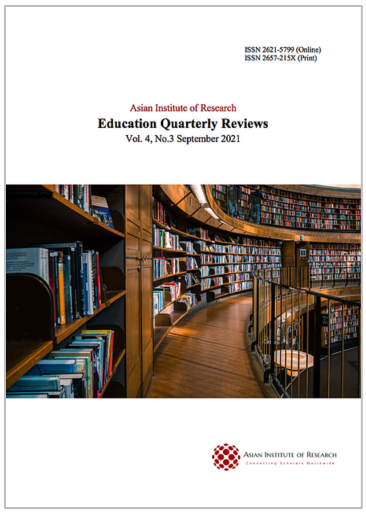

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Forgivingness among Meranao Students in Southern Philippines

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Abstract
People have the tendencies to be involved or engaged in transgression. While some may be forgiving and move forward, others hold grudges, resentment, or feel remorse. In the context of social, behavioral science, this is worth investigating. Thus, this study aimed at analyzing the indicatives of forgivingness in a transgression-related act and if these are associated with Gender and age. The main instrument used is the Transgression Narrative Test of Forgivingness (TNTF) which is a tool to measure forgivingness of the Meranao living in Lanao del Sur, Philippines. The respondents were the 150 Meranao Students (senior high and college students). This study employed a quantitative design that described, compared and correlated variables. Findings indicated that Meranao students are most forgiving towards scenarios in which a transgressor causes a friend to fail in the submission of a job application and least forgiving towards a scenario where a transgressor causes one of the family members to die. Meranaos' age range from 15 to 25 shows no difference in forgivingness between men and women. Results showed a very weak association in age groups. Future researchers may use other situational scales and tools to identify further results and use comprehensive age groups (young, middle-age, and old adult) examining respondents' forgivingness and its significant differences.

Keywords: Forgivingness, Transgression, Transgression Narrative Test of Forgivingness, Meranao

1. Introduction

Human beings are branded as social beings because of their ability to interact and communicate with each other regardless of what nation and tribe they belong. These interactions of people often result in either positive or negative conversations. These conversations involve emotions present when two people start to interact and allow themselves to be in a relationship either, forming an alliance or dissociation among families, relatives, friends, and other close acquaintances. Dissociation or separation may happen when someone transgresses or violates one's limit.

Madsen (2014) defines transgression as an act of violating norms, laws and a doing that is undesirable. According to James (2019), transgression takes place most often with people in different relationships with various instances. Some transgressions like criminal offenses, medical mistakes, or accidents occur with an

unfamiliar individuals. Others happen in close acquaintances like family, partners, and friends (Miller, Worthington, and McDaniel, 2008). There may be a situation where forgivingness is needed to save relationships that have been interrupted. Forgivingness is a disposition to forgive diverse conditions (Roberts, 1995). Accordingly, the type of transgressions may have different impacts with men and women in terms of how they are going to respond (Miller et al., 2008).

Most researchers suggest that dispositional forgivingness, which is the mode to forgive transgressions, helps in the physical health and psychological well-being of an individual by overcoming negative traits and affects. Anger is described as the leading emotional obstacle to forgiveness, the emotion that must be overcome if forgiveness is to occur (Enright, Gassin & Wu, 1992 as cited in Berry, Worthington, Parrott, O'Connor and Wade, 2001). Disposition pertains to forgivingness, which is a term suggested by Roberts (1995) as cited in (Berry et al., 2001) to distinguish the personal trait from acts of forgiving. It also entails forgivingness from a transgression committed eventually and across situations (Berry et al., 2001).

In Kohlberg's Moral Development, in the cognitive view, he emphasizes the process of how an individual reasons to affirm that a behavior is right or wrong. Their behavior is measured by responding to a given moral dilemma situated under the six stages of Kohlberg's theory which are comprehensively arranged from moderate to complex level. There were categorized into three general stages of moral development (Sanders, 2021). In the present study, this theory was the basis to identify how a participant judge situation after reading different scenarios.

