

Social Cognition and Personality Factors as Predictors of Interpersonal Forgiveness

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ABSTRACT

Forgiveness might play an important role on romantic relationships because it has the ability to manage conflicts and has an impact on individual's well-being. However, forgiveness can be influenced by individual personality traits and social cognitive skills. Hereby, the current study analysed forgiveness on romantic relationships based on personality traits (agreeableness and neuroticism) and social cognitive skills (cognitive flexibility, self-reflection and insight).

The recent study had a sample of 268 (140 female, 128 male) Turkish speaking university students. The participants completed Big Five Inventory, Cognitive Flexibility Inventory, Self- Reflection/Insight Scale and Marital Forgiveness Scale. It was predicted that agreeable individuals would show high forgiveness levels whereas individuals with high neuroticism would show low forgiveness levels. Increased cognitive flexibility, self-reflection and insightfulness predicted high forgiveness levels. Also, it was hypothesized that female participants would show higher forgiveness levels than males. However, findings of the current study yielded no gender difference on forgiveness levels. Furthermore, agreeable individuals pointed high forgiveness levels for both genders. In contrast, neuroticism marginally predicted low forgiveness levels for female participants. Among social cognitive skills, only cognitive flexibility predicted forgiveness levels among female participants. On the other hand, social cognitive skills did not predict forgiveness among male participants. Findings were discussed in accordance with socialization and young adulthood.

Keywords: Agreeableness, Neuroticism, Self-reflection, Insight, Cognitive Flexibility and Forgiveness.

ÖZ

Affediciliğin çatışmaları önleme ve bireylerin refahını etkileyebilme özelliğine sahip olması romantik ilişkilerde önemli bir rol oynamasını sağlamaktadır. Ancak, bireyin kişilik özellikleri ve sosyal bilişsel becerileri affedicilik üzerinde etkili olabilmektedir. Buna bağlı olarak, mevcut çalışma kişilik özellikleri (gelişime açıklık ve nevroitiklik) ve sosyal bilişsel özellikler (bilişsel esneklik, kendi üzerine düşünme ve içgörü) temelinde romantik ilişkilerde affediciliği incelemektedir.

Mevcut çalışmanın örneklemi 268 (140 kadın, 128 erkek) Türkçe konuşan üniversite öğrencisinden oluşmaktadır. Katılımcılar, Beş Faktör Kişilik Kuramı Ölçeği, Bilişsel Esneklik Ölçeği, Kendi Üzerine Düşünme ve İçgörü Ölçeği ile Evlilikte Affedicilik Ölçeğini tamamlamıştır. Gelişime açık olan kişilerin yüksek düzeyde affedici, yüksek seviyede nevroitikliğe sahip kişilerin daha düşük düzeyde affedici olacağı öngörülmüştü. Yüksek düzeyde bilişsel esneklik, kendi üzerine düşünme ve içgörü özelliklerinin yüksek düzeyde affedicilik ile ilişkili olması beklenmişti. Kadın katılımcıların, erkek katılımcılardan daha yüksek seviyede affediciliğe sahip olması da belirlenen hipotezler arasındaydı. Mevcut çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre, cinsiyetin affedicilik seviyesi üzerinde herhangi bir etkisi bulunmamıştır. Buna ek olarak, her iki cinsiyette de gelişime açıklığın yüksek seviyede affedicilikle ilişkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Bundan farklı olarak, yalnızca kadınlarda nevroitikliğin affedicilik seviyesi ile marjinal düzeyde ilişkili olduğu saptanmıştır. Kadınlardaki sosyal bilişsel beceriler arasında yalnızca bilişsel esnekliğin affedicilik düzeyini yordadığı görülmüştür. Erkeklerde ise sosyal bilişsel beceriler ve affedicilik arasında herhangi

bir iliŖki bulunmamıŖtır. Bulgular, sosyalleŖme ve gen eriŖkinlik temelinde tartıŖılmıŖtır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: GeliŖime Aıklık, Nevrotiklik, Kendi Üzerine Düşünme, İçgörü, BiliŖsel Esneklik ve Affedicilik.

DEDICATION

To My Family

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Forgiveness is defined as the interpersonal process that is associated with a decrease of negative experiences such as behavior, motivation and cognition (Miller, Worthington, Evrett & McDaniel, 2008). Historically, forgiveness from a group processes point of view, has been found to help to ameliorate the wounds of long lasting conflicts within countries, like American slavery (Fehr, 2010). In consideration of an individual basis, forgiveness has the ability to enable physiological and psychological well-being in conflicting interpersonal relationships. DiBlasio and Proctor (1993) suggested that forgiveness can heal an individual's inner emotional feelings and let them free of bitterness and anger, and as a result restoring the intimate relationship. The aim of the current study will be to assess the roles of gender, personality factors and social cognitive skills (i.e., cognitive flexibility and self-reflection) on forgiveness levels of participants in a romantic relationship.

The current thesis conceptualized forgiveness within a romantic relationship in terms of the theoretical model developed by McCullough and colleagues (1998). According to this model, forgiveness can be viewed in a two-factor motivational system which determines people's responses to a transgression. These two motivations are avoidance and revenge. After an offense, an individual who does not forgive seeks revenge and avoidance from the partner. One who forgives, conversely practices relationship maintaining behaviors and motivations. In their theoretical model, the

authors outline a number of other factors that might play a role in this two-factor model, which include proximal variables such as social cognitive factors which include (e.g. how the offended party feels toward the offender) as well as relationship factors (e.g., quality of the relationship, relationship satisfaction, etc.) and personality traits. This thesis will cover personality variables in addition to social cognitive skills in determining forgiveness within romantic relationships.

1.1 Definitions of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a term that has often been defined differently by psychologists and theologians. While before the 1970's forgiveness was seen as a field of religion, during the mid-1980's however forgiveness became a subject of interest in psychological science (Worthington, 2005). One of the first studies on forgiveness conducted by Fitzgibbons (1986) demonstrated forgiveness could be used as a coping strategy to release anger feelings of patients in psychotherapy. Accordingly, forgiveness was thought to aid people in dealing with painful experiences, relieve the relationship from anger experiences and decrease anger. Enright, Freedman and Rique (1998) described forgiveness based on four approaches. Firstly, forgiveness is understood as acceptance or tolerance towards injustice. Secondly, forgiveness is not an indication of forgetting, instead it is remembering the situation from a different perspective. Thirdly, forgiveness is interrupting our anger toward the person who did the harm and to look from both positive and negative sides of the problem. Lastly, forgiveness is seen as more than making one feel good, but it is described as a gift both to the self and other which is equal to psychological healing.

Another definition explored by Worthington (2005) includes forgiveness as both an art and science. On the one hand forgiveness as an art explores how individuals deal

with transgressions and faults, both personally and socially. On the other hand, forgiveness is a domain of science in which it promotes health and well-being. It has been the topic of consideration for depression, problems in anger and lack of hope. With this idea, scientific studies on forgiveness within the field of psychology have increased with an emphasis on different aspects of the concept. For instance, while clinical psychologists promote forgiveness as a mental health issue, developmental psychologists have been more interested in how forgiveness is reasoned by children. Relatedly, personality psychologists analyze who is forgiving or not, whereas social psychologists have examined how forgiveness can be seen in social contexts. Finally, health psychologists have investigated how forgiveness influences one's physical health.

