

IT MATTERS WHAT YOU SAY: EXPLORING FORGIVENESS-SEEKING SCRIPTS IN INTERPERSONAL TRANSGRESSIONS

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Abstract

Forgiveness has been widely investigated-most of the time, using victims' perspective. However, limited attention has been given to the nature and process of forgiveness from a transgressors' standpoint. The primary objective of this study was to analyze the forgiveness-seeking scripts of the transgressors in interpersonal transgressions using both descriptive qualitative (Study 1; N=87) and experimental (Study 2; N=299) approaches. Study 1 provided qualitative information regarding successful forgiveness-seeking script patterns. The scripts were developed and validated through Guttman scale and Q-sort method to arrive at five (5) scripts. The successful forgiveness-seeking scripts were integrated in vignette stories which were used as priming for the experiment (Study 2), which accounted for relationships that were considered in-group or outgroup. Study 2 revealed that the successful forgiveness-seeking scripts included admitting to one's mistake and providing resolution to the situation which was more evident when one has a close relationship with the transgressor. The amount of information discussed in the script is considered valuable in maintaining good interpersonal relationships, this study supports the research stating that relationships are moderated by forgiveness (Heintzelman, Murdock, Krycak, & Seay, 2014) and that the degree of relationship affects forgiveness (Maio, Thomas, Fincham, & Carnelley, 2008).

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Introduction

Relationships involving parents, siblings, other relatives, peers, colleagues, among others comprise the complex social circle of an individual. One's well-being can be greatly affected by the type, kind, and quality of such relationships. Poor interpersonal relationships or struggling to maintain these relationships may create a chain of conflicts, sometimes even with different individuals at the same time. As numerous relationships in individual's circles became problematic, the effects of negative interpersonal relationships on their personal distress are troubled - leading to having multiple transgressions. On one hand, transgressions caused by significant others can rift the relationships (Paleari, Regalia, & Fincham, 2003), intensifying the probability of revenge and worsening the conflict situation in the relationships (McCullough, Bellah, Kilpatrick, & Johnson, 2001; Paleari et al., 2003) that can lead to dissolution of social connection. On the other hand, valued relationships are reconstructed through the process of forgiveness with intentions either personal or otherwise.

As studies would aptly define it, forgiveness is a prosocial mechanism that permits close relationship maintenance despite the damage created by such rift (Fincham & Beach, 2002; Paleari et al., 2003), and emerges as a desire to resolve an interpersonal transgression (Rungduin, 2011; Rungduin & Rungduin, 2013). In interpersonal transgression, forgiveness involves at least two people - a victim and a transgressor. Victims may grant forgiveness (Kaminer, Stein, Mbanga, & Zungu-Drwayi, 2000; Jenkins, 2012; Russell, 2013) leaving the transgressors to become dependent on their decisions to grant or deny them with forgiveness. At the point when a victim chooses to forgive, he or she diminishes the motives to seek retaliation and/or withdraw from the transgressors, thereby enabling prosocial motivations to happen (Paleari et al., 2003). These prosocial motivations consequently can prompt nonconflictual, appeasing practices that repair the relationship (Paleari et al., 2003).

To say that forgiveness may simply mean condoning with the wrongdoing of another overrides the fact that a person's ability to see pass the fault of another individual - and somehow stretch one's tolerance to others' shortcoming - appears to be a hasty judgment. Anything that leads into a

resolution is worthy of attention, thus, studies that devote academic work into such subject are certainly up to something substantial. And this current research gears toward proving that going deeper on the subject of forgiveness in the transgressors' stance may lead to a more emphatic understanding on why conflicts and resolutions go hand in hand in an ideal situation.

Traditionally, forgiveness may have both personal and relational advantages (Paleari et al., 2003). People who are inclined to forgive decrease the negative affect like anger, depression, and anxiety (Seybold, Hill, Neumann, & Chi, 2001; Reed & Enright, 2006; Russell, 2013) as well as increase the overall sense of physical (Seybold et al., 2001; Wilson, Milosevic, Carroll, Hart, & Hibbard, 2008), psychological, behavioral, and emotional well-being (Jenkins, 2012) than those who could not forgive easily. At the relational level, people who practice a habit of forgiveness experience a freedom from damaging relationships in the family, within friends, romantic partners, and religions. Ergo, exploring the personal and relational positive effects of an individual's ability to forgive is such a salient research to pursue.

