

THE SPECIFICS OF UNCONDITIONAL FORGIVENESS IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

СПЕЦИФІКА БЕЗУМОВНОГО ПРОЩЕННЯ В МІЖСОБОВИХ СТОСУНКАХ

The article presents the results of a theoretical and empirical study of the features of unconditional forgiveness in interpersonal relationships. The consideration of forgiveness does not apply to crimes against humanity and other serious crimes that require just punishment. It is proposed to consider forgiveness as a manifestation of subjective activity aimed at understanding the content of the offense/injury and transforming the attitude towards them, as the subject's own choice – the active author of the actions – and has a procedural and synergistic nature. It is proposed to consider forgiveness as a multidimensional and multilevel phenomenon, which includes cognitive, affective, motivational and conative components and represents: firstly, a nonlinear and uneven process in the spatio-temporal and cognitive-motivational dimensions of the subject's conscious rejection of thoughts about the harm caused, the negative emotions caused by it, the desire for revenge and replacing them with more neutral and/or positive ones; secondly, a personal coping resource, which is a factor of psychological resilience and post-traumatic growth. The specifics of unconditional forgiveness are highlighted, characterized by the absence of mandatory conditions or regulatory requirements necessary for forgiveness to occur. The results of an empirical study are presented, in which 226 male civilians (119 young and 107 middle-aged) who did not participate in active hostilities and 372 female civilians (198 young and 174 middle-aged) who did not participate in active hostilities participated. The empirical study used the methodology «Diagnostics of Readiness to Forgiveness» and the research questionnaire «Diagnostics of Attitudes to Forgiveness, Life, and Military-Political Events». It was found that civilian women's readiness for unconditional forgiveness in interpersonal relationships is more pronounced than that of civilian men. In civilian men, the more expressed the readiness for unconditional forgiveness in interpersonal relationships, the more expressed the promotion of good in any circumstances, happy family life, satisfaction with life recently, and good mental state. In civilian women, the more expressed the readiness for unconditional forgiveness in interpersonal relationships, the more expressed the friendly and close relationships, satisfaction with relationships with other people, good mental state, feeling of happiness, happy family life, and satisfaction with life recently.

Key words: forgiveness, unconditional forgiveness, interpersonal relationships, life satisfaction, happiness.

У статті представлено результати теоретико-емпіричного дослідження особливостей

безумовного прощення в міжособових стосунках. Розгляд прощення не поширюється на злочини проти людяності й інші тяжкі злочини, які вимагають справедливого покарання. Запропоновано розгляд прощення як прояву суб'єктної активності, спрямованої на усвідомлення змісту переступу/кривди і трансформацію ставлення до них, як власний вибір суб'єкта – активного автора вчинків – і має процесуальний і синергетичний характер. Запропоновано розгляд прощення як багатовимірного й різнорівневого явища, що включає когнітивний, афективний, мотиваційний і конативний компоненти та являє собою, по-перше, нелінійний і нерівномірний процес у просторово-часовому й когнітивно-мотиваційному вимірах свідомої відмови суб'єкта від думок про завдану шкоду, зумовлених нею негативних емоцій, прагнення до помсти та заміни їх більш нейтральними й/або позитивними; по-друге, особистісний ресурс подолання, який є чинником психологічної пружності й посттравматичного зростання. Висвітлено специфіку безумовного прощення, що характеризується відсутністю обов'язкових умов чи нормативних вимог, необхідних для того, щоб прощення відбулося. Наведено результати емпіричного дослідження, у якому взяли участь 226 цивільних осіб чоловічої статі (119 осіб молодого віку й 107 осіб середнього віку), які не брали участі в активних бойових діях, і 372 цивільні особи жіночої статі (198 осіб молодого віку й 174 осіб середнього віку), які не брали участі в активних бойових діях. В емпіричному дослідженні застосовано методичку «Діагностика готовності до прощення» й дослідницьку анкету «Діагностика ставлення до прощення, життя і воєнно-політичних подій». Виявлено, що в цивільних жінок готовність до безумовного прощення в міжособових стосунках є більш вираженою, ніж у цивільних чоловіків. У цивільних чоловіків, чим більше виражена готовність до безумовного прощення в міжособових стосунках, тим більш виражене сприяння добру в будь-яких обставинах, щасливе сімейне життя, задоволеність життям останнім часом, добрим душевним станом. У цивільних жінок, чим більше виражена готовність до безумовного прощення в міжособових стосунках, тим більш виражені дружні й близькі стосунки, задоволеність стосунками з іншими людьми, добрий душевний стан, відчуття щастя, щасливе сімейне життя, задоволеність життям останнім часом.

