

FEATURES OF FORGIVENESS IN INDIVIDUALISTIC AND COLLECTIVE CULTURES

ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ПРОЩЕННЯ В ІНДИВІДУАЛІСТИЧНИХ ТА КОЛЕКТИВІСТСЬКИХ КУЛЬТУРАХ

The article presents the results of a theoretical study of the characteristics of forgiveness in individualistic and collectivist cultures. Our consideration of forgiveness does not extend to crimes against humanity and other serious crimes that require just punishment. The importance of focusing research attention on individualism and collectivism in the context of the psychology of forgiveness is emphasized. Forgiveness has been shown to be a set of motivational changes that make a person less motivated to seek revenge against the person who violated the relationship; less motivated to maintain alienation from the offender; and more motivated to reconcile and be kind to the offender, despite his or her abusive actions. It is analyzed that the concept of forgiveness and the processes associated with forgiveness can be represented differently in individualistic and collectivist cultural contexts. It is shown that differences in decisional and emotional forgiveness in collectivist and individualistic cultures are associated with different meanings of social harmony for different cultural groups. It has been determined that in collectivist forgiveness the central role belongs to the motive of maintaining social harmony, seeking reconciliation and restoring relationships. It has been shown that collectivists value forgiveness and tend to view it as a solution in the context of reconciliation; representatives of collectivist cultures are more willing to express forgiveness based on a solution than emotional forgiveness. It has been shown that in collectivist cultures, forgiveness that is made by decision is more important than emotional forgiveness. It has been determined that for representatives of collectivist cultures, restored relationships have a greater impact on the well-being of the individual than the restoration of inner peace. It is shown that in collectivist cultures, forgiveness is mainly aimed at maintaining relationships, rather than personal emotional transformation. It is shown that in individualistic cultures, forgiveness is viewed primarily as an intrapersonal construct; forgiveness and reconciliation are clearly separated from each other, and the motivation of justice or personal healing dominates. It has been determined that in individualistic cultures, emotional forgiveness will take on a higher importance than forgiveness by decision, since individualists are more focused on reducing emotional, motivational, and cognitive discomfort, and are more concerned with personal inner peace and maintaining a positive self-concept than with how they can behave towards the offender.

Key words: forgiveness, emotional forgiveness, forgiveness by decision, individualistic culture, collectivist culture.

У статті представлено результати теоретичного дослідження особливостей про-

щення в індивідуалістичних та колективістських культурах. Розгляд прощення не поширюється нами на злочини проти людяності та інші тяжкі злочини, які вимагають справедливого покарання. Підкреслено важливість зосередження дослідницької уваги на індивідуалізмі та колективізмі в контексті психології прощення. Показано, що прощення – це сукупність мотиваційних змін, завдяки яким особа стає дедалі все менш мотивованою до помсти проти партнера, який порушує стосунки, усе менш мотивованою зберігати відчуження від кривдника та все більш мотивованою до примирення і доброзичливості до кривдника, незважаючи на його кривдні дії. Проаналізовано, що концепт прощення і процеси, пов'язані з прощенням, можуть бути по-різному представлені в індивідуалістичному і колективістському культурних контекстах. Показано, що відмінності в прощенні за рішенням і емоційному прощенні в колективістських та індивідуалістичних культурах пов'язані з різними значеннями соціальної гармонії для різних культурних груп. Визначено, що в колективістському прощенні центральна роль належить мотиву підтримки соціальної гармонії, пошуку примирення і відновлення стосунків. Показано, що колективісти цінують прощення і схильні розглядати його як рішення в контексті примирення; представники колективістських культур із більшою готовністю висловлюють прощення за рішенням, аніж емоційне прощення. Показано, що в колективістських культурах прощення, яке приймається за рішенням, є важливішим за емоційне прощення. Визначено, що для представників колективістських культур відновлені стосунки мають більший вплив на добробут особи, ніж відновлення внутрішнього спокою. Показано, що у колективістських культурах прощення переважно має на меті підтримку стосунків, а не особистісну емоційну трансформацію. Показано, що в індивідуалістичних культурах прощення розглядається переважно як внутрішньоособистісний конструкт; прощення і примирення чітко відокремлені одне від одного, а мотивація справедливості чи особистого зцілення домінує. Визначено, що в індивідуалістичних культурах емоційне прощення набуватиме вищого значення, ніж прощення за рішенням, оскільки індивідуалісти більше зосереджені на зменшенні емоційного, мотиваційного і когнітивного дискомфорту, частіше занепокоєні особистим внутрішнім спокоєм, збереженням позитивної Я-концепції, ніж тим, як вони можуть поводитися щодо кривдника.