Latest developments on research about forgiveness have focused on marital satisfaction (Fincham & May, 2017), parent-child relationship, and other familial issues (Heintzelman et al., 2014). Even other scholars explored the subject of forgiveness to understand religious beliefs (Fincham & May, 2017). But studies exploring how young people, especially adolescents and young adults, use forgiveness in their social relationships seems to be lacking. There are limited studies conducted using young individuals applying forgiveness, liberally and often, in their social relationships. The quality of these relationships usually dictates how these individuals take forgiveness; it also serves as one of the key factors on how and why forgiveness can occur, aside from the possibly prime reason that they innately have the willingness to forgive (Ho, Worthington, & Davis, 2017).

Interestingly, the more these individuals establish the relationships, the more they experience conflicts, fights, spats, and disagreements with people whom they choose to be with - more often than not, inflicting them to feel undesirable. The study delves on forgiveness scripts in a forgiveness-seeking situation - the perspective of transgressors through experiments. Up until now, the focus of most studies is on the sole benefits the victims can get. Subsequently, by its very nature, forgiveness typically comprises two individuals, attempting to understand the transgressor's perspective is essential (Rourke, 2006). Thus,

exploring this will be beneficial to the well-being of both transgressors and victims as suggested here and in the study of Rourke (2006).

Literature Review

Transgressors' Forgiveness-Seeking Behavior

People have their own mechanisms on how to eliminate the negative effects of interpersonal transgressions. Some would rely on their inner strengths and characteristics while others would rely on the divine presence of their Gods - or that strong faith they sourced out from their primal and spiritual strengths. To get rid from recurrence of avoiding or retaliating the interpersonal conflict, forgiveness (McCullough & Witvliet, 2001) is said to be the main key. Forgiveness has two facets - from the victim's granting forgiveness and from the transgressor's seeking forgiveness. Within psychology, increasing interests have been noted in the forgiveness process where its usual focus is on the victim's granting forgiveness. For instance, Worthington's (2005) work focuses on what makes a person likely to forgive while Fincham and Beach's work (2002) focuses on the benefits the forgiver receives when granting forgiveness to the transgressor. Since forgiveness involves two individuals - and the transgressors are the main recipients of interpersonal transgression - the need to explore transgressor's seeking forgiveness is vital if experts would really like to understand the whole truth about the forgiveness process. In fact, previous works of Sandage, Worthington, High, and Berry (2000) and Bassett, Bassett, Lloyd, and Johnson (2006) had pointed out that a large portion of the exploration on forgiveness has concentrated on the process of granting forgiveness rather than seeking forgiveness. Thus, this paper seeks to find a clearer understanding of the forgiveness-seeking capacity of the transgressors through examining closely certain forgiveness scripts. It is safe to say that this is a pioneer study that attempts to give a wider perspective on the whole forgiveness process and experience.

In support of the scant literature at hand on forgiveness-seeking process of the transgressors, Zechmeister and Romero (2002) used narrative method to provide a subjective view of the transgression that happened from the individual's standpoint. Participants were asked to jot down two narratives. One of which focuses on a past experience where they have angered or caused any harm to someone else (transgressor perspective), or vice versa, where other person/s angered or have caused the participants any harm (victim perspective). The second narrative would mainly involve the concept of forgiveness or not on

the extent of certain situations. Offenders who forgave themselves were most likely to make amends and offer an apology. This mean, transgressors find it necessary to apologize to the victim in order to also process forgiveness to themselves. It is as though, being forgiven is a subset of forgiving oneself (Pelucchi, Paleari, Regalia, & Fincham, 2013).

