

## The Mediating Role of Forgiveness in the Context of Interpersonal Relationship Styles and Conflict Resolution Tendencies\*

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### Abstract

The aim of this research is to examine the mediating role of university students' forgiveness themselves, others and the situation in the relationship between interpersonal relationship styles and tendency to resolve conflicts of university students. The study group of this research consists of 409 students who are studying at various undergraduate departments in Gaziantep University. "Conflict Resolution Tendency Scale", "Heartland Forgiveness Scale", "Interpersonal Relationship Style Scale" and "Personal Information Form" prepared by the researcher were used as data collection tools in the research. In the analysis of the data, structural equation modeling was applied by using AMOS program. Analyses in the research have shown that the relationship between nourishing relationship style and conflict resolution tendency is significant in the positive direction. According to the results of the research, in the model in which the intermediary role of forgiveness is examined between interpersonal relationship styles and conflict resolution tendency, self-forgiveness and the forgiveness of others in relation to the nourishing relationship and the tendency to resolve conflict; the relationship between the toxic relationship style and the tendency to resolve conflict was found to be the partial mediator effect of self-forgiveness.

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## INTRODUCTION

People try to meet basic needs with a view of maintaining their living. Finding themselves in the midst of a social life, individuals try to meet their need for relationships in different social settings such as schools, within a circle of friends, or in business environments. According to Blatt and Blass (1996), the ability to establish and maintain close, lasting and fulfilling relationships is a prerequisite of being an adult. In this context, interpersonal relationships play a major part in the development of personality. Interpersonal relationships have an important place in their social development, especially for students who move away from their families and enter the university environment. With university life, young people both try to adapt to a different environment and try to establish new interpersonal relationships (Arıcıoğlu, 2016). Individuals strive to maintain the relationships that they establish with others. That will is closely associated with the quality of interpersonal relationships and psychological well-being.

Argues that the personality and behaviors of the individual affects the thoughts and behaviors of the other person, who is also a party to the relationship. Individuals who establish various connections and relationships in their daily lives are not only affected by these relationships, but also affect the other person involved (Hortaçsu, 2003). Our relationship with people that we are interacting with lead to the development of our interpersonal style (Erözkan, 2009). Individual people are observed to employ certain styles -both nourishing and toxic in nature- within the framework of interpersonal dynamics that shape interpersonal relationships. The nourishing relationship style is characterized by clarity and a natural feel. The conversations are direct and honest. In toxic relationship styles, however, that natural feel is lacking, and the style does not entail any efforts to improve others. Toxic relationships are used among competitors, and are known to entail tricks and conspiracy. And, these features wear down the interpersonal relationships through the process. When toxic relationship styles are employed, the other party in the relationship feels bad and hurt. In a healthy relationship, on the other hand, tricks and conspiracy are not allowed. In settings with a shared healthy outlook concerning interpersonal relationships, one can talk about a continuing development of the relationship (Greenwald, 1973 quoted by Göçener, 2010). The nourishing relationship styles in the context of interpersonal relationships are open, respectful and rational, and help the individual to communicate with society in a healthy manner. Toxic styles, however, are often contemptuous, aggressive, and disrespectful, and obstruct the development of a healthy and sound relationship (Aydın, 1996). In the way of toxic styles, individuals have low skill levels and are supporters of not listening because they do not accept and respect the other person (Kaptan, 2018). Individuals who employ constructive communications in their relationships with others are expected to have healthy and sustained relationships. In the case of individuals who opt for judgmental and negative communications, on the other hand, the potential for hurting the others in the relationship, and having conflict is markedly higher (Batıgün, 2004).

As is the case with any aspect of life, it is only natural for any relationship to withstand conflicts among individuals who have different needs, wants or impulses. The approaches to bring about solutions to these conflicts vary with the reaction to the conflict. If the conflicts are handled in a constructive manner, it can be considered an opportunity for positive change and development in interpersonal relationships. In a setting bereft of any conflict, change and development would not occur. McCullough and Witvliet (2002) argue that people react in two distinct forms in the face of negative developments such as receiving an insult, suffering from deception, or being attacked: they either avoid the person that commits these acts, or they seek revenge. Sustained negative emotions and thoughts, in the context of interpersonal relationships, and the lack of effective conflict resolution methods are considered dysfunctional reactions (Griffin and Bartholomew, 1994).

Forgiveness, another means to handle conflicts in interpersonal relationships, has been drawing increased interest recently. Forgiveness can be explained as the fact that the person who has

experienced the victim is distant from the negative emotions and revenge on the person who has victimized him and avoiding verbal aggression (Hampes, 2016). Baumeister et al., (1998) note that forgiveness in interpersonal relationships can allow for the hurt person to help fix the relationship, by forgiving the person who committed the negative deed. In this sense, in interpersonal relationships, forgiveness is considered a positive concept to help sustain the relationship and to further socialization. It is also thought to be the key to successful interpersonal relationships.