In general, psychologists accept that forgiveness is not unforgiving- unforgiveness defined by researchers including Worthington and Wade (1999) includes a mixture of delayed negative emotions, that include resentment, bitterness, and hostility. These feelings develop after ruminating about the transgression and motivate a desire to retaliate or avoid the offender (Wade & Worthington, 2005). Forgiveness therefore does not include forgetting or excusing an offense but is more accepted as a conscious decision of individuals in which they are aware of the seriousness of the offense (Exline, Worthington & Hill, 2003). Wade, Worthington and Meyer (2005) have conceptualized two types of forgiveness. One is a decisional forgiveness that the authors state to be an intentional act wherein individuals forgive someone's wrongdoing and put aside actions of revenge and avoidance. Thereby, individuals release the offender's misbehavior and mistakes. Secondly, Wade et al. (2005) define emotional forgiveness as the change of negative emotions with positive emotions. Hereby emotional forgiveness leads to less negative emotions and motivations,

therefore causing an increase in positive emotions. Accordingly, most classifications of forgiveness should therefore include elements of both reducing unforgiving as well as an increase in positive emotions (Worthington & Wade, 1999).

1.2 The Role of Forgiveness in Intimate Relationships

1.2.1 Development of Young Adults and Emerging Adults in Intimate Relationships of Forgiveness

Forgiveness can play an important role in intimate relationships as intimate relationships are an important milestone during young adulthood years (Dush & Amato, 2005). Romantic relationships can range from dating to marriage. Whatever the type, romantic relationships can influence an individual's mental health, physical health, sexuality and financial status. At this point, to define emerging adulthood is also important because it is a new and critical term of the life course between adolescence and young adulthood (Arnett, 2007). Emerging adulthood is the lifespan where young people pay attention to intimate relationships such as friendships, family relations, and romantic relationships. Individuals in this period are also entering in marriages and parenthood. According to Arnett (2007) emerging adulthood period had psychosocial differences in socioeconomic and ethnic groups. Furthermore, romantic relationships during emerging adulthood period point to an important key that is life tasks commitment (Shulman & Conolly, 2013). Successfully navigating through relationships can be difficult as relationships have challenges such as communication and meeting each other's needs. One challenge relevant for the current study is dealing with transgressions within relationships. Couples might have several ways of coping with transgressions from splitting, separating, divorcing but also forgiving (Fincham, 2000). Forgiveness can arise in different levels of human development (Worthington, 2005). Therefore, ones

can deal with forgiveness during late childhood according to Piaget, 1932 (Mullet & Girard, 2000) with family relatives and with partners in intimate relationships (Worthington,2005). Furthermore, the current studies sample is more categorized as emerging adults because university students were selected. As mentioned below emerging adults are turning their attention to romantic relationships and at the same time it is a period where individuals are less known about their future yet (Mullet & Girard, 2000).

1.2.2 Forgiveness in Intimate Relationships

Forgiveness, within a relationship context can function to enhance pro-relationship responses and relationship well-being. For instance, Karremans and Lange (2004) found that forgiveness was positively linked with willingness to conciliate, willingness to sacrifice and directed cooperation with a partner who had offended. The findings suggested that forgiveness fostered caring and pro-relationship responses. In a longitudinal study conducted by Kato (2016) interpersonal forgiveness in romantic relationships was investigated. It was predicted that forgiveness encourages the maintenance of the romantic relationship while unforgiveness decreases relationship satisfaction. The study operationalized forgiveness as a coping strategy in romantic relationships and found that forgiveness was significantly correlated with relationship satisfaction whereas this was not the case for couples who tended to be more un-forgiving. Similarly, McCullough, Rachal, Sandage, Worthington, Brown, and Hight (1998) found that relationship commitment and satisfaction were negatively related to reported avoidance and revenge following a transgression by individuals in a romantic relationship. Critically, closeness reported before and after the transgression were in part related through forgiveness levels.

Fincham and Beach (2002) conducted a study on forgiveness in marriages. Forgiveness was defined as a construct that may have a supportive role in understanding psychological aggression and the general forms of communication in marriage. Both positive (e.g., goodwill) and negative (e.g., ambivalence) dimensions of forgiveness among married couples was also analyzed. Findings revealed that psychological aggression was highly associated with negative forgiveness whereas constructive communication (e.g., whereby partners suggest solutions and compromise rather than point blame) was linked with positive forgiveness. Moreover, the research suggested that taking revenge on the partner promotes unforgiving behavior which is a negative forgiveness dimension that can lead to psychological aggression. On the other hand, positive dimension of forgiveness was found to be turned to constructive communication among couples.

Also, a past study conducted by Finkel, Rusbult, Kumashiro and Hannon (2002) suggested that a relationship variable, namely commitment attribution promotes high forgiveness. It was predicted that those who tend to have lower commitment would have lower forgiveness levels in reaction to the betrayal of the partner and vice versa. Findings of this study revealed that commitment is linked positively with interpersonal forgiveness. Based on the results it was suggested that commitment prevents the behavior of betrayal. However, it was also revealed that those who are more dependent on their partner tend to have high interpersonal forgiveness.

Fincham, Paleari and Regalia (2002) enhanced the 2-factor motivational systems model developed by McCullough and colleagues by looking at both relationship level variables (e.g., marital quality) and social-cognitive variables (such as affective reactions, responsibility attribution and emotional empathy) and their role on

forgiveness among long-term married couples. Prior to this research, the two literatures were not combined in a single study. The authors hypothesized that high marital quality was related to more positive responsibility attributions (seeing the offense as less serious) and less conflict-promotion within the relationship. These attributions were then assumed to promote forgiveness via increased affective emotions (less anger and sadness) and more emotional empathy. Contrary to their expectations the authors found that the link between marital quality and forgiveness was mediated by affective and cognitive variables such as empathy and attributions. Although marital quality was found to play a role, attributions and emotional reactions given by partners in long term relationships were seemingly more critical. This is in line with research which shows that a partner's attributions and emotions can shape their reactions to marital conflicts (Fincham & Beach, 2002). Marital quality however, was also indirectly related to forgiveness such that those in a satisfactory and intimate relationship can find the ability to reinterpret the transgression and find the positive emotions that will eventually lead to forgiveness.

1.3 The Role of Personality Traits in Forgiveness

Personality can play a critical role in relationships, particularly with regards to transgressions within a relationship and how one deals with them. Personality characteristics such as Big Five (i.e., agreeableness, neuroticism, openness, conscientiousness and extraversion) have been found to be associated with dispositional forgiveness (Strelan, 2007). Extraversion trait demonstrates characteristics such as being socially oriented, assertive and having a dominant status (Heineck & Anger, 2010). Also, conscientious people possess traits like order, self-control, being hard-working, organized and a good planner. Openness characteristics include those who are more open to new experiences, flexible and creative.

Neuroticism trait illustrates characteristics such as viewing the environment as a threat which leads them to experience high stress, hostility, anger and depression (Strelan, 2007). Personality trait neuroticism also manages individual's perception and responses in a negative way (Derryberry & Reed,1994). In contrast, agreeableness trait contains characteristics such as empathy, generosity which is a result of being more tolerant of others (Kuotsos, Wertheim & Kornblum, 2008) and assists individual's active concerns for others (Costa & McCrae,1992). Personality traits of big five, namely agreeableness and neuroticism have been found to have significant effects on forgiveness (McCullough & Hoyt, 2002). One study done by Brose, Rye, Zois and Rose (2005) found that openness and conscientiousness were not related to forgiveness whereas a positive relationship between extraversion and forgiveness was found. In contrast, a previous study did not indicate a relationship between extraversion and forgiveness (Walker & Gorsuch, 2002). Overall, due to the magnitude of evidence linking neuroticism and agreeableness as significant predictors of forgiveness, this is why the current study focused on these two personality traits above the rest.

Starting with neuroticism, research shows that neuroticism may have an affect through perceptual processing because individuals with high neurotic traits pay attention more to negative stimuli (Derryberry & Reed,1994). In contrast, people with high agreeableness have few conflicts with their environment (Asendorpf & Wilpers, 1998). McCullough and Hoyt (2002) have suggested that agreeable people may have decreased revenge thoughts and are therefore more likely to forgive, however this may not be the case for those high in neuroticism.

