

Covert and Overt Forgiveness and Apology Patterns with Intrapersonal and Interpersonal Perspectives

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Description

There are many different reactions about offenses in terms of apology and forgiveness. People who forgive themselves and/or others tend to apologize more to themselves and/or others than those who do not? Are those characteristics related each other? The purpose of this review is to introduce a model conceptualizing covert and overt intrapersonal and interpersonal forgiveness and apology patterns from victim/perpetrator and self/other perspectives (See Table 1 for the proposed new model). Much current work views forgiveness and apology factors from an integrated perspective considering those constructs as an overt expression of a single personality dimension. From the intrapersonal perspective, my new model based on an exploratory approach suggests that forgiving self as a perpetrator should be differentiated from apologizing to self as a victim; thus, the construct of self-apology, which has been largely ignored in the research, should be added to what Enright called “the forgiveness triad”—forgiving others, receiving forgiveness from others, and self-forgiveness [1]. In regard to the construct of self-forgiveness, Enright et al. defined self-forgiveness as “a willingness to abandon self-resentment in the face of one’s own acknowledged objective wrong, while fostering compassion, generosity, and love toward oneself.” He also argued that “whatever one offers to another in interpersonal forgiveness is offered to oneself now in self-forgiveness”. To my knowledge, no forgiveness or apology research has considered the concept of self-apology, although seeking forgiveness or apology from an interpersonal forgiveness perspective has been included in forgiveness research. Receiving/seeking forgiveness from self, or self-apology from within an intrapersonal perspective, has been ignored.

Thus, the new model in this exploratory study adds to the traditional formulation a consideration of intrapersonal patterns of 1) covert self-apology without self-forgiveness, covert self-forgiveness without self-apology, and combined forms of covert self-apology and self-forgiveness from self-self interactions, and 2) covert other-apology and covert other-forgiveness from self-other interactions (numbers in the manuscript matching with numbers in the Table 1). In the model, intrapersonal apology and forgiveness are defined as apology and forgiveness without any direct or indirect behavioral interactions with others; covert self-apology (without self-forgiveness), covert self-forgiveness (without self-apologies), and the combined form of covert self-apology and self-forgiveness are defined as apologizing to self and/or forgiving self about one’s own harmful behavior toward oneself, when intrapersonal transgressions like self-harm behaviors occurs. Covert other-apology and covert other-forgiveness are the processes whereby a self apologizes to the other and forgives the other mentally without any behavioral interactions with the other, following an interpersonal transgression.

From the traditional interpersonal perspective, apology and forgiveness are assessed only from overt behavior patterns; however, even in the absence of direct apology and forgiveness between a victim and offender, a self can show indirect and overt behavioral

efforts to induce an apology from an offender or forgiveness from a victim. Within the interpersonal domain, a comprehensive theory of apology and forgiveness benefits from inclusion of a direct-indirect behavioral dimension—specifically, through considering whether the response to the offense and any related communication is direct or indirect. Consistent with the traditional approach, we also define 3) overt-direct apology and overt-direct forgiveness as directly saying “sorry” to the offender and directly forgiving the offender after an apology, respectively. In addition, we define 4) overt-indirect apology as a self’s behavioral efforts to induce the victim a self has hurt to forgive the self by indirectly displaying positive behaviors like smiles or appropriate emotions like regret. Overt in-direct forgiveness is defined as a self’s behavioral efforts to induce the offender to feel sorry about the wrongdoing by indirectly expressing certain emotions like anger, sadness, disappointments and/or trust to the offender. In the proposed model, after each intrapersonal and interpersonal construct of apology and forgiveness is considered in regard to covert and overt behavior patterns, intrapersonal and interpersonal apology and forgiveness are considered in combination, with additional consideration paid to other personality structures. This pilot study yielded relevant findings from an initial evaluation of the model.

The total sample for our pilot study consisted of 36 participants from an urban university in the northeastern United States (participants received the surveys/experiment credits in psychology courses), after screening 4 participants who showed pseudo-forgiveness scores in Enright Forgiveness Inventory; 18 females and 17 males between 18 and 32 years of age (mean age of 19 years). Of this total sample, 58.3% were European American (female: 42.9% and male: 57.1%) and 19.7% were Asian American students (female: 42.9% and male: 57.1%) from an urban university in the northeastern United States. All participants completed a survey packet including the Personal Responses to Doing Harm (PRDH) scale which is newly developed for this study. Also, the packet includes 1) three indices of apology and forgiveness – i.e., the Enright Forgiveness [2], Forgiving Personality Scale [3], and Apology, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation Scale-R [4] for the convergent validity of the apology and forgiveness items, and 2) other various measurements of personality structures—i.e. the Attachment Questionnaire (AQ; [5]), Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales (CTSPC; [6]), Resilience Scale-10 (RS-10; [7]), Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; [8]), Ethnocultural Empathy