An individual who employs a negative style in their interpersonal relationships, and who, thus, experiences frequent conflicts, can possibly overcome the conflict if they are able to relatively easily forgive themselves, others, and the subject matter of the conflict. Hurt and wronged persons that relate to the act of forgiving by the person who committed the wrong has a therapeutic effect by making them stronger (Tekinalp and Terzi, 2012). Individuals who are able to forgive others, see reduced levels of anger and enmity (Thoresen et al., 2000). The affections that they harbor for others, on the other hand, increase (Fitzgibbons, 1998). Furthermore, individuals who are capable of forgiving relatively easily have an easier time in trusting others in interpersonal relationships, and are able to act independently of past acts and individuals (Hallowell, 2005). Forgiveness can reduce and even destroy situations that damage interpersonal relationships. In addition, forgiveness has an important role in reducing the poisonous relationship (Kaya, 2019). People who have difficulties forgiving, on the other hand, have problems in establishing long-term positive interpersonal relationships (Hallowell, 2005). Forgiveness is considered crucial for both the aggrieved and the aggrieving party in a relationship. Thanks to forgiveness, the individual who did the wrong is relieved of a guilty conscience, whereas the individual who was hurt is relieved of the mental burden of the act (Kara, 2009). Hallowell (2005) argues that people who are able to forgive, enjoy reduced levels of anger, feelings of enmity and tendency to blame oneself, and have increased levels of optimism and means of social support. Therefore, forgiveness plays a major part in sustaining healthy interpersonal relationships, and handling conflicts. It affects mental health positively and increases the level of happiness of individuals (Kaya and Orçan, 2019). It contributes to the health of social relations as well as physical and mental health (Aydın, 2017). McCullough et al., (1997) characterizes the forgiveness process with reduced levels of willingness for revenge or avoiding the individual who committed the wrongdoing, and changes such as a desire to reach a settlement despite the hurtful acts on behalf of that person. In the same way, Kachadourian et al., (2005) defines the act of forgiveness of others as an emotional transformation with reduced negative emotions and increased positive emotions towards the person thought to have acted in a wrong way.

The literature reveals that efforts for positive conflict resolution increase in parallel to an increased level of forgiveness (Ruvolo and Veroff, 1997; Enright and Fitzgibbons, 2000). Park and Antonioni (2007) found that extroverted individuals who are open to development and who have positive styles in their relationships with others are endowed with positive conflict resolution skills and have the ability to face individuals in their conflict. However, no studies investigating a possible correlation between forgiveness, interpersonal relationship styles, and conflict resolution can be found. In this context, it is unknown if forgiveness plays a part in conflict resolution processes concerning interpersonal relationships. Therefore, the analysis of the potential role of forgiving others and the situations involved may be, in terms of mediating in the context of interpersonal relationship styles and conflict resolution tendencies, particularly during the university years characterized by a more intense level of interpersonal relationships and conflicts in relationships, and is worthy of further investigation. If it is determined in this research that forgiving oneself, others and the situation play a mediating role in the conflict resolution process forgiveness can be added to individual and group psychological counseling and guidance practices for conflict resolution. By giving general forgiveness training to individuals, it can be ensured that they resolve conflicts in interpersonal relationships in a positive constructive way.

This study investigates the mediating role of forgiveness in the context of interpersonal relationship styles and conflict resolution tendencies. The study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1) Is there a significant relationship between the forgiveness levels of individual students, and their interpersonal relationship and conflict resolution tendency scores?
- 2) Does the forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others and forgiveness of situations play a mediating role in the context of nourishing relationship styles and conflict resolution tendencies of students?
- 3) Does the forgiveness of self, others and situations play a mediating role in the context of toxic relationship styles and conflict resolution tendencies of the students?

## METHOD

The relational survey model was used in this study, which examined whether self-forgiveness, forgiving others, and forgiving the situation had a mediating role in the relationship between interpersonal relationship styles and conflict resolution tendencies of university students. Relational screening model is a research model that aims to determine the existence and/or degree of change between two or more variables (Karasar, 2013).

## SAMPLE

This study was carried out with 409 students enrolled in the Faculty of Education, the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, the Faculty of Science and Arts, the Faculty of Engineering, and the School of Physical Education and Sports at Gaziantep University. Random cluster sampling method was used within the scope of this research. The distribution of the participants by gender, faculty and grade level is given in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Distribution of Students by Gender, Faculties and Classes*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Frequency (n)</i>	<i>Percentage (%)</i>
<i>Gender</i>		
Female	254	62
Male	155	38
<i>Faculty</i>		
Faculty of Education	87	21,3
Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences	47	11,5
Faculty of Science and Arts	152	37,2
Faculty of Engineering	85	20,8
School of Physical Education and Sports	38	9,3
<i>Grade Level</i>		
3rd Grade	204	49,9
4th Grade	205	50,1

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that 254 (62%) of the students participating in the research are female and 155 (38%) are male. Of the students, 87 (21.3%) were in the Faculty of Education, 47 (11.5%) were in the Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, 152 (37.2%) were in the Faculty of Science and Arts, 85 (20.8%) were in the Faculty of Engineering, 38 (9.3%) of them are studying at the School of Physical Education and Sports. 204 (49.9%) of the study group were 3rd grade students and 205 (50.1%) were 4th grade students.

## DATA COLLECTION TOOLS

Within the scope of the research 3 different scales were used with a personal information form prepared by the researcher.

