Comparison of Turkish and Iranian University Students' Forgiveness, Tolerance and Happiness Levels

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to compare the levels of forgiveness, tolerance and happiness of university students in terms of different variables (gender, age, marital status and program) in Turkey and Iran. A total of 1234 (797 female and 437 male) university students, between 18 and 23 years old, who were studying at Hacettepe University and Ondokuz Mayıs University in Turkey and Tehran University and Tabriz University in Iran, participated in the study. They completed three data collection instruments: the Oxford Happiness Scale (OMO), Tolerance Scale (TO) and Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS). The analysis of the data was performed with the SPSS 23 statistical program. The results of the statistical analyses showed that the happiness and tolerance levels of university students in Turkey and Iran differ according to gender, age, marital status and educational status variables. However, when the same variables were considered, there was no significant difference in forgiveness levels. Finally, the findings were discussed in reference to previous studies.

Keywords: Forgiveness, Happiness, Tolerance, University students, Iran, Turkey.

1. Introduction

Culture is regarded as one of the most important elements that determines the lifestyles of societies, which have created their own cultures by combining traditions, values and customs that have been influenced by geographical and climatic factors. The more places, climates, religions, languages and nations there are in the world, the great the cultural diversity. Culture is one of the main elements that distinguishes one society from another. While such differences can create conflict between societies, cultural diversity can also teach different communities coexistence and tolerance of one another (Önger, 2013).

In the past, cultures were often thought of as quite different, separate and independent of each other; however, it is clear that there has been a significant increase in cultural similarities in the last century as a result of developments in global forms of communication and interaction. People from different cultures have established formal and informal rules, in order to live together and interact on a daily basis, to reduce friction and increase their satisfaction. Although these rules facilitate coexistence and encourage people to accept others' differences, it is still possible to experience conflicts on the individual and societal levels. Socialization, which is influence by societies' beliefs, attitudes, values, mutual agreements about formal and informal norms and conflict resolution, helps individuals to cope with their emotions and can lead to behaviors, such as tolerance and forgiveness, that are necessary for social harmony (Kaleli, 2013).

Tolerance is a moral value that relates to the personality, patience and self-control of the individual. It is defined as an active process in which the individual achieves a stage of development by controlling himself in difficult situations, showing patience without complaint and controlling his instincts (Khormaie, Farmani, & Soltani, 2014). The definition in the Encyclopaedia Britannica, notes that it comes from the Latin word "tolerare," which means to allow, to endure, to tolerate, to release others in their actions and judgments, to participate in patriarchal or majority views, with patience and acceptance (Kaleli, 2013).

In addition to the concept of tolerance, forgiveness is also an important idea in most cultures and religions. Although it can differ in meaning and scope, it has been used much more carefully in recent literature (Rotter, 2001). This concept has been the subject of research conducted by social and clinical psychologists since the 1990s (McCullough et al., 1998). This is largely due to empirical proof that forgiveness is an effective way to significantly alter and even end interpersonal conflicts (Bugay & Demir, 2010, 2012; Bugay, Demir, & Delevi, 2012). As previously mentioned, forgiveness can be used differently and have different meanings within different cultures. One of these meanings is tolerating someone else's mistakes, gaining inner peace or improving communication with the person who made the mistake. As a result, it is possible to eliminate negative emotions, reduce aggression and let go of the desire for revenge (Enright & Coyle, 1998). Besides forgiveness, the concept of happiness has been the focus of research due to its positive effects on our lives. In modern societies, happiness is not only an area for scientific inquiry, but also a key issue for society. Over the last decade, research on the determinants of happiness has shown that economic, sociological and cultural factors affect happiness levels. In particular, demographic and

economic factors such as marital status, education and income are associated with happiness, especially in the context of developed countries (Clark, Diener, Georgellis, & Lucas, 2008; Dolan, Peasgood, & White, 2008; Frey & Stutzer, 2002; Tideman, Frijters, & Shields, 2008).

Despite the importance of happiness, forgiveness and tolerance, there are very few studies comparing their levels in different countries and cultures. Thus, the goal of this study was to conduct an intercultural comparative examination of the levels of happiness, forgiveness and tolerance of university students in Turkey and Iran in terms of different variables (gender, department, age, school type and marital status). In this context, it can be said that the subject is original and can contribute to the field since there is no intercultural study in which happiness, forgiveness and tolerance are discussed together. The results of such a study can be used to help societies developed methods of better understanding each other and establishing healthy relations. In addition, as self-recognition is important for self-improvement, enrichment and personal growth, society must also realize its own limitations to evolve. One of the best ways of promoting such realization is to conduct an intercultural study that compares the characteristics of various societies to determine their strengths and areas that require improvement.

