

Kravchuk S.L.

Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv

THE CONNECTION OF READINESS FOR SELF-FORGIVENESS WITH FEELINGS OF GUILT, SHAME AND RESENTMENT

The article presents the results of a theoretical and empirical study of the specifics of the relationship between feelings of guilt and shame with resentment and willingness to forgive oneself. Forgiveness has been shown to be characterized by a prosocial change in motivation, in which a person becomes less motivated to seek revenge against a partner in interpersonal interactions, less motivated to maintain alienation from the offender, and more motivated to reconcile and benevolently treat the offender, despite his or her abusive actions. Self-forgiveness has been shown to be an emotionally focused coping strategy that involves reducing negative and increasing positive thoughts, emotions, motivations, and behaviors about oneself. It has been shown that in shame the focus of appraisal is on the self, whereas in guilt the focus of appraisal is on behavior. The results of an empirical study are presented, in which 938 people participated, including the following target groups: male and female civilians, wives of active combatants, and internally displaced women. The following research methods were applied: the author's research questionnaire "Diagnostics of attitudes towards forgiveness, life and military-political events"; the questionnaire "Scale of deep readiness to forgive"; the methodology "Measuring feelings of guilt and shame". It was found that internally displaced women, civilian women, civilian men, and wives of active combatants had clearly expressed significant negative correlations between feelings of guilt and willingness to forgive themselves. It was determined that among civilian women, civilian men, wives of active combatants, and internally displaced women, clearly expressed significant positive correlations between resentment and feelings of guilt and shame were found. It was found that civilian women, civilian men, wives of active combatants, and internally displaced women showed clearly expressed significant negative correlations between shame and willingness to forgive themselves. It was found that in all four groups, the negative, clearly expressed, significant correlations of shame with willingness to forgive are less pronounced compared to the negative correlations of feelings of guilt with willingness to forgive themselves.

Key words: forgiveness, self-forgiveness, feelings of guilt, shame, resentment.

Statement of the problem. In recent years, there has been a growing scientific interest in interpersonal forgiveness, however, self-forgiveness has received much less attention in scientific psychological research.

Self-forgiveness also differs from interpersonal forgiveness in terms of the presence/absence of conditions for forgiveness. Whereas interpersonal forgiveness can be either unconditional or conditional, as it depends on the victim's willingness to forgive the offender, self-forgiveness is unconditional because it is associated with a process of self-reflection by the offender, who focuses on his or her own transgression. Such a process of self-forgiveness is carried out without complete dependence on the judgment of others.

Interest in the issues of self-forgiveness and feelings of guilt, shame, and resentment is growing in

connection with aspects of psychological well-being. Self-forgiveness is associated with various personal and interpersonal adaptive characteristics, such as developed emotion regulation, high levels of positive relationships, and social support [23, p. 275].

The problem of the connection between self-forgiveness, guilt, shame and resentment attracts the attention of researchers in the context of psychotherapeutic practice.

The question of the model of self-forgiveness remains open. Today, there are serious disagreements among scientists regarding the definition of the concept of self-forgiveness.

Determining the specifics of the relationship between willingness to forgive and feelings of guilt, shame, and resentment is an important source of understanding psychological well-being.

Analysis of recent research and publications.

An analysis of theoretical and empirical research on the issue of forgiveness [7; 12; 15; 17; 24; 25; 28; 42] shows that in forgiveness, a person overcomes negative affect, harsh judgments, and negative behavior, in particular, the search for revenge against the person who caused the offense, and replaces them with more positive emotions, positive thoughts, and positive behavior.

Forgiveness is characterized by the predominance of positive emotions, conscious concentration on positive emotions, and the presence of changes in the perception of the offense [11; 14; 16; 21; 43].

Self-forgiveness is often defined by researchers as a positive shift in feelings, actions, and beliefs about oneself after a person has committed a transgression [12; 21; 43]. The tendency to forgive oneself has also been studied as a stable personality trait [6, p. 763]. Thus, scientists J. Hall, F. Fincham define dispositional self-forgiveness as a person's general tendency to forgive oneself for failures and transgressions that harm others [21, p. 624].

Self-forgiveness is defined as an emotionally oriented coping strategy that involves reducing negative and increasing positive thoughts, emotions, motivation, and behavior toward oneself [21; 42]. Special attention should be paid to the model of the dual process of forgiveness presented by W. Griffin, E. Worthington and colleagues [19, p. 718].