*Heartland Forgiveness Scale:* To assess the forgiveness tendencies of university students, the Heartland Forgiveness Scale developed by Thompson et al. (2005) was used. The scale is composed of 18 items, and entails 3 subscales, namely forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations. The first 6 items on the scale (items 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6) focus on forgiveness of self, the second 6 items (items 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12) focus on forgiveness of others, and the last 6 items (items 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18) focus on forgiveness of situations. The scale is a 7-point likert scale, and the lowest and highest possible scores possible on a given subscale are 6 and 42 respectively. The lowest and highest scores for the overall scale, in turn, are 18 and 126 respectively. In scoring the scale, items 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15 and 17 are scored in reverse. The scale was adapted to Turkish culture by Bugay and Demir (2010), with a study based on a set of 376 university students. The confirmatory factor analysis applied found the goodness of fit index (GFI) to be 0.92; while the comparative fit index (CFI) was 0.90. Finally, the root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) was 0.06. The scale was found to have adequate structural validity. Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the reliability of the Turkish version of the scale. The Cronbach's alpha figures for the subscales were found to be 0.64 for forgiveness of self, 0.79 for forgiveness of others, and 0.76 for forgiveness of situations. On the other hand, the Cronbach's alpha for the overall forgiveness score was 0.81. The scale was found to be based on 3 factors, in line with the original version, and is applicable to a Turkish sample. In this study, the reliability coefficient of the Heartland Forgiveness Scale was found to be .78.

*Interpersonal Relationship Styles Scale:* The Interpersonal Relationship Styles Scale was developed by Şahin et al. (1994), as a self-assessment scale serving to identify styles employed by individuals in their interpersonal relationships. The 4-point likert scale is composed of 31 items. The scale serves to identify an individual's style of interaction with other individuals. The scale is composed of two subscales assessing nourishing and toxic relationship styles. The subscale focusing on nourishing relationship styles, in turn, is based on two subscales on open and respectful relationships, whereas the toxic relationship styles subscale is again composed of two subscales, regarding selfish and contemptuous relationships. The Cronbach's alpha figures for these two subscales were found to be 0.81 for the toxic relationship styles subscale, and 0.80 for the nourishing relationship styles subscale. In conclusion, the scale was found to have sufficient structural validity. High scores in nourishing relationship styles indicate a positive style towards relationships, whereas high scores regarding toxic relationship styles suggest a negative outlook towards interpersonal relationships. In this study, the reliability coefficient for the nourishing relationship style was found to be .80. The reliability coefficient for the toxic relationship style was found to be .84.

*Conflict Resolution Tendencies Scale:* The conflict resolution tendencies scale developed by Akbalık (2001) was used to assess the conflict resolution skills of university students. The scale is composed of 55 items, and entails 5 subscales assessing the willingness to understand the other person involved in the conflict, listening skills, focusing on the needs of both parties, socialization, and anger management. The scale is a 4-point likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient for the scale was found to be 0.91, while the subscale were found to correlate with each other in the 0.27 to 0.57 range. The scale was found to have adequate structural validity. 21 items are scored in reverse. The lowest and highest scores possible with the scale are 55 and 220, respectively. The higher the score in the overall scale and its subscales, suggests a stronger inclination to settle conflicts. In this study, the reliability coefficient of the Conflict Resolution Tendencies Scale was found to be .78.

*Personal Information Form:* The personal information form was designed by the researcher, to investigate the demographics of the students who comprised the study group. The personal information form includes the participants' gender, faculty and grade level information.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The study was first checked to see if the variables exhibited a normal distribution or not, and eventually found a normal distribution. Kolmogorov – Smirnov test, one of the normality tests, was

used. Skewness and kurtosis values were checked. Thereafter, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was applied to investigate the correlations between the variables. Then, in line with the general objectives of the study, the structural equation modelling (SEM) and Amos app were used to see if forgiveness of self, others, and the situation played a mediating part in the relationship between interpersonal relationship styles and the conflict resolution tendencies.

## RESULTS

In this section, first of all, descriptive statistics about the variables, correlation analysis and finally the findings of the mediation analysis are given. Descriptive statistics regarding the variables in the study are given in Table 2.

**Tablo 2.** Descriptive Statistics of Dependent and Independent Variables

Variables	(n=409)	$\bar{X}$	Ss	Min.	Max.
Conflict Resolution Tendency		170,4478	21,72665	104,00	216,00
Self Forgiveness		27,1077	4,97059	9,00	39,00
Others Forgiveness		25,5393	7,03221	6,00	42,00
Situations Forgiveness		27,3662	5,52853	6,00	42,00
Nourishing Relationship Style		31,9929	7,24761	10,00	48,00
Toxic Relationship Style		13,6308	6,85930	3,00	36,00

As can be seen in Table 2, the mean of the conflict resolution tendency scores of the sample is 170.44 (Ss=21.72), the mean of the self-forgiveness scores is 27.10, (Ss=4.97), the mean of the forgiveness scores is 25.53 (Ss=7.03), and the mean of the forgiveness scores is 27.36 (Ss=5.52), the mean of the nurturing relationship style scores was 31.99 (Ss=7.24), and the mean of the toxic relationship style scores was 13.63 (Ss=6.85).

