God as a reason to live amicably with his peers and as a tool for communication. To this participant, his faith was used as a source for reproach when a peer hurts him. It is also noteworthy that sharing of a participant's faith, although resourceful, was also a source of conflict among peers due to differences in religious orientations:

... now I'm a Christian. ... my relationship with my friends is talking to them about God, sharing the word of God with them. At times too when I share the word of God with them they feel that you want to bring their spirit down. Because ... they have another God that they worship so it's as if I want to bring their spirit down to prevent them from worshipping Him. So if I'm staying with you I will always talk to you about God. ... (Kwesi, Male, 14 years)

Nature of relationship with caregivers

Participants also described the nature of the relationship between themselves and their caregivers. The patterns were generally positive and negative. For negative relationship patterns, 3 participants reported conflicts characterized by instances where caregivers hoard items intended for them, refuse to attend to their needs and maltreat them:

Sometimes, when the office [administration] bring us something that we should share amongst ourselves, they [caregivers] take it. [Sometimes the] time they are supposed to share the things, they won't share it. When the things [are] ... expiring before they will come and share the things ... Or if we have a problem that you want to go and tell them, they will not even mind you. Even today, since morning, we have not eaten. They don't care whether we have eaten or not ... (Kofi, Male, 16 years)

... Sometimes, the way they [caregivers] talk to you ... they [caregivers] won't treat you the way you want. And they [caregivers] go and report us, they [caregivers] themselves will come and call us ... if the children do some bad things, they will come and tell us to punish them. When we punish them too, they will complain ... (Yaa, Female, 18 years)

The relationship problems made it difficult for participants to share their thoughts and worries with the caregivers. The excerpt below describes a child who had resorted to keeping to herself and doing things in secrecy as she perceives her caregivers to be unapproachable:

... I don't often come closer to them. ... hmmm because I have nothing to tell them ...
Though there may be problems, ... it is hard for me to tell anyone or the mothers who are here ... (Akos, Female, 18 years)

On the positive side, the account of four participants revealed that caregivers were seen as providers of regular basic needs such as food and shelter. Additionally, they were viewed as a source of discipline when they misbehaved. Others also commented on the welcoming attitude of some caregivers, making it easy for them to share their thoughts freely:

Like I feel free to say what is on my mind to them [caregivers], they [caregivers] don't sack me. They [caregivers] don't say that what I'm saying is not good. They rather help me or give me the lead to go where [I want] to go. And they are like our parents which we were born to [because] the way they behave is the same way [our] own parents would behave. (Kwesi, Male, 14 years)

Understanding of forgiveness

Regarding participants' understanding of forgiveness, four different opinions emerged from the data. First, forgiveness was viewed as a process of ignoring a wrongdoer:

When someone has done something against you and you don't like, you don't mind the person so you forgive the person. (Kweku, Male, 13 years)

Second, forgiveness was equated to forgetting a negative experience:

Forgiveness means, forgetting about the wrong things someone does to you. (Abena, Female, 18 years)

Third, being remorseful for harm caused was viewed as forgiveness:

regretting an offence and apologizing. (Kofi, Male 16 years)

Fourth, forgiveness was perceived as letting go of how one feels about a negative experience and setting the wrongdoer free rather than punishing the person for the negative behavior:

Forgiveness to me simply means that setting a person who has cause you an offence free without making any cause on it. So that [means] you have forgiven the person. Meaning that you have set the person free. Forgiveness in the dictionary- forgiveness means that accepting someone truly when he has commit an offence or a wrong thing which need to be punished but rather has been or have been set him to go free without any cause on it. (Kwesi, Male, 14 years)

Motivation to forgive

Regarding participants' motivations to forgive someone who has hurt them, forgiveness was viewed as an act of obligation required of a Christian and demanded by God. To three participants, the sins of humanity are being forgiven by God through the constant

supplications of Jesus on humanity's behalf. Thus, Christians are expected to replicate the act of forgiveness in their lives by letting go of the emotional pain they feel following a negative experience. Additionally, participants also believe in an adverse effect of unforgiveness which to them is worse than forgiveness:

... If someone does something, you can forgive the person [just like] how God sent his son, how Jesus is in heaven begging for our sins and have to forgive our sins ... Because if we sin then we go to God, God too forgives us so we have to also forgive them. If you don't forgive, if the judgment day comes, you can be dead into hell or you will get a punishment. (Kwame, Male, 12 years)

... the main reason is that God said we should forgive. Because the Bible says so and I am a Christian. ... Epistle of Peter or Paul spoke about forgiveness. (Akos, Female, 18 years)

Again from a Christian perspective, four participants reported that forgiveness of others' wrongdoing is reciprocated with forgiveness of one's sins by God. The bigger reward is that, following forgiveness, one's needs are provided by God because he/she forgave someone who hurt them. Besides the biblical belief of God's reward for forgiveness, participants also believed in the tangible mutual benefits that can accrue from forgiveness. To one participant, forgiveness creates an opportunity for the receipt of prospective favors from the person who hurt them:

... I learn that when you forgive ... Whatever you do against God, God too will forgive you and everything you ask from God, he will provide it for you. (Kwabena, Male, 14 years)