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Offender	Victim	Intrapersonal /Interpersonal Interaction	New Pattern	Items of PRDHS
self	self	Intrapersonal	1) Covert self-apology & self-forgiveness	1. When I hurt myself or do something wrong to myself, I feel sorry but then I am able to let go of the negative emotions soon after
		Intrapersonal w/o self-forgiveness	1) Covert self-apology	I feel sorry but tend to hold onto the negative emotions for a long time
		Intrapersonal w/o self-apology	1) Covert self-forgiveness	I let it go, without feeling sorry about what I have done to myself.
self	others	Intrapersonal	2) Covert other-apology	2. When I do something wrong or hurtful to another person, I usually feel sorry in my mind, but I do NOT tell him/her "I'm sorry" directly or indirectly.
		Direct Interpersonal	3) Overt-direct apology	I usually feel sorry and apologize to him/her for my mistakes, saying "I'm sorry" directly.
		Indirect Interpersonal	4) Overt-indirect apology	I usually feel sorry but I don't say "sorry" directly. Instead, I indirectly induce the person I've hurt or wronged to forgive me by displaying positive behaviors (e.g., smiles) or appropriate emotions (e.g., regret).
others	self	Intrapersonal	2) Covert other-forgiveness	3. When a person does something wrong or hurtful to me, I usually forgive him/her in my mind, even if he/she does NOT tell me "I'm sorry" directly.
		Direct Interpersonal	3) Overt-direct forgiveness	I usually forgive him/her after he/she says "I'm sorry" to me.
		Indirect Interpersonal	4) Overt-indirect forgiveness	I'm willing to forgive him/her even if he/she does NOT say sorry to me. If he/she does not apologize, I induce him/her to feel sorry about his/her hurtful behavior by directly or indirectly expressing certain emotions (such as my anger, sadness, disappointments, uncomfortable feelings, and/or trust) to him/her.

Table 1: Subject of offenses (self/others) and behavioral pattern (passive/covert-active/overt) in intrapersonal and interpersonal views.

Scale (EES; [9]), Toronto Alexithymia scale (TAS-20; [10]), Personal Feeling Questionnaire -2 (PFQ-2; [11]), Limbic System Check List (LSCL-33; [12]), and Symptom Questionnaire (SQ; [13]).

Result is shown at Table 2. From the combination of intrapersonal and interpersonal perspectives of apology and forgiveness, we found consistency; people who feel sorry about their wrongdoing toward themselves but do not forgive themselves tend not to apologize to others by overtly displaying positive behaviors (e.g., smiles) or appropriate emotions (e.g., regret) ($r=0.34$, $p<0.05$); They might believe that apology is useless for themselves as well as for victims. People who quickly forgive themselves about their own wrongdoing toward themselves without holding negative feelings tend to be willing to forgive others and overtly induce offenders to feel sorry about their hurtful behavior by expressing emotions such as my anger, sadness, disappointments, uncomfortable feelings, and/or trust to him/her ($r=0.35$, $p<0.05$). As an offender, people who feel sorry mentally but do not directly say sorry to victims tend not to show in their behavior that they are sorry about their mistake ($r=-0.83$, $p<0.01$). On the other hand, as victims, people who forgive offenders after behavioral apologies also tend to mentally forgive offenders without apologies ($r = 0.35$, $p<0.05$). These results suggest that intrapersonal forgiving tendency might be compatible with interpersonal aspects of forgiving regardless of whether apologies are received from offenders. Significant positive correlations between overt apology and overt forgiveness ($r = 0.44$, $p<0.01$) indicate that people who are willing to forgive others by overtly encouraging offenders to apologize to them tend to apologize to others by overtly displaying positive behaviors or appropriate emotions. Convergent validity of PRDH scale was evidenced through positive and negative associations with three indices measurements of apology and forgiveness differently. Covert other-apology and forgiveness, and overt-indirect apology and forgiveness were all associated with negative aspects of functioning; covert other-apology and covert

other-forgiveness were positively correlated with parental aggression during childhood ($r= 0.49$, $p<0.05$; $r = 0.56$, $p<0.01$); overt-indirect apology and overt-indirect forgiveness were positively associated with alexithymia ($r = 0.38$, $p<0.05$; $r = 0.39$, $p<0.05$). On the other hand, overt-direct apology and overt-direct forgiveness, saying "sorry" to others and forgiving others with apologies, were related to resiliency ($r = 0.36$, $p<0.05$; $r = 0.50$, $p<0.01$) and other positive aspect of variables.

