



SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS OPINIONS REGARDING FORGIVENESS IN TURKEY¹

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to identify the students' opinions regarding forgiveness. The data were collected from 6th, 7th and 8th grade 257 students (151 female, 106 male) studying in Sehitler Secondary School, Ataturk Secondary School, Bahcelievler Sehit Volkan Canoz Religious Secondary School, National Education Foundation Secondary School and Ahmet Sumer Secondary School in Kırıkkale in 2017-2018 spring academic term. "The Perception Form regarding Forgiveness" were used as data collection instruments in this study. These forms consisting of 14 items were designed as a 5-point Likert type scale. It was found that students' most positive opinions about forgiveness of family situations, who is who to forgive is important, do succeed in being happy despite the negativity, If the person I'm having problems with is stepping on, I step in, do not pass the anger easily when fault is made, take the time to accept adverse events. On the other hand, their most negative opinions were; do not ignore the mistakes made to him, the fault is normal, revenge feeling to people who hurt themselves.

Keywords: secondary school; student; forgiveness

Human beings cannot always be receptive or act with flexibility when faced with situations that arise in life due to personal, situational or social

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factors. One of the most personally and socially visible signs of such behaviors in the individual is the transition between forgiving and not forgiving. There is a general consensus (Çoklar & Dönmez, 2014) that the process of forgiveness involves dropping feelings of anger and revenge after experiencing a hurtful situation caused by the behaviors of others. In the majority of the definitions of forgiveness, an emphasis has been on transforming negative emotions in the forgiving individual, such as revenge, into positive emotions, like empathy and compassion. Previous studies have suggested that both the forgiver and the forgiven experience an improvement in social relations and physical and mental health (Aydın, 2017). In their study of college students, Aydemir and Bayram (2016) established that the self-forgiveness of an individual influences self-love, while self-love influences feelings of loneliness, and feelings of loneliness are effective in self-forgiveness. Bugay and Demir (2012) found that the Forgiveness Improvement Program applied to college students helped to improve the level of forgiving others and general forgiveness. In a study by Özgür and Eldeklioğlu (2017) on the effect of the REACH Forgiveness Model on high school seniors in a Turkish setting, a significant difference was found in favor of the experimental group, in other words, that the program applied was effective on forgiveness. In their study conducted on college students, Özteke Kozan, Kesici, and Baloğlu (2017) established a correlation between the expressing and displaying of emotions at a higher level, controlling negative body reactions, coping and anger management skills, and the forgiveness of the self, others and situations. In a study conducted on college students, Sarı (2014) found that forgiveness and self-actualization are precursors to each other, and that there is a relationship between them. Moreover, it has been found that scale development studies have been conducted regarding forgiveness in high school students (Çolak, Koç, Eker, & Düşünceli, 2017).

As can be understood from the above, forgiveness plays an important role in increasing physical, mental, behavioral and relational positiveness in the life of the individual. It is considered that carrying out studies on forgiveness, particularly in secondary school students, as one of the earlier stages of life, could influence the continuity of good conduct in the respondents. Accordingly, this study examines the current status of secondary school students in regards to forgiveness, and identifies whether they need support in this area. Conducting such a study could contribute to the relevant literature.

Method

Participants

This study is a descriptive study. The study group consisted of 257 [151 (58.8%) girls and 106 (41.2%) boys] 6th, 7th, and 8th grade students at five secondary schools in Kırıkkale during 2017-2018 spring academic year.

Data collection tool

“Secondary School Students’ Views Regarding Forgiveness” was developed in order to determine the views of secondary school students forgiveness. Developed by the researcher, these form consisting of 14 items were designed as a 5-point Likert type scale.

Findings and discussion

In this section, you can see the frequency (*n*) and percentage (%) distributions according to the answers given to the items in the “Secondary School Students’ Views Regarding Forgiveness”.