... It is being stated in the Bible that we must forgive those who forgive us. So that our God too will forgive us. So if you don't forgive someone God too won't forgive you. So we need to forgive others so that God too will forgive us. The reason why I will forgive the other person is that, you don't know the kind of person that you might meet in the near future. ... So you have to forgive that person so that in case you go and meet that person somewhere, he or she can also help you whatever you are going through. Maybe that person too might save your life. ... What you sow is what you reap. (Kofi, Male, 16 years)

It also emerged that forgiveness depends on evidence of change from the person who has caused harm. One participant reported that it is difficult to forgive someone who continuously causes harm. Instead, she gives the person who has caused her harm time to change his/her behavior with the hope that they would desist from their negative behavior. However, if the person continues to repeat the wrong doing, forgiveness will not be rendered, thus, leading to a break in their relationship:

... one thing I don't like is that you can forgive someone and the person would repeat that same mistake. What I do is that I would give you time to change but if you keep on repeating that same mistake I would not even like to talk [about] your matter ... And ... I would forgive the person but I wouldn't like to have any friendship with the person. Because when you become- when you continue the friendship, he would repeat that same mistake ... (Ama, Female, 17 years)

Participants also reported that forgiveness is an expected end product of apologies rendered. According to two participants, once an individual renders an apology for the harm caused, forgiveness is a necessary outcome. In this sense, it does not matter the severity of the wrong doing, or whether the apology was initiated by the one who caused harm on his own accord or was demanded by an authority figure:

[I forgive] because they have apologized. Because, when they finish they say sorry. ... (Abena, Female, 18 years)

... But when they offend then they feel sorry of me, then I forgive them. (Kwabena, Male, 14 years)

Forgiveness also appeared to depend on the severity of the negative emotions (anger and pain) felt as a result of an experienced negative behavior. According to this participant, when the pain or anger is severe, he does not forgive but forgives when the pain is mild:

... Sometimes when the pain is in me I don't forgive them ... but [when] the pain is not in me, I forgive them. Sometimes when they offend me they will be laughing at me too, so the pain comes and I get more angry ... (Kwabena, Male, 14 years)

The significance of the relationship to the participant was also cited as a determinant of whether or not a wrong doing would be forgiven. From the excerpt below, it appeared that forgiveness was necessary to restore the broken relationship resulting from a wrong doing. To this participant, being able to socialize with his peers was more important than holding a grudge, hence he would forgive to restore the relationship with the peers:

They are my brothers, if I do not forgive them, we can't play, we can't eat, we can't sit together and learn books that is why I forgive them so that we can come together and do something. (Kwabena, Male, 14 years)

To another participant, in human encounters, it is inevitable for one not to be hurt by people they interact with, therefore forgiveness should be seen as an inevitable component of human existence:

... for me I have my reasons. ... I would say that human beings, no matter what somebody would step on your toes so you have to forgive. (Ama, Female, 17 years)

The process of forgiving a wrongdoer

When participants were asked to describe how they went about forgiving someone who has hurt them, the accounts of participants revealed differences in their approaches, depending on whether or not the victim perceived that the person who caused harm did so intentionally or not and who (victim or wrongdoer) is seeking forgiveness. When the one who caused harm was thought to offend unintentionally, the victim was passive in the forgiveness process but rather deferred forgiveness to God. The victim rather asked for forgiveness on behalf of the one who caused harm, giving the perception of the person's lack of awareness of his/her wrongdoing. It appeared that in such cases the victim believes he/she had no control over forgiveness, hence the deferral to God, who is perceived to be all powerful and can negotiate forgiveness for the one who caused harm:

You just pray, you pray. That God should forgive the person. ... I will just tell the person that he doesn't know what he or she is doing, and so I have forgiven him, so she or he shouldn't do that thing again. (Kwame, Male, 12 years)

Yeah, I will tell them that, everything they do God should forgive them. So the thing they are doing, they don't know what they are doing. So God should forgive all ... Yes. I pray to God that we come together and eat again. They shouldn't do those things they've being doing to

me anymore so that we can come back together again. I don't do them anything, I just tell them that, God should forgive them and they don't know what they are doing. (Kwabena, Male, 14 years)

Other participants reported that even when the person who caused them harm was not aware of his/her wrongdoing, they made an attempt to explain to them how their actions were impacting on them negatively. It was perceived that this process will lead the person to understand the adverse impact of their actions, get the person to stop hurting them and feel remorse, apologize and ask for forgiveness. From participants' accounts, the emphasis was on the lack of awareness of the impact of the wrongdoing on the victim but not the awareness of committing the wrongdoing:

... I will just see you and tell you what you did was very bad ... and when you ask me to forgive you. I would say oh ok you didn't know what you did so I would just forgive you. (Akos, Female, 18 years)

If someone just insults you, you tell the person, you don't mind the person. Or you could tell the person that he or she doesn't know what he or she is doing, so he should stop. (Kwabena, Male, 14 years)