In one such study forgiveness was examined within the domain of the big five personality traits (Brose, Rye, Zois & Ross, 2005). It was expected that forgiveness correlated positively with agreeableness whereas negatively with neuroticism. Aspects of neuroticism were defined with angry hostility. On the other hand, agreeableness characteristics facet was explored with compliance and straightforwardness. In line with the hypothesis findings indicated that neuroticism was negatively associated with forgiveness. Agreeableness was found to be positively related with forgiveness. This research suggested that people with agreeableness personality trait was valuing interpersonal relationships which led to a lack of conflicts and therefore maintaining positively with the aim of forgiveness. However, neuroticism personality trait block people to forgive because of their thinking process which contained hostility, anger and rumination.

Past studies have therefore tested whether particular cognitive tendencies and fundamental personality characteristics prevent forgiving and therefore decrease relationship satisfaction among couples who were emerging adulthoods (Braithwaite, Mitchell, Selby & Fincham, 2016). Cognitive tendencies can provide or inhibit forgiveness and it is influential because it is an intrapersonal process. In one such study, authors investigated whether negative cognitions including neuroticism, destructive thoughts and catastrophizing which measures the tendency of individuals to focus their attention on the negative consequences of an event, influenced forgiveness and relationship satisfaction. The results indicated that those who scored high on neuroticism trait had decreased forgiveness and therefore reduced relationship satisfaction. According to the findings higher trait forgiveness also showed higher relationship satisfaction. Also, it was found that destructive thoughts were directly associated with negative relationship satisfaction whereas forgiveness

was found to be positively associated with relationship satisfaction. The research suggested that neuroticism had an impact of damaging relationships because it led to a less forgiving tendency.

Previous research done by Koutsos, Wertheim and Kornblum (2008) demonstrated that the personality traits agreeableness and neuroticism were related to forgiveness. The aim of the study was to assess the role of dispositional forgiveness on an individual's willingness to forgive. Also, it was aimed to analyze the role of dispositional forgiveness and situational forgiveness whereby situational forgiveness points to a specific contextual transgression, whereas dispositional forgiveness is a trait that is inherited. Results showed that neuroticism and agreeableness were found to be involved in dispositional forgiveness whereas agreeableness was included in situational forgiveness. The study results suggested that revenge motivation and avoidance predicted disposition to forgive.

A longitudinal research done by Lehnart and Neyer (2006) examined personality and relationship duration in order to assess whether personality trait predicted relationship break up or continuation. Also, it examined how relationship experiences had an effect on personality trait changes. Findings of this study revealed that personality trait neuroticism did not predict relationship stability. Separation among young adulthoods is more due to the dissatisfaction of the relationship. Agreeableness was found to be in relation with relationship continuation and stability. This finding suggested that agreeableness personality trait might start to be developed in young adults because romantic relationships need obligation and making an agreement. Findings also revealed that those who change their partner within 8 years have more stable characters whereas those who continue with their

relationship change their personality trait accordingly. On the basis of the results a relationship ends when the individual is being unsatisfied rather than when they are neurotic. However, in a stable relationship agreeableness trait was related to continuation. In addition, individuals that had agreeableness characteristics were more depended on their partners that lead to avoiding arguments and fights.

Past research also examined the relationship between dispositional forgiveness (self, others, accepting others' forgiveness and God's forgiveness) personality traits of big-five and 16 primary personality traits (Walker & Gorsuch, 2002). It was hypothesized that those who scored high in neuroticism vs. emotional stability showed low levels of interpersonal forgiveness. Additionally, it was predicted that participants with high agreeableness personality trait would have increased interpersonal forgiveness, to others and accepting forgiveness. As a result, four dimensions of dispositional forgiveness (self, others, accepting others' forgiveness and God's forgiveness) were found to be related to personality traits. Neuroticism was negatively associated with all factors of dispositional forgiveness. Individuals with neuroticism characteristics are so self-confident that lead them to avoid general forgiveness. On the other hand, agreeableness personality trait was linked to the dimension of receiving forgiveness of others.

1.4 The Role of Social Cognitive Skills in Forgiveness

One variable that has received little attention in the literature in relation to its role in interpersonal forgiveness is social cognitive skills (Gassin, 1995). While social cognition is defined as the understanding of other people, including trying to understand others experience and minds (Liebermann,2007) social cognitive skills are included within a process of interpersonal knowledge, sensation, attitudes and

behavior (Bennet, Farrington & Huesmann, 2005). One such skill is cognitive flexibility which is described as having the ability to switch between different cognitions and at the same time adapting to those changes (Dennis & Vander Wal, 2010). However, cognitive flexibility has different meanings in psychological researches and is pointed on a spectrum of behavior's that has not one definition (Ionescu, 2002). Generally, however cognitive flexibility can be defined as having the ability of multitasking, change behavior due to a rule or finding of solutions and includes shifting and categorization.

In terms of the link between these skills and forgiveness, it is believed that the more advanced an individual's social cognitive skills are, the more likely they are to show forgiveness to the transgressor (Thompson et al., 2005). It is expected that those with such skills can come to a more comprehensive understanding of both the offense and the offender which can help enhance their forgiveness levels. It has also been found that forgiveness is related to empathy and perspective taking (Konstam, Chernoff, & Deveney, 2001), skills that require a level of cognitive flexibility, hence a positive correlation between forgiveness and high cognitive flexibility has been observed (Thompson et al., 2005).

Although not exactly the same variables covered in the current research a similar social cognitive construct that has been studied in the literature and linked to positive relationship behaviors is mindfulness. Researchers investigated whether high mindfulness led to decreased rejection fears of conflicts and destructive behaviors in romantic partners (Dixon & Overall, 2018). Mindfulness is defined as to being attentive, aware and nonjudgmental of current moments. Destructive behaviors were explored as the occurrence of experiencing fear rejection. Also, destructive behaviors

were tested on 10day diary of participants which were considered through unpleasant and hurtful description of feelings. Firstly, it was predicted that daily relationship conflicts arise through high rejection fears. Secondly, it was expected that individuals high in mindfulness are more likely to have rejection fears that lead them to behave destructive toward their partner. This study also had the purpose to analyze whether reduced mindfulness effect was independent self -esteem or low self -esteem. This recent study's findings revealed that dispositional mindfulness (present awareness) can reduce the experience of rejection fears and risk situations and support destructive behaviors toward the partner. With this in mind dispositional mindfulness are more the individual with low self-esteem. In contrast individuals who are low in mindfulness avoid more insecurities in their relationship. Overall the authors suggested that dispositional mindfulness has the ability to protect destructive reaction which will have the effect to manage the relationship.

Currently, to the author's knowledge there is only one study in the literature that has investigated the link between cognitive flexibility and interpersonal forgiveness. This study was conducted by Thompson and colleagues (2005) in an attempt to verify the psychometric properties of a scale of forgiveness (Heartland Forgiveness Scale). The authors predicted that cognitive flexibility correlated positively with forgiveness whereas rumination, vengeance and hostility correlated negatively with forgiveness. The term forgiveness was defined as a framework of perceived transgression and the response of the individual to that transgression which can be from neutral to negative. Transgression was explained as an individual's expectation about violating situations in which they develop negative thoughts. To review the transgression, it is necessary to use cognition and emotion in order to reframe the transgression to not be negative. In other words when people are forgiving they are going through a

dialectical process. Dialectical process is when people put the reality of the transgression with their primary thoughts into a new framework of the transgression, self, others or the world. During forgiveness people try to look from the transgressors perspective and develop empathy and to do so effectively, cognitive flexibility is needed. In line with this the authors found that cognitive flexibility was positively related with forgiveness.

