



FORGIVENESS: GENDER MATTERS

Dr. Deepthi B. Duggi

PG Dpt. of Psychology, Karnatak University, Dharwad, Karnataka India.

Abstract

The present study is conducted to find out the Forgiveness among Post-Graduate students. Two hundred and forty students were selected using Random Sampling Technique from various departments of Karnatak University, Dharwad. To measure Forgiveness, Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations (TRIM) inventory by McCullough et al. (1998) was used to collect the data. Result revealed that if students become more forgiving they tend to be less revengeful and tend to show less avoidance, tend to show less avoidance, and tend to show more benevolence and conciliation nature and visa versa. Significant difference found between male and female Post Graduate students. On Forgiveness, Female students have shown less feeling of avoidance and revenge, and more feelings of benevolence toward the transgressor and vice versa. This study will help to reduce negative effect, leads to conflict management, stress relief and improved relationships. This can bring long-term health benefits for our heart and overall health.

Keywords: *Forgiveness, Transgression and Gender Difference.*

Introduction

Forgivingness

Forgiveness is a concept that has received remarkable little attention despite its pervasiveness'' (p. 27) Fincham, Paleari, and Regalia (2002). Forgiveness is a unique relational construct because it is the "light" that cannot exist without the dark side of interpersonal communication (Metts & Cupach, 2007). It is noted that forgiveness is the ability to overcome negative emotions and judgments of a transgressor, not by denying these emotions, but by viewing the transgressor with compassion, benevolence, and love Enright, Santos, and Al-Mabuk (1989).

Transgressions

Waldron and Kelley (2005) found that the severity of the transgression shaped the forgiveness process. Fincham and Beach (2002) viewed forgiveness as the ability of both partners to communicate effectively following a transgression, which then contributes to the likelihood of relational repair rather than simply an individual decision made by the harmed partner. Metts and Cupach (2007) claimed that any person will have a basic understanding of interpersonal transgressions and can easily describe a transgression experience. They state transgressions framed as rule violations allow researchers to explore a variety of unexpected, inappropriate, and disruptive behaviors across a wide range of relationship types. Moreover, Fine and Olson (1997) examined the experience of hurtful, aversive behaviors, and results indicated women had higher scores than men for hurt experienced.

Moreover, prior forgiveness research has shown varying results based on the sex of the participants and their likelihood to forgive. McCullough et al. (2006) and Berry, Worthington, Parrott, O'Connor, and Wade (2001) found no sex differences in the prediction of interpersonal forgiveness, while Macaskill claimed women are more forgiving than men, and Kalbfleisch (1997) found no sex differences in overall forgiveness in a study of conflict resolution between mentors and prote'ge's in the organizational context.

A Motivational Perspective on Forgiveness:

To date, the literature contains a wide range of forgiveness definitions (Worthington 2005). One prominent definition has been provided by McCullough and colleagues (e.g., McCullough et al. 2003; McCullough et al. 1998) have offered a motivational perspective on interpersonal transgressions and the way people deal with the negative consequences caused by these transgressions. They assume that transgression-related interpersonal motivations (TRIMs) vary along four dimensions.

After experiencing an interpersonal transgression, people may react with (1) an increased motivation to avoid their transgressor, (2) an increased motivation to get revenge, and/or (3) less motivation to show benevolence (4) less motivation to show Conciliation toward the person who caused them pain. According to McCullough and colleagues, these possible TRIMs are also the four motivational dimensions on which interpersonal forgiveness takes place. They conceptualize forgiveness as pro-social changes in an injured person's transgression-related interpersonal motivation toward a transgressor these motivational changes are assumed to be related to relational and individual benefits.