Witvliet, Ludwig, and Bauer's study (2002) also examined the issue of transgressors seeking forgiveness. The respondents of their study, which were students, had been asked to recollect past events involving themselves where they significantly hurt someone else's feeling. When respondents were asked to imagine seeking forgiveness, emotional self-ratings appeared positive and beneficial - as compared to the time they were asked to simply recall the transgression itself; they reported to have felt less guilt, shame, sadness, and anger, affirming the findings of Berry, Worthington, O'Connor, Parrott, and Wade (2005) that negative unforgiving emotions may be superseded by positive and other oriented-emotions through forgiveness. This leads to believe more than forgiveness, on a personal and interpersonal level, is necessary to fix any relationship that has been distressed.

Having an in-depth understanding as to the reasons why transgressors seek forgiveness or not makes it viable to advocate the behavior ergo, aiding the process of granting forgiveness (Rourke, 2006). This makes the recent advancement in forgiveness-seeking (*see e.g.* Witvliet et al., 2002; Zechmeister & Romero, 2002; Rourke, 2006) literature inspiring. Thus, the present research has three major objectives, which are to be addressed in 2 phases of the study. This study aims to a) determine the content of forgiveness scripts on successful situations used in the forgiveness-seeking process; b) identify which among the conditions has the highest possibility to be utilized by the transgressor in the forgiving-seeking process; c) and lastly, to identify the effect of the degree of relationships to the forgiveness-seeking script patterns made by the transgressors.

Methods

Study 1: Pre-survey

Participants

Eighty seven (87) college student across year levels enrolled in a state university were purposively selected to take part in the study. The student-sample

was comprised of 43 male (41.30%) and 44 females (58.8%) with age ranging from 16 to 21 years old ($M=18.25$). College students were chosen for the study as college is the time when students are more independent. This is also the stage when they need to work with groups and collaborate on school projects with their peers. With so many academic and extra-curricular work they need to go through, conflicts may likely arise as they make interpersonal connections. Of the 87 participants, all of them were born in the Philippines (Filipino citizens); enrolled in an educational institution (college students); and had experienced to ask forgiveness and forgiven. These inclusion criteria set by the researchers to ensure that the participants had experienced the phenomenon being investigated (Groenwald, 2004). This study eliminated those participants who had not met the criteria inclusion set for this study.

Measures

A pre-survey forgiveness questionnaire was utilized to identify students' experiences with forgiving. It has 7 item open-ended questions inquiring about a recent offense they committed within the past six months to a significant other. The pre-surveyed group were asked to describe the type of their relationship (e.g. friend, parent, or partner) to the transgressed party; the statements they used in asking forgiveness; and the solution they provided to resolve the conflict. A follow-up question was provided as to whether what they did was forgiven because of the resolution they offered. Likewise, they were asked to describe the time when they were transgressed to by describing the source of conflict, the type of transgression, and how the transgressor sought forgiveness. They were further asked about what types of forgiveness processes the transgressor did that earned their forgiveness.

Procedure

Upon obtaining the consent from the participants, the survey questionnaire was scheduled and administered based on their availability and convenience. The sessions lasted approximately 30 minutes in length. The gathered data from the situations where students were asked to describe successful forgiveness-seeking scripts were subjected to thematic analysis. The scripts used were then categorized, and codes were prepared to analyze sentence structures of the scripts which then became the bases in constructing the study's forgiveness-seeking script. To further validate the proposed scripts, the

researchers conducted a Guttman scaling to 50 students and another 25 students using the Q-sort method. The final composition of the successful forgiveness-seeking script was used in vignette stories for the actual experimentation.

Study 2: Actual experiment

Participants

Two hundred ninety-nine (299) college students across year levels enrolled in a state university were randomly selected to be part of the study. The student-sample was comprised of 150 males (50.16%) and 149 females (49.84%) with ages ranging from 16 to 21 years old ($M=17.56$). The participants were chosen to be part of the study because their age range represents how the attitude of others and maintaining harmony in relationships are imperative among adolescents (Girard & Mullet, 1997) than in other development stage. The 299 participants were Filipino citizens; enrolled in an educational institution (college students); and had forgiveness-seeking and forgiveness-granting experiences. These inclusion criteria set by the researchers guarantee that the participants had experienced the phenomenon being examined (Groenwald, 2004). The participants who had not met the inclusion criteria were automatically removed in the analysis of the study.