The process was rather different when the person who caused harm was perceived to be aware of his negative behaviors. Generally, it appeared that when the wrongdoer was perceived to be aware of his behavior and impact, participants reported being active in the forgiveness process. Participants reported the wrongdoing to a higher figure, usually a caregiver in the Children's Home, for the person to be called to book and for attempts to be made towards rectifying the negative behavior after which forgiveness was rendered. It appeared from the excerpts below that those who were aware of their negative behaviors deserved some chastisement before forgiveness, hence the involvement of a higher figure who can render punishment or "warning" before forgiveness was rendered by the victim:

I will just go and report to mum [caregiver in the Children's Home]. ... and they will call him or her to warn him. ... then I just forgive the person. (Kwame, Male, 12 years)

I will go and report them. And they talk to them before I forgive them. (Abena, Female, 18 years)

For another participant, she starts the process with a direct confrontation of the one who caused harm in an attempt to get him/her to understand the impact of their negative behavior. For this participant, forgiveness is not the end game but an awareness of the impact of the negative behavior on the victim and as required by the participant's religious beliefs. Even after confrontation and religious beliefs, she still held a grudge against the one who hurt her:

... I would get annoyed and tell the person direct that this is what you have done ... in their mist and I would say it loud whether the person likes it or not. For me like I would see the person as a friend, even though I would keep some things in my heart or mind as time goes on ... I would tell the person straight forward that this is what you have done and I would let the person get the reason why I am offended. ... Because I know he or she would become better than me and also for Christ sake I would let the person know the reason why I was offended with him or her ... (Ama, Female, 17 years)

The process of seeking forgiveness

Interestingly, when a participant was the one who wronged another person and sought forgiveness, he/she took steps to apologize and asked for forgiveness in order to repair the broken relationship:

Maybe if I know that I have done something which is bad and it is not good, that one, I accept it for myself that I have done something bad. So I will go and apologize. I will go back and apologize. If only I see that, the mistake was my fault. (Kofi, Male, 16 years)

... If it is my own offence I will come and apologize to you about what I have done is not good so I am sorry. (Kwesi, Male, 14 years)

For other participants, it emerged that rather than addressing the negative behavior or rendering apologies, they instead invited the victim to play or attempted to approach the person for an interaction, during which an attempt was made to seek forgiveness. Another participant reported simply attempting to initiate an interaction without rendering an apology or seeking forgiveness but assumes that once she had initiated an interaction, the person who has been wronged was expected to let go of their negative feelings and continue the relationship:

... if we are having, like playing game or something, then I will go and call that person that, he should come and let's go and play the game. Then I will be talking to him that he should forgive me that ... we fought. Even if I can't, I will send someone to go to that person. (Yaa, Female, 18 years)

... if I offend someone I ... would keep calm and talk to you [the person] if you [the offended person] won't accept, even God knows [I have done my best]. (Ama, Female, 17 years)

A participant reported that he attempts to explain to the person who has wronged him the impact of their behavior on him and then defer to a Higher Being to render forgiveness. For this participant, he believed that the power to forgive did not lie with him even though he is the victim and therefore did not take ownership for forgiveness but rather deferred to a Supreme Being who was believed to have the power to forgive unrepentant individuals. This belief was due to his religious beliefs:

First I talk to them that the things they are doing is not good. Sometimes too ... when we fight ... they say they don't like me. So I shouldn't come near [them] again. Then me too I say the thing they are saying, God should forgive them. ... When they insult me, I don't mind them. Then I will start saying that, everything they say against me, God should forgive them. (Kwabena, Male 14 years)

Yet for others, the process of forgiveness did not take into account the seeker of forgiveness or the intentions of those who have wronged them. For two participants, what was important was the potential impact of forgiveness on the broken relationship. From the excerpts below, when the relationship was broken, the victim made all attempts to restore the broken relationship through apologies and by explaining to the person who hurt their feelings the impact of their behaviors:

I don't think ... it depends on measure of the troubles and tribulations ... There are things that I do because I am a Christian. I forget that you have [offended] me or I have offended you. I will forget that offence ... if it is your own offence I will come and tell you

that I have forgiven you and ... we will come back to make friends again. I forgive them by not saying any negative word to them but rather blessing them. (Kwesi, Male, 14 years)

I will go with the person. Sit down and talk about what happened. I will analyze everything to him whether ... I am wrong or he or she is wrong so we forget about everything so we can be able to make peace. (Kofi, Male, 16 years)

Discussion

This paper investigated the nature of relationship between children and their peers and caregivers in two Children's Homes in Accra, Ghana. Results showed the children in Children's Homes have generally cordial relationships. However, there were instances of conflicts and other negative attitudes from peers and caregivers. This pattern of relationships has been reported in previous studies on children placed in residential care in Ghana which have described the residential institutions as a medium for the provision of emotional and material needs of orphans albeit with instances of abuse and relationship problems (Adu, 2011; Salifu Yendork & Somhlaba, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d). Consistent with the present findings of cordial relationships, peers in the institutions have been reported to offer social and emotional support to one another whereas residential caregivers have been found to offer nurturance in the form of playing the role of parents and providing basic needs to orphaned children (Salifu Yendork & Somhlaba, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d). These positive experiences have been noted to enhance residential children's sense of belongingness and psychological well-being (Salifu Yendork & Somhlaba, 2015b). The present study found the nature of everyday relationship problems experienced by children from their peers and caregivers included insults, teasing, bullying, stealing, malicious intents and lies, which have also been reported in previous studies on children placed in residential care centers in Accra, Ghana (Adu, 2011; Salifu Yendork & Somhlaba, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d). These negative experiences when not managed well can be sources of enmity among children and poor psychological well-being (Barcaacia, Schneider, Pallini, & Baiocco, 2017), hence the need to discuss forgiveness which, is one of the character strengths that can play an important role in dissolving negative emotions following experiences of wrongdoing and promoting psychological well-being.