Similarly, it is assumed that self-reflection and insight as social cognitive skills will also be predictive of forgiveness. Self-reflection illustrates an individual's questioning and judging about one's own thinking, behaviors and feelings whereas insight includes the capability to appreciate own thinking, behavior and feelings (Roberts & Stark, 2008). According to Lieberman (2007) insight is the ability to reframe the world from another eyes and self- reflection is the process where the individual has the ability of reflecting current and past events. Also, self-reflection is explored as the evaluation of behavior, thoughts and feelings and self-insight is the ability to understand own thoughts, feeling and behavior (Grant, Franklin & Langford, 2002).

To date, no study has connected these cognitive skills with that of forgiveness within the literature and this study aims to fill that gap. It is expected that a link between self-reflection and insightfulness will be established with forgiveness since researchers claim that forgiveness requires a change in the offended person's stance on an affective, cognitive and behavioral level (Enright, 1996). For instance, the Enright and Human Development Study Group (1991) a group of psychologists studying the field of forgiveness at the University of Wisconsin-Madison have defined forgiving as a willingness to forego a sense of resentment, condemnation,

and revenge toward the offender, while at the same time harboring feelings of compassion, generosity, and even love. The group further suggested that the offended person's new stance should include affective changes including the overcoming of resentment and substitution of compassion and behavioral changes that include overcoming the urge to behavior in vengeance. Most related to the current thesis is the cognitive changes necessary for the offended to forgive- which the researchers state include overcoming thoughts of condemnation with thoughts of respect. The claim of the current study is that this requires an amount of self-reflection and insight (as well as cognitive flexibility). Those individuals who are able to question and judge how they think and feel about an offense, who can then appreciate their stance will in turn be able to forgive a transgression.

1.5 Gender and Forgiveness

Gender differences have been observed in forgiveness (Fincham et al., 2002). There might be several reasons for this difference. Miller, Everett and McDaniel (2008) state a number of factors that might play a role for instance they state that differences in ratings of forgiveness may be an artifact of methodological moderators whereby analyses of forgiveness measures gender differences rather than forgiveness per se. Other reasons they include are differences in affective traits, attachment styles and differences in views of justice based morality (which may cause men for example to respond to a transgression was fighting, vengeance or justice). Religion might also play an important role in forgiveness since past studies have shown that women are more religious (Freese, 2004) and forgiveness is an important value in religion (Rye, 2005).

In order to assess who out of the genders is more forgiving and why, a number of studies have been conducted. A meta-analysis conducted by Miller et al., (2008) in the United States of America examined 53 articles between 1983 and January 2007 that explored gender and forgiveness. Result of this meta-analysis showed that there is a difference between males and females in forgiveness. The difference in forgiveness across gender was found to be small to moderate but might have had an impact. Males were to be found less forgiving than female participants. This was not surprising since men are usually considered to be more vengeful than females.

Relatedly, one study by Shackelford, Buss and Bennett (2002) analyzed gender difference in interpersonal forgiveness levels hypothesizing that forgiveness is based on gender and the nature of the infidelity. Results showed that men found it more difficult to forgive sexual infidelity and therefore are more likely to terminate the relationship compared to women. In contrast, women found it more difficult to forgive their partner when it was an emotional cheating and are more likely to break up the relationship than men do. Research suggested that men are more sensitive to sexual infidelity whereas women showed sensitivity to emotional cheating. According to the authors the reason that men find it difficult to forgive sexual infidelity is due to the sense of rivalry because there could be risk of bearing a child from another man. On the other side, research suggested that women's difficulty in forgiving on emotional cheating is due to the attachment to the partner. Because of the emotional infidelity women feel upset because they might not share the same feelings with their partners.

Fincham et al. (2002) explored gender differences in forgiveness among long-term married couples. This study suggested that gender was an important aspect in

understanding forgiveness. One of the findings revealed that responsibility attribution (to be less selfish and intentional) was shown to be high among women than men. The authors suggested that attributions and exhibited behavior while problem solving were highly associated for wives than for husbands. Reasons behind this construct were that wives are more attributional active and sensitive to relationships than husbands. On the other hand, men displayed less direct emotional empathy than women and the research suggested that men in general showed few intimate behaviors containing emotional empathy than women do. Therefore, when men have emotional empathy it has a higher effect on relationship quality and their readiness to forgive. Relatedly, Sandage and Williamson (2005) suggested that forgiveness might differ from culture to culture. The reason why women are forgiving more might be due to the socialization of gender roles that describes women as more the ones who restoring and caring the relationship.

One other reason that a gender difference might exist with regards to the processes involved in forgiveness could be emotional intelligence. Although the current study does not measure emotional intelligence variables such as personality traits and social cognitive skills require a level of emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability to state, assess and perceive emotions exactly (Mayer & Salovey, 1997). The authors argue that emotional intelligence gives an understanding of emotions and emotional knowledge. A more recent study by Joseph and Newman (2010) investigated personality traits of big 5 and cognition in accordance to emotional intelligence. Findings revealed that cognitive ability is dependent on emotional intelligence and have an important role in understanding emotions. The personality traits conscientiousness and neuroticism only predicted emotional intelligence. Furthermore, another recent study done by Berrocal, Cabello

and Castillo (2012) investigated gender differences in emotional intelligence. Findings of this study revealed that female participants score higher in emotional intelligence than male participants. Berrocal et al. (2012) listed several reasons for women's higher emotional intelligence including their better understanding of emotional words, nonverbal communication and sensitivity to the emotion of others. Therefore, the current study expecting gender differences among the hypothesizes.

1.6 The Current Study

The current research was conducted with Turkish speaking Cypriots and Turkish citizens from Turkey in North Cyprus and attempted to look at the roles of gender, personality and social cognitive skills on interpersonal forgiveness. As far as the author is aware to date, there is no published research on forgiveness in interpersonal relationships conducted with these populations (see Sampmaz, Yildirim, Topcuoglu, Nalbant & Sizer, 2016 and Yalcin & Malkoc, 2015 for research findings on the link between forgiveness and subjective well-being in Turkish speaking participants).

The current study had four hypotheses.

It is hypothesized that:

- (1) Those participants scoring high in neuroticism will show lower forgiveness whereas those participants scoring high in agreeableness will show high levels of forgiveness.
- (2) Those participants scoring high in cognitive flexibility will show high forgiveness whereas those participants scoring low will show low levels of forgiveness.

- (3) Those participants scoring high in self-reflection and insight will show high forgiveness whereas those participants scoring low will show low levels of forgiveness.
- (4) Females will show greater forgiveness than males.

It is expected that the personality and social cognitive processes predicting forgiveness might differ between men and women therefore the hypotheses will be tested separately for each gender.

Chapter 2

METHOD

2.1 Participants

In the current study 268 participants (140 female, 128 male) were recruited through convenience sampling and snowballing technique, from Northern Cyprus and Turkey. Participants age ranged between 18 and 30 years ($M=22.40$, $SD=2.62$). The inclusion criteria were being an undergraduate or graduate student currently in a romantic relationship, including being married. Out of the participants 150 were collected online and 118 collected using the paper-pencil version.

2.2 Materials

Four scales in their Turkish versions and one demographic questionnaire were used in the current study.

2.2.1 Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire consisted of 4 questions which assessed whether the participants were suitable for the study. Questions included age, gender, relationship status, sexual orientation and relationship duration (see Appendix A). One participant was removed from the study (online questionnaire) because this participant identified as gay and the current study analysed only heterosexual couples.