The Pearson Product Moment Correlation Analysis was applied to identify the correlation between the variables investigated in the study. The results are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Correlations between the Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Conflict Resolution Tendency	1					
2.Self Forgiveness	.285**	1				
3.Others Forgiveness	.271**	.198**	1			
4.Situations Forgiveness	.415**	.413**	.343**	1		
5.Nourishing Relationship Style	.494**	.164**	.157**	.243**	1	
6.Toxic Relationship Style	-.498**	-.195**	-.076**	-.274**	-.260**	1

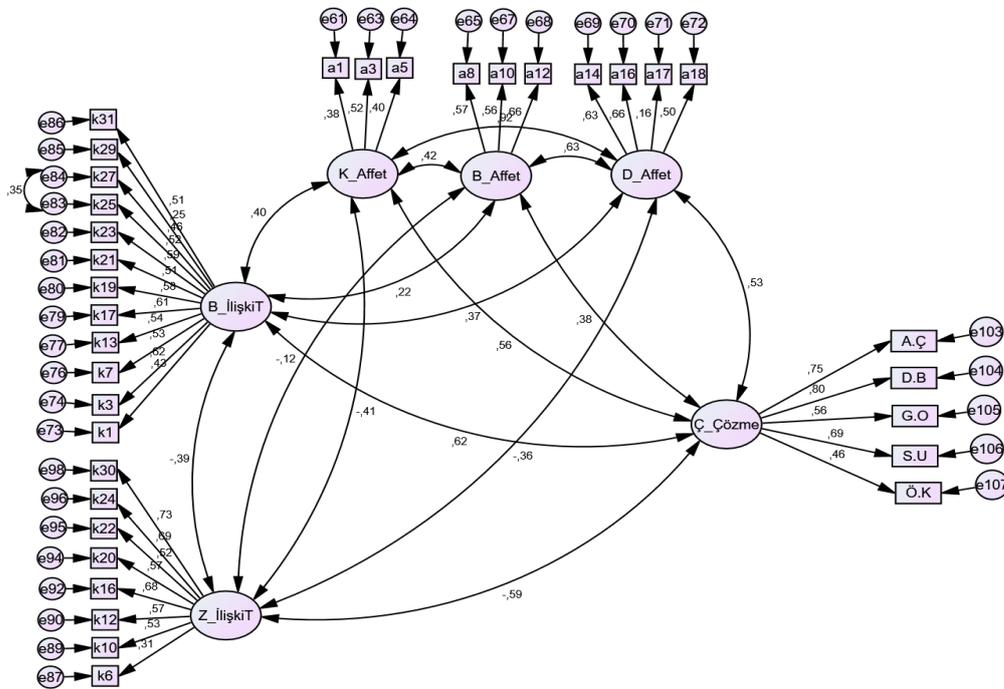
\*\*p<.05

Table 3 shows the correlation levels between the variables and reveals that a slight but positive correlation exists between conflict resolution tendencies and the forgiveness of self (r=0.285, p<0.05) and the forgiveness of others (r=0.271, p< 0.05), whereas the correlation with the forgiveness of situations was more pronounced, as a moderate and positive correlation (r=0.415, p< 0.05). A moderate positive correlation was found between the conflict resolution tendency and the nourishing relationship style (r=0.494, p<0.05), while the correlation between the conflict resolution tendency and the toxic relationship style was moderate and negative (r=-0.498, p<0.05). The nourishing relationship style was found to exhibit a slight but positive correlation with the forgiveness of self (r=0.164, p<0.05), of others (r=0.157, p<0.05), and situations (r=0.243, p<0.05). The toxic relationship style was found to exhibit a slight negative correlation with the forgiveness of self (r=0.195, p<0.05), of others (r=0.076, p<0.05), and situations (r=0.274, p<0.05).

This section covers the SEM analyses regarding the theoretical model tested in the study. First of all, before putting the proposed theoretical model to test, the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was applied to see to what extent the observed variables of the assessment model represent the latent ones, and to identify the structural correlations between the latent variables. The standardized factor loads derived through the analysis were reviewed, and led to proposed modifications of items 25 and 27 regarding the nourishing relationship style. A review of the items 25 “I am honest in terms of sharing my thoughts” and 27 “I am honest in terms of sharing my emotions” led to the observation that the contents of these are quite similar. Therefore, modifications were made to achieve a better fit with the model. Once better model fit values were achieved, mediation tests were applied. The details regarding the assessment model are presented in Figure 1.

According to the proposed mode, nourishing and toxic relationship styles are considered the predictor variables, whereas the forgiveness of self, others, and situations are the mediating variables. Finally, the conflict resolution tendency was the predicted variable.

**Figure 1.** Assessment Model based on Standardized Coefficients (\*)



(\*) B\_İlişkiT: Nourishing relationship style, Z\_İlişkiT: Toxic relationship style, K\_Affet: Forgiveness of self, B\_Affet: Forgiveness of others, D\_Affet: Forgiveness of situations, Ç\_Çözme: Conflict resolution tendency, A.Ç: Willingness to understand, D.B: Listening skills, G.O: Focusing on needs, S.U: Socialization, Ö.K: Anger management.

The level of fit with the assessment model with standardized coefficients as specified in Figure 1, and the acceptable fit values are specified in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Acceptable Fit and Model Fit Values regarding the Assessment Model