Following the report of maltreatment and inadequate food, by some participants in one of the Children's Homes, the lead researcher had a discussion with the head of the Home, who is the overall authority figure in the institution. The head was informed of the findings and some recommendations were made. Recommendations made included the essence of a system for monitoring distribution of food items to children and the nature of caregiver-children relationship in the Children's Homes. We also recommend the need for training of caregivers on ways to manage behavior problems of children in their care, given that some of the children might come into the homes with prior adjustment problems or develop adjustment problems while in the homes. Additionally, we recommended the need for continual psychological support for both the children and the caregivers to equip them with skills for managing relationship problems such as stress management, problem-solving skills among others. Follow-up by the first two authors with the head of the Children's Home show that the support of a Clinical Psychologist has been solicited. The psychologist volunteers on weekly basis to provide counseling for the children and caregivers until a clinical psychologist can be employed on a permanent basis. The head

of the Children's Home also indicated that a request has been sent to the Department of Social Welfare for monitoring support.

With regards to children's understanding of forgiveness, narratives included ignoring a wrongdoer, forgetting a negative experience, regretting and apologizing. Their knowledge of the meaning of forgiveness did not fit any of the three existing conceptualizations of the concept as a response, a trait or characteristics of social units. However, their responses were consistent with findings of some previous research. For example, Adarlo, Corpuz, and Villanueva (2015) found that children understood forgiveness to mean being good and accepting apologies, means of building positive peer-relationship. God's teaching, saying sorry and the process of regaining friendship. Additionally, Kemp (2014) found that children confused forgiveness with forgetting, denial and moving on, and apology. The narratives of children in the present study showed a lack of understanding of the actual concept of forgiveness in general and were not aware of the different types. Their responses did not reflect any of the key indicators of forgiveness as a response which include a transformation in one's affect, cognitive judgment and motivation towards an individual who caused harm (Denham et al., 2005) and how this can manifest as a personality disposition and characteristics of social unit (McCullough & Witvliet, 2002). In its strict sense, forgiveness is different from pardoning, condoning, excusing, forgetting, denial of wrongdoing and reconciliation (Enright & Coyle, 1998; White, 2002). Given the erroneous knowledge on forgiveness in the present sample, children in residential care would need educational support on the actual concept of forgiveness as suggested by White (2002).

Participants' motivation to forgive included their religious orientation, evidence of change from the person who hurt their feelings, when apology was rendered, severity of negative emotions and maintenance of a relationship with the person who has wronged them. Maintenance of relationship with a wrongdoer and apology are consistent with previous studies (Denham et al., 2005; Kemp, 2014). Severity of impact of a negative experience, restoration of relationships and need for trust in not repeating the wrongdoing have also been reported in previous research (Kemp, 2014). Additionally, the significance of religion/spirituality in forgiveness has also been highlighted by previous studies (Davis, Worthington, Hook, & Hill, 2013; McCullough & Worthington, 1999). These motives reflect some of Enright and The Human Development Study Group's (1994) stages of forgiveness development. For example, the demand for apology and evidence of change reflect the first and fourth soft stages in which something is demanded of the wrongdoer before forgiveness is granted. Citation of religion also reflects the lawful expectational forgiveness soft stage in which forgiveness is rendered because it is demanded by religion or similar institution.

The narratives of how children go about forgiving following a negative experience showed some distinctions depending on whether or not the wrongdoing was done intentionally and who (i.e. the person who has been hurt or the person who caused harm) is seeking forgiveness. When the person who caused harm was perceived to be unaware of "his/her" negative behavior and its impact, participants reported being passive in the forgiveness process and deferred to a Higher Being for forgiveness or steps were taken to make the wrongdoer aware of the impacts of his/her action to elicit remorse and apology. On the other hand, when the person who caused harm was believed to be aware of his/her negative behavior and the impacts, avenues for punishment or counsel

for the person were explored to elicit remorse, and also confrontation of the wrongdoer to raise awareness of his/her behaviors before forgiveness was given. Moreover, when the person who caused harm sought forgiveness, forgiveness followed apology. Some participants also did not take steps to address the negative experience but believed that once they hurt another person's feelings and asked for forgiveness, the person who was wronged had to forgive irrespective of how they felt. These patterns are consistent with Kemp's (2014) findings that highlighted the role of remorse and apology in the forgiveness process among children as well as Davis et al.'s (2013) findings in adults that emphasize the influence of religion and spirituality in forgiveness.

