

The Forgiveness among Vocational Students in Bangkok

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Objective: To study forgiveness among vocational students in Bangkok area as well as evaluation of overall forgiveness and its subscales classified by year and department.

Materials and Methods: The 240 participants were students who studied in vocational college for whom data was collected using a Forgiveness Scales for Teenagers Questionnaire.

Results: The results indicated that the categories of overall forgiveness, situational forgiveness and forgive others were ranked in 'indifference to forgive' while self-forgiveness was ranked 'slightly forgive'. When comparing the total scale and subscale scores of forgiveness by year, 1st-year students had higher scores than the 2nd-year students with significance level at 0.05. However, both total scale and sub-scale scores of the students from various departments did not illustrated statistical differences.

Conclusion: The findings reflected the characteristics of forgiveness in vocational certificate level students which provide vital information in planning to promote forgiveness quality in order to minimize violence when resolving conflict.

Keywords: Forgiveness, The certificate vocational students

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In terms of Buddhism and Thai cultural context⁽¹⁾, forgiveness is a type of kindness. When one forgives, he tends to lessen his ego and attachment. Those who learn how to forgive can also refrain from suffering and anger⁽¹⁾. Forgiveness can be considered a process and an output relating to emotional changes. The intention of the transgressor is accounted for as the victims voluntarily choose to forgive the transgressor. This process helps lessen vindictiveness and helps resolved psychological conflict toward the transgressor, although the victims may feel the need to express their negative feelings toward their transgressors⁽²⁾. Sources of wrong doing may cause resentment within oneself, other or in such situations that are beyond individual's control such as

illness or natural disasters. Resentment can be calmed by 'self-', 'other-', and 'situational forgiveness'⁽³⁾. Forgiveness occurs when there are unbiased thoughts or compassion compelling forgiveness and justice toward the transgressor⁽⁴⁾.

Nowadays, it becomes common for the media to report problems and conflicts within Thai society. Persistent reports of physical aggressions in Thai society can be seen on the news. Many severe cases were among vocational certificate students against one another with reasons attributed to institutional rivalry and personal conflicts resulting in loss of lives and property damages. Institutional rivalry created unity within one institution and the students, through their peers, feel they are the representation of the institution's pride and glory. Subsequently, when another institution become renowned for something that is considered socially threatening, the conflicts ensued and continued which indirectly forms a traditional rivalry⁽⁵⁾.

In this research, only one principal of a targeted institution provided written consent for data

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collection that supported the concept of forgiveness which is significance and must be recognized. As one of the options of peaceful resolutions, forgiveness helped relieve resentment without using violence⁽⁶⁾. The association with prevention of violence highlights that by instilling kindness, one subsequently is more likely to forgive⁽⁶⁾. This research would provide important information that aims to promote forgiveness as a protective factor in inhibiting violence among them and preparing vocational students to be the future of the country.

Objective

To study forgiveness among vocational students in Bangkok by comparing total forgiveness scores and its subscales classified by year and departments.

Materials and Methods

The participants consisted of 240 vocational certificate students at a Thai private vocational college in Bangkok in academic year 2016. The participants were selected through proportional stratified random sampling for all 4 departments. Number of the participants was calculated by the following formula of Cochran⁽⁷⁾.

$$n = \frac{NZ^2 \alpha/2 pq}{d^2(N-1) + Z^2 \alpha/2 pq}$$

N = number of population

$\alpha/2$ = the value of the standard normal variable given (=1.96 for a 95% CI)

p = Estimate of proportion of the target population based on previous research by Chuhakan (2013) (=0.307 assumed in this study)

q = 1-p

d = the acceptable sampling error (= 0.05 assumed in this study).

From this formula, the outcome was 229.95 ssun.

However, the researcher collected data from 240 samples to spare in case of loss or incomplete data. Proportional stratified random sampling for 240 samples was conducted with the 4 departments as followed:

- 1) 260 Machine Shop Mechanics = 80
- 2) 205 Electrical Power Technology = 63
- 3) 200 Mechanical Technology = 61
- 4) 116 Printing Technicians = 36

Then simple random sampling was applied

with students who voluntarily joined the research.