Table 1. Secondary school students’ perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding forgiveness

Items	Rating									
	Strongly disagree		Agree to some extent		Indecisive		Strongly agree		Totally agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. Student perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding behave like the past to forgiven person	56	21.8	44	17.1	54	21.0	56	21.8	47	18.3
2. Student perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding to not forgiveness of the damaged person	53	20.6	37	14.4	65	25.3	39	15.2	63	24.5
3. Student perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding forgiveness of family situations	12	4.7	14	5.4	22	8.6	50	19.5	159	61.8

Table 1. Secondary school students' perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding forgiveness - *continued*

Items	Rating									
	Strongly disagree		Agree to some extent		Indecisive		Strongly agree		Totally agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
4. Student perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding do not pass the anger easily when fault is made	42	16.3	40	15.6	41	16.0	55	21.4	79	30.7
5. Student perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding do not ignore the mistakes made to him	135	52.5	49	19.1	32	12.5	24	9.3	17	6.6
6. Student perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding take the time to accept adverse events	30	11.7	34	13.2	61	23.8	53	20.6	79	30.7
7. Student perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding do succeed in being happy despite the negativity	32	12.5	15	5.8	34	13.2	53	20.6	123	47.9
8. Student perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding feel strong with forgiveness behaviour	34	13.2	30	11.7	58	22.6	63	24.5	72	28.0
9. Student perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding revenge feeling to people who hurt themselves	79	30.7	47	18.3	49	19.1	23	8.9	59	23.0
10. Student perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding to think that forgiveness is virtue	25	9.7	23	8.9	38	14.8	64	24.9	107	41.7
11. Student perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding who is who to forgive is	45	17.5	14	5.4	27	10.5	47	18.3	124	48.3

Table 1. Secondary school students' perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding forgiveness - *continued*

Items	Rating									
	Strongly disagree		Agree to some extent		Indecisive		Strongly agree		Totally agree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
12. Student perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding the fault is normal	88	34.1	39	15.2	49	19.1	41	16.0	40	15.6
13. Student perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding if the person I'm having problems with is stepping on, I step in	35	13.6	21	8.2	43	16.7	61	23.8	97	37.7
14. Student perception frequency and percentage distribution regarding adapt to life negativities	45	17.5	32	12.5	64	24.9	43	16.7	73	28.4

As can be seen in Table 1, the study findings revealed that the most positive perceptions of secondary school students regarding forgiveness are forgiveness of family situations, who is who to forgive is important, do succeed in being happy despite the negativity; on the other hand, their most negative perceptions were; do not ignore the mistakes made to him, the fault is normal, revenge feeling to people who hurt themselves. The above findings indicate that the concept of forgiveness in secondary school students occurs particularly in family-related situations, where relationships are more continuous. Concurrently, it is identified that the person to be forgiven is also important in forgiveness. In other words, the person takes into account the level of importance of the person to be forgiven to him/herself or the meaning attached by the secondary school student to the person(s) to be forgiven. It can further be stated that achieving happiness in the face of challenges, in other words, achieving optimal (most effective) health and a state of well-being in which the body, mind and soul become integrated, influences forgiveness (Korkut, 2004). Furthermore, it has been noted that secondary school students cannot ignore offenses against them, and cannot accept the fact that mistakes could be made, and so develop a desire for revenge against those who inflict pain on them. Accordingly, despite what is stated in the literature (Aydın, 2017), it could be

said that the negative emotions of the wronged person, such as the desire for revenge, are not transformed into positive emotions like empathy and compassion in secondary school students. Concurrently, it can be stated that problems may arise in the development of a positive state, including improving social relations and physical and mental health of both the forgiving and forgiven individual. In a study involving college students, Topbaşoğlu Altan and Çiviçi (2017) observed the regulatory role of self-forgiving and forgiving the situations in the relationship between continuous anger and satisfaction with life. In another study involving college students, Özteke Kozan, Kesici, and Baloğlu (2017) established a correlation between the expressing and displaying of emotions at a higher level, controlling negative body reactions, coping and anger management skills, and forgiving of the self, others and situations. In other words, it can be stated that individuals who faced challenges in developing forgiveness behaviors during their secondary school years may experience problems in behavior and anger management, and satisfaction with life in later years.

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