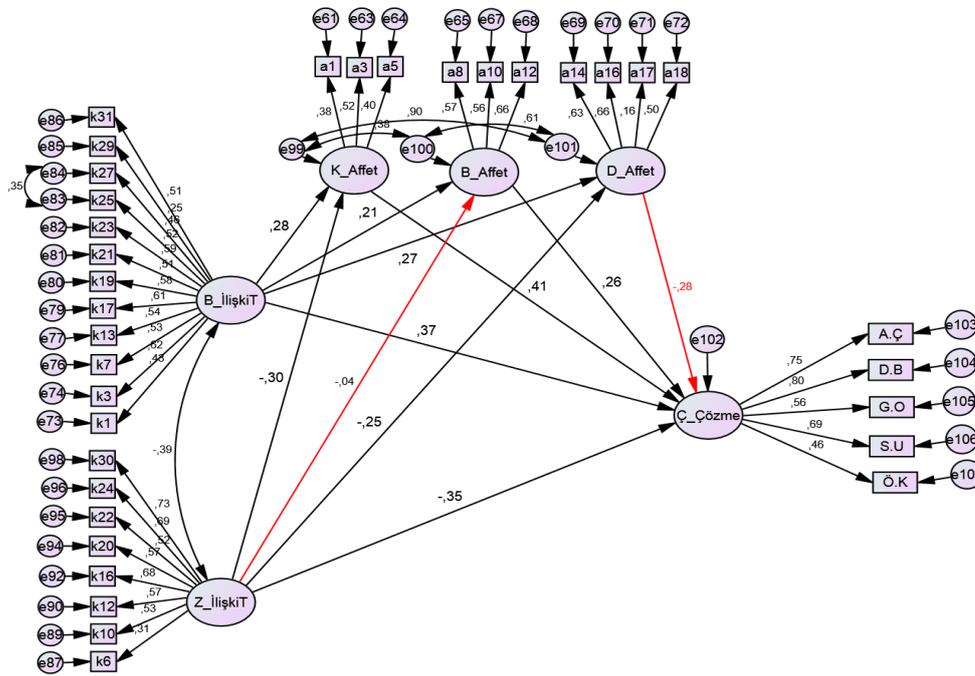
Fit Index	Recommended Values	Values
$\chi^2/df$	$2df < \chi^2/df < 3df$	1,658
RMSEA	$0 < RMSEA < 0.05$	0.040
CFI	$0.90 < CFI < 1.00$	0.895
GFI	$0.85 < GFI < 1.00$	0.885
RMR	$0.05 < RMR < 0.10$	0.062

In the context of the figures provided in Table 4,  $\chi^2/df = 1.658$  being smaller than 3, and CFI figure being equal or at least close to 0.90 is deemed to suggest acceptable fit in terms of the model. A RMSEA figure less than 0.05 is, again, an indicator of a good fit. The values are observed to be within the accepted thresholds.

The proposed structural equation model analyzed the mediating role of forgiveness of self, others, and situations in the context of the relationship between the nourishing interpersonal relationship style as well as the toxic interpersonal relationship style on the one hand, and the individual elements of conflict resolution tendencies, namely the willingness to understand, listening skills, focusing on needs, socialization, and anger management on the other.

The model presenting the standardized path coefficients for model 1 are presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Standardized Path Coefficients for Model 1 (\*)



(\*) B\_İlişkiT: Nourishing relationship style, Z\_İlişkiT: Toxic relationship style, K\_Affet: Forgiveness of self, B\_Affet: Forgiveness of others, D\_Affet: Forgiveness of situations, Ç\_Çözme: Conflict resolution tendency, A.Ç: Willingness to understand, D.B: Listening skills, G.O: Focusing on needs, S.U: Socialization, Ö.K: Anger management

The level of fit with the standardized path coefficients of Model 1 as shown in Figure 2, and the acceptable fit values are specified in Table 5.

Table 5. Acceptable Fit and Model Fit Values Regarding Model

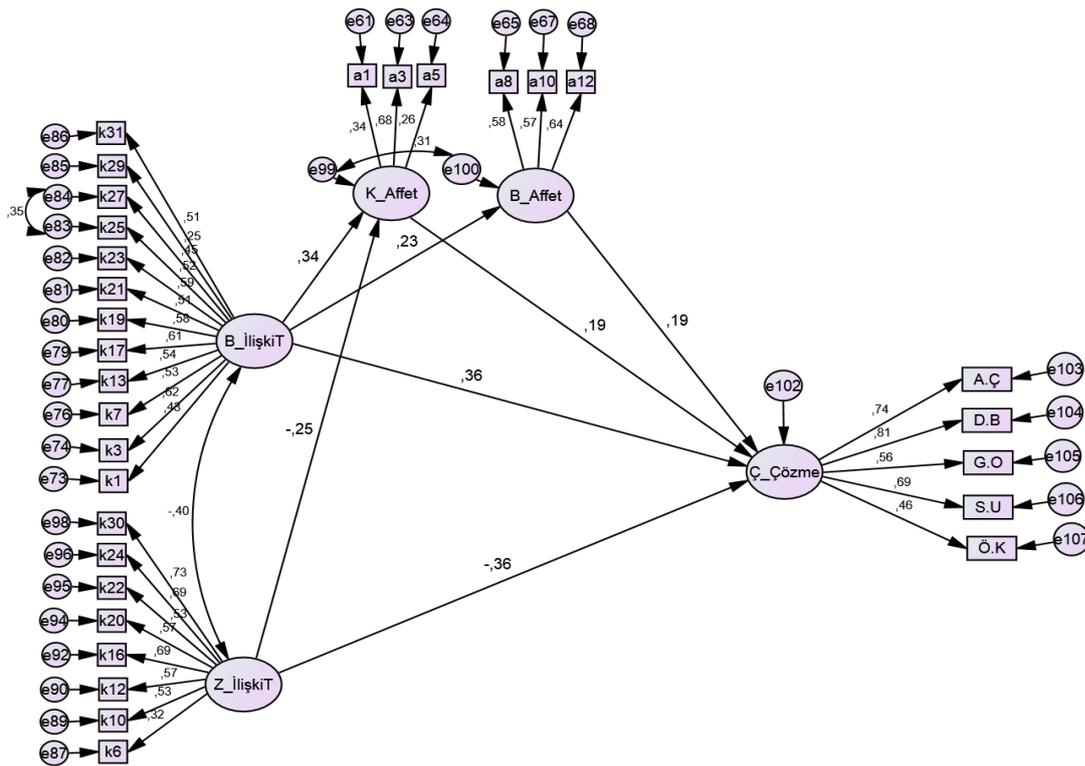
Fit Index	Recommended Values	Values
$\chi^2/df$	$2df < \chi^2/df < 3df$	1,653
RMSEA	$0.05 < RMSEA < 0.08$	0.040
CFI	$0.90 < CFI < 1.00$	0.895
GFI	$0.85 < GFI < 1.00$	0.885
RMR	$0.05 < RMR < 0.10$	0.062