Ключові слова: прощення, безумовне прощення, міжособові стосунки, задоволеність життям, щастя.

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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.

In situations of interpersonal offense/transgression, most people, experiencing resentment, anger, aggression, anxiety, guilt, are motivated to avoid relationships or to retaliate in return. The calming of

negative reactions to transgressors and the formation of motivation for positive reactions and changes in interpersonal interaction are possible thanks to such a multifaceted phenomenon as forgiveness.

According to the social interactionist approach, forgiveness is understood as a phenomenon of interpersonal interaction that is associated with closeness,

trust, or affection [7; 8]. K. Cameron and A. Caza [11] believe that forgiveness is inherently social, as it occurs in relationships with other people, not with inanimate objects.

A. Sokur (A. Cokyp) [1] considers forgiveness as an expression of the need for human relationships, where the quality of such relationships is of primary importance.

Forgiveness in interpersonal interactions, as research shows, plays an important role in restoring and maintaining relationships [13; 19], strengthening interpersonal trust, and is one of the strategies for resolving interpersonal conflicts [20; 21]. Forgiveness can be expressed interpersonally through reconciliation, which is an attempt by the victim to restore relationships by showing goodwill towards the offender [36]. In forgiveness, the motivation for goodwill increases [45].

Forgiveness promotes positive social relationships [24] and has social benefits that increase the likelihood of rekindling relationships [39]. Scholars have noted that forgiveness involves restraining interpersonally destructive impulses such as revenge [37], maintaining valuable social relationships [28; 36], choosing actions that favor long-term interests such as repairing relationships with the offender [3], and being willing to consider future interactions [9].

Forgiveness may reflect the quality of the interpersonal relationship, and the nature of the relationship plays an important role in forgiveness [25]. Victims are more likely to forgive their abuser when they are in a close relationship with the abuser [27] or when they value the relationship highly before the offense [23]. The strength of the marital bond prior to the infidelity directly predicted higher levels of emotional forgiveness [12]. M. McCullough and colleagues [37] found the following factors to contribute to interpersonal forgiveness: the nature of the relationship, the perceived value of the relationship, and the intensity of victimization. Closeness in a relationship is one of the best predictors of forgiveness [41]. Forgiveness was highly predictive when the predictor combined high relationship value with low risk of future exploitation [37]. In particular, M. McCullough and colleagues found that forgiveness between parents and children is unconditional, easy, and immediate, compared to other types of relationships [37]. Forgiveness plays an important role in restoring interpersonal communication, increasing interpersonal trust, and facilitating conflict resolution [20]. Forgiveness is a strategy for resolving interpersonal conflicts [21].

In the context of psychological analysis of the phenomenon of forgiveness, the problem of distinguishing certain types of forgiveness deserves special attention, as it allows us to reveal its multifaceted nature and the specifics of the prospects for further research.

Unconditional forgiveness is one of the least studied types of forgiveness.

The purpose of the article: determine the specifics of unconditional forgiveness in interpersonal relationships.

Presentation of the main research material. Today, the concept of "forgiveness" is ambiguous in psychology, as there are serious disagreements among scientists regarding the conceptualization of this phenomenon.

In our opinion, the phenomenon of forgiveness appears as a manifestation of subjective activity aimed at understanding the content of the offense/injury and transforming the attitude towards them, as the subject's own choice – the active author of the actions – and has a procedural and synergistic nature.

We consider forgiveness as a multidimensional and multilevel phenomenon, including cognitive, affective, motivational and conative components and representing: first, a nonlinear and uneven process in the spatiotemporal and cognitive-motivational dimensions of the subject's conscious rejection of thoughts about the harm caused, the negative emotions caused by it, the desire for revenge and replacing them with more neutral and/or positive ones; second, a personal coping resource, which is a factor of psychological resilience and post-traumatic growth.

Unconditional forgiveness is characterized by the absence of mandatory conditions or normative requirements necessary for forgiveness to occur.

Unconditional forgiveness [15; 22; 38] is called radical forgiveness [17; 31] or aspirational forgiveness [10] by some scholars.