Ключові слова: прощення, емоційне прощення, прощення за рішенням, індивідуалістична культура, колективістська культура.

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Problem statement. Our consideration of forgiveness does not extend to crimes against humanity and other serious crimes that require just punishment.

Understanding the concept of forgiveness and the conditions under which it is permissible is culturally specific and takes on different meanings in different cultural groups. Regardless of cultural context, most contemporary theories of forgiveness focus largely on interrelated processes, namely: freeing oneself from negative thoughts, reducing personal motives for revenge, and avoiding.

Representatives of different cultural groups may consider certain transgressions to be more or less serious, have different motivations for forgiving, and report different levels of forgiveness and emotional forgiveness.

It is interesting to note that to date, most theoretical and empirical research in the field of forgiveness has been conducted in Western Europe, where such research has been based on Western assumptions about motivation, behavior, character, relationships, emotions, and cognition.

It is appropriate to view forgiveness as a dynamic process that occurs in the context of social interaction.

Scientific research has shown that forgiveness is characterized by a prosocial change in motivation, whereby an individual's behavior is determined by the suppression of destructive motivation [30; 39]. Forgiveness is a set of motivational changes that make a person less and less motivated to seek revenge against a partner who violates the relationship; less and less motivated to maintain alienation from the offender; and increasingly motivated to reconcile and be friendly toward the offender, despite their offensive actions [5; 27; 35; 40].

At the same time, the specifics of forgiveness in the context of culture are not sufficiently explored in the scientific literature. It is important to focus research attention on individualism and collectivism as key dimensions that characterize different cultural groups.

The purpose of the article: identify the characteristics of forgiveness in individualistic and collectivist cultures.

Presentation of the main research material. In a cultural context, individualism and collectivism often represent opposite poles of the same dimension.

G. Triandis [38] defines individualism and collectivism using four main characteristics. Individualism, according to the scientist, is characterized as a social model in which individuals, first, consider themselves relatively independent from the groups to which they belong; second, are motivated primarily by their own preferences, needs, rights, or contracts they have entered into with others; third, attach greater importance to personal than collective goals; fourth, tend to make decisions about joining with others based on an analysis of costs and benefits to themselves.

It is interesting to note that, according to research findings, there are certain cultural differences

between different regions and classes within countries. For example, it has been found that collectivism is more prevalent among groups representing lower socioeconomic strata, particularly among the less educated working class [11]. It has also been found that in North America, Eastern Europe, and East Asia, individualism is more prevalent among groups representing the higher socioeconomic strata of the population [10].

It should be noted that individualism is not static. In many countries around the world, there has been a significant increase in individualism throughout the twentieth century. One of the main factors contributing to such changes is the socio-economic development of countries. Thus, researchers note that more prosperous societies allow people to rely less on their close community and instead achieve their personal goals [16; 20]. Foreign researchers also note that individualism is gradually growing in countries such as the United States, China, Japan, and Mexico [11; 12].

Researchers have found that socio-economic development contributes to the growth of individualistic values and practices [11].

In this context, it is also worth noting that the same person may value both allocentrism (ideas of cultural collectivism) and idocentrism (expression of individualistic values and norms) at the same time, and either tendency may be activated depending on the situation [33].

In an empirical study, Ukrainian scholars О. Калиняк і А. Колядко [2] found that Ukrainian society is characterized by a mixed collectivist-individualist value system. In their empirical study, О. Калиняк і А. Колядко found that within each generation there is an orientation towards a mixed value system, which, however, has different manifestations and meanings of collectivist and individualistic values in each age group. It is noteworthy that all respondents from the four generations, regardless of the characteristics of their socialization, tended to encourage and support their children's orientation toward individualistic values [2].

It should be noted separately that individualistic and collectivist cultures play an important role in the formation of value systems and their understanding. Under the influence of various cultural factors, a person's identity is formed.

According to some scientific studies, it has been established that in individualistic cultures, confrontation is acceptable, people are encouraged to express their opinions and be assertive, because independence and self-confidence are important, and attention is focused on personal priorities and self-realization [28; 31]; happiness is reserved for those who are successful or consider themselves to be so; work is often perceived as a key factor in happiness, pleasant feelings, and self-affirmation [23].