According to this model, two separate processes constitute self-forgiveness. According to the researchers, self-forgiveness requires, first, a cognitive shift towards recognizing responsibility for one's transgression and a commitment to align one's behavior and values in the future, and, second, restoring self-esteem involves replacing self-condemning emotions with self-affirming emotions.

Important indicators of self-forgiveness are a decrease in the motivation to avoid and a decrease in the desire for self-punishment.

When a person commits an offense, he or she experiences various emotions in this regard. Some studies have focused on two of them, namely, guilt and shame [9; 15; 36]. Distinguishing between these two emotions is important because they have different effects on the forgiveness process.

Researchers J. Tracy and R. Robins [39] define shame as a humiliating experience, intense embarrassment, and inner torment due to the perception of being dishonored and disgraced. According to R. Gilbert [18], shame is associated with a negative self-assessment and negative thoughts

about oneself, for example, "I am unsuccessful, inadequate, ugly, and worthless."

In shame, the focus of evaluation is on the self (e.g., "I am bad"; "I was a bad person", etc.), while in guilt, the focus of evaluation is on behavior (e.g., "I did something bad"; "My action was bad"; "I did something wrong", etc.) [36; 41].

U. Orth, M. Berking, S. Burkhardt [30] note that shame experiences mainly arise after a moral transgression or a feeling of incompetence and are characterized by confusion in thoughts, inability to speak and reflect.

Scientists K. Scherer, H. Wallbott [33] believe that shame is characterized by a stronger tendency to withdraw than other emotions, such as joy, anger, disgust, sadness, and fear. Shame activates avoidance behavior.

Some studies have identified the significant role of shame in a wide range of mental health problems [36]. For most people, shame is an unpleasant emotion that can have serious negative consequences [34]. Shame is associated with depression and anxiety [32, p. 502]. Shame can lead to social isolation, which exacerbates many problems, including depression and suicide [40, p. 236].

Shame is associated with increased personal suffering and neuroticism [36; 41]. Compared to guilt, shame is more strongly associated with symptoms of depression [25, p. 417], and this relationship is due to increased anger and externalization of guilt [37, p. 116]. R. Edelstein, P. Shaver equate shame with social anxiety [10]. Shame makes you feel "trapped, powerless, and isolated" [5, p. 48].

It is also noteworthy that in the scientific literature, shame and guilt are mainly differentiated based on their connection with behavioral characteristics: shame is associated with avoidance behavior, and guilt is associated with approach behavior aimed at compensating for the damage caused by the transgression [27]. According to J. Harper, guilt activates the focus on the image of the other and encourages the maintenance and strengthening of dyadic relationships [22, p. 194]. Guilt includes tension, remorse, and regret as a result of one's actions [36].

Scientists J. Hall, F. Fincham believe that when a person's self is viewed as powerless and worthless, shame and guilt will dominate and lead to thoughts that "I did a bad thing" and "I am a bad person" [21]. If shame dominates, the feeling will be that "I am a bad person." If the feeling of guilt dominates, you will feel that "I did a bad thing". It is more difficult to cope with shame than with guilt [37].

It is interesting to note that shame and guilt have a different impact on seeking and granting forgiveness.

Scientists B. Riek, L. Luna, C. Schnabelrauch note that guilt is the main motive for seeking forgiveness [31, p. 763]. Some scholars also believe that guilt and remorse can play an important role in maintaining and restoring interpersonal relationships [2; 13]. For example, it was found that when respondents recalled and wrote about an incident in which they had offended someone, those who reported feeling guilty about the event also reported apologizing to the victim [2, p. 176].

Other foreign studies have also demonstrated a link between guilt and the motivation to restore relationships [3; 36]. The perpetrator's sense of guilt is associated with increased empathy for others and the perception of personal responsibility [37, p. 118]. Guilt is a predictor of accepting responsibility [29, p. 397].

It is also worth noting that the empirical results of studies on the relationship between guilt and self-forgiveness are inconsistent. Thus, scientists B. McGaffin, G. Lyons, F. Deane found a positive relationship between guilt and self-forgiveness [29]. However, scientists J. Hall, F. Fincham empirically found that guilt is negatively related to self-forgiveness [21].