Research instruments

The Forgiveness Scales for Teenagers⁽⁸⁾ adapted from Thompson's Hartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) measures forgiveness in 3 sub-scales; self forgiveness, forgive others, and situational forgiveness. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this scale was 0.906. This 49-item scale comprised of 7-point scale ranges as followed:

If the score ranges between 1.00 to 2.50, it is interpreted as 'unable to forgive' where individuals' responded to hurtful situations with anger and vindictiveness. If the score ranges between 2.51 to 3.50, it is interpreted as 'slightly unable to forgive' where individuals' response to hurtful situations with minimal forgiveness but retained anger and vindictiveness. If the score ranges between 3.51 to 4.50, it is interpreted as 'indifference to forgive' where individuals' responded to hurtful situation with neither forgiving nor unforgiving stance. If the score ranges between 4.51 to 5.50, then it fell under 'slightly forgive' where individuals' responded with some forgiveness with little characteristics of vindictiveness. Lastly, if the score ranges between 5.51 to 7.00, it indicated 'able to forgive' where individuals' response is reconciliation and feeling resolved.

Statistical analysis

The demographic data were analyzed by descriptive statistics illustrating frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation of the forgiveness scales for students. The differences among the total and the sub-scale scores of forgiveness were analyzed by one-way ANOVA (Post-hoc was calculated by bonferroni).

Ethical consideration

The present study was approved by the Siriraj Institutional Review Board (SIRB), Faculty of Medicine, Siriraj Hospital, Mahidol University; Si. 413/2015.

Results

Among 100 of the 240 participants, 41.7% were 2nd-year students. 33.8% of the participants studied in department of machine shop mechanics (Table 1).

The highest average score is 'self forgiveness' and the lowest average score is 'forgive others'. The overall forgiveness score of the sample was found to be in the range of 'indifference to forgive' (\bar{x} = 4.45). In the forgive others sub-scale, the average score was 'indifference to forgive' (\bar{x} = 4.36). 'Self forgiveness,'

the average score was ‘slightly forgive’ ($\bar{x} = 4.67$). Finally, the ‘situational forgiveness’ also fell in the range of ‘indifference to forgive’ ($\bar{x} = 4.44$) (Table 2).

The overall forgiveness score between the vocational studying in different years was not statistically significant but in respect of ‘forgiving others’, the difference was statistically significant at

0.5. The highest score of ‘forgive others’ sub-scale were found among 1st-year students, followed by 3rd-year students. However, ‘self forgiveness’ and ‘situational forgiveness’ scores were not different in statistical significant (Table 3).

When classified by department, the overall and sub-scale forgiveness scores of the sample from various departments were no statistically significant differences (Table 4).

Table 1. Demographic data

Variable	Frequency	Percentage
Year of study		
1 st -year	64	26.7
2 nd -year	100	41.7
3 rd -year	76	31.7
Total	240	100.0
Department		
Machine shop mechanics	81	33.8
Electrical power technology	66	27.5
Mechanical technology	69	28.8
Printing technicians	24	10.0
Total	240	100.0

Discussion

The overall forgiveness scores and sub-scale forgiveness scores of Bangkok vocational students

The participants in the study scored ‘overall forgiveness’ and ‘forgive others’ in the range of ‘indifference to forgive’. These results demonstrated that the majority of the participants’ responded with some degree of vindictiveness in their cognition, emotion, and behavior. The feelings of anger, hate, hurt, vengeance, injustice, and avoidance equivocated to feelings of kindness, understanding, love, and desire for reconciliation which corresponded to the previous study by Enright et al⁽⁹⁾. They found that the

Table 2. The overall forgiveness score and forgiveness by sub-scales score of vocational students

Forgiveness score	Mean	SD.	Maximum	Minimum	Interpretation
Overall forgiveness	4.45	0.67	6.57	2.71	Indifference to forgive
Forgive others	4.36	0.88	6.57	2.17	Indifference to forgive
Self forgiveness	4.67	0.66	6.5	2.75	Slightly forgive
Situational forgiveness	4.44	0.87	7	2.14	Indifference to forgive

Table 3. The forgiveness score according to year of study

Forgiveness score	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	F	Sig	Post-Hoc
Overall forgiveness						
Mean	4.49	4.37	4.51	1.152	0.318	
SD	0.64	0.67	0.67			
Forgive others						
Mean	4.55	4.20	4.38	3.193	0.043*	1-2
SD	0.79	0.90	0.90			
Self forgiveness						
Mean	4.57	4.65	4.73	1.128	0.325	
SD	0.68	0.65	0.65			
Situational forgiveness						
Mean	4.33	4.41	4.54	1.112	0.331	
SD	0.86	0.81	0.92			

