

The Effects of Forgiveness Education Program for University Students

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Abstract: Background: The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of forgiveness education program for university students. It aimed to grasp how forgiveness programs affected life satisfaction, the degrees of forgiveness, anger, depression, self-esteem, spirituality and happiness of university students. **Methods:** Subjects were 43 students as an experimental group and 43 students as a control group. One was an experimental group which participated in a forgiveness education program in K University, and the other was a control group which was not participated in any programs in other universities. **Findings:** Following the intervention, the experimental group experienced a significant improvement in degrees of forgiveness ($t=-2.41, p<.05$), self-esteem ($t=-2.12, p<.05$), happiness ($t=-3.01, p<.01$), spirituality ($t=-2.56, p<.05$) and forgiveness ($t=-2.41, p<.05$). But experimental group experienced a significant decreased anger expression ($t=3.03, p<.01$). There was a slight difference on the anger expression, spirituality, happiness and the degrees of forgiveness between the experimental and the control group. **Improvements:** This study implies that a forgiveness education program was effective in improving university students' degrees of forgiveness, happiness, spirituality, self-esteem, and reducing anger. Systematic and specific a forgiveness education program will be needed for future study.

Keywords: Forgiveness, Education, Program, University students, Effects

I. INTRODUCTION

We have hurt or we have been hurt others between relationships while living. Especially due to some hurt by someone in childhood, he or she has problems in building relationships between others, lowers self-esteem or suffers when starting a new job. The students in Korea have felt wounded by someone closer such as their parents, siblings, peers, teachers etc., and experienced agony, anger, depression and anxiety by accumulating some wound. Since they also have a variety of chances to form new relationships at university, actively experiencing relationships, they are satisfied with the expanded connections or depressed and unhappy owing to conflicts resulting from the process [1]. Such internal problems may cause harmful influence on human relations or negative effect on the current life. At this point, people will cope with in various ways to reduce negative emotions due to the wound.

Forgiveness can be a positive and healthy solution to the

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wound felt unfairly due to personal relations [2, 3]. Forgiveness is needed for university students because it resolves conflicts and enhances happiness [1]. Through forgiveness being relieved anger and fear, university students can get assistance to play their own role as a newly perfect human [4]. That is, forgiveness can free the person who was wounded unfairly from negative emotions and make him or her stop doing negative behaviors such as hostility, intention for revenge and verbal aggression.[5]. It is reported that A man hurt by others who forgives easily can enhance self-esteem by improving the positive sides and reduce anger, depression and anxiety.[6, 7]. There is some researches in which forgiveness help recover injured relationships and elevate subjective well-being and life quality. [8].

Starting in 1990 in Korea, various researches on effectiveness of forgiveness including the concept definition, the procedure of its understanding, development of its scale and program development have been progressed [9]. Forgiveness research related to factors has mostly been dealt; particularly a lot of effects researches after forgiveness education programs have been conducted for elementary school students [9], few for university levels.

It is necessary for social welfare and nursing students whose major is human services providing services from cradle to grave to improve one's life quality and conduct the effectiveness of forgiveness through its educational program. They are suffering from a lot of stresses caused by heavy curriculums, onsite practice such as health and welfare institutes, responsibilities on providing services, a lot of stresses caused by professional ethics and criterion for life [10]. Moreover due to insecurity of employment and future, it is believed that life satisfaction and happiness has been lowered. Therefore, this study is to examine effects on anger, the degrees of forgiveness, spirituality, depression, self-esteem, happiness, life satisfaction for human service students after applying for forgiveness education programs and to utilize a basic material for developing further systematic forgiveness education programs. It is additionally to resolve conflicts from personal relations, help cure the wound and ultimately heighten their self-esteem, spiritual well-being and happiness by conducting forgiveness education programs.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Research design and subjects

This study was a quasi-experimental research by analyzing the effects of forgiveness education programs



The Effects of Forgiveness Education Program for University Students

both participants and not-participants under the program and using non-equivalent control group pre-posttest design. It was intended to know the differences on life satisfaction, subjective well-being and the status of health, anger, depression, self-esteem, spirituality, the degrees of forgiveness after applying for forgiveness education programs for university students in C city. One was an experimental group which participated in forgiveness education program, and the other was a control group which was not participated in the program. The subjects for the experimental group were the students who selected 'Forgiveness' lecture as a liberal arts course in K University while freshmen who were majoring similar studies near the K University were selected as a control group. 43 students for each group were allocated. The research was progressed only for the students understood research goals and signed on the paper to participate in the research among students who confirmed class goals and subjects on the syllabus, enrolled in the course voluntarily.

2.2. Research instruments

2.2.1. Korean version of the satisfaction with the life scale; K-SWLS

The satisfaction with the life scale is a tool which evaluates the level of life satisfaction consisting of five questions. It is a seven-point scale meaning the higher, the more satisfied with one's life. In this study, the scale used by [11] was measured.

2.2.2. Korean center for epidemiologic studies depression scale: CES-D

Depression scale [12] used in this study was CES-D, an integrated Korean scale which used to use three Korean CES-D domestically. Consisting of total 20 questions and a four-point scale, the total range is from 0 to 60. The higher score one gets, the more highly depressed one gets.