Measures

The researchers' developed a three-part questionnaire about forgiveness. The first part explored transgressor's standpoint on forgiveness-seeking if he/she was in the victim's place. The participant was also asked to identify the specific condition (sorry, admit, explain, action or restoration) that affected his or her answer. The second part is a scale that examined the forgiveness-seeking which was arranged on a 4-point scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree), with sample statements as: What I said was enough for you to forgive me. The third part is a scale exploring the degree of relationship the participants perceive to be shared by the characters in the vignette (There is a strong relationship between the two characters). The scales in the three-part questionnaire registered a .92 Cronbach alpha when subjected to reliability testing.

Procedure

Experimental in nature, the completely randomized design (CR-K) was utilized to test the successful forgiveness-seeking scripts made by the researchers

out of the results in Study 1. Study 2 has five conditions and each condition includes the process of adding the component of the proposed successful forgiveness-seeking script starting from the first part of the script which is *Saying Sorry* (condition 1), *Saying Sorry + Admitting the transgression* (condition 2), *Saying Sorry + Admitting the transgression + Explaining why the transgression occurred* (condition 3), *Saying Sorry + Admitting the transgression + Explaining why the transgression occurred + Doing actions that would lessen the feelings of anger or pain* (condition 4), up to *Saying Sorry + Admitting the transgression + Explaining why the transgression occurred + Doing actions that would lessen the feelings of anger or pain + Restoring the relationship* (condition 5).

Two stories were developed based on the forgiveness scripts gathered, one story involved a significant/in-group relationship between persons (parent-child); while the other involved a non-significant/out-group relationship (classmates in a course). The stories, written in Filipino (local language), were evaluated for their statement length, words used, understandability and number of sentences; with the two stories with the same number of words and sentences. Both stories in the same condition had the same content except for the relationship of the transgressor.

Condition 1 involved the script, *sorry*. In this vignette, the guilty person only said “sorry” to apologize for the transgression. In Condition 2, transgressor said sorry and explained why the transgression occurred e.g. I wanted to have a rank higher than you that is why I did not turn in your paper. Condition 3, adds an admission component to the script, e.g. I know what I did was wrong; while in Condition 4, the guilty person’s actions in relation to the transgression was presented (bowed his/her head to show repentance). Lastly, Condition 5 followed all the patterns given in Conditions 1 to 4, with the script for the need to restore the relationship, emphasized e.g. Our relationship is important to me; I hope you forgive me. The conditions were used as priming to the forgiveness behavior that was later measured by a three-part questionnaire in the local language about forgiveness (*see Measures*).

Three groups (out-group, in-group, combined group) were then formed to identify if the degree of relationship has something to do with the forgiveness scripts used by the participants. Means, standard deviations, one-way ANOVA were then used to evaluate how effective the forgiveness-seeking scripts to students.

Results

Study 1: Pre-survey

Themes coming from the open-ended questionnaires emerged from the analysis of significant statements made by 87 college students, describing the overview of the scripts they used in the forgiveness process. Each theme from the student's responses was based on their sharing of what script worked. The sentence structures were composed of the first word being uttered up to the last word articulated. Of all the words that were elicited from the pre-survey, the researchers decided to include the forgiveness-seeking scripts with the most number of responses. Based on the data gathered, it became evident that there was a wide variety of scripts behind the forgiveness-seeking scripts used by the participants. Table 1 reveals the components of a successful forgiveness-seeking script from emerging from the questionnaires answered by the students. The patterns were used in developing the scripts in the actual experimentation. Based on the students' responses, there were nine (9) sub-themes (e.g. noun, sorry, acceptance, admit, explain, actions, approach, asking forgiveness, expression of hope to be forgiven) under the 1st word uttered that emerged. This time, "sorry" received the most number of responses. "Explaining the transgression" under the 2nd word uttered received the highest responses from the participants; while "admitting one's mistake" as the third word uttered appeared to be the most phrase-pattern used by the participants. "Actions" or a behavioral manifestation of the forgiveness-seeking process (e.g. bowing one's head, crying, asking to hug the victim) came as the 4th word-description or action provided. "Restorations" or scripts that emphasize how important the relationship is and that forgiveness is sought to continue and care for the relationship came in 5th.