This current study is also under the umbrella of cultural anthropology, which is the study of human cultures, beliefs, practices, values, ideas, technologies, economies and other domains of social and cognitive organization. In relevance to the study, individuals may perceive the behavior as a forgivable act if it was patterned to what their cultures already believed. Culture influences how people think and express themselves from the inherited beliefs that shape the perceptions of individuals (Lumen Learning Website, 2021a).

Miller et al. (2008) used a meta-analysis conducted with 53 articles reporting 70 studies that addressed gender and forgiveness. Results showed that females are more forgiving than males while males are less forgiving than women are when responding to vengeance measures. They suggested several factors that indicate why differences between females and males happen. It includes functional differences in the processing of emotional hurts and forgiveness, differences in dispositional qualities, differences in situations that may affect gender differentially, and gender differences in religion.

Mellor, Fung, and Mamat (2012) explored forgiveness and empathy among Malaysian men and women and the relationship between them. The study involved a sample of 233 Malaysian undergraduate students recruited from four English-mediated universities in Malaysia. Two measuring tools were used, namely, Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI), which measured empathy, and the Transgression- Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-12 (TRIM), which measured Forgiveness. Finding revealed that women are more empathic and forgiving than men. Furthermore, the authors concluded that there is an association between empathy and forgiveness.

Thompson et al. (2005) used Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) to assess forgiveness of self, others, and situations that relied on self-report measures. The findings suggest that forgiving people can be able to reframe transgressions and construct a new narrative such that they are no longer affected by negative thoughts, feelings, or behaviors about the wrongdoer, transgressor, and associated outcomes.

A study of Takada and Ohbuchi (2013) used TNTF as a reliable measure of forgiveness to re-examine the hypotheses of the second study after using the initial method in the first study. Findings revealed that participants were classified as true forgivers by being collaborative in conflict resolution strategy and tend to be satisfied with the outcome of the conflict. In contrast, participants were classified as hollow forgivers by preferring avoidance as a conflict resolution strategy and less satisfied with the outcome of the conflict.

After reading articles about the reviews of forgiveness scales, the researchers tried to utilize a measuring tool to measure the forgivingness of Meranaos in their local areas and explore the significance of specific demographic variables to forgivingness. Meranaos were chosen as the respondents because they are rarely investigated in terms of their behavior or emotions. Moreover, measuring the identities of Meranao tribe withstand as a probable cause of why Meranao tends to forgive and not. These identities may influence how Meranao behaves culturally and personally into different situations. Pride as one of the identities of a Meranao (Alaya-Ay, Cuizon, Branzuela, Romarez and Talaid, 2013) leads one family to engage in a feud or rido (in a Meranao term) such as family feuds, conflicts, revenge, retaliatory acts on the other and murder and theft were the causes.

This present study tried to utilize a tool to measure forgivingness of the Meranao and to find out if there is a significant difference of gender and of age to the forgivingness of the respondents. By finding so, results will tell us if men are easier to forgive than women and vise-versa. And if younger people forgive easier than older ones and vise-versa. Thus, it specifically sought to answer the following research questions: 1.) In which situation from the given transgression scenarios were the respondents mostly forgive and least likely to forgive? 2.) Was there gender difference in forgivingness? 3.) Is there a significant relationship between age groups and forgivingness?

2. Method

The study employed a quantitative design that described, compared, and correlated variables. It describes the forgivingness in the study through the transgression scenarios and measures the correlations of forgivingness in gender, and age group, respectively. This research design collected information from the respondents using sampling methods in which participants responded in different conducts, including an online survey, online polls, and questionnaire. Results were shown in a numerical form (Bhat, 2019).

A total of 150 Meranao Students (senior high and college students) served as respondents in this study who all lived in Lanao del Sur and were invited to respond thru online. Of the 150 respondents, 118 were women, and 32 were men. Ages of respondents ranged from 15 to 25.