Psychologists' interest in forgiveness has begun to increase with the development of positive psychology, in which forgiveness is regarded as one of the positive features of humankind (Smith, 2006). Forgiveness has become, in recent years, a topic of increasing interest to researchers as a psychological construct (Thompson et al., 2005). Freedman and Enright (1996) state that although forgiveness has been a research topic for theologians and philosophers in the past, it has now been accepted in psychological counselling and psychology. Some researchers consider forgiveness to be an adaptive behaviour and its lack to be a psychological disorder (Thompson et al., 2005). Forgiveness is also defined as "abandonment of negative feelings and judgments against a faulty person in which those feelings have occurred as a result of the faulty person's injustice" (Enright & Human Development Working Group, 1991). There is consensus that forgiveness is a complex phenomenon which has cognitive, behavioral, motivational and interpersonal components. However, there are disagreements over whether empathy or displacement of negative emotions with positive emotions is the basis of forgiveness (Lichtenfeld, Buechner, Maier, & Fernández-Capo, 2015). Numerous studies have shown that forgiveness has general health benefits and reduces psychological disturbances, such as depression (Dyke & Elias, 2007; Lawler et al., 2005; Toussaint, Williams, Musick, & Everson, 2001). In a study by Gençoğlu, Şahin, and Topkaya (2018), self and situational forgiveness was shown to be an important variable contributing to the reduction of negative feelings (*e.g.* and depression, anxiety, and stress). Additionally, Azar and Mullet (2002) compared the Congolese and French in an intercultural survey of forgiveness, which confirmed the hypothesis that the Congolese were more willing to forgive and less willing to take revenge. Such findings reveal that forgiveness may be more of a characteristic feature of collectivist cultures than individualist cultures.

Happiness, which is defined most often in the literature as a frequent positive affect, high level of life satisfaction and infrequent negative affect (Diener, 1984), has also attracted the attention of researchers. It depends on personal attitudes and emotions and is a pleasant and

desirable feature that arises from positive emotions and being pleased with life (Hills & Argyle, 2002). Additionally, it directly affects quality of life. As researchers have shown, happy people are more successful in many areas of life, such as family life, friendships, income, and health and business performance. Myers and Diener (1995) describe happy people as those who can make sincere friendships or are not lonely. In some studies, having strong social relationships is considered to be an important factor in individual happiness (Cooper, Okamura, & McNeil, 1995; Ed Diener & Seligman, 2002; Holder & Coleman, 2009; Myers & Diener, 1995).

Researchers have also found that individuals who are married, have a wide circle of friends and are strong in social interactions, in other words individuals who are not alone, are happier (Lyubomirsky, Sheldon, & Schkade, 2005). Vaidya (2014) emphasizes that women are often happier than men as they have more social support and experience less loneliness than men. Dost (2007) found that the happiness levels of Turkish university students are correlated with gender, perceived academic achievement, perceived economic status, attitudes, future expectations, religious beliefs and loneliness.

Tolerance, like happiness, is one of the concepts that needs to be addressed in the context of positive psychology. However, there is a limited amount research in psychology literature dealing with this concept. In their study, Khormaie, Farmani, and Soltani (2014) investigated the relationship between tolerance and hope levels of university students and found that there is a positive relationship between them. Given the significance of the concepts of tolerance, forgiveness and happiness, as well as the gaps in the literature, the aim of this research was to examine the similarities and differences in terms of socio-demographic variables in the levels of forgiveness, tolerance and happiness of university students living in Turkey and Iran.

2. Method

2.1 Research Design

This was a cross-sectional study of the socio-demographic variables related to happiness, forgiveness and tolerance levels of Turkish and Iranian university students. This research design was deemed most appropriate for this study as it aims to describe similarities and differences at a particular time in a particular population (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007).

2.2 Participants

A total of 1407 student, 692 who studied at Tehran and Tabriz universities in Iran and 714 who studied at Ondokuz Mayıs university and Hacettepe university in Turkey, participated in this study. The universities were selected as they are in the capitals and major cities of the two countries. After examining the data collection tools, students who were thought to have filled out the scale items randomly were not included in the data analysis. As a result, a total of 1234 student, including 679 students from Turkey and 555 students from Iran, were included in the analysis. Of the students, 64.6%were female and 35.4% were male. The age range varied from 18 to 23. While 10.3% of the students were married, 89.7% were single. Additionally, 10.5% of the students were continuing their associate degree, while 89.5% were

continuing their undergraduate education. More detailed information about the demographic characteristics of the students is presented in Table 1.

2.3 Measures

The Personal Information Form: This form used to obtain information about participants' background characteristics, such as gender, age, school type and marital status.

Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS): The HFS was developed by Thompson et al. (2005) to determine individuals' forgiveness levels. The scale consists of self, others and situation forgiveness sub-dimensions, and can be used by calculating sub-dimensions or total scores according to the researcher's purpose. In this study, scale total scores were used because the goal was to determine the general forgiveness levels of university students. The HFS consists of 18 items, which participants rate on a seven-point Likert-type scale. The total points can range from 18 to 126. The scale was adapted to the Turkish language and culture by Bugay and Demir (2010). The construct validity study conducted by the researchers consisted of a three-factor structure consistent with the original scale. At the same time, the internal consistency coefficients of the scale were .64 for self-forgiveness, .79 for forgiving others, .76 for forgiving the situation and .81 for the whole scale. The adaptation studies of the scale to the Iranian culture were carried out by Dehghan, Kord-Tamini, and Arab (2014), who reported a Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient of .83.

Tolerance Scale (TS): The TS was developed by Ersanlı (2014). It is a five-point Likert-type scale that consists of 11 items, with total scores ranging from 11 to 55. Higher scores indicate higher tolerance levels. The construct validity of the scale was examined by Ersanlı (2014) through both explanatory and confirmatory factor analysis. Ersanlı (2014) found, as a result of exploratory factor analysis, that the scale was composed of a single factor accounting for 39.37% of the total variance, and the item factor loadings varied between .46 and .75. Confirmatory factor analyses carried out in a different sample group cross-validated the one-factor structure of the scale. Findings related to reliability showed that the item-total correlations of the scale varied between .37 and .64 and that the scale had a sufficiently high Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient (α = .79). The validity and reliability of the scale in the Iranian culture was examined by Ersanlı and Mameghani (2016). They discovered that the scale did not have a good level of discrimination of the six items for the Iranian culture. As a result of the exploratory factor analysis carried out after the removal of these six items, the scale had a one-factor structure as in the original scale. Confirmatory factor analyses confirmed this factor structure in a new sample (χ^2 (df = 5) = 6.746, p > .05, RMSEA = .036 90% CI [.000-.096], p > .05, CFI = .994; TLI: .987; WRMR: .467). These findings indicate that some cultural factors may play a role in measuring tolerance levels. However, the fact that the scale has a one-factor structure indicates that the concept of tolerance may be a psychological feature that can be considered one-dimensional. In Iranian and Turkish culture, the results were not directly comparable because of the functional nature of the different numbered items. In order to overcome this issue, Ersanlı and Mameghani (2016) suggested that the students' mean scores should be compared according to the functional items in both cultures based on the functional items in the Iranian culture. Thus,

this method of comparison was adopted.

Oxford Happiness Scale (OHS): The OHS was developed by Hills and Argyle (2002) to determine individuals' happiness levels. It consists of 29 items, and possible total scores range from 29 to 172. Higher scores indicate higher happiness levels. Hills and Argyle found that the scale consisted of a one-dimensional structure and the internal consistency coefficient (Cronbach alpha) of the scale was 0.91. The validity and reliability studies of the scale in the Turkish language were carried out by Doğan and Sapmaz (2012), whose exploratory factor analysis revealed a structure with an eigenvalue of 8.3 and that explains 29.84% of the total variance. Factor loadings of the scale varied between 0.32 and 0.77. The values obtained as a result of confirmatory factor analysis showed that the one factor structure of the scale was confirmed in the sample of Turkish university students. As a result of the analysis for the criterion-related validity, significant correlations were found between the OHS and other instruments that evaluate happiness and optimism. In the reliability analyses, the Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient of the OHS was 0.91, and the reliability coefficient obtained by the split-half reliability method was 0.86. The reliability and validity studies of the OHS in Iran were carried out by Liaghatdar, Jafari, Abedi, and Samiee (2008), who found the Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale to be .92, and that it had a relationship to another happiness scale at the r = .73 level and that the convergent validity was high.

2.4 Procedure

The data were collected during the first semester of the 2015-2016 academic year. The necessary approvals, including ethics committee approval, were obtained from the relevant institutions before the data were collected. Students were informed that participation in the research was voluntary, that their answers were confidential and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. The Personal Information Form, Tolerance Scale, Heartland Forgiveness Scale and Oxford Happiness Scale were given to groups of approximately 25-50 students during normal school hours. No one refused to participate in the research and no incentives were given. The participants were given approximately 30 minutes to complete the form and scales.

2.5 Statistical Analysis

The SPSS 23 statistical program was used to examine the data. Missing data, univariate and multivariate outliers and assumptions of statistical analyses were examined before the main analyses. First, a limited number of participants who did not answer most of the scale items or who were thought to have answered randomly were removed from the data set. In order to determine outliers in the dataset, the Tolerance Scale, the Heartland Forgiveness Scale and the Oxford Happiness Scale total scores were standardized as suggested by Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2014). Four univariate outliers from the Heartland Forgiveness Scale were removed from the dataset. There were no outliers in The Oxford Happiness Scale or the Tolerance Scale scores. Descriptive statistics, including frequency and percentages, were used to obtain information on the demographic characteristics of the individuals. Two-way analysis of variance was used to examine the differences between cultural and