In individualistic cultures, people are expected to take care of themselves and their loved ones and take responsibility for their achievements and failures [22].

Individualistic cultures are characterized by more market-oriented social relations, higher geographical mobility, greater openness to immigration, and weaker family ties [9].

In summary, we can say that the typical characteristics of individualism are independence, self-confidence, uniqueness, achievement orientation, and competition.

Separately, we note that, according to G. Triandis [38], in individualistic cultures, the emphasis is on guilt, punishment, and forgiveness as ways of restoring moral order.

A study by B. Васютинського [1] revealed that, at first glance, individualism consists in denying one's own guilt. It is important for an individualist to have high self-esteem, unclouded by reasons to feel guilty. B. Васютинський notes that individualism of a higher order implies the ability to take responsibility for the course of events and one's participation in them, which may mean that a person acknowledges their guilt for unsuccessful or bad deeds. According to B. Васютинського, two poles of individualism can be distinguished: one that is more productive and at the same time moral, which means conscious responsibility for oneself and recognition of one's guilt, and the other that is more defensive, in which the selfish aspect of individualism is emphasized—denial of one's guilt and refusal to take responsibility for it [1].

It should be noted that while the basic principle of individualism is that people are independent of each other, the basic principle of collectivism is that groups bind and mutually oblige their members.

According to G. Triandis [38], collectivism, on the contrary, is defined as a social model in which individuals, first, consider themselves connected to the ingroup of which they are members; second, are motivated primarily by the social norms and obligations of their ingroup; third, perceive collective goals as more important than their personal goals; fourth, emphasize their connection with other members of the ingroup. G. Triandis notes that people in collectivist cultures focus more on context than content when evaluating others and communicating, pay more attention to external processes than internal ones in determining social behavior, and define relationships with ingroup members primarily as group-wide.

Research has shown that in collectivist cultures, which include most countries in Latin America, Southern Europe, Asia, and Africa, tribal communities, people strive to maintain harmony and respect the hierarchy within the community/group [10; 31]; the group cares for individuals, individuals are loyal to the group [33]; the well-being of the group is more important than individual goals [23]; the self-concept is based on social roles rather than personal qualities [10]; the main instrument of social control is shame; shame is removed and honor is restored only when a person does what society expects of them in this situation [38]; every person has a place and responsibilities in

society [11]; people who experience failure often turn their aggression against themselves instead of using violence against others [7].

It is noteworthy that people in collectivist cultures report greater happiness in social contexts, particularly when experiencing feelings of closeness to others, while people in individualistic cultures report greater happiness in contexts unrelated to social relationships [23]. It has also been found that people in collectivist cultures tend to report emotions in a more differentiated way, allowing for different shades of "gray," compared to people in individualistic cultures [10].

In summary, it can be said that the typical attributes of collectivism are a sense of duty to one's group, interdependence between members of the ingroup, a desire for social harmony, and conformity to group norms.

B. Васютинський [1] notes that individualism and collectivism have their sources and manifestations at the following levels of human life: 1) the individual-psychological or intrapersonal level, at which a person satisfies their needs by projecting them onto the social environment; 2) the personal-communicative, interpersonal level, where communication takes place in the immediate environment; 3) the interactive-group level; 4) the general cultural and collective-mental level – the space of existence of large communities, societies, civilizations.

It should be noted that the concept of forgiveness and the processes associated with forgiveness can be represented differently in individualistic and collectivist cultural contexts.

According to collectivist worldviews, the individual is seen as socially connected to the ingroup/society, emphasizing the importance of collective norms, relationships, and collective well-being. For example, in Congo, forgiveness is at the heart of the traditional justice system. The offender is perceived as detached from society as a result of the harm caused. Other members of society try to reintegrate the offender into society, mainly out of respect for the principle that it is bad for an individual to be detached from society [18].

Studies involving representatives of individualistic cultures have consistently shown that a tendency to forgive is positively associated with benevolence and negatively associated with neuroticism [3; 29].

In our opinion, the study by Y. Ohtsubo, T. Masuda, M. Matsunaga, Y. Noguchi, H. Yamasue and K. Ishii [32] is quite interesting, in which the researchers sought to determine whether eighteen dispositional variables, including personality traits, would correlate more strongly with forgiveness in Canada (as an individualistic country) than in Japan (as a collectivist country). The results showed that only two of the eighteen variables correlated more strongly with forgiveness in Canada than in Japan [32]. Based on the results, the researchers concluded that there is a significant similarity in the correlations between forgiveness and dispositional variables in the two

countries. Among respondents in both countries, forgiveness correlated with similar dispositional variables [32].