A measuring scale was adopted and modified from Berry and his colleagues (2001), namely Transgression Narrative Test to Forgivingness (TNTF), to measure the forgivingness of the respondents. The researchers implemented four items (4, 5, 6, and 7 items) from the five developed scenarios of the TNTF, constructed three scenarios (1, 2, and 3 items) added to the adopted items to suit the context of Meranaos and purpose of this research and modified some conditional details of the scenarios. In modifying the scenarios, the central theme of transgressions was preserved.

Each item has confined situational transgressions, respectively. Two items: item 4 and item 6 reflect intentional transgressions done by an acquaintance. Item 5 reflects negligent transgression by a friend. Item 1 reflects biased transgression by the school. Item 2 reflects betrayal transgression by a loved one. Item 3 reflects murder transgression by a stranger. Lastly, item 7 reflects an intentional transgression by a relative followed by an apology (Berry et al., 2001).

The researchers used content validation and reliability of items to utilize the seven-item scale, and after having the validity and reliability of the research instrument, the researchers then proceeded with the data gathering.

In collecting the data, Google form was used. A link was generated, allowing respondents to answer the questions. The form was shared with respondents by sending a link or email. The data gathered using the Google form is typically stored in a spreadsheet (Love, 2021). All the responses were recorded automatically in a linked spreadsheet connecting to the main author's Gmail account that was used in creating the form. After collecting 150 responses from the respondents, it was followed by calculation and analysis of data using statistical tools.

Mean and Standard Deviation was used to describe the range of forgivingness of the respondents. Eta Coefficient Test and ANOVA were used together for nominal data, specifically the sex and age group, and continuous data, which is the extent of forgivingness of the respondents.

3. Findings and Discussion

This presents the tabulated and analyzed data of the study. Interpretations and discussions were also given to exemplify the meanings of the data and for further understanding. The information was interpreted for the purpose of answering the research questions.

Table 1: Respondents' Extent of Forgivingness

Indicators	Mean	SD	Description
Item 5: You asked a favor to your friend to drop off your job application to a school or company. A week later, you received an SMS from the potential employer informing you that your application cannot be considered because it was submitted after the deadline. You learned that your friend forgot to drop off your application due to errands she had to attend to and because of her forgetfulness. Imagine yourself in such situation and mark how likely you are to forgive your friend for not delivering the application on time.	3.63	1.032	Likely to Forgive
Item 7: You have a distant cousin from country side and he/she was admitted to a university where you also enrolled and you agreed to look for a dormitory where you can stay together. You've been together for months. You observed that you could not get along all the time because of his/her intrusive attitude. One day, one of your most precious things got him/her broken. Instead of apologizing, he/she said that it wouldn't be a bother. He/she knows you have scholarship to buy again. Imagine yourself in such a situation and mark how likely you are to forgive your cousin.	2.9667	1.108	Undecided
Item 4: Someone you occasionally see in a class has a paper due at the end of the week. You have already completed the paper for the class and this person says he or she is under a lot of time pressure and asks you to lend him or her your paper for some ideas. You agree, and this person simply retypes the paper and hands it in. The professor recognizes the paper, calls both of you to her office, scolds you, and says you are lucky she doesn't put you both on academic probation. Imagine yourself in such a situation and mark how likely you are to forgive the person who borrowed your paper.	2.88	1.158	Undecided
Item 6: You just started a new job and it turns out that a classmate from high school works there, too. You think this is great; now you don't feel like such a stranger. Even though the classmate wasn't part of your crowd, there's at least a face you recognize. You two hit it off right away and talk about old times. A few weeks later, you are having lunch in the cafeteria and you overhear several of your coworkers, who do not realize you are nearby, talking about you and laughing; one even sounds snide and hostile toward you. You discover that your old classmate has told them about something you did back in school that you are deeply ashamed of and did not want anyone to know about. Imagine yourself in such a situation and mark how likely you are to forgive your old classmate for telling others your secret.	2.7	1.11	Undecided
Item 1: Mariam is known to be the top 1 at their school. However, during the graduation day, she was not recognized as the class valedictorian but her classmate, Aisah which is a transferee and happened to be the granddaughter of the school principal. If you were Mariam, given the instance that the school was unfair to you, would you be able to forgive what happened?	2.64	1.271	Undecided

