

MARCIN WNUK¹, JERZY T. MARCINKOWSKI^{1,2}, ZDZISŁAWA KALISZ²**Relacje pomiędzy siłami charakteru takimi jak wybaczenie, wdzięczność i nadzieja a satysfakcją z życia studentów zdrowia publicznego i fizjoterapii****Relationships between the strengths of character: forgiveness, gratitude, and hope and satisfaction with life among public health and physiotherapy students****Streszczenie**

Cel. Głównym celem badań było zweryfikowanie, czy wdzięczność jest związana ze skłonnością do przebaczenia. Dodatkowo postanowiono sprawdzić, czy wdzięczność, skłonność do przebaczenia oraz nadzieja są pozytywnie skorelowane z satysfakcją z życia.

Material i metody. W badaniu wzięło udział 75 studentów zdrowia publicznego i fizjoterapii z Bydgoskiej Szkoły Wyższej w Bydgoszczy. Zostały użyte następujące narzędzia badawcze: Interpersonalna Skala Motywacji Związanej z Przewinieniem (TRIM-12), Kwestionariusz Wdzięczności (Q-6), Index Nadziei Herth (HHI), Skala Satysfakcji z Życia (SWLS).

Wyniki. Wśród studentów wdzięczność była negatywnie skorelowana z motywacją do zemsty oraz pozytywnie związana z siłą nadziei. Zanotowano umiarkowaną korelację pomiędzy siłą nadziei i satysfakcją z życia.

Abstract

Aim. The main aim of this study was to examine whether gratitude is related to forgiveness. An additional aim was to verify if gratitude, forgiveness, and hope are positively correlated with satisfaction in life.

Material and methods. The sample consisted of 75 students of public health and physiotherapy graduate courses at the University of Bydgoszcz. The following tools were used: Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale - (TRIM-12), Gratitude Questionnaire (Q-6), Herth Hope Index (HHI), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS).

Results. A negative relationship between gratitude and motivation to revenge as well as a positive relationship between gratitude and hope were observed. Hope was positively related with life satisfaction.

Słowa kluczowe: nadzieja, przebaczenie, wdzięczność, satysfakcja z życia.

Key words: hope, forgiveness, gratitude, satisfaction with life.

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INTRODUCTION

Virtues are defined as a positive, coordinated system of thoughts, beliefs, emotions, motivations and actions due to which an individual behaves in such a way that it brings advantages to them, as well as to the society the individual lives in. A collection of virtues defines the character of an individual [1]. Strengths of character are the most elementary and positive manifestations of functioning which, grouped in topical bundles, create six virtues [2]. They are dispositions for actions, desires and feelings that involve the practice of making judgments, leading to human perfection and self-realization. An ability to forgive is a strength of character, being one of the elements of moderation, whereas hope and gratitude are strengths of character depicting a virtue known as transcendence. Strengths of character have the following attributes:

- a. Omnipresence – widely known and popular within many cultures.
- b. Fulfillment – closely connected with commonly perceived individual fulfillment (self-realization), happiness and satisfaction with life.
- c. Morally appreciated – valuable in their own right, not due to material aspects they create.
- d. They do not restrict (reduce) other people's values – they assist spiritually those who experience them, leading to admiration, not envy.
- e. They stand in opposition to failure, misfortune, being an antonym to the negative.
- f. They constitute individual differences in the perspective of stability and generalization.
- g. Measurable – researchers measure them successfully from the perspective of individual differences.
- h. Differentiation – they are neither unnecessary nor redundant (neither theoretically, nor empirically) for other strengths of character.
- i. Exemplary, which means that they embody an individual.
- j. They become evident in early youth or childhood.
- k. Selectively absent – they are totally absent in some individuals.
- l. Institutionalized – they are a deliberate objective of cultivated social practices and rituals.

Hope – as a strength of character – means to expect the best in the future by undertaking certain actions to achieve it; faith that good future will come true [2].