It is interesting to note a foreign study [17], which demonstrates the understanding of forgiveness in Japanese and American cultural contexts. Foreign researchers M. Joo, K. Terzino, S. Cross, N. Yamaguchi and K. Ohbuchi [17] found that Japanese respondents identified five main characteristics of forgiveness: tolerant, charitable, open-hearted, accepting, and compassionate. American respondents identified the following most important characteristics of forgiveness: understanding, doing the right thing, accepting apologies, respect, and learning from mistakes.

It should also be added that American respondents were more likely to view forgiveness as a strategy for maintaining a positive view of themselves rather than as a strategy for restoring and maintaining harmony in relationships [17]. Americans are more likely to attribute positive characteristics to the person who forgives than to consider the specific context [21].

Willingness to forgive is more characteristic of collectivist cultures than individualistic ones. It was found that Congolese respondents, as representatives of a collectivist culture, were more likely than French respondents, as representatives of an individualistic culture, to view forgiveness as the cessation of resentment toward the offender and the restoration of sympathy, affection, and trust [18]. It is interesting to note that a higher percentage of Congolese agreed with the statement "Forgiveness is good" than French respondents. At the same time, both groups of respondents showed a low degree of agreement with the statement "Forgiveness is bad."

In another foreign study [41] conducted on American respondents, researchers concluded that the main motives for forgiveness were self-centeredness rather than altruism, as assumed in the hypothesis. In conceptualizing forgiveness, it was found that Americans are more focused on the attributes of forgiving individuals than Japanese [17].

Foreign researchers M. Joo, K. Terzino, S. Cross, N. Yamaguchi and K. Ohbuchi [17] note that Japanese and American differences in the characteristics of forgiveness may be related to the following potential factors of its culturally specific understanding: differences in the orientation toward harmony in relationships or self-improvement; differences in motivation to adapt to others or influence them; differences in decision-making, expression of emotions, and their control; emphasis on the situation or the individual. Representatives of Western cultures tend to prioritize personal interests and goals over relationships. It has been found that representatives of Western cultures value and support a positive self-concept, and self-esteem is considered one of the indicators of a person's mental health.

Researchers J. Hook, E. Worthington and S. Utsey [13] found that representatives of individualistic cultures are more focused on reducing emotional, moti-

vational, and cognitive discomfort, while representatives of collectivist cultures are more focused on restoring relationships and maintaining group solidarity. The researchers also found that in collectivist cultures, forgiveness is mainly aimed at maintaining relationships rather than personal emotional transformation [25].

In the cultural context of Western countries, there is an open expression of one's emotions, and positive emotions are much more valued than negative emotions [28; 36]. At the same time, in the context of Eastern cultures, the free expression of emotions, especially negative ones, is perceived as inappropriate, as it can disrupt interpersonal relationships [4].

It is also worth noting that Western European researchers emphasize the role of emotions in forgiveness and distinguish between decision-based forgiveness and emotional forgiveness [6; 40].

Let us dwell in more detail on the characteristics of decision-based forgiveness and emotional forgiveness in individualistic and collectivist cultures.

In the context of their research on Western cultures, scientists S. Lichtenfeld, V. Buechner, M. Maier and M. Fernández-Capo [26] define emotional forgiveness as a necessary condition for true forgiveness. Foreign studies have shown that emotional forgiveness is a priority for representatives of Western cultures. In particular, it has been demonstrated that respondents focused on the transformation of internal thoughts and emotions in order to restore inner peace, rather than on the dynamics of relationships in the understanding of forgiveness [14; 18]. It has been found that for representatives of Western cultures, forgiveness was associated with personal self-improvement [8].

At the same time, some studies have shown that collectivist forgiveness is understood primarily as a decision to forgive and is largely motivated by the desire to encourage and maintain group harmony rather than inner peace, in contrast to individualistic forgiveness [13]. In collectivist cultures, the free expression of negative emotions is perceived as inappropriate because it can disrupt interpersonal relationships [17]. Researchers H. Fu, D. Watkins and E. Hui [8] found that Japanese respondents, compared to American respondents, focused more on relationship harmony and demonstrated a motive for adaptation and forgiveness in decision-making. Social harmony is an important construct in collectivist cultures [28; 32]. In China, the willingness to forgive is largely determined by the motivation of social solidarity, rather than personality characteristics or religiosity, as noted in Western studies [8]. Collectivists strive to avoid conflict and minimize the external expression of conflict.