Accounts of the forgiveness process are worth noting due to their peculiarity in the present sample. Some participants reported that they would be the first to seek forgiveness in order to restore a broken relationship irrespective of the nature of negative experiences. These accounts show the significance of restoration of broken relationships to the participants. Peers are a major source of social network and interaction for children placed in residential care (Salifu Yendork & Somhlaba, 2015b, 2015c, 2015d) due to the minimal contact they have with institutional caregivers as a result of high child-to-caregiver ratio (Merz & McCall, 2010) and limited or lack of contact with their families (Luecken, 2008). This perhaps explains why all attempts are made towards repair of broken relationships rather than holding a grudge and waiting for the person who caused harm to ask for forgiveness. These findings also underscore why children in residential institutions would benefit from education on forgiveness and its relevance to their well-being given that they believe they are practicing "forgiveness" when in actual fact they are not practicing "forgiveness".

Implications for well-being

In light of the findings and conclusions drawn from the study, children in residential institutions would benefit from education on forgiveness. Specific focus should be on children's understanding of the meaning of forgiveness and how it is different from other related concepts (e.g. pardoning, condoning, excusing, forgetting, denial of wrongdoing and reconciliation), the benefits of forgiveness and impact of unforgiveness. This can be incorporated into the routine programs in the Children's Homes in order to enable them to attain the benefits associated with forgiveness. Additionally, given the role of religion and spirituality in shaping the participants' conceptualization of forgiveness, religious activities of the different religious denominations of children in the Homes could be targeted as an avenue to educate children in residential institutions on forgiveness given that participants' accounts brought to light how their religious beliefs influenced their understanding and motivation to forgive. Education on forgiveness could be incorporated into different religious activities when issues on virtues are discussed. In such education, the scientific established meaning and the types of "forgiveness" could be explained, indicators of forgiveness responses on the one rendering it and the benefits it ensues. With such knowledge, children placed in Children's Homes will become aware of whether or not they are practicing "forgiveness" or other related constructs. This will subsequently inform their expectations of the benefits forgiveness is anticipated for their well-being.

Following the finding of maltreatment and neglect of children's needs, there is the need for training of caregivers in residential institutions on unique characteristics of children

placed in Children's Homes and how that can strain the relationship between children and caregivers. This will equip caregivers with skills needed to tolerate and manage problematic behaviors that may emanate from the relationship. We recommend continual psychological services for both the children and the caregivers to address psychological distress that may emanate from daily encounters in the residential care centers. There is also the need for structures to screen potential caregivers before they are employed, training of caregivers and monitoring of activities of Children's Homes by the Department of Social Welfare to detect and curb issues of maltreatment and neglect of children placed in the Children's Homes.

The findings of the current study are also important for the education of children in residential care both internationally and nationally. First, child care practitioners need to help children understand the concept of forgiveness. It is important that children are helped to develop a broader understanding without being forced to practice forgiveness. Second, it is important to note that forgiveness is not a panacea for negative experiences that children may encounter in residential care. As such practitioners in care homes need to help children develop proper and healthy ways of practicing forgiveness. Children need to know when to report incidences that bother on maltreatment. This is especially important in cases where homes are run by religious institutions and children may feel compelled to forgive or leave it to a higher power.

Limitations and recommendations for future studies

While this study has brought out interesting findings about the experience of children placed in residential care and their understanding of forgiveness, findings should be interpreted with caution due to some limitations. First, the sample size of ten participants, although acceptable in qualitative research, was small and could have impacted on the diversity of views that emerged from the study. A larger sample size could have elicited a wide variety of views on the subject. Future studies should consider exploring forgiveness on a larger scale towards generalizing findings.

Second, the focus of the present study was on how children in residential care negotiate forgiveness in the context of the negative experiences they reported. Hence, other strategies of responding to negative experiences were not explored. Future studies should consider widening the scope to include other ways of managing negative experiences.

Third, the use of only one-on-one interviews as the only method of data collection could have limited participants' abilities to communicate and elaborate on their experiences and thoughts on the subject. Future studies should consider including other data collection methods such arts-based research, digital technologies, focused group discussions among others (see Holland, Renold, Ross, & Hillman, 2008; Mannay et al., 2019; Young & Barrett, 2001) to provide participants with more opportunities to communicate their experiences and thoughts on the subject.

Fourth, given the limited scope of the present study, which was to explore the nature of relationships and the concept of forgiveness in the present sample, following the findings of maltreatment of children by caregivers, the study could not follow-up on how caregivers are selected, trained and supported. Future studies could explore how the Department of Social Welfare in Ghana screen potential caregivers, the nature of training and support offered to caregivers, measures put in place to protect children in residential care and

monitor the activities of the Children's Homes. Findings of such a study could highlight the unique needs of the caregivers to help provide quality care to children placed in the Homes. The study could not also follow-up to explore the outcome of the implementation of the researchers' recommendations towards the handling of alleged maltreatment of children. Future studies could broaden the scope to allow the exploration of the impact of the presence of a clinical psychologist in the Children's Home towards the wellbeing of children in residential care.

Fifth, given the limited opportunities residential children have to address their concern, another area for future study could be the exploration of avenues for children to speak out and address their concerns about anything.

In spite of these limitations, this study has laid a foundation for the exploration of broader aspects of forgiveness in children placed in residential care. Areas such as socialization process of, cultural underpinnings of, and impact of, forgiveness could be explored by future studies to broaden the understanding of forgiveness following parental loss and residential placement.