Item 2: Ali who was happily married to Fatima a year ago went abroad to work. Fatima, at first didn't want Ali to go but had no choice because Ali really promised her that he's going there just for Fatima's sake and for their future children. However, after a few months of Ali's stay abroad, Fatima was notified by Ali that he is going to marry Sittie, his co-worker. If you were Fatima, will you forgive Ali for betraying his promise to you?	2.4133	1.249	Not Likely to Forgive
Item 3: After 5 years, your brother Yusoph was able to go home after earning a degree overseas. Your parents had to work full time for your brother to graduate. However, a shoot-out happened outside the airport and accidentally killed Yusoph on the spot before he can reach home. Imagine your family in such a situation and mark how likely you are to forgive the person who killed your brother.	2.04	1.181	Not Likely to Forgive
Overall Mean	2.753	1.158	Undecided

Legend: 1.00 – 1.79 = Definitely Not Forgive; 1.80 – 2.59 = Not Likely to Forgive; 2.60 – 3.39 = Undecided; 3.40 – 4.19 = Likely to Forgive; 4.20 – 5.00 = Definitely Forgive

Table 1 shows the respondents' extent of forgivingness, which was arranged from highest to lowest. The result showed as "undecided" in items 1, 4, 6, and 7 because when the average was computed it falls to the middle. Thus, responses were very polarized in items 5 and 3. Similar results were obtained from the responses in the average when "likely to forgive" and "not likely to forgive" were calculated.

Item 5 that indicates the highest extent of forgivingness implied that this situation was the most forgiving scenario that respondents were most likely to forgive. It suggests that people forgive negligent transgressors specifically a friend, in a scenario, probably because of empathy. According to Davis (1983), as cited in Mellor et al. (2012), consensus revealed that empathy is associated with forgiveness, with the related assumption being that an empathic person is more likely to forgive an intrapersonal transgression.

By showing empathic concern towards a transgressor, it implies that if it happens to a person, he/she will do the same thing similar to the situation that happened to a friend. Toussaint and Webb (2005) stressed that a person was able to forgive others when he or she has the ability to understand and relate to others and be treated like just how he or she wants to be treated. Toussaint and Webb (2005) contended that people who forgive faults have likely to have less anxiety, anger, and depression. Moreover, McCullough (2000) indicated that forgiveness is certainly given with people having a close intimate relationship.

Meanwhile, item 3 indicates the lowest extent of forgivingness. Accordingly, when people experience transgressions, they typically develop negative thoughts (e.g., ''This has ruined my life''), feelings (e.g., anger), or behaviors (e.g., seeking revenge) related to the transgressor, transgression, or associated outcomes that reflect how they are responding (cognitively, affectively, or behaviorally) to the transgression (Thompson, et al., 2005). One causes for a person to be unforgiving is anger (Williams, 1989 as cited by Berry et al., 2001). In the study of Mauger et al. (1992), as cited in Kamat (2005), he revealed that participants with low scores on forgiveness of others measured higher on anger. These imply that people become unforgiving because of anger. In addition, Darby and Schlenker (1982), as cited in Kamat (2005), concluded that "more serious offenses with higher responsibility and larger consequences of the transgressions towards the victim would generate less forgivingness." In a Meranao setting, when pride was triggered in the family, especially in a murder situation, *rido* eventually occurred (Alaya-Ay et al., 2013). It implies that conflicts could arise when Meranao became unforgiving, which leads them to unlikely forgive.

Culture may also influence how people think of certain transgressions. Accordingly, a culture is owned by any certain group having the same attributes such as social, ethnic, or age, reflecting the same customs and behavior (Lumen Learning Website, 2021b). It suggests that Meranao is unforgiving if a shared cultural norm was violated from the transgressions that occur.