sociodemographic characteristics, which is known also in the literature as factorial ANOVA. One of the most important advantages of this analysis method is that researchers can test the main effects of independent variables as well as test whether the independent variables as a whole have an interaction effect (moderation) among themselves (Field, 2013; Ho, 2013). Two-way analysis of variance has three assumptions (Field, 2013; Ho, 2013). The first assumption is that the sample of the participants is chosen independently from the population. This assumption is related to research design and cannot be statistically tested. However, this assumption was fulfilled since the study included a group of university students in Turkey and another group in Iran. The second assumption is that the dependent variable is approximately normally distributed. This assumption was examined by checking skewness and kurtosis values in line with the recommendations of measurement and evaluation experts (Field, 2013; Hair et al., 2014; Ho, 2013), while taking the sample size into consideration. As a general rule, when the skewness and kurtosis values are from -2 to +2, this indicates that the skewness and kurtosis values do not deviate from a normal distribution (Field, 2013; George & Mallery, 2016; Pituch & Stevens, 2016). In the dataset, the Heartland Forgiveness Scale scores were found to be .890 and .543, respectively; the Oxford Happiness Scale scores were .649 and .109, respectively; and the Tolerance Score scores were .280 and 1.01, respectively. The last assumption is the homogeneity of variances. This assumption was found to be violated in some analyses when controlled by the Levene test. However, the Hartley F_{max} (Field, 2013) test showed that the ratio of the largest group variance ratios among the sample groups to the smallest group variance was not significant and that sample variances did not differ significantly. Similarly, Howell (2013, p. 234) stated that the results of variance analysis are more likely to be valid when the largest variance among the groups is four or less than the smallest variance. For this reason, this assumption has been accepted as well. Post-hoc comparisons across groups were performed with the Scheffe test to determine the source of difference after the two-way ANOVA as well as interaction effect. Although interaction effect also can examine using simple effect analysis, the subjectivity of interpreting the interaction figures make this approach more useful. In this approach, we first created separate groups for interaction effect. For example, if the interaction between marital status and gender were significant, we created four groups representing married female, single female, married male, single male then conducted to Scheffe test to determine source of difference. This interaction examination approach suggested by Ho (2013). The significance level was accepted as *p* < .05.

3. Results

In Table 1, frequencies and percentages of the variables considered in the study can be seen for Turkey, Iran and the whole sample. As shown in Table 1, 35.4% of the students were male and 64.6% were female. In terms of age, 13.5% were 18, 15.2% were 19, 23.9% were 20, 19.9% were 21, 15.6% were 22 and 11.9% were 23 years old. While 10.3% of the students were married, 89.7% were single. Finally, 10.5% were associate degree students and 89.5% were undergraduate students.

A series of two-way variance analyses was performed to test the research hypothesis. Table 2 shows descriptive statistics of the forgiveness scores of the participants, and Table 3 shows

the results of the two-way variance analysis of the forgiveness scores.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the Turkish and Iranian samples

Variable	Turkey		Iran		Total	
	n	*%*	*n*	*%*	*n*	*%*
Gender						
Female	450	66.3	347	62.5	797	64.6
Male	229	33.7	208	37.5	437	35.4
Age						
18	119	17.5	47	8.5	166	13.5
19	123	18.1	65	11.7	188	15.2
20	167	24.6	128	23.1	295	23.9
21	129	19.0	117	21.1	246	19.9
22	93	13.7	99	17.8	192	15.6
23	48	7.1	99	17.8	147	11.9
Marital Status						
Married	31	4.6	96	17.3	127	10.3
Single	648	95.4	459	82.7	1107	89.7
School Type						
Associate degree	71	10.5	58	10.5	129	10.5
Bachelor's degree	608	89.5	497	89.5	1105	89.5

Table 2. Descriptive statistics related to forgiveness scores

Variable	Turkey		Iran		Total	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Gender						
Female	48.49	5.69	47.98	8.31	48.27	6.95
Male	48.58	5.57	48.09	7.66	48.35	6.64
Age						
18	48.14	5.47	47.64	6.31	48.00	5.71
19	48.29	5.66	49.34	8.65	48.65	6.84
20	48.75	6.02	48.65	8.68	48.71	7.28
21	48.91	6.07	46.80	8.29	47.89	7.28
22	48.49	5.07	48.48	7.18	48.49	6.23
23	48.23	4.70	47.54	8.08	47.76	7.14
Marital Status						
Married	47.81	6.00	46.79	9.26	47.04	8.57
Single	48.56	5.63	48.28	7.77	48.44	6.60
School Type						
Associate degree	48.11	5.42	47.09	8.81	47.65	7.14
Bachelor's degree	48.57	5.68	48.13	7.97	48.37	6.81