These present findings represent the first systematic empirical attempt to measure covert forms of apology and forgiveness as related to self and other—forms that have previously been lumped together under the construct "self-forgiveness"—as well as assessing the covert-overt behavioral dimension of forgiveness and apology. This pilot study suggests a new frame of reference for understanding apology and forgiveness, which can be summarized in three major points. First, a fully-articulated model of forgiveness and apology must consider covert self-apology, which has been ignored in the forgiveness and apology research area. Covert self-apology should be differentiated from self-forgiveness, and covert other-apology should be differentiated from other-forgiveness, although all these constructs have typically been lumped together under the construct "self-forgiveness." Second, both intrapersonal and interpersonal offenses and responses to them must be considered. In regard to apology and forgiveness, self-related offences should be differentiated from other-related offences. Thus, covert-self apology and forgiveness should be differentiated from covert other-apology and forgiveness. Third, the proposed apology-forgiveness framework includes a covert-overt behavioral dimension related to the overt or covert forms of interpersonal and intrapersonal processing in other-related offences and direct/indirect ways of communication: covert other-apology and forgiveness, overt-direct apology and forgiveness, and overt-indirect apology and forgiveness.

	Apology and Forgiveness Indices		Other variables	
	Positive Corr.	Negative Corr.	Positive Correlation	Negative Correlation
Covert other-apology	ns*	ns	Fearful attachment style in AQ ($r = 0.40, p < 0.05$), Childhood parental aggression in CTSPC ($r = 0.49, p < 0.05$), TAS-difficulties in describing feelings ($r = 0.42, p < 0.05$) LSCL ($r = -0.40, p < 0.05$),	SQ-relaxed ($r = -0.45, p < 0.005$) SQ-friendly ($r = -0.60, p < 0.01$) IRI-empathic concerns ($r = -0.43, p < 0.05$)
Covert other-forgiveness	FP ($r = 0.45, p < 0.05$);	ns	Childhood neglect by parents ($r = 0.56, p < 0.01$)	ns
Overt-direct apology	FP ($r = 0.40, p < 0.01$)	EFI-affect ($r = -0.45, p < 0.05$),	SQ-content ($r = 0.40, p < 0.05$) SQ-relaxed ($r = 0.56, p < 0.05$) SQ-friendly ($r = 0.73, p < 0.01$) Resiliency in RS ($r = 0.36, p < 0.05$) IRI-empathic concerns ($r = 0.45, p < 0.05$),	Fearful attachment in AQ ($r = -0.39, p < 0.05$), Childhood psychological and physical aggression by parents CTSPC ($r = -0.46, p < 0.05, r = -0.49, p < 0.05$), TAS-difficulties in identifying feelings & difficulties in describing feelings ($r = -0.37, p < .05; r = -0.43, p < 0.05$) LSCL ($r = 0.39, p < 0.05$)
Overt-direct forgiveness	FP ($r = 0.56, p < 0.01$) AFRS faith in forgiveness ($r = 0.47, p < 0.01$)	ns	Resiliency in RS ($r = 0.50, p < 0.01$)	Ethnocultural empathy-perspective taking in EES ($r = -0.42, p < 0.05$) SQ-depression ($r = -0.44, p < 0.05$) PFQ-shame ($r = -0.39, p < 0.05$) LSCL ($r = -0.50, p < 0.01$)
Overt-indirect apology	EFI-affect, ($r = 0.51, p < 0.05$) EFI-behavior, ($r = 0.51, p < 0.05$) EFI-cognition ($r = 0.48, p < 0.05$)	ns	Fearful attachment in AQ ($r = 0.36, p < 0.05$) TAS-externally oriented thinking ($r = 0.38, p < 0.05$)	ns
Overt-indirect forgiveness	EFI-affect, ($r = 0.57, p < 0.01$) EFI-behavior, ($r = 0.44, p < 0.05$) EFI-cognition ($r = 0.50, p < 0.05$)	ns	TAS-difficulties in describing feeling & externally oriented feelings ($r = 0.38, p < 0.05; r = 0.39, p < 0.05$)	ns
Covert self-apology	ns	FP ($r = -0.36, p < 0.05$);	Preoccupied attachment style in AQ ($r = 0.44, p < 0.01$) SQ-anxiety ($r = 0.41, p < 0.05$) SQ-depression ($r = 0.50, p < 0.01$) PFQ-guilt ($r = 0.43, p < 0.05$)	ns
Covert Self-forgiveness	ns	ns	Fearful attachment style in AQ ($r = 0.42, p < 0.01$) TAS-externally oriented thinking ($r = 0.44, p < 0.05$)	ns
Covert Self-apology and forgiveness	ns	ns	Dismissing attachment style in AQ ($r = 0.38, p < 0.05$) SQ-content ($r = 0.44, p < 0.05$)	ns

* Note. All the non-significant values were excluded in this table. EFI: Enright Forgiveness Inventory; FP: Forgiving Personality Scale; AFRS-R: Apology, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation Scale-R; AQ: Attachment Questionnaire; CTSPC: Parent-Child Conflict Tactics Scales; RS-10: Resilience Scale-10; IRI: Interpersonal Reactivity Index; EES: Ethnocultural Empathy Scale; TAS-20: Toronto Alexithymia scale; PFQ-2: Personal Feeling Questionnaire -2; LSCL-33: Limbic System Check List; SQ: Symptom Questionnaire.

Table 2: Correlation results between PRDHS and apology and forgiveness indices and other variables.

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