2.2.2 Big Five Inventory

The Big five inventory was developed by Benet-Martinez and John (1998) and usually assesses five personality traits which are neuroticism, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness and extraversion. In line with the hypotheses of the

study, the scales pertaining to the personality traits of agreeableness and neuroticism alone were used in the study. Therefore, the scale consisted of 17 items that were on a 5 point likert scale with anchors 1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree. Items for agreeableness were 1,3,5,7,9,11,13,15,17 and neuroticism were 2, 4, 6,8,10,12,14,16. Reverse items in the current scale for agreeableness was 1, 5, 11,15 and for neuroticism was 4,10,13. For example, agreeableness included an example item that stated, “Tends to find fault with others” and an example item of neuroticism was “Is depressed, blue”. The Turkish version of the big five inventory was adapted by Sümer, Lajunen and Özkan (2005) was utilized. The cronbach alpha scores for the subscales were .78 for neuroticism and .58 for agreeableness and were similar to the ones in the original study (see Appendix B).

2.2.3 Cognitive Flexibility Inventory

Cognitive Flexibility Inventory was used to measure participant’s cognitive flexibility level. This inventory was developed by Dennis and Vander Wal (2010) and consists of 20 items with response options ranging from 1 strongly agree to 5 strongly disagree. For instance, items included “I am good at sizing up situations.” The adaption for the Turkish of the cognitive flexibility inventory was conducted by Gülüm and Dağ (2012). The cronbach alpha score was .87 after having taken out the items 10 and 12 since they reduced the reliability of the scales (See Appendix C). Presumably, items 10 and 12 did not work for the sample in the current study.

2.2.4 Self-Reflection and Insight Scale

Self-reflection and insight scale was developed by Grant et al. (2002) and consists of 20 items (12 items self-reflection and 8 insight items) ranging between 1 strongly disagree and 6 strongly agree. Reverse items for self-reflection were: 1,2,8,13 and reverse items for insight were: 4,9,11,14 and 17. One example item for self-reflection

“I often think about the way I feel about things.” Insight scale included items such as “I usually know why I feel the way I do”. The Turkish adaption of this scale was developed by Aşkun and Çetin (2017). The cronbach alpha score for insight was .79 and for self-reflection it was .80 after removing item18 out for reducing the alpha level (see Appendix D)

2.2.5 Marital Forgiveness Scale

Marital Forgiveness Scale was developed by Fincham and Beach (2002) and comprised of 6 items, ranging from 1 strongly disagree to 6 strongly agree. The scale contains a positive dimension (constructive communication) and negative dimension (psychological aggression) however the total scale was utilized in the current study. Sample items include “When my partner wrongs me, I just accept their humanness, flaws and failures” (positive) and “When my partner hurts me, I want to see them hurt and miserable” (negative). Reversed items for this scale at the same time negative dimensions were: 1, 2 and 5. A total score was computed using both the positive and negative dimensions. The Turkish version was translated by a professional translator and interpreter and was then back translated by a native English-speaking academic. Furthermore, the cronbach alpha level for this scale was found to be .66.

2.3 Procedure and Design

After obtaining approval from the research ethics committee of Eastern Mediterranean University, the study took place in Northern-Cyprus and Turkey Turkish speaking population. Participants were first given the consent form in order to get their consent to voluntarily take part in the study. The consent form included information including that the study will be anonymous and participants have the right to withdraw whenever they want. They were then administered the

questionnaire which took approximately 15-20 minutes. The same procedure was observed for the online version. Only those participants giving consent continued on the webpage with the online questionnaire. Participants were thanked and debriefed after completing both versions of the questionnaire. The study was a cross-sectional design in which the predictor variables consisted of one categorical variable gender and five continuous variables that were neuroticism, agreeableness, cognitive flexibility, self-reflection and insight, whereas the dependent measure was interpersonal forgiveness.

Chapter 3

RESULTS

In line with the aims of the study, the variables were analyzed by using independent sample t-test, correlations and hierarchical multiple regression.

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

3.1.1 Gender Differences

An independent t-test was conducted in order to assess gender differences. There was no gender difference found for forgiveness levels, however female participants scored higher on self-reflection, neuroticism and agreeableness compared with males. A marginally significant difference was found on insight in which women scored higher. Male participants scored higher on cognitive flexibility alone (See table 1).

Table 1. Gender differences for all the variables

Variables	Female	Male	<i>T-value</i>
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	
Forgiveness	3.44 (0.74)	3.49 (0.79)	-.54
Insight	3.96 (0.77)	4.11 (0.69)	-1.74 [†]
Cognitive Flexibility	3.79 (0.55)	3.94 (0.57)	-2.18*
Neuroticism	3.00 (0.85)	2.77 (0.74)	2.34*
Agreeableness	3.74 (0.56)	3.47 (0.56)	3.93**
Self-Reflection	4.01 (0.52)	3.72 (0.59)	4.21**

Note: [†] $p=.06$; * $p<.05$, ** $p<.001$

3.1.2 Correlation Analysis

In order to analyse the relationship between variables a correlation analysis was conducted. As can be seen in Table 2, results indicated no significant correlation between self- reflection and forgiveness for men ($r=.17, p=.51$) and for women ($r=.12, p=.16$). Also, a significant positive correlation was found between the variables agreeableness and forgiveness for men ($r=.45, p=.00$) and for women ($r=.37, p=.00$). Neuroticism and forgiveness revealed a significant negative association for men ($r=-.37, p=.00$) and for women ($r=-.38, p=.00$). Furthermore, there was a significant positive correlation found between insight and forgiveness for men ($r=.32, p=.00$) and for women ($r=.25, p=.00$). Cognitive flexibility and forgiveness revealed a significant positive correlation for men ($r=.27, p=.00$) and women ($r=.39, p=.00$).

There was no significant correlation between age and forgiveness for men ($r=.97, p=.37$) and for women ($r=-.61, p=.47$). Additionally, no significant correlation was found between relationship duration and forgiveness for men ($r=.06, p=.54$) and for women ($r=.01, p=.92$). Because no significant relationship between age, duration of relationship and forgiveness was obtained, these variables were not entered into the regression analysis.

Table 2. Correlations among cognitive flexibility, neuroticism, agreeableness, self-reflection, insight, month, age and forgiveness among gender.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Self-Reflection	--	.21*	.11	-.01	.33**	.12	-.09	-.10
2.Agreeableness	.26**	--	-	.06	.27**	.37**	-.15	-.06
3.Neuroticism	-.13	-	--	-	-	-	.02	-.10
4.Insight	.37**	.29**	-	--	.52**	.25**	.26**	.32*
5.Cog.Flexibility	.51**	.33**	-.47**	.57**	--	.39**	.08	-.05
6.Forgiveness	.17	.45**	-.37**	.32**	.27**	--	.01	-.06
7.RelationshipDuration	-.07	.01	.15	-.11	-.10	.06	--	.36*
8.Age	.06	.17*	.08	.10	.22*	.10	.08	--

Note: Above the diagonal line are results for women, below the diagonal are results for men. *Correlation is significant at 0.05 level

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

3.2 Regression Analysis

Hierarchical multiple regression was conducted to determine the roles of neuroticism, agreeableness, self-reflection, insight and cognitive flexibility on individual's forgiveness level. In order to control for personality variables, neuroticism and agreeableness was entered in the first step, after which the social cognitive variables were entered in the second step. The analysis was conducted separately for females and males.

There were no violations of normality, linearity, multicollinearity and homoscedasticity. Examination of the data indicated significance and assumption were met for VIF and Tolerance. Highest VIF for all variables was 1.96 for cognitive flexibility. The lowest tolerance for insight was once again .51 for cognitive flexibility.

3.2.1 Predictors of Forgiveness in Women

Neuroticism and agreeableness were entered in the first block in which 21% of the

variance in forgiveness levels was explained. In the second block self-reflection, insight and cognitive flexibility was entered. The total variance by the model as a whole was 25%, $F(5,139) = 9.11, p < .001$. The two measures explained additional 4% of the variance on female participants level of forgiveness, after controlling for neuroticism and agreeableness, the model was marginally significant, R square change = .04, F change (3,134) = 2.38, $p = .07$. In the final model the variables that were significant with agreeableness ($\beta = .25, p = .003$), cognitive flexibility ($\beta = .21, p = .04$) and marginal influence was found for neuroticism ($\beta = -.19, p = 0.6$).