Table 1. Significant Themes for Successful Forgiveness Script Pattern

1 st Word	2 nd Word	3 rd Word	4 th Word	5 th Word
Noun	Giving Assurance	Sorry	Explain	<i>Restorations</i>
Sorry	Restoration	Unintentional	Sorry	Letting Go
Acceptance	Admit	<i>Admit</i>	<i>Actions</i>	Giving Assurance
Admit	<i>Explain</i>	Blaming Others		
Explain	Noun	Explain		
Actions	Sorry	Humorous Approach		
Approach	Unintentional	Consequences		
Asking forgiveness	Action	Casual Approach		
Hopeful	Fondness			

Overall, the possible sentence structure to form the forgiveness process scripts under the successful forgiveness-seeking script pattern (asked forgiveness and forgiven) was to do the following process: “Sorry, Explain, Admit, Actions, and Restoration”. This means that people who have asked forgiveness and were forgiven usually feel sorry for what happened, explain why they committed such offense and admit it to the fullest extent. “Actions” and “Restorations” come in if the transgressors are said to promise to change the unlikely behavior(s) leading to restore the relationship. The emphasis on needing to restore the relationship is imperative for a forgiveness-seeking script, based on the written scripts and reasons why there was a need to ask for forgiveness, a person’s sincerity in delivering the script primarily matters in the forgiveness-seeking process.

To further validate whether the proposed successful forgiveness-seeking script pattern was reliable, Guttman scaling and Q - Sort Method were conducted. 50 respondents took the Guttman scale (see Figure 1) while 25 respondents undergone Q-Sort method (see Figure 2) on the validation process. The results showed that the second (*Explain*) and third (*Admit*) component are interchangeable in the process of forgiving.

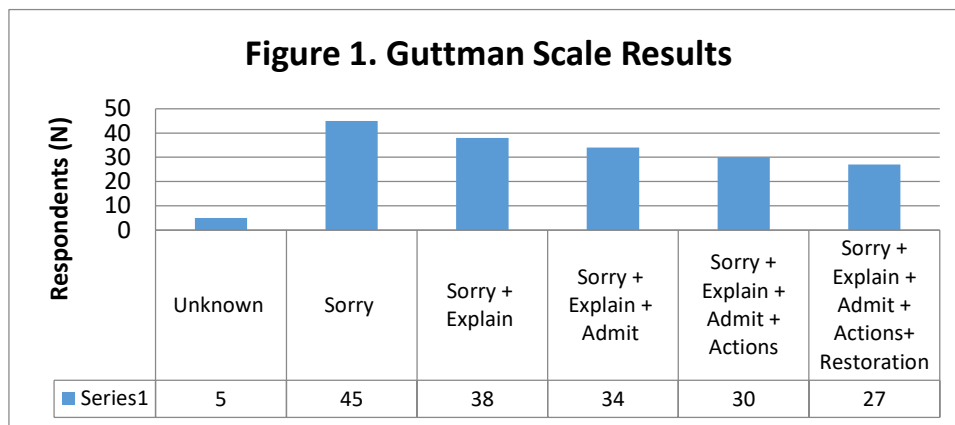
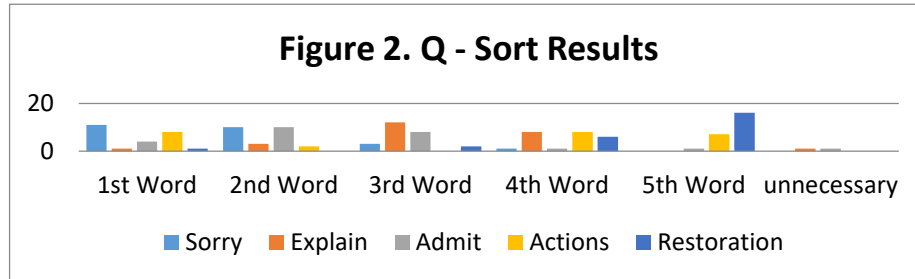