In the context of Table 5,  $\chi^2/df = 1.658$  being smaller than 3, while RMSEA being smaller than 0.05 indicates a good level of fit with the model. A CFI figure equal or close to 0.90, on the other hand, also suggests a good level of fit for the model. The analysis reveals that the proposed model exhibits an acceptable level of fit.

A detailed review of Model 1 shows that the nourishing relationship style has a positive effect on forgiveness of self, others, and situations, whereas the toxic relationship style had a negative effect on the forgiveness of self and the situation. According to Model 1, the nourishing relationship style has an effect of 0.28 on the forgiveness of self, of 0.22 on the forgiveness of others, and again of 0.28 on the forgiveness of the situations. The toxic relationship style, on the other hand, has an effect of -0.29 on the forgiveness of self, and of -0.24 on the forgiveness of the situations. The nourishing relationship style has an effect of 0.37 on conflict resolution tendency. The toxic relationship style has an effect of -0.36 on conflict resolution tendency. The path from the toxic relationship style to the forgiveness of others is found to be insignificant, just like the path from the forgiveness of the situations to conflict resolution tendency. As the forgiveness of the situations did not have an effect on the output variable, it was removed from the analysis, culminating in a new model.

The model presenting the standardized path coefficients for model 2 thus developed are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Standardized Path Coefficients for Model 2 (\*)



(\*) B\_İlişkiT: Nourishing relationship style, Z\_İlişkiT: Toxic relationship style, K\_Affet: Forgiveness of self, B\_Affet: Forgiveness of others, D\_Affet: Forgiveness of situations, Ç\_Çözme: Conflict resolution tendency, A.Ç: Willingness to understand, D.B: Listening skills, G.O: Focusing on needs, S.U: Socialization, Ö.K: Anger management.

The level of fit with the standardized path coefficients of Model 2 as shown in Figure 3, and the acceptable fit values are specified in Table 6.

**Table 6. Acceptable Fit And Model Fit Values Regarding Model 2**

<i>Fit Index</i>	<i>Recommended Values</i>	<i>Values</i>
$\chi^2/df$	$2df < \chi^2/df < 3df$	1,762
RMSEA	$0.05 < RMSEA < 0.08$	0.043
CFI	$0.90 < CFI < 1.00$	0.894
GFI	$0.85 < GFI < 1.00$	0.893
RMR	$0.05 < RMR < 0.10$	0.058

In the context of Table 6,  $\chi^2/df = 1.762$  being smaller than 3, while RMSEA being smaller than 0.05 indicates a good level of fit with the model. A CFI figure equal or close to 0.90, on the other hand, also suggests an acceptable level of fit for the model. The analysis reveals that the developed model exhibits an acceptable level of fit.

A detailed review of Model 2 shows that the nourishing relationship style has a positive effect on forgiveness of self, others, and situations, whereas the toxic relationship style had a negative effect on the forgiveness of self and the situations. According to Model 2, a nourishing relationship style has an effect on the forgiveness of self of 0.34, and on the forgiveness of others as 0.23. The toxic relationship style, on the other hand, has an -0.25 effect on the forgiveness of self. The nourishing relationship style has an effect of 0.36 on conflict resolution tendency. The toxic relationship style has an effect of -0.36 on conflict resolution tendency. When the variables of forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others are introduced into the relationship between the nourishing relationship style and the conflict resolution tendency, the correlation between the nourishing relationship style and the conflict resolution tendency gets weaker. In the same way, when the forgiveness of others is introduced into the relationship between the toxic relationship style and the conflict resolution tendency, the correlation again gets weaker. Therefore, the forgiveness of self and of others have, arguably, a partly mediating effect on the relationship between the nourishing relationship style and the conflict resolution tendency. Also, the forgiveness of others seems to have a partly mediating effect on the relationship between the toxic relationship style and the conflict resolution tendency. The Sobel Test was applied to see if the partial mediating effect of the independent variables were significant or not.

The results of the Sobel Test regarding the relationship between the nourishing and toxic relationship styles and the conflict resolution tendency, through the mediation of the forgiveness of self are shown in Table 7.

**Table 7. The Effect of Nourishing and Toxic Relationship Styles On Conflict Resolution Tendencies Through the Mediation of the Forgiveness Of Self**

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Direct Effect</i>	<i>Indirect Effect</i>	<i>Total Effect</i>
Nourishing Relationship Style	0,45	0,034	0,484
Toxic Relationship Style	0,451	0,033	0,484

Table 7 reveals that, according to the Sobel Test, the nourishing relationship style has an indirect effect on conflict resolution tendencies through the mediation of the forgiveness of self is 0.034. The toxic relationship style, on the other hand, was found to have an indirect effect on conflict resolution tendencies, through mediation of the forgiveness of self as 0.033.