Table 3. Two-Way ANOVA results related to forgiveness scores

Source	*df*	MS	*F*	*p*	Partial η²
Gender					
Culture (A)	1	70.54	1.51	.220	.001
Gender (B)	1	2.92	.06	.803	.000
A × B	1	.04	.00	.976	.000
Error	1230	46.86			
Age					
Culture (A)	1	43.14	.92	.337	.001
Age (B)	5	39.03	.83	.525	.003
A × B	5	58.27	1.25	.286	.005
Error	1222	46.80			
Marital Status					
Culture (A)	1	36.07	.77	.380	.001
Marital Status (B)	1	107.58	2.30	.129	.002
A × B	1	11.67	.250	.617	.000
Error	1230	46.70			
School Type					
Culture (A)	1	61.50	1.31	.252	.001
School Type (B)	1	64.23	1.37	.242	.001
A × B	1	9.82	.21	.647	.000
Error	1230	46.80			

Note. MS = Mean Squares, Partial η² = Effect Size.

As shown in Table 3, the results of two-way variance analysis of the forgiveness scores showed that the main effects of culture (F (1, 1230) = 1.51, $p > .05$, partial η² = .001), and gender (F (1, 1230) = .06, $p > .05$, partial η² = .000) and the culture-gender (F (1, 1230) = .00, $p < .05$, partial η² = .000) interaction were insignificant. Additionally, the results of two-way variance analysis indicated that the main effect of culture (F (1, 1222) = .92, $p > .05$, partial η² = .001), age (F (5, 1222) = .83, $p > .05$, partial η² = .003) and the interaction between culture and age (F (5, 1222) = 1.25, $p > .05$, partial η² = .003) were insignificant. Similarly, the results of two-way variance analysis indicated that the effects of culture (F (1, 1230) = .77,

$p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$), marital status ($F (1, 1230) = 2.30$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$) and the interaction of culture and marital status (F $(1, 1230) = 3.45$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$) were insignificant. Finally, two-way variance analysis showed that the main effects of culture ($F (1, 1230) = 1.31$, $p > 0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$) = .001), school type ($F (1, 1230) = 1.30$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$) and the interaction between culture and school type ($F (1, 1230) = .21$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$) were insignificant.

Table 4 shows mean and standard deviation values according to happiness level, and Table 5 shows the results of two-way ANOVA analysis related to happiness levels. As seen in Table 5, two-way variance analysis related to gender showed that the main effects of culture ($F (1, 1230) = 9.05$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .007$) and the interaction of culture and gender ($F (1, 1230) = 7.91$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .006$) were significant. Result of the Scheffe test conducted to determine the source of the interaction found that female university students in Iran ($M = 113.93$) were found to have significantly higher happiness scores than female university students in Turkey ($M = 108.69$).

A two-way variance analysis of age and gender found that the main effect of culture ($F (1, 212) = 14.78$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .012$) was significant. However, the main effects of age ($F (5, 1222) = 1.13$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .005$) and the interaction between culture and gender ($F (5, 1222) = 1.04$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .004$) were insignificant. As seen in Table 4, the happiness level of university students in Iran ($M = 112.70$) is significantly higher than that of university students in Turkey ($M = 109.29$). Next, a two-way variance analysis of marital status revealed the main effects of marital status ($F (1, 1230) = .30$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$) and the interaction between culture and marital status ($F (1, 1230) = .78$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$) to be insignificant. However, the main effect of culture ($F (1, 1230) = 7.37$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .006$) was significant. Finally, the results of a two-way variance analysis of school type showed the main effects of school type ($F (1, 230) = 28.89$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .007$) and the interaction between culture and school type (F $(1, 1230) = 8.57$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .007$) to be significant. However, the main effect of culture (F $(1, 1230) = .02$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$) was insignificant. As can be seen in Table 4, the happiness level of students who continue with their associate degree ($M = 117.88$) was significantly higher than that of the undergraduate students ($M = 110.00$). The results of the interaction analysis carried out by the Scheffe test, after the process, revealed the happiness levels of students continuing their undergraduate education in Turkey ($M = 108.08$) to be significantly lower than those of students continuing their associate education in Turkey ($M = 119.62$) and Iranian associate ($M = 115.74$) and undergraduate ($M = 112.34$) students. At the same time, the happiness levels of students pursuing their associate degrees in Turkey ($M = 119.62$) was significantly higher than those of undergraduate students in Iran ($M = 112.34$). The happiness levels of the undergraduate students in Iran ($M = 112.34$) were significantly higher than those of the undergraduate students in Turkey ($M = 108.08$).