3.2.2 Predictors of Forgiveness in Men

Neuroticism and agreeableness were entered in the first block of variables, 23% of the variance in male participants forgiveness level was explained. In the second block self-reflection, insight and cognitive flexibility were entered in which the total variance explained by the model as a whole was 25%, $F(5,127) = 8.14, p < .001$. The additional- measures explained 2% of the variance on male participants level of forgiveness, R square change = .02, F change (3,122) = 1.10 $p = .35$, which was not significant. In the final model agreeableness ($\beta = .34, p < .001$) alone was significant (see Table 3).

Table 3. Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Forgiveness in Personality traits and Social Cognitive Skills

Predictors	Women			Men		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SEb</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SEb</i>	β
	Analysis 1					
Agreeableness	.36		.28**	.49		.35*
Neuroticism	-.25		-.29 [†]	-.21		-.20
	$R^2 = .21$			$R^2 = .22$		
	Analysis 2					
Cognitive Flexibility	.28		.21**	.02		.02
Insight	.03		.03	.18		.16
Self-Reflection	.02		.02	.01		.01
	$R^2 = .25$			$R^2 = .22$		
[†] $p = .06$. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.						

Chapter 4

DISCUSSION

The research aimed to study forgiveness in interpersonal relationships by analyzing the roles of gender, personality factors (i.e., neuroticism and agreeableness) and cognitive skills (i.e., cognitive flexibility, self-reflection and insight) of participants in a romantic relationship. It was hypothesized that individuals with high neuroticism will show lower forgiveness levels whereas participants with high traits of agreeableness will show higher levels of forgiveness. Also, it was predicted that high scores on cognitive flexibility, self-reflection and insight will be associated with higher levels of forgiveness since such individuals will be able to question and judge situations that will influence their stance and in turn show higher forgiveness. Lastly, it was predicted that females will show greater forgiveness level than male participants.

In terms of the hypothesis on gender differences, the current research found no significant gender difference on forgiveness levels. Research findings on gender differences have been inconsistent but often in favor of women. The meta-analysis conducted by Miller et al. (2008) found small differences between genders on forgiveness, whereas the findings by Shakelfold et al. (2002) suggest a difference in terms of forgiving based on the nature of the offense. There may be a number of reasons why the current study did not find gender differences. When one looks at why gender differences exist, Miller et al., (2008) outlined a long list of causes,

including differences between the genders in affective traits, beliefs in vengeance vs. morality, religiosity levels, situational factors, etc. Since the current study did not measure these listed moderators it cannot clearly state why the difference did not emerge. It might however simply be because the participants of the current study were more similar in their perceptions and definitions of forgiveness. A serious criticism brought to gender differences studies on forgiveness is that the methodology of measuring forgiveness seems to be creating the gender differences rather than the concept itself (McCullough et al., 1998). The current study did not require participants to actively create a scenario of transgression, instead their own tendencies to forgive within a relationship was measured, which led to no difference. Methodological differences in the study of forgiveness should be taken into consideration in future research to see whether the difference or similarities still exists.

Out of the personality traits neuroticism and agreeableness were tested to see their influences on forgiveness. In line with the hypothesis, correlation results indicated that neuroticism was negatively associated with forgiveness for both genders. Those who were scored low on neurotic personality traits had higher levels of forgiveness. Agreeableness on the other hand, was positively associated with forgiveness, which means that individuals with agreeable personality traits tend to have higher forgiveness levels, once again this was obtained for both men and women. This result was found to be in line with past studies that found high agreeableness and low neuroticism was associated with forgiveness (Brose et al., 2005). Brose and colleagues (2005) have suggested that since neuroticism has characteristics such as hostility, revenge and rumination these properties have a negative impact on forgiveness by blocking the thinking process and just conceiving the negative points

of a transgression in order not to forgive. In contrast, agreeableness qualities are suggested to give the individual the ability of giving worth to a relationship and therefore reducing the number of conflicts within a relationship.

Relatedly, when one turns to the findings of the hierarchical regression, it was found that agreeableness was the most important predictor of forgiveness for both genders. Critically, agreeableness alone was found to predict forgiveness among male participants. In line with a past study conducted by McCulloch and Hoyt (2002) agreeableness trait is associated more with forgiveness because revengeful thoughts are decreased. McCulloch and Hoyt (2002) argued that agreeable individuals tend to forgive more because they pay less attention to revenge and therefore act in more empathetic ways toward the transgression. Similarly, agreeable partners are lower in psychological aggression and catastrophizing thoughts (McNulty & Russell, 2011, Braithwaith et al., 2015). Such characteristics are crucial elements to relationship maintenance.

It is assumed that agreeableness as a trait might help both genders to be motivated to avoid any transgressions or conflicts within the relationship. According to the 2-factor motivational model of McCulloch and colleagues (1998) to manage the response of transgressions is a key, it might therefore be a valid assumption that those individuals high in agreeableness trait might have the motivation to promote forgiveness within their relationships.

Relatedly, a previous study stated that those partners who were married to people with high agreeableness characteristics were more forgiving to those who were not (McNulty & Fincham, 2012). The functioning of an intimate relationship can

therefore lie in the functioning of personality traits such as agreeableness.

At this point, it is suggested that agreeable individuals have the ability to use forgiveness as an instrument to manage their negative experiences and therefore again maintain their relationship in accordance. Agreeableness personality traits have their roots in prosocial behaviours and an agreeable persons prosocial thinking might influence the willingness of forgiveness (Worthington, 2005). To sum up the ideas due the agreeableness properties such as prosocial thinking, generosity, empathy being more tolerant of an individual lead to willingness of forgiveness that retains the romantic relationship and besides satisfaction.

The current study's findings yielded that as the neuroticism increases a decrease was to be found in forgiveness. Neuroticism was marginally predictive of forgiveness among female participants. The current findings indicated that neuroticism did not predict forgiveness among male participants. It might be the case that due to their low levels of neuroticism, this personality trait did not predict forgiveness in men. Similar to the current study one past study indicated that women were higher on facets of neuroticism than men (Costa, Terraciano & McCrae, 2001). Costa and colleagues (2001) suggested that gender differences in personality traits might arise due to the influence of socialization of gender roles. Hence, it was suggested these effects of socialization also influence the development of gender roles.

The relationship between the social cognitive skills self-reflection, insight and cognitive flexibility on forgiveness were initially analyzed by correlation. Results revealed that except for self- reflection correlations among insight, cognitive flexibility and forgiveness were significant in both men and women. Social cognitive

skills were hypothesized to be correlated with forgiveness because forgiveness requires shifting between different cognitions, adapting to those changes as well as perspective taking. Someone who is high in social cognitive skills such as cognitive flexibility has the ability to consider the situation from multiple perspectives and also switch between these views. Insight is also positively correlated with forgiveness as expected because insight is critically thinking of the self and the individual can look on the self and behave accordingly. Since insight was correlated to forgiveness, one would assume that self-reflection too would be associated. However, this was not found to be the case and self-reflection was not found to be correlated to forgiveness in the current study. Whereas self-reflection includes the evaluation of behavior, thoughts and feelings, insight is the ability to understand own thoughts, feelings and behaviors (Grant et al. 2002). It might therefore be the case that the current population that was sampled did not have the evaluation properties required to be self-reflecting. Although the results revealed an association with the ability to understand one's thoughts and feelings, it did not show a link to the assessment and reflection of those feelings and behaviors. A previous study contended that self-reflection is more abstract and in need of more cues to reflect one's self in contrary to insight (Hixon & Swann,1993). Moreover, the authors suggested that a person has to be known well in order to reflect self otherwise people belie themselves. Therefore, on the basis of these findings it is suggested that self-reflection might not work due less knowledge or less awareness of self-knowledge to reflect. This might again be due to the population that was sampled. Since the group were young adults, it might be plausible that they had not yet developed self-reflecting characteristics. However, such an assertion must be empirically established in future work.