Figure 1 shows that out of 50 respondents, 27 (63.5 %) preferred to use the complete pattern (*Sorry + Explain + Admit + Actions + Restoration*) when being asked for forgiveness while figure 2 revealed that 2nd (*Explain*) and 3rd (*Admit*) components are interchangeable. Based on the responses, a higher number of students prefer to use *Admit* as their second word than *Explain*. Considering the outcomes of validation, the researchers finalized the proposed

forgiveness script as *Sorry + Admit + Explain + Actions + Restoration* for its actual experimentation.



Study 2: Actual Experiment

The actual experiment was taken in the context of successful forgiveness-seeking script patterns used by the transgressors to their victims. This time, three groups (Out-group, In-group and Combined Group) were formed to identify if the degree of relationship can influence the forgiveness script patterns of the transgressors to their victims in the process of forgiving. There were two vignette stories made by the researchers. The 1st vignette story contains characters who are related by blood (e.g. parents-child) while 2nd vignette story involves characters who are non-family members (e.g. classmates in a course). The researchers' forgiveness scale was given to the participants after reading the vignette stories. The combined data presents integrated in-group and out-group results to identify which forgiveness-seeking scripts are generally accepted regardless of relationships.

Table 2. Descriptives of Degree of Relationships and Experimental Conditions

Degree of Relationship	Experimental Conditions									
	Condition 1		Condition 2		Condition 3		Condition 4		Condition 5	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Out-group	14.85	2.79	15.81	2.74	15.25	4.21	15.52	3.97	15.4	4.45
2. In-group	20.93	3.34	21.6	2.76	21.43	3.42	22.55	2.99	22.83	2.93
3. Combined (Out-In Group)	35.78	4.87	37.41	4.61	36.68	6.2	38.08	4.98	38.23	5.57

Based on Table 2, the out-group preferred to use condition 2 (Sorry + Admit) ($M=15.81$; $SD=2.74$) when asking for forgiveness. Transgressors would immediately say sorry and admit their committed offense to their victims. For in-

group, condition 5 (*Sorry + Admit + Explain + Action + Restoration*) (M=22.83; SD=2.93) seemed to be the most favored condition when asking for forgiveness. Victims would only be forgiving if the complete set of forgiveness scripts are said to be provided. Meanwhile, condition 5 (*Sorry + Admit + Explain + Action + Restoration*) (M=38.23; SD=5.57) seemed to be the most preferred condition when out-group and in-group are combined.

Table 3. Summary of ANOVA

Groups	Variations	Sum of Square	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	η^2
Out-Group	Between Groups	30.537	4	7.634	0.556	0.695	0.008
	Within Groups	4036.995	294	13.731			
	Total	4067.532	298				
In-Group	Between Groups	152.171	4	38.043	3.947	0.004*	0.051
	Within Groups	2833.742	294	9.639			
	Total	2985.913	298				
Combined (Out+In Groups)	Between Groups	249.081	4	62.27	2.232	0.066	0.029
	Within Groups	8201.06	294	27.895			
	Total	8450.14	298				

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

Table 4. Multiple Comparisons of Conditions in In-group (*Scheffe Post Hoc*)