2.2.3. Enright's forgiveness inventory

The degrees of forgiveness were measured by using Enright's Forgiveness Inventory, EFI developed by Enright[13] and EFI-K translated by [14]. This test was made up of total 30 questions including each 10 sub-areas question

under recognition, emotion and behavior. The response against each question was from 'quite yes' (5 points) to 'Not at all' (1 point), meaning the higher point one gets, the higher degrees of forgiveness one gets.

2.2.4. State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory

The contracted form which dealt with three aspects of anger among STAXI-K was used in this study. STAXI(State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory)was developed by Spielberger[15] and STAXI-K was translated by [16]. This scale consisted of total 24 questions including each 8 sub-areas' question under anger control, anger expression and suppression. The response against each question was measured by 5 points scale. The lower points on anger control and the higher points on anger expression and suppression mean higher anger.

2.2.5. Spirituality scale

Developed by [17], it is suitable for Koreans to measure spirituality quantitatively and consists of total 30 questions, 6 constructive factors.

2.2.6. Subjective Happiness Scale: SHS

To measure happiness, 4 questions used by [18] were used. Each question was measured a seven-point scale from 'Not at all.' (1 point) to 'quite yes' (5 points),

2.3. Forgiveness Education program

In this study, an forgiveness education program is based on a forgiveness education program by[6], made up for the class by major professors of psychology, social welfare and nursing, developed and opened a subject as a personal course since 2016 in K university. It is composed of 8 periods, the program operation has progressed lecturing, writing by the participants, presenting and sharing with each other. The course contents of each period are as follows: 1st period as an introductory stage for building reliability, 2nd and 3rd as expositional stages for expressing the wound and understanding self, 4th period as experiencing forgiveness, 5th to 7th as operational stages for treating thought, emotions and behaviors, and final 8th stage for sharing changes and opinions and encouraging each other as seen in table 1.

Table 1: Forgiveness Education Program

session	stage	topic	contents	effects
1	introduction	opening mind	Orientation &Introduction - Pre-test / make a name tag - choosing a friend to forgive / introducing program	facilitate participation /building trust
2	Express	acknowledge and express wounds	forgive Re-creation - skin ship game -the person who wants to remember and is most comfortable -a memoryless and uncomfortable person	Self-openness
3		find my true self	Lecture #1: Review previous study - basic understanding of anger and resentment - why should we learn forgiveness?	Self-understanding
4	decision	Experience forgiveness	Lecture #2 - three stages of anger - free from ascribing others and complaining resentment	Self-discovery/ Understanding others



5	Operation	intervention on thoughts	Lecture #3 - experiencing thought influence - understanding of bad influence by anger -5 false thoughts on forgiveness	Enhancing emotional expressions /empathy	of
6		intervention on feelings	Lecture #4 : PERT Practice -meditation - empty chair experience(change positions and emphasize) -Am I a perfect human being?	emotional intercourse	
7		intervention on action	Lecture #5 : HEAL Practice - pick out infeasible rules - writing a letter to myself	psychological stability	
8	Termination	Proceeding forward	have time to forgive and reconcile with my neighbors - Make a forgiveness lantern -sharing my changes	Positive self-esteem	

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. General characteristics

Both experimental and control group were total 43 students consisting of 25 majored in social welfare and 18 majored in nursing. In the exponential group 37 freshmen were included and in the control group all freshmen were included as seen in Table 2.

Table 2: General Characteristics

characteristics	Exp.(n=43)	Cont.(n=43)
gender	female	29(67.4%)
	male	14(32.6%)
grade	1	37(86.0%)
	2	0(0%)
	3	2(4.7%)

major	4	4(9.3%)	0(0%)
	Social welfare	25(58.1%)	25(58.1%)
	Nursing	18(41.9%)	18(41.9%)
religion	Catholic	13(30.2%)	4(9.3%)
	Protestant	9(20.9%)	7(16.2%)
	Buddhist	1(2.3%)	4(9.3%)
	None	20(46.5%)	27(62.8%)
	Others	0(0%)	1(2.3%)

3.2. Homogeneity test

After comparing to pretest scores for the experimental and control group's homogeneity test, it was certified that two groups were appropriate homogeneous groups showing no significant difference between them as seen in Table 3.