Based on the hierarchical regression results it was revealed that only cognitive

flexibility significantly predicted forgiveness, and this was only present in females. This result pointed to the idea that those female participants who have the ability for multitasking and switch between different tasks. In this case to consider the transgression from various perspectives might in fact come to a more comprehensive understanding of both the offense and the offender, which in turn leads to more forgiveness. This finding is in line with the literature that indicated that there is a significant difference in cognitive skill such as verbal attention and strategic thinking between the genders (Weiss, Ragland, Brensinger, Bilker, Deisenhammer & Delazer, 2006). However, Weiss and colleagues (2006) argued that women have been found to show more verbal attention and considered as more strategic thinkers than men. Similarly, multitasking has been found to be an advantage of female participants over male participants whereby men are more likely to mix between tasks which leads to a drop in their speed (Stoet, Connor, Conner & Laws, 2013). Both these findings can help explain how and why women use cognitive flexibility as a tool to forgive. Since women are already equipped with the ability of multitasking and strategic thinking, this might aid them in utilize a more flexible cognitive stance when evaluating a transgression.

Another suggestion might be that women are more solution oriented which requires cognitive flexibility for that reason they are evaluating a transgression from various aspects. One meta-analysis conducted by Bennet et al., (2005) found gender differences in social cognition. They stated that social cognitions develop differently for women and men such that, women feel guiltier, have greater empathetic roles and moral judgements over a situation than men. This might help explain the gender difference in cognitive flexibility on forgiveness.

Another assumption is that gender roles occurring as a result of socialization might explain this relationship. It might be the case that due to socialization men may not feel they need to use any tactics or cognitive skills to forgive because they do not see themselves as the ones who need to forgive. One past study, indicated that men who endorsed traditional gender roles as part of socialization were less forgiving of others but needed to receive forgiveness from others (Walker & Doverspike, 2001). Flinck, Paavialainen and Kurki (2005) argued that due to gender roles and socialization women are more likely to experience feelings such as guilt, subordinate status and forgiveness. The authors suggested that men own the power within an intimate relationship and do not need to forgive because they orient the relationship as they wish. In terms of the current study, this might help explain why women's social cognitive skills namely cognitive flexibility predicted forgiveness as it can help promote their relationships. Once again however, such an assertion should be verified with future research.

Finally, emotional intelligence which was not assessed in the current study might give an idea as to why among female participants cognitive flexibility predicted. Previous studies have shown that women are higher in emotional intelligence than males (Berrocal et al.,2012). In addition, the findings of the previous study could be an explanation of why cognitive flexibility predicts forgiveness in females but not in male participants. People with high emotional intelligence are the ones who have the ability of understanding emotions and are sensitive to emotions. Accordingly, to understand emotions, cognitions are needed. One recent study showed that emotional intelligence is associated with cognitions (Joseph & Newman, 2010). Future studies that also assess emotional intelligence along with these variables are necessary to better assert such a claim.

4.1 Implications

The current study examined personality traits and social cognitive skills on forgiveness among romantic relationships. However, forgiveness research has been studied a few in the last 15 years and need to be studied more in the future. Moreover, the current study is the first study with those variables in Turkey and Northern-Cyprus. Forgiveness is an important framework within a romantic relationship.

It is for this reason that one suggestion of the current research is that the importance of forgiveness could be explained using an intervention with young adults currently in a romantic relationship in the hope that increased forgiveness within couples might be helpful to restore their relationship (Fincham et al., 2002). As stated previously, forgiveness plays an important role in well-being (Fehr,2010) and can also function to increase relationship satisfaction (Kato,2016).

One such intervention on forgiveness between couples was conducted by Coyle and Enright (1997) in which they explained to couples what forgiveness is and what it is not. The exploration of forgiveness could help couples to benefit from using forgiveness as a process in which they make their relationship much better. It was found that the intervention showed an essential importance of promoting forgiveness. In other words, participants were able to gain forgiveness abilities after the intervention.

One potential implication is that the personality trait agreeableness can be used so that one can be more tolerant to their partner which could lead to an increase of forgiveness levels. Agreeableness was an important predictor for both gender in the

current study. Therefore, it is suggested to use the properties of agreeableness in couple therapies, counselling's or cognitive behavioral therapist can make individuals aware of these traits which include enhancing tolerance, generosity, empathy and prosocial behaviors. On the other hand, neuroticism was only marginally predictive in female participants that showed a negative relationship with forgiveness. It is therefore also beneficial to state that neuroticism trait which include high stress, hostility and viewing the environment as a threat should be reduced within relationship interventions. Once again, couples' therapist counselors or cognitive behavioral therapists could emphasize a reevaluation of the properties of neuroticism within partners in consideration to reduce them in order to increase forgiveness levels in a relationship. Moreover, psychology counselor centers in universities should also take these suggestions in consideration in order to help university students who are either emerging adults or young adults most in need of such interventions in their romantic relationships.

Furthermore, couple therapists and cognitive behavioral therapists can train their clients in perspective taking training to achieve forgiveness. In the current study, it was found that higher cognitive flexibility in women helped to increase forgiveness. This finding can be beneficial for therapists and couples in which they can be trained to think in a more flexible manner, re-phrase and re-state the problem to see it from different points of views and in a different light. Doing so might help couples on their road to forgiveness.

Since the topic of forgiveness is quite new in the field it would be most beneficial if forgiveness was measured as a norm of socialization and its function within societies. Because forgiveness lies on a continuum and can differ from culture to culture, it

would be beneficial to be addressed from a more macro level by different social sciences including anthropology and sociology.

Relatedly, cross cultural designs within the field of Psychology can give allow us to understand differing perspectives of how forgiveness within socialization occurs based on gender.

Overall, there is no published research on forgiveness in Norther-Cyprus and Turkey. The current study is recommends doing more research in this field these contexts to ensure the generalizability of the findings.

4.2 Limitations

One major weakness was that the participants were from two different countries (Turkey and Northern-Cyprus). The main problem here was that the cultures are similar but has not the same. The cultural differences may have negatively impacted the results by creating a heterogeneous sample with differing causal variables at play.

Secondly, the study used self-report measures might have created a social desirability bias, since the questions were about the personality and one's cognitive flexibility. Participants might have been motivated to show themselves in the best possible light. Future studies could implement scenarios reflecting the use of different social cognitive skills in order to prevent such demand characteristics.

Furthermore, the current study did not measure one social cognitive ability that is empathy. Empathy requires cognitive flexibility which might play an important role in forgiving because by using empathetic skills one might look from the perspective of the transgressor. Previous studies have shown that empathy is related to

forgiveness (Konstam, Chernoff, & Deveney, 2001). Since its role in forgiveness has already been established it was not included in the current study, however it might be beneficial to add empathy in addition to the other social cognitive skills in order to see which of the variables are predictive of forgiveness over and above the others.

However, another major weakness of the current study was that relationship duration was assessed and found to not play a role. Future researches should include other relationship variables such as the relationship satisfaction, commitment levels, and the like in order to evaluate their additional roles on interpersonal forgiveness.

The current study was conducted with heterosexual couples and data of LGBTI individuals was removed. As a future study, it is suggested that forgiveness in homosexual partners should be evaluated. Due to their more flexible gender roles and gender ideology, LGBTI+ individuals might show different social cognitive skills that enhance the forgiveness process.