DV	(I) Condition	(J) Condition	Mean Difference		
			(I-J)	SE	Sig.
In-Group	Condition 1	Condition 2	-0.6667	0.56682	0.847
		Condition 3	-0.5	0.56682	0.941
		Condition 4	-1.626	0.56922	0.089
		Condition 5	-1.9000*	0.56682	0.026
	Condition 2	Condition 1	0.6667	0.56682	0.847
		Condition 3	0.1667	0.56682	0.999
		Condition 4	-0.9593	0.56922	0.586
		Condition 5	-1.2333	0.56682	0.318
	Condition 3	Condition 1	0.5	0.56682	0.941
		Condition 2	-0.1667	0.56682	0.999
		Condition 4	-1.126	0.56922	0.42
		Condition 5	-1.4	0.56682	0.195
	Condition 4	Condition 1	1.626	0.56922	0.089
		Condition 2	0.9593	0.56922	0.586
		Condition 3	1.126	0.56922	0.42
		Condition 5	-0.274	0.56922	0.994
	Condition 5	Condition 1	1.9000*	0.56682	0.026*
		Condition 2	1.2333	0.56682	0.318
		Condition 3	1.4	0.56682	0.195
		Condition 4	0.274	0.56922	0.994

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

An analysis of variance (one-way) was conducted to determine if the degree of relationship has an effect towards transgressors' forgiveness script patterns. Participants were classified into three groups: *Out-group*, *In-group*, and *Combined group*. Based on the results, there was no significant effect of out-group as a degree of relationship towards forgiveness script patterns used by the participants at the $p > .05$ level for five conditions [$F(4, 294) = 0.55, p = .696$]. Similar results were also generated when out-group was combined with in-group [$F(4, 294) = 2.32, p = .066$]. However, a significant effect was accounted with in-group as having a direct effect on forgiveness script patterns at the $p > .05$ level for five conditions [$F(4, 294) = 3.947, p < .004$]. The difference accounted for a low 5.1% which gives almost 94% to be attributed to other factors. Post-hoc test using Scheffee indicated that condition 5 (*Sorry + Admit + Explain + Actions + Restorations*) seemed to be the most favored condition compared to other conditions, with no other significant differences.

Discussion

This research documents how forgiveness-seeking scripts become successful and investigated on the scripts when it comes to how people will most likely forgive a transgressor given the mechanisms of the script. Study 1 qualitatively analyzed the script-structure that makes forgiveness seeking successful while study 2 used the formulated successful scripts to gauge possibilities of being forgiven given a context of wrongdoing.

Forgiveness entails a correction process (Risen & Gilovich, 2007) from the transgressor which the victim must find believable. This includes sincerity-concerns and whether the actions are congruent with the act of asking for forgiveness. The five conditions were set to deliberately segment the process in the creation of a forgiveness-seeking script. The data suggests, that one must use the word, sorry, to initiate forgiveness between two persons. While, there are studies suggesting that saying sorry may not necessarily be expressed (Rungduin & Rungduin, 2013), but assumed by the forgiver based on the perceived intention of the actions done by the transgressor, in the case of the adolescents in this study, the word, "sorry" is imperative. Addressing the need to understand why a transgression was done is important for the victim, however, it also matters how a person is displaying sincerity while explaining (Risen & Gilovich, 2007). The results suggest, that the more information is provided in the forgiveness-seeking process, the higher the probability that a person will be forgiven.

Forgiveness is an act of accepting what has happened and being able to willingly continue the relationship (Rungduin & Rungduin, 2013). How we ask for forgiveness matters whether we are forgiven or not, moreover, what is seen as imperative is how the transgressor believes in being forgiven (Bendixen, Kennair, & Grontvedt, 2018). The study points out that forgiveness works on a process where the transgressed perceives that the transgressor is sincere in asking forgiveness. The type of script used determines the degree of sincerity and that the possibility of being forgiven is based on whether a person relates how he or she is willing to change the behavior leading to the transgression. Studies on forgiveness emphasized that seeking forgiveness is significant in maintaining intimate relationships (Fincham & May, 2017) and that people who have an increased meaning of life are most likely to be forgiving (Toussaint & Diakonova-Curtis, 2017).