The results of the Sobel Test regarding the relationship between the nourishing relationship style and the conflict resolution tendency, through the mediation of the forgiveness of others are shown in Table 8.

**Table 8.** *The Effect of the Nourishing Relationship Style on Conflict Resolution Tendencies Through the Mediation of Forgiveness of Others*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Direct Effect</i>	<i>Indirect Effect</i>	<i>Total Effect</i>
Nourishing Relationship Style	-0,448	-0,036	-0,484

Table 8 reveals that, according to the Sobel Test, the nourishing relationship style has an indirect effect on conflict resolution tendencies through the mediation of forgiveness of others, being -0.036.

In the light of these findings, one can argue that forgiveness of self and forgiveness of others play a partial mediating role in the relationship between the nourishing relationship style and the conflict resolution tendency, while the forgiveness of self plays a partial mediating role in the relationship between a toxic relationship style and the conflict resolution tendency.

## DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

It was found that there were positive and significant relationships between the tendency to resolve conflict, forgiveness of self, others, the situation and the nurturing relationship style, but there were negative significant relationships with the toxic relationship style; There are positive relationships between nurturing relationship style and self-forgiveness, forgiving others and forgiving situation, toxic relationship style and self-forgiveness, forgiving others and forgiving situation and negative relationships. It was found that self-forgiveness had a partial mediator role in the relationship between toxic relationship style and conflict resolution tendency.

The analyses revealed a positive and significant correlation between the nourishing relationship style and the conflict resolution tendency. In other words, as the nourishing relationship styles of individuals become more emphasized in interpersonal relationships, their conflict resolution tendencies also grow. Individuals boasting a nourishing relationship style in interpersonal relationships can express themselves more clearly, and are more open to communication, and are willing to maintain the relationship. Individuals who have a nourishing relationship style also are often expected to have a number of skills such as relationship maintenance, reconciliation, and empathy, which play a part in conflict resolution processes. This state of affairs can account for the significant correlation between the two variables. The literature suggests that the personality traits of openness to development and conformity, often observed in individuals with a nourishing relationship style are predictors of certain conflict resolution behaviors such as “confrontation”, “public/private behavior”, “emotional expression”, “approach/avoidance”, and “self disclosure” (Basim et al., 2009). There are also some findings attesting the willingness to maintain social relationships on part of individuals who exhibit conformist behaviors in interpersonal relationships (Jensen-Campbell and Graziano, 2001). The literature is also not bereft of findings suggesting extroverted individuals who are keen for development have, in addition to more positive and social outlooks, rather constructive attitudes towards confrontation with persons with whom they have conflicts, in line with the findings of the present study (Park and Antonioni, 2007). In the present study, a positive and significant correlation was observed between the nourishing relationship style and the forgiveness of self. In other words, the higher the level of nourishing relationship style employed in interpersonal relationships, the stronger the tendency for forgiveness of self. The individuals who exhibit a nourishing relationship style in interpersonal relationships are noted to have the will to seek acceptance, and value and respect oneself and others, as character traits. The individuals who are capable of forgiveness of self are able to accept their mistakes, and cherish themselves. In parallel to these findings, Worthington (1998) also found that an openness to new experiences increased the forgiveness levels. The study also found a positive and significant relationship between the forgiveness of self and the conflict resolution tendency. In other words, the higher the forgiveness of self that an individual can exhibit, the stronger their tendency to resolve conflicts experienced in any interpersonal relationship. Through the forgiveness process, which is embraced as a means to do away with the feeling of guilt associated with

a mistake one made or an event experienced, the individual turns to themselves and raises their awareness levels about themselves. Through such increased awareness, they gain the ability to have a more objective outlook towards their mistakes, and seek reconciliation in order to discover impartial solutions to the conflicts experienced in interpersonal relationships. This finding was confirmed in the literature, as Jacinto and Edwards (2011) found that individuals capable of forgiveness of self also have the skills to settle conflicts, maintain their interpersonal relationships, and experience new relationships.

The analysis to understand the mediating role of the forgiveness of self in the relationship between the nourishing relationship style and the conflict resolution tendency led to the conclusion that the forgiveness of self had a partial mediating role. Individuals who have a nourishing relationship style engage in open, clear and non-aggressive communications in their relationships with the others. That is why individuals with the nourishing relationship style can employ positive conflict resolution skills in the face of problems they face. Any increase in awareness about the mistakes one committed, followed by the forgiveness of self among individuals who employ nourishing relationship styles in interpersonal relationships can also lead to increased levels of conflict resolution tendency. Individuals who are capable of forgiveness of self are also expected to enjoy increased levels of motivation towards conflict resolution.