Gender Differences in Forgiveness

Gender differences in forgiveness might be expected for several reasons i.e., based on the stress and coping literature, one would expect gender differences in the way men and women experience human conflicts, appraise them and cope with them (Lazarus 1999). Moreover, gender differences in forgiveness are also likely influenced by sociological factors or religion (Miller et al. 2008). Nevertheless, previous research has demonstrated inconsistent results across studies and several studies did not find any gender differences at all (e.g., Berry et al. 2001; Girard and Mullet 1997; Maltby et al. 2007; Subkoviak et al. 1995; Toussaint and Webb 2005; Worthington et al. 2000). In contrast, a recent meta-analytic review indicates that women are, on average, more forgiving than men (Miller et al. 2008). These gender differences seem to be uninfluenced by moderators such as dispositional forgiveness versus forgiveness of real-life transgressions or hypothetical transgressions. The authors also found that men were less forgiving than women when unforgiveness was operationalized through vengeance measures (Miller et al. 2008).

The reviewed literature revealed the shortage of studies on gender differences in the forgiveness of real-life transgressions with a special focus on gender differences. This fact promoted the investigator to take up this challenge and throw light on gender difference in forgiveness.

Thus, in view of above stated facts the present study is taken up the following main objectives of finding the significant difference of Forgiveness among Post-Graduate students. Thus it is hypothesized that Male and Female Post Graduate Students will differ significantly among themselves on Forgiveness.

Method

Participants

The quota sample of present study consists of 240 Post Graduate students, 120 Male and 120 Female students. These sample were collected from various departments of Karnatak University, Dharwad.

The Measure Used

Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations (TRIM) Inventory—25-Item Form: It measures participants' motivations to avoid and seek revenge against their transgressors (McCullough et al.'s 2003). On a whole it has 25 items with 4 subscales. The 7-item revenge subscale measures motivation to avoid a transgressor. The 5-item avoidance subscale measures motivation to seek revenge. The 6 item benevolence subscale measures benevolence motivation and a 7 item conciliation subscale measures conciliation motivation. Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory has cronbach's alphas ranging from 0.84 to 0.93 for avoidance, 0.79 to 0.86 for revenge and 0.86 to 0.96 for benevolence and conciliation. It has good evidence of convergent and discriminant validity (McCullough et al., 1998; McCullough et al., 2006). Items are rated on a five-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree).

Procedure

All the participants included in the sample were contacted personally at various departments of Karnatak University, Dharwad and their consent was sought for participation. Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM) was administered on the sample along with personal data sheet prepared for the purpose. While administering the questionnaire, the participants were asked to recall the recent interpersonal transgression which they have come a cross and still they are unable to overcome it. Depending on that hurt they were asked to give responses to the given questionnaire. To determine the significance of difference between the two groups means, the 't' test is applied. The above analysis is done with the help of the SPSS package (17th Version).

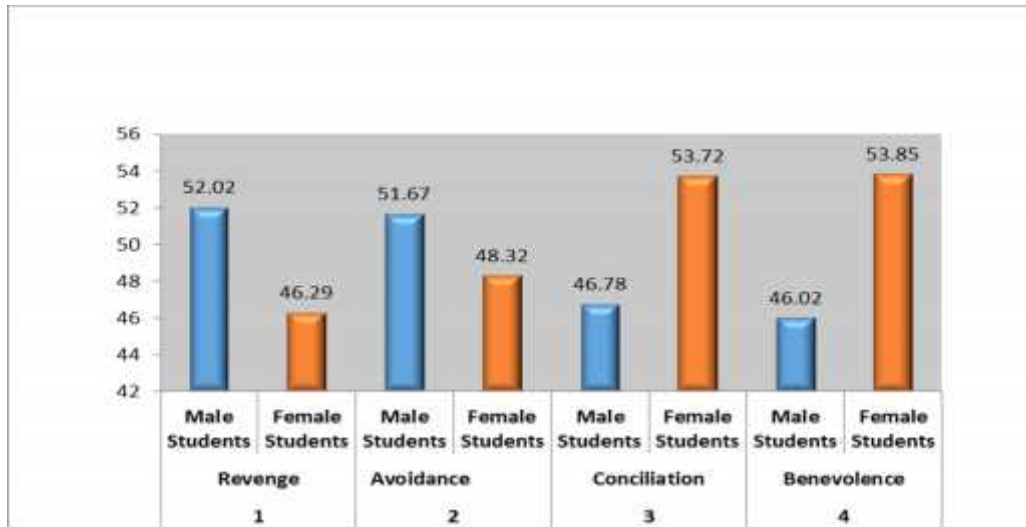
Results

Table 1: The N, Means and SDs and 't' values for Forgiveness by using Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations (Avoidance, Revenge, Conciliation and Benevolence) of Male and Female Post Graduate Students.