The role of hope in the context of developing the well-being has been verified in several research projects. In one of the surveys, in all three samples, hope was that out of 24 character strengths that correlated most strongly with satisfaction with life [2].

The results of the research led to verify the claim that some of the character strengths are more important than others for a subjective well-being, whereas the strongest correlate among them is hope [3]. This hypothesis has only partially been confirmed by further research. In fact, some character strengths were independent predictors of the satisfaction with life as a cognitive aspect of a subjective well-being, whereas a correlate of this variable, stronger than hope, was love [4].

Another strength of character, important for well-being, is forgiveness, defined as acquitting harms, giving 'a second chance', or a lack of tendency to take revenge and retribution. An inclination to revenge, following harm, is biologically conditioned and deeply rooted in psychological and cultural aspects of human nature. A need to payback is often connected with a tendency to avoid the person who caused the suffering. A need to take revenge is one of the strongest motifs of human pursuit in the name of paying back, wrongly perceived justice, pride, and honor.

A different reaction to harm or damage done by another person is forgiveness. A common feature of different concepts of forgiving is striving to weaken the motif for revenge and overcoming the need to avoid the wrongdoer. Jampolsky [5] uses seven criteria to evaluate forgiveness: change in perception and vision, change in attitudes and beliefs, change of affective character, change in perceiving own responsibility and blame, change referring to choice, decision and intention, change concerning dualism between one's own and the other person's awareness, and change in perceiving basic qualities of life.

Worthington and Scherer [6] list two forms of forgiveness: emotional and decision-based. The former is based on a set of negative emotions not limited to reluctance, bitterness, hostility, hatred, etc that are transformed into positive emotions, such as: love, peace or joy, extending not only over the wrongdoer but also over oneself. On the other hand, decision-based forgiveness refers to expectations related to future interactions with the wrongdoer. Emotional and decisive forgiveness may complement each other, or may be realized in different ways. Decision-based forgiveness usually precedes and enables emotional forgiveness. However, there are exceptions to this rule.

McCullough et al. [7] noticed a lack of relations between forgiveness and satisfaction with life. The researchers strived to explain that the lack of relations between both constructs by means of divergence between both measures. The Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale - (TRIM-12) measures changes in the mode of forgiving towards particular person who did particular harm, whereas the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) is a general evaluation, not referring to a specific event that took place at a specific time.

In a study conducted in Portugal populations, a tendency to forgive was not connected with satisfaction with life. The correspondence between forgiving and satisfaction with life was noted in reference to a general male population of the French – males, adults and unbelievers. Such relations between the variables were not noted among women, teenagers, young adults, regular church-goers, and so called 'unobservant believers' [8].

Another character strength, similar to forgiving from the point of view of human relations, is gratitude. While forgiving is a reaction to harm being done, gratitude follows help, support and kindness given. In both cases the reaction is of positive pro-social character, and is connected with well-being in a positive way.

According to Watkins et al. [9], a grateful person can be characterized by four attributes. They have a sense of abundance and plenty, appreciate a positive influence of other

people on their well-being, show gratitude for simple pleasures in life, these available to the majority of people, manifest the importance of experiencing and expressing gratitude. Friedman [10] defines gratitude as being grateful for: people, situations, life circumstances, what has been given, experienced and learned, for spiritual riches, for abundance and plenty, for what has been forgiven, for inner qualities, future, positive experiences, good fortune and blessings.

The results of the research consistently confirm the existence of positive relations between gratitude and well-being. The correlations found occurred in the research on students, patients with a neuromuscular disease, and clinical patients undergoing psychotherapy [11,12].

THE AIM

The aim of the study was to examine whether a greater force of gratitude among students is accompanied by a tendency to forgive. An additional aim was to verify if gratitude, forgiving and hope are positively connected to satisfaction with life.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Seventy five students of Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation of Bydgoska Szkoła Wyższa (University of Bydgoszcz) took part in the research. The questionnaires were handed out and filled in during classes taught by Ms. Zdzisława Kalisz in December 2009. Women constituted 86.7%, whereas men - 13.3%; 90.7% of the respondents had secondary education, and 9.3% higher education.