The two-way variance analysis of age and gender found that the main effect of culture ($F (1, 212) = 14.78$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .012$) was significant. However, the main effect of age ($F (5, 1222) = 1.13$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .005$) and the interaction of culture and gender ($F (5, 1222) = 1.04$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .004$) were insignificant. As seen in Table 4, the happiness

level of university students in Iran ($M = 112.70$) was significantly higher than that of university students in Turkey ($M = 109.29$). For marital status, the two-way variance analysis showed the main effect of marital status ($F (1, 1230) = .30$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$) and the interaction between culture and marital status ($F (1, 1230) = .78$, $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .001$) to be insignificant. However, the main effect of culture ($F (1, 1230) = 7.37$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .006$) was significant. Finally, the two-way variance analysis of school type showed the main effect of school type ($F (1, 230) = 28.89$, $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .007$) and the interaction between culture and school type ($F (1, 1230) = 8.57$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .007$) to be significant. However, the main effect of culture ($F (1, 1230) = .02$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .000$) was insignificant. As can be seen in Table 4, the happiness level of the students who were pursuing their associate degree ($M = 117.88$) was significantly higher than that of undergraduate students ($M = 110.00$). The results of the interaction analysis carried out by Scheffe test showed the happiness levels of the students pursuing their undergraduate education in Turkey ($M = 108.08$) were significantly lower than those of students pursuing their associate education in Turkey ($M = 119.62$) and those of Iranian associate ($M = 115.74$) and undergraduate ($M = 112.34$) students. At the same time, the happiness levels of students pursuing their associate degrees in Turkey ($M = 119.62$) were significantly higher than those of undergraduate students in Iran ($M = 112.34$). The happiness levels of undergraduate students in Iran ($M = 112.34$) were significantly higher than those of undergraduate students in Turkey ($M = 108.08$).

Table 4. Descriptive statistics related to happiness scores

Variable	Turkey		Iran		Total	
	Mean	*Sd*	*Mean*	*Sd*	*Mean*	*Sd*
Gender						
Female	108.69	12.79	113.93	16.06	110.97	14.53
Male	110.47	14.46	110.64	18.18	110.55	16.32
Age						
18	108.08	12.31	114.38	16.05	109.86	13.72
19	110.56	13.80	109.95	17.16	110.35	15.00
20	109.65	13.29	113.54	15.30	111.34	14.30
21	110.33	13.82	113.95	16.41	112.05	15.19
22	107.77	13.77	110.25	18.84	109.05	16.59
23	107.94	13.43	113.57	17.80	111.73	16.67
Marital Status						
Married	108.77	13.13	114.63	15.80	113.20	15.35
Single	109.31	13.41	112.29	17.16	110.55	15.15
School Type						
Associate degree	119.62	17.48	115.74	15.58	117.88	16.70
Bachelor's degree	108.08	12.30	112.34	17.08	110.00	14.79

Table 5. Two-Way ANOVA results related to happiness scores

Source	df	MS	F	p	Partial η²
Gender					
Culture (A)	1	2052.19	9.05	.003*	.007
Gender (B)	1	158.10	.70	.404	.001
A × B	1	1792.58	7.91	.005*	.006
Error	1230				
Age					
Culture (A)	1	3365.63	14.78	.001*	.012
Age (B)	5	256.45	1.13	.345	.005
A × B	5	237.88	1.04	.390	.004
Error	1222	227.750			
Marital Status					
Culture (A)	1	1680.29	7.37	.007*	.006
Marital Status (B)	1	69.37	.30	.581	.000
A × B	1	177.80	.78	.337	.001
Error	1230	227.86			
School Type					
Culture (A)	1	4.12	.02	.891	.000
School Type (B)	1	6379.39	28.89	.001**	.023
A × B	1	1892.27	8.57	.003*	.007
Error	1230	220.85			

Note. MS = Mean Squares, Partial η² = Effect Size, $p < .01$*, $p < .001$**.

Table 6 shows the mean tolerance and standard deviation scores according to the country and gender of the participants, and Table 7 presents the results of two-way ANOVA. Two-way variance analysis showed that the main effect of culture ($F_{(1, 1230)} = 471.12$, p< .001, partial η² = .277) and the interaction between culture and gender (F $_{(1, 1230)} = 4.12$, $p < .05$, partial η² = .003) were significant. However, the main effect of gender ($F_{(1, 1230)} = .22$, $p > .01$, partial η² = .000) was not significant. Tolerance levels of university students in Iran ($M = 11.31$) were significantly higher than those of university students in Turkey ($M = 7.56$), and interaction analysis results showed that this result was similar for both genders. In other words, male and female university students in Iran have significantly higher tolerance levels