The results of an empirical study by R. Strelan also demonstrated a negative relationship between these variables [35]. Scientists E. Guerola, M. Prieto, D. Panigua also empirically found that guilt had a negative impact on self-forgiveness [20].

Scientists J. Tangney and R. Dearing note that self-forgiveness is negatively related to both guilt and shame [36]. Shame often motivates an avoidance response, which is consistent with a lack of self-forgiveness [37]. According to J. Tangney, shame may reduce the likelihood that the offender will seek forgiveness, as shame is associated with maladaptive reactions and less empathy for others.

According to R. Enright, acknowledging shame is an important step in granting forgiveness [12].

It is interesting to note that, according to some studies [26], shame and guilt can be both adaptive and maladaptive, depending on the situation.

The purpose of the article: determining the peculiarities of the connection between guilt and shame with resentment and readiness for self-forgiveness.

Presentation of the main research material. Our empirical study was conducted during 2023–2025. Our empirical study involved male

civilians (226 males: 119 young and 107 middle-aged); female civilians (372 females: 198 young and 174 middle-aged); wives of active combatants (114 females: 58 young and 56 middle-aged); and female internally displaced persons (226 females: 117 young and 109 middle-aged).

We used the following research methods: 1) the author's research questionnaire "Diagnostics of Attitudes Toward Forgiveness, Life, and Military and Political Events"; 2) the questionnaire "Scale of Deep Readiness for Forgiveness" (authors: L. Y. Thompson, C. R. Snyder, L. Hoffman et al. [38]); 3) the Measurement of Guilt and Shame (author: J. P. Tangney [37]).

Based on a correlation analysis using Spearman's correlation coefficient, we identified the peculiarities of the relationship between feeling of guilt and resentment and readiness for self-forgiveness in civilian men and women, wives of active combatants, and internally displaced women. The results are presented in Table 1.

In internally displaced women, civilian women, civilian men, and wives of active combatants, there were clearly expressed significant negative correlations between feeling of guilt and readiness for self-forgiveness (respectively, p ranged from $-0,34$ to $-0,37$, $p < 0,01$), which indicate that the less they have feeling of guilt, the more they have a readiness for self-forgiveness.

Our findings are consistent with the results of other empirical studies. Some studies have shown that the inability to forgive oneself is a factor in guilt [44], higher levels of neuroticism, and low self-esteem [7; 21].

Guilt is a barrier to self-forgiveness [15]. Individuals who are prone to experiencing guilt as a reaction to their wrongdoing are more likely to punish themselves without engaging in self-forgiveness [35]. At the same time, lower levels of guilt and regret, as well as lower levels of stress, anxiety, and depression were characteristic of individuals with a high level of psychological resilience [4].

In all four groups, we found direct, pronounced, significant correlations between feeling of guilt and resentment (respectively, p ranged from $0,33$ to $0,37$, $p < 0,01$). A person who feels resentful blames himself or herself for what happened, i.e., feels guilty. A person who feels guilty for a certain offense may not recognize his or her own guilt and begins to resent others.

Based on the correlation analysis using Spearman's correlation coefficient, we also identified the peculiarities of the relationship between shame

and resentment and readiness for self-forgiveness in civilian men and women, wives of active combatants, and internally displaced women. The results are presented in Table 2.

In all four groups, we found direct, clearly expressed, significant correlations between shame and resentment (p in the range from 0,30 to 0,31, $p < 0,01$, respectively). A person experiencing resentment may begin to feel shame for their actions. Experiencing resentment through wrongdoing, pain, humiliation is associated with shame due to a feeling of non-compliance with standards and norms.

In civilian women, internally displaced women, wives of active combatants, and civilian men, clearly expressed significant negative correlations between shame and readiness for self-forgiveness were found (p in the range from -0,30 to -0,32, $p < 0,01$, respectively), which indicate that the less shame they express, the more readiness they express for self-forgiveness.

In all four groups, the negative, clearly expressed, significant correlations of shame with readiness for self-forgiveness are less pronounced compared to the correlations of feeling of guilt with readiness for self-forgiveness (see Table 1 and Table 2).

Our findings are consistent with those of other empirical studies. The ability to forgive oneself for past offenses can lead to a decrease in shame and guilt, and can increase kindness and compassion

for oneself [8, p. 98]. It has been established that high levels of shame and guilt are closely related to psychopathology [1, p. 87].