In the present study, a positive and significant correlation was observed between the nourishing relationship style and the forgiveness of others. The higher the use of nourishing relationship style in interpersonal relationships, the higher the levels of forgiving others would be exhibited by that individual. The nourishing relationship style characterized by an open communication style respectful of the thoughts of others ensure the maintenance and development of interpersonal relationships. In the same way, individuals capable of forgiving a person with whom they had a problem with would also ensure the maintenance of the relationship. A glance at the literature reveals that, in parallel to the conclusions of the present study, a personality characterized by conformity and harmony with others would also exhibit positive correlation with forgiving others (Ross et al., 2004). The present study also found a positive and significant correlation between forgiveness of others and the conflict resolution tendency. The higher the level of forgiveness one has for others who may have hurt them, the higher their conflict resolution tendency would be. In the context of forgiving others, the individual sees reduced willingness to seek revenge or to avoid the person who committed the mistake, and also increased willingness to reconcile with the other person despite the hurtful acts the latter had committed (McCullough et al., 1997). Forgiveness of the person that hurt the individual, as a means to resolve the conflict rather than seeking revenge or avoiding the problem, can serve to maintain the relationship between the individuals involved. This finding of the present study support those of others (Ruvolo and Veroff, 1997; Enright and Fitzgibbons, 2000) who argue that conflict resolution and forgiveness are related. Another study (Fincham et al., 2004) noted findings to support the claim that forgiveness is a predictor of conflict resolution.

The analysis to understand the mediating role of the forgiveness of others in the relationship between the nourishing relationship style and the conflict resolution tendency led to the conclusion that the forgiveness of others had a partial mediating role. Individuals who have nourishing relationship styles in terms of their interpersonal relationships exhibit increased levels of conflict resolution tendency, if they succeed in forgiving the individuals who hurt them. Individuals who have nourishing relationship styles and high levels of conflict resolution tendency are also inclined to establish new relationships and maintain existing ones. They can do so by forgiving the person who hurt them. An individual who utilizes the nourishing relationship style can bravely confront the person who hurt them in the context of a conflict. However, even if reconciliation is sought in the conflict, the resentment may linger, or efforts may be made to overcome the negative emotions only. McCullough et al. (1997) argue that, in the process of forgiving others, the individual experiences reduced levels of revenge willingness or avoidance of the person who committed the mistake, and would instead exhibit

a desire for reconciliation despite the hurtful behavior on part of the person who committed the mistake. Forgiveness of others not only clears negative emotions, but also calls for positive ones (Fincham et al., 2004). The person starts to harbor positive emotions towards the person who hurt them, and makes efforts to settle conflicts in a positive way. Other studies found a strong correlation between forgiveness and behavior that avoids revenge and instead engages in a reconciliatory attitude (Watkins et al., 2011). Wieselquist (2009), in turn, found that forgiveness among individuals who engage in a romantic relationship is a predictor of trust in and satisfaction with the relationship.

The study found a negative but significant correlation between the toxic relationship style and the conflict resolution tendency. One needs to have a tendency for positive settlement of the conflicts, with a view to maintaining interpersonal relations. Negative traits such as “making inappropriate jokes”, “taunting”, “ridiculing others”, and “bragging” observed in individuals who have a toxic relationship style are among the factors with a negative effect on conflict resolution process. In a toxic relationship style, the individual hurts the person they contact, and may suffer the disruption of the interpersonal relationship. A person with a toxic relationship style would not be expected to be willing to resolve the conflicts that may be experienced. Therefore, the individuals who embrace a toxic relationship would not be expected to solve the conflicts in a positive way. The study also found a negative yet significant correlation between the toxic relationship style and forgiveness of self. The lower the forgiveness of self, the more prominent would be their toxic relationship style in their interpersonal relations. Forgiveness is correlated negatively with anger, aggressiveness and vindictiveness, and positively with harmony and empathetic skills (Berry et al., 2005). Individuals who cannot forgive themselves and thus suffer negative emotions would be expected to exhibit a toxic relationship style in their interpersonal relationships, taking the form of resorting to insults, hurting others, and failing to respect the rights of others.

The analysis to understand the mediating role of forgiveness of self in the relationship between the toxic relationship style and the conflict resolution tendency led to the conclusion that the “forgiveness of self” had a partial mediating role. In the case of toxic relationship style, the individual would insist on her own position, and refrain from reconciliation with the other person involved in the conflict. An individual who employs the toxic relationship style may fail to control their emotions and experience anger easily in any relationship. According to Enright et al. (1996), forgiveness is “making efforts to develop positive emotions and reactions such as mercy, empathy, and generosity instead of anger, frustration and revenge.” These points lead to the conclusion that, through the process of forgiving, the individual’s anger can be replaced with positive attitudes such as compassion, generosity, and empathy. The means to do so, on the other hand, is through an awareness of one’s own mistakes, followed by forgiveness for them.

This research is limited to 3rd and 4th year students who continue their university education. Only students studying at the Faculty of Education, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Faculty of Engineering and School of Physical Education and Sports were included in the study. Despite these limitations, some suggestions were made within the scope of the findings of the study. The research was applied on university students. The application of this model to married people or people living in different age groups and different regions will make significant contributions to the generalizability of the model. In the study, whether the model differs according to gender was excluded from the scope of the study. In future studies, the gender factor can also be added to the scope of the research. In other studies examining the mediating role of forgiveness in the conflict resolution process, different dimensions of interpersonal relationships can be examined by including them in the research. From the results of this research, it was determined that forgiveness plays an important role in interpersonal relations and conflict resolution process. For this reason, forgiveness of self and others can be added to studies aiming to improve individuals' interpersonal relationships and conflict resolution skills.

**AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION**

-The first author made significant contributions to the design of the study, analysis and interpretation of the data.

-The second author was involved in drafting the article, interpreting the results, and critically revising it for important intellectual content.

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