Conclusions

This study has shown that the present sample of children living in Children's Homes experienced several negative experiences but lacked an understanding of the actual meaning of forgiveness. Quite noticeable is their willingness to forgive or seek forgiveness in order to maintain social ties and foster social interaction. Indeed, forgiveness is associated with several benefits and these benefits can only be attained if the parties involved fully understand forgiveness and know how to apply it when needed.

Note

1. "Moving with people" as used here mean "being close to other people" or "having a cordial relationship with other people".

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This research was supported by the Templeton World Charity Foundation through "Can Forgiveness Be Strengthened in West and South Africa?" (TWCF0101/AB66).

Notes on Contributors

Joana Salifu Yendork, Ph.D., is a Lecturer at the Department of Psychology, University of Ghana. She obtained her Ph.D. in Psychology from Stellenbosch University, South Africa. Her research interests focus broadly on the wellbeing of vulnerable children and adolescents and positive psychology. She has published widely on vulnerable children and adolescents, religion and positive psychology.

Selina Owusu Boadu, MPhil., is a Clinical Psychologist at the Child Health Unit of Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital, Accra, Ghana. She obtained an M.Phil. in clinical psychology from the University of Ghana. She has engaged in several research works with children and has published on children.

Margaret Amankwah-Poku, Ph.D., is a Lecturer in psychology at the Department of Psychology, University of Ghana teaching undergraduate and postgraduate courses. She also supervises undergraduate research project, Masters Dissertations and Ph.D. theses work. She has an M.Phil. in Clinical Psychology from the University of Ghana and a Ph.D. in Health Psychology from the University of Birmingham, UK. She has practical experience in clinical practice, counselling and research. She has research interest in the Psychosocial aspect of physical health, focusing on Diabetes care; Attitude and attitude change for good health care and mental health issue.

Annabella Osei-Tutu, Ph.D., is a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Psychology, University of Ghana, Legon, Accra. She is licensed to practice as a counseling psychologist in Ghana. Her research interest lies in the intersections of psychology and culture, particularly focusing on mental health and well-being within West African settings. She has published on a variety of issues relating to forgiveness, conceptions of mental illness, and cultural scripting of emotions in Ghana.

ORCID

Joana Salifu Yendork  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5665-3404>

References

- Abebe, T. (2009). Multiple methods, complex dilemmas: Negotiating socio-ethical spaces in participatory research with disadvantaged children. *Children's Geographies*, 7(4), 451–465.
- Adarlo, R. A., Corpuz, J. M. V., & Villanueva, J. C. (2015, July 29–30). *Children's concept of forgiveness*. Paper presented at International Conference on Studies in Humanities and Social Sciences (ICSHSS'15), Phuket, Thailand. Retrieved from <https://icehm.org/upload/7144ED715060.pdf>
- Adongo, S. T. (2011, May 24–27). *Realising the rights of children in Ghana: Towards homes without walls*. Paper presented at the Way Forward Project Second Working Groups Convening, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Adu, N. A. T. (2011). *Children's assessment of well-being: A study of the experiences and subjective well-being of orphans living in institutions in Ghana* (Master's thesis, Norwegian University of Science and Technology). Retrieved from <http://ntnu.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:443614>
- Ansah-Koi, A. A. (2006). Care of orphans: Fostering interventions for children whose parents die of AIDS in Ghana. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Social Services*, 87, 555–564.
- Banerjee, R., Bennett, M., & Luke, N. (2010). Children's reasoning about the self-presentational consequences of apologies and excuses following rule violations. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*, 28, 799–815.
- Barcaacia, B., Schneider, B. H., Pallini, S., & Baiocco, R. (2017). Bullying and the detrimental role of un-forgiveness in adolescents' wellbeing. *Psicothema*, 29, 217–222. doi:10.7334/psicothema2016.251
- Bettmann, J. E., Mortensen, J. M., & Akuoko, K. O. (2015). Orphanage caregivers' perceptions of children's emotional needs. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 49, 71–79. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2015.01.003
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3, 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Carpenter, K. (2014). Using orphanage spaces to combat envy and stigma. *Children, Youth and Environments*, 24, 124–137.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Crick, N. R., & Dodge, K. A. (1994). A review and reformulation of social information-processing mechanisms in children's social adjustment. *Psychological Bulletin*, 115, 74–101.