than male and female university students in Turkey. The two-way variance analysis for age found that the main effect of culture (F (1, 1222) = 452.31, p < .001, partial η^2 = .270) was similarly significant. However, the main effect of age (F (5, 1222) = .85, p > .05, partial η^2 = .003) and the interaction of culture and age (F (5, 1222) = .46, p > .05, partial η^2 = .003) were insignificant. Tolerance levels of university students in Iran (M = 11.31) were significantly higher than those of university students in Turkey (M = 7.56). Next, the two-way analysis of variance for marital status revealed that the main effect of culture (F (1, 1230) = 183.83, p < .001, partial η^2 = .130) was significant. However, the main effect of marital status (F (1, 1230) = .30, p > .05, partial η^2 = .000) and the interaction between culture and marital status were insignificant. As stated earlier, the tolerance levels of university students in Iran (M = 11.31) were significantly higher than those of students in Turkey (M = 7.56). Finally, the results of the two-way analysis of variance performed on school type showed the main effect of culture (F (1, 1230) = 178.93, p < .001, partial η^2 = .127) and the main effect of school type (F (1, 1230) = 5.12, p < .05, partial η^2 = .004) were significant. However, the interaction between culture and school type (F (1, 1230) = .21, p < .05, partial η^2 = .001) were insignificant. In addition to the fact that the tolerance levels of the university students in Iran were higher than those of university students in Turkey, when both countries were compared, the tolerance levels of associate degree students (M = 9.81) were significantly higher than those of undergraduate students (M = 9.18).

Table 6. Descriptive statistics related to tolerance scores

Variable	Turkey		Iran		Total	
	Mean	*Sd*	*Mean*	*Sd*	*Mean*	*Sd*
Gender						
Female	7.47	2.06	11.47	3.44	9.21	3.39
Male	7.73	2.45	11.05	3.40	9.31	3.37
Age						
18	7.38	2.13	11.00	2.93	8.40	2.88
19	7.41	2.09	10.94	3.77	8.63	3.25
20	7.60	2.22	11.65	3.69	9.34	3.56
21	7.82	2.31	11.19	3.38	9.42	3.32
22	7.47	2.25	11.32	3.50	9.46	3.53
23	7.73	2.24	11.40	3.08	10.20	3.31
Marital Status						
Married	7.06	1.79	11.65	3.36	10.53	3.63
Single	7.58	2.22	11.24	3.45	9.10	3.32
School Type						
Associate degree	8.35	2.71	11.59	3.37	9.81	3.42
Bachelor degree	7.47	2.12	11.28	3.44	9.18	3.17

Table 7. Two-Way ANOVA results related to tolerance scores

Source	df	MS	F	p	Partial η²
Gender					
Culture (A)	1	3745.56	471.12	.001**	.277
Gender (B)	1	1.77	.22	.637	.000
A × B	1	32.78	4.12	.043*	.003
Error	1230	7.95			
Age					
Culture (A)	1	3613.94	452.31	.001*	.270
Age (B)	5	6.77	.85	.516	.003
A × B	5	3.64	.46	.810	.002
Error	1222	7.99			
Marital Status					
Culture (A)	1	1463.35	183.83	.001*	.130
Marital Status (B)	1	.28	.04	.850	.000
A × B	1	18.36	2.31	.129	.002
Error	1230	7.96			
School Type					
Culture (A)	1	1419.43	178.93	.001**	.127
School Type (B)	1	40.59	5.12	.024*	.004
A × B	1	9.57	1.21	.272	.001
Error	1230	7.93			

Note. MS = Mean Squares, Partial η² = Effect Size., $p < .05*$, $p < .001**$.

4. Discussion

In this study, the levels of forgiveness, happiness and tolerance of university students in Turkey and Iran were examined in terms of independent variables. The results revealed that happiness and tolerance levels differed according to gender, age, marital status and education variables. However, forgiveness levels did not differ greatly based on the same variables.

Forgiveness is a moral virtue that can be employed in response to the wrongs of others and one that can be learned through education. Since moral behaviours are important in Islam, this virtue is important in the Koran, both in the private and social life of the individual. Forgiving the wrongs of others is considered in its verses (Maide 3), with the significance

revealed through the repetition of various phrases meant to signify Allah's forgiveness (forgiving, God's mercy, mercy, virtue, gentle, etc.) (Fer, Fatemi, & Emini, 2012).

Iran and Turkey share some similarities in terms of culture, religion and language as they are close neighbours. While forgiveness is important in psychology and most cultures worldwide, its place is especially prominent in Islam and the Turkish culture. The religious similarities of Iran and Turkey, therefore, mean that they should also display similarities in terms of their perspectives on forgiveness. The findings of many studies support the view about the significant effect of religion on the concept of forgiveness. For example, Hui et al. (2006) have found that religiosity (personality and membership) means that an individual is likely to see forgiveness as a virtue, as well as a type of mercy and unconditional love. At the same time, research supports the idea that individuals with more personal/internal logical reasoning and non-fundamentalist religious attitudes (search traits) are more likely to forgive than individuals with religious/social pressures (more dogmatic or external approach to religiosity). The complexity of the quest for religion along with increased logic and thought can lead individuals to look at crime in context and become more open to thinking about alternative explanations for criminal behaviours (Messay, Dixon, & Rye, 2012). In a study conducted by Balliet (2010), a positive relationship was found between conscientiousness and forgiveness. Additionally, Macaskill, Maltby, and Day (2002) found that religiosity positively correlated with forgiving the self, others, and events. However, current research suggests that the possibility of forgiveness in the future with individuals' own religious attitude, or the possibility of project affinity and the forgiveness of a particular crime (situational forgiveness) with the religious approach (Messay et al., 2012). Another study in the United States found that individuals who are more sensitive to the need to fulfil prayers and have internal religious faith have a greater ability to forgive others and higher tolerance levels (Webb, Chickering, Colburn, Heisler, & Call, 2005). Ayten (2009) showed that religiosity had a positive relationship with forgiveness and negative relationship with revenge in a study conducted on 321 people in Turkey. Moreover, another study undertaken by Ayten (2012) in the same country showed that there was a positive correlation between forgiveness and modesty, but a negative relationship between forgiveness and pride.