Ultimately, forgiveness is an effortful process that requires individuals to act in a way that is healthy and beneficial to the relationship and eventually to the self. The current study shed light on certain factors by which this path may be possible.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire

Demografik Anket

1.Yaşınız: ____

2.Cinsiyet: Kadın____ Erkek____

3.Medeni durumunuz: Bekar__ İlişki __ Evli__

a.) **Evlilik/İlişki süresi:** ____ ay y 1 l____

b.) **Çocuğunuz var mı?** Evet____ Hayır____

4. Cinsel Yönelim: Heteroseksüel (karşı cinse ilgi duyan) ____

Homoseksüel (kendi cinsine ilgi duyan) ____ Biseksüel (hem kendi

cinsine hemde karşı cinse ilgi duyan)____

5. Öğrenci Statüsü: 1. Sınıf__

2. Sınıf__

3. Sınıf__

4. Sınıf__

Yüksek Lisans__

Doktora__

Appendix B: Big Five Inventory

	kesinlikle katılmıyorum	katılmıyorum	ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum	katılıyorum	kesinlikle katılıyorum
1. Başkalarında hata arayan.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Bunalımlı.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Yardımsever ve çıkarıcı olmayan.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Rahat, stresle kolay baş eden.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Başkalarıyla sürekli didişen.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Gergin olabilen.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Affedici bir yapıya sahip.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Çok endişelenen.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Genellikle başkalarına güvenen.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Duygusal olarak kolayca keyfi kaçmayan.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Soğuk ve mesafeli olabilen.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Dakikası dakikasına uymayan.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Hemen hemen herkese karşı saygılı ve nazik	1	2	3	4	5
14. Gergin ortamlarda sakin kalabilen.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Bazen başkalarına kaba davranabilen.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Kolayca sinirlenen.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Başkalarıyla iş birliği yapmayı seven.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C: Cognitive Flexibility Inventory

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle katılıyorum
1. Durumları "tartma" konusunda iyiyimdir	1	2	3	4	5
2. Zor durumlara karşılaştığımda karar vermekte güçlük çekerim	1	2	3	4	5
3. Karar vermeden önce çok sayıda seçeneği dikkate alırım	1	2	3	4	5
4. Zor durumlara karşılaştığımda kontrolümü kaybediyormuşum gibi hissedirim	1	2	3	4	5
5. Zor durumlara değişik açılardan bakmayı tercih ederim	1	2	3	4	5
6. Bir davranışın nedenini anlamak için önce, elimdeki dışında ek bilgi edinmeye çalışırım	1	2	3	4	5
7. Zor durumlara karşılaştığımda öyle strese girerim ki sorunu çözecek bir yol bulamam.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Olaylara başkalarının bakış açısından bakmayı denerim	1	2	3	4	5
9. Zor durumlara baş etmek için çok sayıda değişik seçeneğin olması beni sıkıntıya sokar.	1	2	3	4	5

10. Kendimi başakların yerine koymakta başarılıyım.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Zor durumlara karşılaştığımda ne yapacağımı bilemem.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Zor durumlara farklı açılardan bakmak önemlidir.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Zor durumlarda nasıl davranacağıma karar vermeden önce birçok seçeneği dikkate alırım.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Durumlara farklı bakış açılarından bakarım.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Hayatta karşılaştığım zorlukların üstesinden gelmeyi becerebilirim	1	2	3	4	5
16. Bir davranışın nedenini düşünürken mevcut bütün bilgileri ve gerçekleri dikkate alırım.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Zor durumlarda, şartları değiştirecek gücümün olmadığını hissederim.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Zor durumlara karşılaştığımda önce bir durup çözüm için farklı yollar düşünmeye çalışırım.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Zor durumlara karşılaştığımda birden çok çözüm yolu bulabilirim	1	2	3	4	5
20. Zor durumlara tepki vermeden önce birçok seçeneği dikkate alırım.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix D: Self-Reflection and Insight Scale

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Ne katılmıyorum ne katılıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle katılıyorum
1. Düşüncelerim hakkında sık kafa yormam.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Davranışlarımı analiz etmekle aslında çok da ilgilenmem.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Genellikle düşüncelerimin farkındayım.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Bir şeyler hakkında gerçekten nasıl hissettiğimle ilgili sık sık kafam karışır	1	2	3	4	5
5. Yapmakta olduğum şeyleri değerlendirmek benim için önemlidir	1	2	3	4	5
6. Neden o şekilde davrandığımı konusunda genellikle çok net bir fikrim vardır.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Ne hakkında düşündüğümü incelemekle çok ilgilenirim.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Nadiren kendimle ilgili öz değerlendirme yaparım.	1	2	3	4	5
9. İçimde bir his oluştuğunun sıklıkla farkındayım; ama onun ne olduğunu pek bilmem.	1	2	3	4	5
10. Sıkça duygularımı gözden geçiririm.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Davranışlarım beni sık sık hayrete düşürür.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Hislerimin ne anlama geldiğini anlamaya çalışmak benim için önemlidir.	1	2	3	4	5

13. Açıkçası neden o şekilde davrandığının üzerinde durmam.	1	2	3	4	5
14. Düşüncelerim hakkında düşündükçe kafam daha da karışır.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Mantiğımın nasıl çalıştığını anlamaya kesin bir ihtiyaç duyuyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
16. Sıkça düşüncelerimin üzerinde durmaya vakit ayırırım.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Sık sık bir şeyler hakkında nasıl hissettiğimden anlam çıkarmayı zor buluyorum.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Düşüncelerimin nasıl oluştuğunu anlayabilmek benim için önemlidir	1	2	3	4	5
19. Bir şeyler hakkında ne şekilde hissettiğim üzerine sık sık düşünürüm.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Neden o şekilde hissettiğimi genellikle bilirim.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix E: Marital Forgiveness Scale

	Kesinlikle katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	ne katılıyorum ne katılmıyorum	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle katılıyorum
1. Sevgilim beni incittiğinde, onun incinmesini ve mutsuz olmasını isterim.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Sevgilim bana karşı hatalı davrandığında, acısını ondan nasıl çıkarabileceğimi düşünürüm.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Sevgilim bana karşı hatalı davrandığında, onun insan oluşunu, kusurlarını ve yanlışlarını kabul ederim.	1	2	3	4	5
4. İlişkimi "geçmiş geçmişte kalsın" felsefesine göre yaşamaya çalışırım.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Sevgilim bana adil olmayan bir şekilde davranırsa, davranışlarından pişmanlık duymasını sağlayacak yollar düşünürüm.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Sevgilimi hızlıca affedebilirim.	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix F: Eastern Mediterranean University Psychology

Department's Ethics and Research Committee Approval Letter

 <p>Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi "Uluslararası Kariyer İçin"</p>	<p>Eastern Mediterranean University "For Your International Career"</p>	<p>P.K.: 99628 Gazimağusa, KUZEY KIBRIS / Famagusta, North Cyprus, via Mersin-10 TURKEY Tel: (+90) 392 630 1995 Faks/Fax: (+90) 392 630 2919 bayek@emu.edu.tr</p>
<p>Etik Kurulu / Ethics Committee</p>		
<p>Sayı: ETK00-2018-0020 Konu: Etik Kurulu'na Başvurunuz Hk.</p>	<p>02.01.2018</p>	
<p>Sayın Arzu Tuğrul Psikoloji Bölümü Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi</p>		
<p>Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Kurulu'nun 18.12.2017 tarih ve 2017/51-15 sayılı kararı doğrultusunda, Social Cognition and Personality Factors as Predictors of Interpersonal Forgiveness adlı tez çalışmanızı, Doç. Dr. Şenel Hüsnü Raman'ın danışmanlığında araştırmanız, Bilimsel ve Araştırma Etiği açısından uygun bulunmuştur.</p>		
<p>Bilginize rica ederim.</p>		
		
<p>Doç. Dr. Şükrü Tüzmen Etik Kurulu Başkanı</p>		
<p>ŞT/sky.</p>		
<p>www.emu.edu.tr</p>		