SI.No	Variables	Group	N	Mean	SDs	't'-value
1	Revenge	Male Students	120	52.02	11.84	2.73**
		Female Students	120	46.29	8.90	
2	Avoidance	Male Students	120	51.67	9.73	2.40*
		Female Students	120	48.32	8.47	
3	Conciliation	Male Students	120	46.78	8.46	-3.73***
		Female Students	120	53.72	10.06	
4	Benevolence	Male Students	120	46.02	7.74	-4.21***
		Female Students	120	53.85	10.62	



Figure 1: The N, Means and SDs and ‘t’ values for Forgiveness by using Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations (Avoidance, Revenge, Conciliation and Benevolence) of Male and Female Post Graduate Students



An observation of Table 1 and Figure 1 reveals that the Male students have shown above average score and Female students have shown below average score in Revenge and Avoidance Motivation respectively. Further, Female students have shown above average score and Male Students have shown below average score in Conciliation and Benevolence Motivation. On Revenge Highly significant difference has been observed on Revenge ($t=2.73$; $p>0.01$) and Avoidance Motivation, significant difference has been observed between the male and female students ($t=2.40$; $p>0.05$). In Conciliation ($t=-3.73$; $p>0.001$) and Benevolence Motivation ($t=-4.21$; $p>0.001$) very highly significant difference found between these two samples group.

Discussion

This study is examining gender differences in the forgiveness of real-life transgressions with a special focus on gender interactions. Gender difference was found for avoidance, revenge, and benevolence and conciliation motivation. The present results supported hypothesis on gender differences in real-life forgiveness.

This finding is in line with earlier study reported by Based on previous findings (Maltby et al. 2007; Miller et al. 2008; Sukhodolsky et al. 2001), we expected that men and women would differ in their TRIMs. Nevertheless, significant differences were found for revenge, suggesting that men have a higher motivation to seek retribution after experiencing a transgression than women. These findings suggest that gender differences are only apparent in certain aspects of forgiveness but not in others and therefore contribute to the mixed results in this respect. The results for revenge are in line with previous studies (Miller et al. 2008; Mullet et al. 1998).

These gender differences are closely linked to gender differences in aggression (cf. Archer 2004). This result might also explain, in part, the existing inconsistent findings for gender differences in forgiveness and point out to the importance of taking age into account when investigating gender differences in forgiveness.

It would be interesting to investigate this phenomenon from a developmental point of view using longitudinal data. The motivation to seek revenge after experiencing a serious transgression might develop and manifest itself differently for men and women across lifespan. Gender differences were found for revenge motivation and avoidance motivation. (Brown, 2003; McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001). Worthington, Sandage, and Berry (2000) showed that women are no more likely to forgive than men. When people forgive, they become less motivated by feelings of avoidance and revenge, and more motivated by feelings of benevolence toward the transgressor (e.g., Fincham 2000; McCullough et al. 2003).

Conclusions

The present study reveals that male students experience more revenge motivation and avoidance compared to female students. The obtained results of the research reveal and suggest that suggest understanding the need for intervention



programme for these students. REACH therapy can be given to the students. *Implications:* Forgiveness is an emotion-focused coping process that can promote health (Worthington 2006; Worthington and Scherer 2004) and it might have its major impact on health through reducing un-forgiveness rather than creating positive emotional experiences (Harris and Thoresen 2005). Forgiveness, especially when undertaken for altruistic motives, can affect both physical and mental health (Witvliet and McCullough 2007; Worthington et al. 2005); and forgiveness interventions are appropriate for but infrequently used in medical settings (Harris and Thoresen 2006). Forgiveness will help to reduce negative effect, leads to conflict management, stress relief and improved relationships. This can bring long-term health benefits for our heart and overall health.

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