The following research tools were used: Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale - (TRIM-12), Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6), Herth Hope Index (HHI), Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS).

The Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6) [13] is a single factor measure of satisfying sincerity. In one of the tests, the relative sincerity factor in the scale measured by α -Cronbach's factor was 0.82. The tool consists of 6 questions that are answered in six-point Likert scale, from '1' (I totally disagree) to '7' (I definitely agree). The points for particular questions are totaled. In the presented research project, the sincerity measured with α -Cronbach's factor was 0.70.

The Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale - (TRIM-12) is used for measuring motivation for forgiving. The tool consists of 12 testing positions, out of which five refer to revenge, whereas seven to avoidance as motifs connected with the perception of an interpersonal attack made by the given person. Answers are given on a 5-grade Likert scale, from '1' (I totally disagree) to '5' (I definitely agree). The results are obtained after summing up all answers. The tool has acceptable sincerity measured by relative stability (α -Cronbach's revenge = 0.90; α -Cronbach's avoidance = 0.86-0.94) and absolute stability by means of test-retest (revenge = 0.53-0.79; avoidance = 0.44-0.86 with 3-9 week delay).

The scale is characterized by proper inner accuracy measured by factor analysis, as well as convergent accuracy

and differential accuracy measured by correlations with other measures of forgiving and similar constructs [13]. In the described research, the sincerity of motivation to revenge was α -Cronbach's = 0.82, whereas the motivation to avoid the wrongdoer was 0.91.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) is a commonly used tool for measuring psychical well-being based on satisfaction with life operationalizing as a conscious cognitive evaluation of life during which an individual is comparing conditions of their life with standards once imposed on oneself [14]. This measure comprises five statements, which are answered by the interviewed person on 7-grade scale. The more points the interviewed gains, the greater their satisfaction with life is. The scale possesses satisfying psychometric properties. Its sincerity measured by the test-retest method was 0.83 after a repeated test in two-week time, 0.84 after a month, and from 0.64 to 0.84 after two months [15]. Its one-factor character was confirmed in several research projects [16-18]. In the presented tests, the sincerity was α -Cronbach's = 0.72.

The Hope Index (HHI) is a scale used for measuring hope. The interviewed people answer 12 questions, expressed in 4-grade Likert's scale, beginning with - 'I definitely agree - 4' to 'I definitely disagree - 1' [19]. The scale possesses satisfying psychometric properties. The sincerity in reference to the population of ill people was α = 0.97 [19]. The sincerity measured with test-retest method was 0.91 [20]. In the conducted research project, the sincerity was α -Cronbach's = 0.91. In this project the sincerity was α -Cronbach's = 0.77.

RESULTS

The calculations were based on SPSS – the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, version 12. To calculate relations between the variables, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used. The obtained results are presented in Table 1.

Gratitude was negatively correlated with motivation for revenge and positively connected with the strength of hope. Gratitude, motivation for revenge, and motivation for avoiding the wrongdoer were not connected with satisfaction with life. A moderate correlation between the strength of hope and satisfaction with life were observed.

TABLE 1. Value of correlation coefficients between the selected variables (n = 75).

	1	2	3	4
Gratitude				
Motivation for revenge	0.24*			
Motivation for avoiding the wrongdoer	0.01	0.39**		
Hope	0.24*	0.13	0.18	
Satisfaction with Life	0.12	-0.10	0.16	0.43**

* Correlation is significant at 0.05 level

** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level

DISCUSSION

The hypothesis claiming the dependence between gratitude and forgiveness, expressed by avoiding the wrongdoer and motivation for abandoning revenge was partially confirmed. It turned out that the students who are characterized by a high level of gratitude, are at the same time highly motivated not to take revenge. Being grateful is not connected with the motivation to avoid the person who caused pain, harm and suffering.