Table 2a: The Difference in Forgivingness in terms of Gender

ANOVA Table								
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Interpretation
Forgivingness * Sex	Between Groups	(Combined)	.560	1	.560	1.023	.314	Not Significant
	Within Groups		81.084	148	.548			
	Total		81.644	149				

Table 2b: The Difference in Forgivingness in terms of Gender

Measures of Association			
	Eta	Eta Squared	Interpretation
Forgivingness * Sex	**.083**	.007	No relationship

Table 2a and Table 2b present the results to the research question 2. Data revealed that forgivingness in terms of gender has no significant difference with an obtained result of 0.314. It implies that people ages 15 to 25, either man or woman, is easily influenced by the society, thereby affecting their opinions, judgment, and even their forgivingness. For Meranaos, life experiences are mostly experienced within these ages that cause them to consider and reflect on their decisions. These experiences are the same for both men and women. Hence, the age 15 to 25 years has no difference for both men and women in forgivingness.

Similarly, the result of Berry et al.'s (2001) study, as they had anticipated, revealed that there is no difference in forgivingness between men and women. Nevertheless, this result contradicts with the study of Miller et al. (2008), in which they concluded that a significant difference exists in gender responses to forgiveness. Gender difference in forgivingness was found to have small to moderate impact.

Further, more variables might affect the relationship between gender and forgiveness, according to Miller et al. (2008). These are the injustice in the society, religion, and culture. In the present study as it was revealed in table 3.2b gender and forgivingness have no association at all, with an obtained result of 0.83. It implies that because in the age group of the study that limits to 15 to 25, association along these ages are not possible. The support to this implication was revealed in Table 3a.

Table 3a: The Difference in Forgivingness in terms of Age Group

ANOVA Table								
			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Interpretation
Forgivingness * Age Group	Between Groups	(Combined)	.952	3	.317	.574	.633	Not Significant
	Within Groups		80.692	146	.553			
	Total		81.644	149				

Table 3b: Relationship between Age Group and Forgivingness

Measures of Association			
	Eta	Eta Squared	Interpretation
Forgivingness * Age Group	.108	.012	Very weak association

Table 3a and table 3b presents the significant relationship of the respondents' forgivingness in terms of age group. The data reveals no significant difference with an obtained result of 0.633.

The result implies that their age does not influence their opinion in forgiving certain circumstances and situations. Most of them particularly the younger ones forgive because they were often influenced by factors such as life lessons, mistakes from the past, and experiences. These factors drive them in making their opinion of whether to forgive or not. Hence, their age has nothing to do with them to forgive or not to forgive.

These findings confirm the study of Enright et al. (1992), as cited in (Berry et al., 2001), in which they examined the relationship between forgivingness and other demographic variables. The result shows that forgiveness develops from childhood to early adulthood, but after college age, no age differences have been found. However, this contradicts Ghaemmaghami, Allemand, and Martin (2011), in which they found significant association between age, and forgiveness for others but not with self-forgiveness.

The moral development in Kohlberg's theory was probably the reason why perceptions of certain scenarios affects the age. In the present study, the focus is on the youth, specifically, age group of 15 to 25 (World Health Organization, 2021). It suggests that with these ages, their likelihood to forgive was similar. Stage 5 in Kohlberg's moral development (Kurt, 2020) states that, initially, people as always good until they get confused between what is right and what is not. They contemplate on this to continuously create a good society rather than creating a society to be good. It showed that how they respond to hypothetical scenarios reflects their judgment to forgiving such.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings, it was found out that Meranao students forgive mostly towards neglecting scenarios, meaning scenarios that a transgressor causes a friend to fail in the submission of a job application and least forgiving towards a scenario where a transgressor causes one of the family members to die. According to Toussaint and Webb (2007), empathic person became forgiving because they became understandable by putting their shoes towards similar condition. While Meranao students became unforgiving in a state where a death of family is involved, anger holds the disposition to forgive. In addition, gender has nothing to do with forgivingness of the Meranao students along with their age. Hence, the scenario-based scale revealed the situations where Meranao students mostly forgive and less likely to forgive.

To recommend, a similar study may be conducted in other provinces in Southern Philippines with dominant Meranao student populations to compare with the findings of this paper. More situational cases and tools can be added to confirm further the results. Future researchers can study the implication of age difference in forgivingness.

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