Table 3: Homogeneity Test of Dependent Variables between Two Groups

	Exp. (N=43)	Cont. (N=43)	t	p	
life satisfaction	3.77(.649)	3.77(.895)	.000	1.000	
health status	3.63(.846)	3.88(.793)	-1.447	.152	
anger	control	3.27(.553)	3.31(.568)	-.360	.719
	expression	2.89(.664)	2.86(.576)	.195	.846
	suppression	3.09(.749)	2.94(.539)	.741	.305
spiritual experience	3.39(.569)	3.36(.466)	.200	.842	
happiness	3.39(.657)	3.50(.646)	-.827	.411	
depression	1.77(.447)	1.72(.322)	.561	.576	
self esteem	3.43(.666)	3.62(.530)	-1.486	.141	
forgiveness	2.66(.573)	2.47(.482)	1.655	.102	

3.3 The Effects Verification of the Program

This study was validated using the ANCOVA. The experimental group experienced a significant improvement in degrees of forgiveness ($t=-2.41, p<.05$), self-esteem ($t=-2.12, p<.05$), happiness ($t=-3.01, p<.01$), spirituality ($t=-2.56, p<.05$) and forgiveness ($t=-2.41, p<.05$) as seen in table 4. But

experimental group experienced a significant decreased anger expression ($t=3.03, p<.01$). Anger expression showed significantly low grade on the posttest in the experimental group and spiritual experience, happiness, self-esteem,



The Effects of Forgiveness Education Program for University Students

forgiveness grade showed higher grades in the posttest than in the pretest in the experimental group. While the control group showed no significant differences statistically in average grades both pretest and posttest.

Table 4: Effects of Forgiveness Education Program between Two Groups

variables	groups	pretest	posttest	t	F		
		M(SD)	M(SD)				
life satisfaction	Exp.(N=43)	3.77(.649)	3.70(.832)	.621	.693		
	Cont.(N=43)	3.77(.895)	3.70(.989)	.464			
health status	Exp.(N=43)	3.63(.846)	3.74(.819)	-1.044	.946		
	Cont.(N=43)	3.88(.793)	3.72(1.008)	1.000			
anger	control	Exp.(N=43)	3.27(.553)	3.39(.549)	-1.871	.007	
		Cont.(N=43)	3.31(.568)	3.39(.542)	-1.182		
	expression	Exp.(N=43)	2.89(.664)	2.66(.587)	3.030**		1.38*
		Cont.(N=43)	2.86(.576)	2.84(.524)	.404		
suppression	Exp.(N=43)	3.09(.749)	2.89(.485)	1.735+	3.33		
	Cont.(N=43)	2.94(.539)	2.98(.458)	-.802			
spiritual experience	Exp.(N=43)	3.39(.569)	3.54(.539)	-2.557*	1.92*		
	Cont.(N=43)	3.36(.466)	3.37(.551)	-.125			
happiness	Exp.(N=43)	3.39(.657)	3.59(.654)	-3.005**	.012*		
	Cont.(N=43)	3.50(.646)	3.48(.646)	.323			
depression	Exp.(N=43)	1.77(.447)	1.72(.464)	.839	1.13		
	Cont.(N=43)	1.72(.322)	1.68(.338)	.901			
self esteem	Exp.(N=43)	3.43(.666)	3.59(.668)	-2.119*	3.50+		
	Cont.(N=43)	3.62(.530)	3.57(.547)	.973			
forgiveness	Exp.(N=43)	2.66(.573)	2.86(.403)	-2.413*	.026**		
	Cont.(N=43)	2.47(.482)	2.48(.528)	-.161			

+ .05 < p < .10, * p < .05, ** p < .01

Through this study, students who took forgiveness education program during one semester had effect on anger expression, spiritual experience, happiness, self-esteem and forgiveness. These findings were similar to the study [19] for the subjects of university students who were hurt by personal relations. The results were that anger and anxiety were reduced however depression did not show significant difference. That's because depression may need long term treatment.

In this study, a forgiveness education program had an effect on the degrees of forgiveness enhancement for university students and showed a significant difference statistically compared to the control group. These findings were the same as the existing researches on alcohol addicts [7], women victims of domestic violence [20] and breast cancer patients for middle-aged women [21].

It is considered that forgiveness grades got higher because the subjects acknowledged and expressed the wound through forgiveness education programs and understand others by treating emotions and experiencing forgiveness. The score on anger expression fell in the experimental group and this result was the same as the research on the subject of the old in facilities.[5] It is necessary for university students to minimize conflicts, control, suppress anger effectively and express it properly if they feel happy. Anger control ability will be enhanced if they find the origin of anger, face and

expose it properly through a forgiveness education program. In this study, spirituality was improved significantly in the experimental group and showed a significant difference statistically compared to the control group. This is the same result [5, 21], and it is thought that a forgiveness education program make them find life meaning and purposes, understand others and heightened self-esteem. That's why spirituality may have been enhanced. Students can accept their life positively, have close relations with others and be considerate to others. Therefore forgiveness education programs can be utilized as nursing invention by enhancing positive emotions and keeping healthy life spiritually. In this study, however, depression, self-esteem and life satisfaction showed no remarkable differences statistically between pre and posttest and showed no difference compared to the control group. Hence it is required to do further repetitive research and validate them along with qualitative research.

IV. CONCLUSION

After applying for forgiveness educational program and analyzing its effects for majoring in social welfare and nursing, anger expression in the experimental group was showed a statistically significant reduction, while happiness, self-esteem,



spiritual experience and forgiveness were improved significantly. Anger expression, spiritual experience, happiness, self-esteem, forgiveness grades had a meaningful difference in the experimental group compared to the control group. Consequently, forgiveness education program was so effective for undergraduates that systematic and specific forgiveness education program will be needed for future subjects.

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