* $p < 0.05$

Table 4. The forgiveness score according to department

Forgiveness score	Machine shop mechanics	Electrical power technology	Mechanical technology	Printing technician	F	Sig
Overall forgiveness						
Mean	4.46	4.49	4.41	4.40	0.207	0.892
SD	0.65	0.68	0.64	0.77		
Forgive others						
Mean	4.41	4.41	4.22	4.35	0.706	0.549
SD	0.86	0.93	0.83	0.97		
Self forgiveness						
Mean	4.61	4.69	4.71	4.53	0.685	0.562
SD	0.62	0.66	0.68	0.73		
Situational forgiveness						
Mean	4.42	4.44	4.46	4.36	0.081	0.97
SD	0.83	0.83	0.90	0.95		

* $p < 0.05$

participants in their study were more likely to use aggressive means in problem-resolution including verbal incriminations, physical altercations, and revenge. Chan-Aim⁽¹⁰⁾ stated that middle adolescents are at the age where they experienced the World in a very vulnerable stage and at times unable to regulated their emotions properly. Hence, anger is often revealed through various actions such as verbal accusations, gossiping, vandalism, or forms of physical aggression⁽¹¹⁾. They are not yet able to comprehend or fully accept the behaviors of the other party. Enright & Gassin⁽¹²⁾ claimed that although the guilty party is punished, the participants were equally able to experience either positive or negative emotions toward themselves.

The ‘situational forgiveness’ score was mostly in the ‘indifference to forgive’ category which illustrated that the participants responded equally with bitterness emotionally and behaviorally such as complaining as well as positively such as understanding that some situations are out of any individual’s control. In some ways, they wanted to relinquish the past and accept that some incidents could happen to anyone without being any individuals’ faults. Snyder & Lopez⁽¹³⁾ supported this idea as they claimed that individuals were able to forgive when they understand the particular situations could occur to any person and although they may suffered a loss, they still retain hope and give one’s self an opportunity to accomplish one’s goals resulting in comprehension and acceptance of the situation.

‘Self forgiveness’ score of this study was in the ‘slightly forgive’ category. This illustrated that the participants were able to forgive themselves more than not, which is supported by Worthington⁽⁸⁾. The details highlighted that adolescents experienced regret and shame of one’s own actions. However, as they reached the point of self-acceptance and recognized one’s own limitations they would lessen the compulsion to self-incriminate, increased self-love, and give self the opportunity to grow, resulting in self-forgiveness.

The comparison of the overall and sub-scale scores of forgiveness between groups of the sample classified by year and department

According to the research results, the difference in year of study among the participants was similar in ‘overall-, self-, and situation forgiveness’ scores but not in ‘forgive others’ scores. This inferred that the 1st-year students had higher ‘forgive others’ scores than the 2nd-year students with significance level at .05. This may be explained that the 1st-year students are freshmen. They are new to the environment physically and socially. They are more likely to need time for adjustment to the rules of the institution and the new society⁽¹⁴⁾. Therefore, they may have not developed the same level of attachment and emotional connections to the institution or feel as a part of inter-institute conflict. They may not feel as threatened from students of other colleges⁽¹⁵⁾ in comparison to other years’ students.

Both overall and sub-scale forgiveness scores

of the sample from various departments were not statistically different. This may be because all departments required practices with machineries in addition to classroom study. This allowed them to know students from other departments and not isolated from one another. They were able to get acquainted, coexist, cooperate, respect the opinions of the majority, are highly cohesive and help each other⁽¹⁴⁾. As adolescents, the participants engaged in search for identities that contributed to their self-esteem, group identity, and place in society. They learned and observed their peers, who are similar to them or get along well with them, as role models in concepts, values, ethics, system, expression, and problem solving⁽¹⁶⁾. Subsequently, the creation of group culture helped its members considering adjustment in order to create ideology, beliefs and norms which later develops core culture of the group⁽¹⁷⁻¹⁹⁾. Sometimes, there are emotional conflicts when members have to choose between conformity and being assertive.

Limitations

This study focused only on a vocational college in Bangkok. Its results cannot be generalized to other institutions. To gain a bigger and clearer perspective of forgiveness in vocational training students, research in different contexts or regions should be conducted.

According to the data collection, the population of Printing Technology Department was lower than informed. Its sample was not as proportionately planned and might affect the distribution of the sample. Therefore, the researcher chose simple sampling instead.

Conclusion

The results showed that 'forgive others' score was the lowest, hence promoting 'forgive others' is required in order to minimize violence when resolving conflict among vocational students.

What is already known on this topic?

There are many previous studies in foreign countries about forgiveness in adolescence. Only few of the researches focused on forgiveness in vocational students which contradicted popular media that focused on aggressive behaviors associated with them.

What this study adds?

This study of forgiveness among vocational students in Bangkok would provide important

information for planning program promoting forgiveness that would lead to types of peaceful resolution as it helps relieve resentment without using violence.

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Potential conflicts of interest

None.

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