K. Tipping (K. Типпінг) [2] distinguishes two types of forgiveness: traditional and radical. According to the researcher, in traditional forgiveness there is a desire to forgive, but at the same time there is a need to blame the offender. With this type of forgiveness, the person retains the awareness of the victim [2, p. 46]. Radical forgiveness is seen by K. Tipping as rooted in the world of Spirit, which can also be called the world of Divine Truth [2, p. 47]. According to K. Tipping, in radical forgiveness there is a desire to forgive, but there is no need to blame. With this type of forgiveness, the person gives up the awareness of the victim and brings many changes to life. K. Tipping defines the awareness of the victim as the belief that someone else has done something wrong to this person and therefore bears direct responsibility for the lack of peace and happiness in his/her life. K. Tipping notes that traditional forgiveness is the only possible form of forgiveness and is very valuable in itself. Traditional forgiveness appeals to the highest human qualities, in particular, compassion, mercy, tolerance, humility and kindness.

According to K. Tipping, radical and traditional forgiveness are views of the world through different binocular lenses. The lens through which we look at the situation determines whether we will use traditional or radical forgiveness [2, p. 47]. The scientist believes that these lenses give us significantly different perspectives on the subject.

An analysis of research on the issue of unconditional forgiveness shows that scientists associate unconditional forgiveness, on the one hand, with the recognition of the unique individuality and infinite val-

ue of each person, and on the other hand, with the recognition of the community of people. Researchers distinguish various foundations of this community, for example, the recognition of the interdependence of all people, which includes the interconnections between people, which, in turn, leads to general and unlimited responsibility [14; 44], human solidarity [22], “the love of God acting in the human heart” [30].

Major religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism have celebrated forgiveness as a virtue, emphasizing that making mistakes is natural and humane, but forgiving is divine.

According to R. Ricoeur [40], the language of forgiveness is conditioned by Abrahamic-Christian culture, which is the legacy of the common approaches of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam to forgiveness. The Abrahamic-Christian tradition of forgiveness is based on the principle of the unconditionality of forgiveness on the part of the divine substance.

In Christian forgiveness, the person himself becomes humble and wise, namely: by forgiving, he discovers his sinfulness, becomes closer to God, and therefore gains hope for salvation.

God's forgiveness can be understood as that which restores a person and leads him to a restored relationship with God / a higher power [42].

F. Fincham and R. May's study aimed to investigate the relationship between divine forgiveness, self-forgiveness, and interpersonal forgiveness [19]. Using two samples (348 respondents and 449 respondents), the researchers examined the relationship between the three types of forgiveness and found that they were positively correlated with each other. F. Fincham and R. May's study found that divine forgiveness played a moderating role in the relationships between the other two types of forgiveness [19].

The unconditional view of interpersonal forgiveness is consistent with the Christian tradition. In Christianity, forgiveness is based on the recognition of the Other as a neighbor, that is, a relationship of intimacy, closeness with the Other is established. For Christians, forgiveness is an expression of Christian love even when it seems impossible because of the pain that the other has caused the forgiver [29].

Separately, we note that K. Lotz believes that forgiveness can be spoken of as a “radical unconditional act” [32, p. 267]. On the one hand, unconditional forgiveness manifests a morality that is not determined by legal, institutional and economic norms. Thus, K. Lotz expresses the point of view that “the phenomenon of morality and the phenomenon of forgiveness demonstrate striking similarities, starting from the fact that both belong to an order that is far from calculations” [32, p. 257].

J. Derrida's statements about conditional and unconditional forgiveness are quite important. Since a person lives in a society where his life is regulated by law and economic relations, organized by institutions, J. Derrida did not deny or belittle the importance of conditional forgiveness [16]. According to J. Derrida, in reality the decision to forgive is made in the “tension”

between unconditional forgiveness and conditional, conventional forgiveness, in which human freedom is realized and the question of forgiveness as a personal and direct moral act is exacerbated.

Researchers V. Jankélévitch and H. Arendt note the existence of such atrocities that cannot and should not be forgiven [5; 26]. H. Arendt calls the evil that cannot be forgiven “radical evil” and writes the following about it: “We can recognize “radical evil” perhaps from the fact that we can neither punish it nor forgive it, which simply means that it is outside the realm of human affairs and escapes the power of man” [4]. It should be noted that H. Arendt tries to connect forgiveness not so much with the perpetrator of the crime, but with the crime itself.