It should be noted that forgiveness in collectivist and individualistic cultures is determined by the nature of interpersonal relationships in both contexts. Representatives of Eastern cultures practice forgiveness in order to restore relationships and ensure group harmony. For example, foreign studies of Japanese respondents have found that the desire for social har-

mony is a factor in forgiveness [8; 37]. In collectivist cultures, forgiveness can be granted not only by an individual victim to an individual offender, but by one group to another group [18]. Collectivist cultures have group norms that promote social harmony.

In a foreign study based on a Japanese sample, factor analysis identified the following seven factors: adaptation, compassion, letting go, forgiveness by decision, personal challenges and achieving forgiveness, harmony, and ideas about forgiveness [17]. At the same time, in a sample of American respondents, researchers identified the following factors: emotional forgiveness, self-improvement, spirituality/kindness, conditions for forgiveness, positive consequences of forgiveness, tolerance, letting go, and incomplete forgiveness [17].

We would like to highlight a foreign study by researchers S. Huang and R. Enright [15], in which some respondents from collectivist cultures indicated their decision to forgive and demonstrated physiological signs of emotional unforgiveness. The researchers studied the characteristics of forgiveness decisions based on religious and cultural requirements for group harmony. S. Huang and R. Enright compared the affective states of Taiwanese adults who described interpersonal conflicts in which they forgave their offenders. Participants were divided into two groups: 1) those respondents who forgave because forgiveness was in line with the expectations of their cultural group and religion; 2) those respondents who forgave because it promoted a sense of love. Researchers S. Huang and R. Enright found that internal, love-motivated forgiveness was more about emotional forgiveness. It turned out that respondents who demonstrated forgiveness by decision had more masking smiles, looked down more, and had higher blood pressure when it came to interpersonal conflict [15].

In summary, it can be said that representatives of collectivist cultures may decide to forgive for the sake of group harmony, but such a decision may not lead to complete emotional forgiveness.

Since collectivist cultures focus on maintaining group harmony, forgiveness by decision is often seen as a path to reconciliation [34]. Foreign scholars J. Hook, Jr. Worthington, S. Utsey [13] define collectivist forgiveness as a decision to forgive that is motivated primarily by social harmony and occurs in the context of values of reconciliation and restoration of relationships.

It should be noted that forgiveness and reconciliation in collectivist cultures are closely related but represent different phenomena [34]. According to research, in collectivist cultures, the decision to forgive is usually associated with external acts of reconciliation. Foreign scholars S. Sandage and T. Wiens [34] note that collectivists more often expect offenders to publicly accept guilt, express regret and remorse, ask for forgiveness, and perform rituals in public to demonstrate the sincerity of their request, and after being told that they are forgiven, confirm that they have received forgiveness and express gratitude for it.

It has been found that in collectivist cultures, forgiveness was more closely associated with reconciliation [24]. At the same time, in individualistic cultures, there are significant differences between forgiveness and reconciliation.

Conclusions from the conducted research.

Summarizing the above, we note that the study of cultural differences in order to conceptualize forgiveness in Western and Eastern cultures is an important step in developing a more global theory of forgiveness.

Forgiveness is conceptualized differently in collectivist and individualist cultures. Differences in decisional and emotional forgiveness in collectivist and individualist cultures are related to the different meanings of social harmony for different cultural groups.

In collectivist forgiveness, the central role belongs to the motive of maintaining social harmony, seeking reconciliation, and restoring relationships. Collectivists value forgiveness and tend to view it as a solution in the context of reconciliation. Representatives of collectivist cultures are more willing to express forgiveness based on a solution than emotional forgiveness. In collectivist cultures, forgiveness, which is based on a decision, is more important than emotional forgiveness. For representatives of collectivist cultures, restored relationships have a greater impact on the well-being of the individual than the restoration of inner peace. In collectivist cultures, forgiveness is mainly aimed at maintaining relationships, not at personal emotional transformation.

In individualistic cultures, forgiveness is viewed primarily as an intrapersonal construct, forgiveness and reconciliation are clearly separated from each other, and the motivation of justice or personal healing dominates. In individualistic cultures, emotional forgiveness will take on a higher value than forgiveness by decision, since individualists are more focused on reducing emotional, motivational, and cognitive discomfort, more often concerned with personal inner peace and maintaining a positive self-concept than with how they can behave towards the offender.

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