- Davis, D. E., Worthington, E. L., Hook, J. N., & Hill, P. C. (2013). Research on religion/spirituality and forgiveness: A meta-analytic review. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality* (Advanced online first). doi:10.1037/a0033637
- Denham, S. A., Neal, K., Wilson, B. J., Pickering, S., & Boyatzis, C. J. (2005). Emotional development and forgiveness in children: Emerging evidence. In E. L. Worthington, Jr. (Ed.), *Handbook of forgiveness* (pp. 127–142). New York: Routledge.
- Denham, S. A., von Salisch, M., Olthof, T., Kochanoff, A., & Caverly, S. (2002). Emotions and peer relationships. In C. Hart & P. K. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of child social development* (pp. 307–328). New York: Blackwell.
- DeSilva, M. B., Beard, J., Cakwe, K., McCoy, K., Nkosi, B., Parikh, B., ... Simon, J. (2008). Vulnerability of orphan caregivers vs. non-orphan caregivers in KwaZulu-Natal. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 3, 102–111.
- Ennew, J. (2005). Prisoners of childhood: Orphans and economic dependency. In J. Qvortrup (Ed.), *Studies in modern childhood: Society, agency, culture* (pp. 128–146). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Enright, R. D., & Coyle, C. T. (1998). Researching the process model of forgiveness within psychological interventions. In E. L. Worthington, Jr. (Ed.), *Dimensions of forgiveness: Psychological research and theological perspectives* (pp. 139–161). Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press.
- Enright, R. D., & The Human Development Study Group. (1994). Piaget on the moral development of forgiveness: Identity or reciprocity? *Human Development*, 37, 63–80.
- Erzar, T., Yu, L., Enright, R. D., & Erzar, K. K. (2019). Childhood victimization, recent injustice, anger, and forgiveness in a sample of imprisoned male offenders. *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology*, 63, 18–31. doi:10.1177/0306624X18781782
- Flanagan, K., Hoek, K., Ranter, J., & Reich, H. (2012). The potential of forgiveness as a response for coping with negative peer experiences. *Journal of Adolescence*, 35, 1215–1223.
- Flanagan, K. S., & Loveall, R. (2012). Forgiveness, peer relations, and children's spirituality. In K. E. Lawson (Ed.), *Children's spirituality: Theology, research, and practice* (pp. 373–398). Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock.
- Foster, G. (2000). The capacity of the extended family safety net for orphans in Africa. *Psychology, Health & Medicine*, 5, 55–59. doi:10.1080/135485000106007
- Fuchs, R. G. (1987). Legislation, poverty, and child-abandonment in nineteenth-century Paris. *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 18, 55–80.
- Government of Ghana. (2007). *Standards for the operation of residential care settings in Ghana*. Accra: Assembly Press. Retrieved from http://www.ovcghana.org/docs/STANDARDS_FOR_RESIDENTIAL_CARE.pdf
- Green, J., & Thorogood, N. (2009). *Qualitative methods for health research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Gyekye, K. (1998). *African cultural values: An introduction*. Accra, Ghana: Sankofa Publishing Company.
- Hermenau, K., Eggert, I., Landolt, M. A., & Hecker, T. (2015). Neglect and perceived stigmatization impact psychological distress of orphans in Tanzania. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 6, 28617. doi:10.3402/ejpt.v6.28617
- Holland, S., Renold, E., Ross, N., & Hillman, A. (2008). *The everyday lives of children in care: Using a sociological perspective to inform social work practice*. Retrieved from <http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/466/1/0108%2520everyday%2520lives%2520of%2520children.pdf>
- Hong, Y., Chi, P., Li, X., Zhao, G., Stanton, B., & Li, L. (2015). Community-based family-style group homes for children orphaned by AIDS in rural China: An ethnographic investigation. *Health Policy and Planning*, 30, 928–937. doi:10.1093/heapol/czu093
- Katz, J., Street, A., & Arias, I. (1997). Individual differences in self-Appraisals and responses to dating violence Scenarios. *Violence and Victims*, 12(3), 265–276.
- Kemp, E. B. (2014). *Measuring children's forgiveness: Development of the children's forgiveness card set*. Dissertation submitted to University of Adelaide. Retrieved from <https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/2440/84976/8/02whole.pdf>