The present study delved on what forgiveness-seeking scripts seemed more convincing to warrant forgiveness. Studies along this area explored how people distinguish sincere from coerced apologies (Risen & Gilovich, 2007) and forgiving oneself when it comes to offense committed (Pelucchi et al., 2013), these studies focused on motivation to feel good about oneself, the current study explored (1) how we frame our arguments to be worthy of forgiveness and (2) if these arguments work. The findings suggest that focusing on how restoration would occur and the actions and consequences attached to it would ensure forgiveness compared with saying sorry. However, this argumentation would work if the transgressor is perceived to have a close relationship with the transgressed, this means that the quality of relationship matters in a forgiveness-seeking situation, which was emphasized in studies among married couples (Farrell, Hook, Ramos, Davis, Van Tongeren, & May, 2015; Fincham & May, 2017) and family relationships (Maio et al., 2008; Heintzleman et al., 2014). The forgiveness-seeking scripts in the study focusing on relationship-restoration was found to be applicable in situations where a defined relationship exists (e.g. friends, parent, and siblings). Forgiveness-seeking scripts seemed not to matter in out-group situations despite the notion that forgiveness enhances positive emotions and replaces negative feelings (Seybold et al., 2001; Witvliet et al., 2002; Berry et al., 2005; Reed & Enright, 2006; Russell, 2013).

Relationship restoration is grounded on humility (Farrell et al., 2015), one needs to accept his or her faults willingly for the transgressed to consider forgiveness. This is reflected in the extent of forgiveness-seeking scripts

provided for successful forgiveness to occur, the presence of admitting to one's mistake is integral for apologies to be accepted (Risen & Gilovich, 2007). Explaining the context of the wrongdoing and wanting to restore the relationship add impact to the possibility of being forgiven. The results show that given the circumstances, a successful forgiveness script should be presented sincerely with the goal of restoring the relationship.

Conclusions

The current study examined the forgiveness-seeking scripts used by the transgressors to their victims. First, the study aimed determine the content of forgiveness scripts on successful situations used in the forgiveness process. Empirical results showed that five themes emerged to be salient and notable scripts in successful forgiveness-seeking (which meant the transgressor asked for forgiveness and was forgiven) namely a.) saying sorry; b.) admitting the transgression; c.) explaining why the transgression occurred; d.) doing actions that would lessen the feelings of anger or pain; e.) and restoring the relationship. Second, the study sought to identify which among the conditions has the highest possibility to be utilized by the transgressor in the forgiving process. Empirical evidences seem to show that the complete set of scripts manifested in condition 5 (*Sorry+Admit+Explain+Actions+Restore*) of the experiment appeared to be the more likely type of script to be used by the transgressor. Lastly, the study pursued to identify the effect of the degree of relationships to the forgiveness script patterns made by the transgressors. Empirical data has shown that in-group relationship had something to do with forgiveness-seeking behavior of the transgressors to their victims. The findings have highlighted the importance of examining the content of forgiveness-seeking scripts in in-group relationships. These confirmations essentially can be added to the reported implications of transgressor's forgiveness-seeking behaviors to understand some features of the forgiveness process.

The absence of specific theoretical framework elucidating transgressor's perspective of forgiveness-seeking supports Sells and Hargrave's (1998) suggestion that "forgiveness literature should move from position of positing theory to more quantitative and qualitative outcomes research". Thus, this study was a clear leap towards that direction as it sought to combine the best results of its qualitative and quantitative phases to explain the transgressor's forgiveness-

seeking behavior through scripts. It also provides information on how one expects a transgressor to provide information regarding his or her perceptions of what has happened, in order for the victim to consider forgiving.

In spite of the interesting results of this study, the limitations it faces must be explicitly mentioned to help future research endeavors. Forgiveness-seeking behaviors reflected on the scripts used by the transgressors is still a subject that needs further examination to substantiate existing findings in the Philippines and see their veracity and viability when set against the local conditions. Since all respondents are college students, it cannot be easily concluded and generalized that this is the case for most Filipinos. Assuming the findings' applicability to the greater population just basing on the results of this research is inadequate per se.

Furthermore, there is a great need to investigate some actual situations that generate successful forgiveness from an experimental perspective. Future research needs to clarify how each forgiveness-seeking script condition would be perceived as regard to varying ages.

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