The obtained results are, to a high degree, consistent with the results obtained in research into mentally disordered patients. Those, who declared a higher level of gratitude, were keener to forgive themselves and others, and expressed a smaller motivation for revenge. As opposed to the results obtained with students, mentally disordered people, who had a high level of gratitude, were less likely to avoid the wrongdoer [20].

The obtained results can be interpreted in terms of similarities between both constructs. Gratitude and forgiveness can be defined as character strengths which constitute a certain attitude towards another person, or a 'Higher Force', identified with the wrongdoer or the benefactor. The attitude manifests itself in the cognitive, emotional and behavioral spheres. In both cases it has a positive and pro-social character. If in the case of gratitude the attitude is stable, and it is not easily changed, in the case of the phenomenon of forgiving others, its essential trait is the change of a negative attitude to a positive one, and it requires a substantial mental, emotional and behavioral engagement.

In this context, to enable forgiving, the perception of the wrongdoer must be changed, together with the emotional attitude, as well as actions and measures toward them. The wrongdoer, at the moment of inflicting pain and suffering, is perceived as evil, with time may become perceived as honest and kind, when their intention, primarily seen as deliberate and premeditated, changes into accidental and unintentional.

Emotional transformation is based on the change of emotions, such as hatred, anger, and hostility into peace, love, and kindness. In the behavioral sphere, the change of attitudes toward the wrongdoer can be brought about by words uttered about them, contacting them more often, reactivating the relation after abandoning it, etc.

Relations between gratitude and a weaker motivation for revenge, as well as the lack of correlation between gratitude and motivation for avoiding the wrongdoer, may possibly result from the fact that avoidance is a natural and quite common reaction, not only toward wrongdoers but also toward people whom we dislike and have an aversion to. This depends on whether they have ever inflicted pain, harm or suffering. People showing gratitude toward the world, God, and other people and life circumstances, may accept avoidance in their lifestyle as a way of coping with difficult situations. Revenge, on the other hand, does not comply with gratitude, since it presupposes negative thoughts, feelings and actions toward others. In this context, people characterized by

a high degree of gratitude, to retain a coherent image of themselves, others, and the world, may be more prone not to yield to revenge.

Also, a hypothesis claiming positive relations between ability to forgive, gratitude, hope, and satisfaction with life has been partially confirmed. If hope turned out to be a positive correlate of satisfaction with life, no connections between gratitude – forgiveness and satisfaction with life were confirmed. In research using SWLS, positive relations between hope and satisfaction [3, 4] were noted. Among the Alcoholics Anonymous and the Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous, hope was not connected to satisfaction with life measured by the Cantril ladder [21, 22]. It seems that despite the fact that both the Cantril ladder, as well as the Satisfaction with Life Scale, are indicators of the same construct in the form of satisfaction with life, they refer to different aspects of well-being. One should stress that despite the fact that both are of a single-factor character, the former is based on one question, whereas the latter consists of five positions. Also the analysis of the content of questions of both measures leads to the conclusion that these may be indicators of different elements of well-being.

Similarly to former research using the same tools, there were no connections noted between forgiveness and satisfaction with life [7]. It seems that the explanations, used by the researchers, concerning differences in both constructs are of a satisfying explanatory value. If satisfaction with life refers to general satisfaction with life, forgiving measured with the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale refers to a particular harm that took place in a specific situation and was caused by a particular person.

In opposition to the previous research, no relations between gratitude and satisfaction were noted [11, 12]. These divergences might have resulted from the differences in the examined populations. Students positively correlated gratitude to hope. It seems that both constructs require a positive attitude toward oneself, life and other people. Being grateful may motivate to reaching for the good or for certain values, and is intensified by other people and one's own competence. Both hope and gratitude are character strengths belonging to the same virtue called transcendence.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The students characterized by a high degree of gratitude tend not to show willingness to revenge and declare greater hope.
2. The students with great hope are satisfied with their life to a much greater extent.
3. Among the students of Rehabilitation and Physiotherapy, gratitude and tendency to forgive are not related to satisfaction with life.

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