In the concepts of unconditional forgiveness, scholars emphasize unlimited responsibility for the good of another person and the willingness to forgive in the absence of a normative requirement to forgive.

Our empirical research was conducted during 2023–2025.

The empirical study involved male civilians (226 males: 119 young and 107 middle-aged) who did not participate in active hostilities; female civilians (372 females: 198 young and 174 middle-aged) who did not participate in active hostilities.

Regarding the definition of age in the range from 25 to 60 years, changes in the age classification of the World Health Organization were taken into account, where young age is 25–44 years, and middle age is 45–60 years.

When forming target samples of respondents, we took into account the following criteria: gender; age; nationality; status of the research participant; region of permanent residence before the Russian-Ukrainian war; main occupation; confession of faith/religion.

We applied the following empirical research methods: methodology “Diagnostics of readiness to forgive” (author: S. Kravchuk); research questionnaire “Diagnostics of attitudes towards forgiveness, life and military-political events” (author: S. Kravchuk).

We applied the following methods of mathematical statistics: Kolmogorov-Smirnov consistency criterion; Mann-Whitney U-criterion, correlation analysis using the C. Spearman correlation coefficient.

In the course of the empirical study using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov criterion, all variables had z-values with significance levels of $p < 0.05$, which reflects statistically significant deviations of the distribution of variable values from normal.

A comparison of the results obtained on the willingness to unconditionally forgive in civilian men and civilian women using the Mann-Whitney U criterion is shown in Table 1.

The results obtained indicate the following pattern: in civilian women, the readiness for unconditional forgiveness is more pronounced than in civilian men at a significant level ($p < 0.05$).

According to the correlation analysis using the Spearman's correlation coefficient, clearly expressed positive significant correlations of the readiness for

Table 1

**Mann-Whitney U criterion: willingness to forgive unconditionally
in interpersonal interactions among civilian men and civilian women**

Indicator	Groups	Number	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	Mann-Whitney U criterion	Level of significance
Willingness to forgive unconditionally	Men	226	117.26	26501.50	850.500	.000
	Women	372	410.21	152599.50		

unconditional forgiveness with the following indicators were found in civilian men: promoting good in any circumstances ($p=0.68$, $p<0.001$); happy family life ($p=0.38$, $p<0.001$); satisfaction with life recently ($p=0.36$, $p<0.001$); good state of mind ($p=0.34$, $p<0.001$).

In civilian women, the following patterns are observed: readiness for unconditional forgiveness is significantly positively correlated with satisfaction with one's friendly and close relationships ($p=0.41$, $p<0.001$); satisfaction with relationships with other people ($p=0.39$, $p<0.001$); good mental state ($p=0.38$, $p<0.01$); feeling of happiness ($p=0.36$, $p<0.001$); happy family life ($p=0.36$, $p<0.001$), satisfaction with life recently ($p=0.34$, $p<0.001$).

Our empirical data are supported by other studies on forgiveness. A positive relationship between forgiveness and life satisfaction has also been found in other studies [33].

In the study of M. Batık et al. [6], it is shown that forgiveness is a significant predictor of subjective happiness. By the way, in a number of other studies it is shown that subjective happiness is positively correlated with forgiveness [34]. A person who forgives has a low level of distress and a higher level of happiness [43].

Forgiveness helps people maintain and repair close relationships [28]. Several studies have found a link between forgiveness and high-quality close relationships [18]. At the same time, people who are less forgiving have been found to be more hostile and have lower tolerance for distress [35].

Conclusions from the conducted research. The consideration of forgiveness does not apply to crimes against humanity and other serious crimes that require just punishment. In civilian women, the readiness for unconditional forgiveness in interpersonal relationships is more pronounced than in civilian men.

In civilian men, the more pronounced the readiness for unconditional forgiveness in interpersonal relationships, the more pronounced the promotion of good in any circumstances, happy family life, satisfaction with life recently, and a good state of mind. In civilian women, the more expressed the readiness for unconditional forgiveness in interpersonal relationships, the more expressed friendly and close relationships, satisfaction with relationships with other people, good mental state, feeling of happiness, happy family life, satisfaction with life recently.

In the future, we plan to conduct a study of the psychological factors of unconditional forgiveness in interpersonal interaction.

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