In our opinion, reducing feelings of guilt, shame, and resentment will increase the motivation for self-forgiveness.

Conclusions. In civilian women, civilian men, wives of active combatants, and internally displaced women, clearly expressed significant negative correlations between feelings of guilt and readiness for self-forgiveness were found. The less a person expresses feelings of guilt, the more they express readiness for self-forgiveness.

Among civilian women, civilian men, wives of active combatants, and internally displaced women, there were clearly significant positive correlations between resentment and feelings of guilt and shame.

Among civilian women, civilian men, wives of active combatants, and internally displaced women, there are clearly expressed significant negative correlations between shame and readiness for self-forgiveness. The less shame is expressed in a person, the more readiness for self-forgiveness is expressed.

Shame is more likely to contribute to self-destructive intentions related to the inability to forgive oneself, as the offender may view the offense as a reflection of his/her own dignity.

In the future, we plan to conduct a theoretical and empirical study of the psychological factors of self-forgiveness.

Table 1

Correlation analysis: the relationship of feeling of guilt to resentment and readiness for self-forgiveness

Indicators	Civilian men	Civilian women	Wives of active combatants	Internally displaced women
Readiness for self-forgiveness	-0,348**	-0,369**	-0,344**	-0,374*
Resentment	0,374**	0,327**	0,346**	0,352**

Note: ** – significance level $p < 0,01$.

Table 2

Correlation analysis: the relationship between shame and resentment and readiness for self-forgiveness

Indicators	Civilian men	Civilian women	Wives of active combatants	Internally displaced women
Readiness for self-forgiveness	-0,298**	-0,324**	-0,306**	-0,314*
Resentment	0,303**	0,312**	0,305**	0,296**

Note: ** – significance level $p < 0,01$.

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Кравчук С.Л. ЗВ'ЯЗОК ГОТОВНОСТІ ДО САМОПРОЩЕННЯ З ПОЧУТТЯМ ПРОВИНИ, СОРОМОМ ТА ОБРАЗОЮ

В статті представлено результати теоретико-емпіричного дослідження особливостей зв'язку почуття провини та сорому з образою та готовністю до самопрощення. Показано, що прощення характеризується просоціальною зміною мотивації, за якої особа стає дедалі все менш мотивованою до помсти проти партнера в міжособовій взаємодії, все менше мотивованою зберігати відчуження від кривдника та все більш мотивованою до примирення і доброзичливості до кривдника, незважаючи на його кривдні дії. Показано, що самопрощення є емоційно орієнтованою копінг-стратегією, яка передбачає зменшення негативних і збільшення позитивних думок, емоцій, мотивації та поведінки щодо себе. Показано, що в соромі фокус оцінки зосереджений на собі, тоді як в провині фокус оцінки зосереджений на поведінці. Наведено результати емпіричного дослідження, в якому взяли участь 938 осіб, серед яких були такі цільові групи: цивільні особи чоловічої та жіночої статі, дружини активних учасників бойових, внутрішньо переміщені жінки. Застосовано такі методи дослідження: авторська дослідницька анкета «Діагностика ставлення до прощення, життя і воєнно-політичних подій»; опитувальник «Шкала глибинної готовності до пробачення»; методика «Вимірювання почуття провини та сорому». Виявлено, що у внутрішньо переміщених жінок, цивільних жінок, цивільних чоловіків, дружин активних учасників бойових дій виявлено явно виражені значущі негативні кореляційні зв'язки почуття провини з готовністю до

самопрощення. Визначено, що у цивільних жінок, цивільних чоловіків, дружин активних учасників бойових дій, внутрішньо переміщених жінок виявлено явно виражені значущі позитивні кореляційні зв'язки образи з почуттям провини та соромом. Виявлено, що у цивільних жінок, цивільних чоловіків, дружин активних учасників бойових дій, внутрішньо переміщених жінок виявлено явно виражені значущі негативні кореляційні зв'язки сорому з готовністю до самопрощення. Встановлено, що в усіх чотирьох групах негативні явно виражені значущі кореляційні зв'язки сорому з готовністю до самопрощення менш виражені порівняно із негативними зв'язками почуття провини з готовністю до самопрощення.

Ключові слова: прощення, самопрощення, почуття провини, сором, образа.

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