- Kidman, R., & Thurman, T. R. (2014). Caregiver burden among adults caring for orphaned children in rural South Africa. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 9, 234–246.
- Kristiansen, M. (2009). *The quality of life of children living in residential child care facilities: A comparative study of three children's homes in Accra and Cape Coast* (Master's thesis). Retrieved from <http://ntnu.diva-portal.org/smash/record.jsf?pid=diva2:202196>
- Luecken, L. J. (2008). Long-term consequences of parental death in childhood: Psychological and physiological manifestations. In M. S. Stroebe, R. O. Hansson, H. Schut, & W. Stroebe (Eds.), *Handbook of bereavement research and practice* (pp. 397–416). Washington, DC: American Association of Psychology.
- Lumbi, P. C. (2007). *The emotional well-being, social adjustment and coping strategies of orphans and vulnerable children affected by HIV/AIDS* (Unpublished MA dissertation). University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa. Retrieved from <http://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/bitstream/handle/10539/5972/P.C.%20LUMBI%20-%20STUDENT%20%23%200516490H%20-%20Masters%20Research%20Report.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Maltby, J., Macaskill, A., & Day, L. (2001). Failure to forgive self and others: A replication and extension of the relationship between forgiveness, personality, social desirability and general health. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 30, 881–885.
- Mannay, D., Staples, E., Hallett, S., Roberts, L., Rees, A., Evans, R., & Andrews, D. (2019). Enabling talk and reframing messages: Working creatively with care experienced children and young people to recount and re-represent their everyday experiences. *Child Care in Practice*, 25, 51–63. doi:10.1080/13575279.2018.1521375
- Maxwell, J. A. (1992). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62, 279–301.
- Maxwell, J. A. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- McCullough, M. E., & Witvliet, C. V. (2002). The psychology of forgiveness. In C. R. Snyder, & S. J. Lopez (Eds.), *Handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 446–458). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- McCullough, M. E., & Worthington, E. L. (1999). Religion and the forgiving personality. *Journal of Personality*, 67, 1141–1164.
- Meintjes, H., & Giese, S. (2006). Spinning the epidemic: The making of mythologies of orphanhood in the context of AIDS. *Childhood*, 13, 407–430. doi:10.1177/0907568206066359
- Merz, E. C., & McCall, R. B. (2010). Behaviour problems in children adopted from psychosocially depriving institutions. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology*, 38, 459–470.
- Patton, M. & Cocharn, M. (2002). *A guide to using qualitative research methodology*. Médecins Sans Frontières, Paris. Retrieved from https://evaluation.msf.org/sites/evaluation/files/a_guide_to_using_qualitative_research_methodology.pdf
- Reik, B. M., & DeWit, C. C. (2018). Differences and similarities in forgiveness seeking across children and adolescence. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 44(8), 1119–1132. doi:10.1177/014616721876079
- Salifu Yendork, J., & Somhlaba, N. Z. (2014). Stress, coping and quality of life: An exploratory study of the psychological well-being of Ghanaian orphans placed in orphanages. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 46, 28–37. doi:10.1016/j.childyouth.2014.07.025
- Salifu Yendork, J., & Somhlaba, N. Z. (2015a). Do social support, self-efficacy and resilience influence the experience of stress in Ghanaian orphans? An exploratory study. *Child Care in Practice*, 21, 140–159. doi:10.1080/13575279.2014.985286
- Salifu Yendork, J., & Somhlaba, N. Z. (2015b). “Exiled life, or home away from home?” exploring Ghanaian orphan narratives of orphanage placement. *Africa Today*, 62, 27–42.
- Salifu Yendork, J., & Somhlaba, N. Z. (2015c). The role of demographic and positive psychological factors on quality of life in Ghanaian orphans placed in orphanages: An exploratory study. *Child Indicators Research* (online first). doi:10.1007/s12187-015-9320-8
- Salifu Yendork, J., & Somhlaba, N. Z. (2015d). Problems, coping and efficacy: An exploration of subjective distress in orphans placed in Ghanaian orphanages. *Journal of Loss and Trauma*, 20, 509–525. doi:10.1080/15325024.2014.949160

- Salifu Yendork, J., & Somhlaba, N. Z. (2017). "I am happy because of God": Religion and spirituality for well-being in Ghanaian orphanage-placed children. *Psychology of Religion and Spirituality*, 9 (Suppl 1), S32–S39. doi:10.1037/rel0000094
- Salifu Yendork, J., & Somhlaba, N. Z. (2015/2016). Does it still take the whole community to raise a child? An overview of the state of research on orphanhood in the African context and the way forward. *Ghana International Journal of Mental Health*, 6–7, 58–89.
- Shaffer, D. R., & Kipp, K. (2010/2014). *Developmental psychology: Childhood & adolescence* (9th ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Skinner, D., Tsheko, N., Mtero-Munyati, S., Segwabe, M., Chibatamoto, P., Mfecane, S., ... Chitiyo, G. (2006). Towards a definition of orphaned and vulnerable children. *AIDS and Behavior*, 10, 619–626. doi:10.1007/s10461-006-9086-6
- Tadesse, S., Dereje, F., & Belay, M. (2014). Psychosocial wellbeing of orphan and vulnerable children at orphanages in Gondar Town, North West Ethiopia. *Journal of Public Health and Epidemiology*, 6, 293–301.
- UNICEF. (1999). *Orphans*. Retrieved from http://www.unicef.org/media/media_45279.html
- UNICEF. (2017). *Institutionalization of needy children not the best way: It must be a last resort*. Retrieved from https://www.unicef.org/ghana/media_10500.html
- UNICEF & UNAIDS. (2006). *Africa's orphaned and vulnerable generations. Children affected by AIDS*. New York: UNICEF Division of Communication United Nations Population.
- White, P. (2002). What should we teach children about forgiveness? *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 36, 57–67.
- Worthington, E. L., Jr. (2005). Initial questions about the art and science of forgiving. In E. L. Worthington, Jr. (Ed.), *Handbook of forgiveness* (pp. 1–13). New York: Routledge.
- Worthington, E. L., Jr., Mazzeo, S. E., & Klewer, W. L. (2002). Addictive and eating disorders, unforgiveness, and forgiveness. *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 21(3), 257–261.
- Worthington, E. L., Jr., Nonterah, C. W., Utsey, S. O., Griffin, B. J., Carneal, C. C., Osei-Tutu, A., ... Germer, L. S. (in press). Forgiveness research in Sub-Saharan Africa. In E. L. Worthington, Jr. & N. G. Wade (Eds.), *Handbook of forgiveness* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Worthington, E. L., Jr., & Wade, N. G. (1999). The psychology of unforgiveness and forgiveness and implications for clinical practice. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 18, 385–418.
- Young, L., & Barrett, H. (2001). Adapting visual methods: Action research with Kampala street children. *Area*, 33, 141–152.