In this study, the happiness levels of university students were also analysed in terms of culture (Turkey and Iran) and several variables (gender, age, marital status and educational program). The happiness levels of the university students in Iran were found to be significantly higher than those of the university students in Turkey. At the same time, the happiness levels of married university students were significantly higher than those of single students. According to the students' program, the happiness levels of those pursuing associate degrees was significantly higher than those of undergraduate students. However, in terms of age, the happiness levels for all university students were similar.

The fact that Iranian university students, female Iranian university students and associate degree university students have higher happiness levels than Turkish university students could arise from differences in the anxieties and anticipations about the future of the students in the two countries. Adults aged between 18 and 25, including those pursuing a higher education, are called "transitional youth age." In this period, young people are endeavouring

to find a profession, as well as testing new friendships and social environments by leaving their families and taking steps to independence. As a result, they have to confront new problems. And while some young people have plans for the future at this age, others may not have a clear plan. Whether or not they have a plan for the future, it is natural that every young person has some anticipation about their future lifestyle (Akman, 1992). It is a fact that university experiences not only affect future professional expectations but also expectations in other areas. Factors such as successes or failures experienced in this process, received reinforcements and the nature of the educational environment may affect students and result in changes in their expectations. Dogan (2006) examined the factors related to university students' happiness and found that those who have positive thoughts about their futures have higher levels of happiness. According to Diener, Suh, Lucas, and Smith (1999) past life satisfaction, present life satisfaction, and the desire to change one's life, future expectations and satisfaction all influence happiness. Thus, university students who are confident that all their future expectations will be fulfilled or have expectations are more likely to have higher levels of happiness than those who believe that none of their expectations will come true in the future. Therefore, as the level of optimism for the future increases, the happiness levels of university students also increase (Dost, 2007). These finding accords with several other studies indicating that optimism has a positive relationship with happiness. Doğan (2006) notes that optimism is one of the personality traits of happy individuals. Aydın and Tezer (1991) found that as optimism increased, the general health status of individuals improved and that optimistic students were more successful and happy in their academic field. Üstün et al. (2014) stated that one of the factors that affects the future expectations of university students in Turkey is their despair about finding a job. In fact, the employment rate in Turkey is behind that of the OECD countries. One of the reasons for this is the fact that a large part of Turkey's population consists of young people. As a result, it is probable that young people who have or are pursuing education specifically in order find work and are feeling despair that they are or might not become employed will experience pessimism about their future prospects (Tuncer, 2011).

In addition, during this period, most students experience a feeling of loneliness (distancing from their families, etc.) which affects their happiness levels. Myers and Diener (1995) described happy people in their study as those who can make sincere friendships or who are not lonely. Some researchers found similarly that individuals who are married and have a wide circle of friends and strong social interactions (meaning they are not lonely) are happier individuals (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005). In some studies, having strong social relationships is considered to be an important factor in individual happiness (Cooper et al., 1995; Diener & Seligman, 2002; Holder & Coleman, 2009; Myers & Diener, 1995).

Dost (2007) also conducted a study supporting the high happiness levels of female university students compared to those of male students and determined that women's happiness levels in general are significantly higher than those of men. Vaidya (2014) concluded that women are happier than men as they receive more social support and experience less loneliness. Finally, this study found that the happiness levels of associate degree students were higher than those of undergraduate students, which is consistent with previous research results.

This research also revealed that the tolerance levels of university students in Iran were higher than those of university students in Turkey, and when both countries were considered, the tolerance levels of associate degree students were found to be significantly higher than those of undergraduate degree students. While both Iran and Turkey have a number of similarities, the tolerance levels of Iranians are likely higher considering the more traditional structure in Iran and the diversity of culture (Persian, Turkish, Kurdish, Irish, Arab and Afghan), in contrast to Turkey, which is experiencing a rapid cultural change (approaching westernization and individualism).

Some cultures may not seem entirely individualistic or totally collectivist. When we examine Iranian culture, we can say that it has a socialist character. Recent progress in industry has resulted in the country entering a transitional phase from a pluralistic culture to an individualistic culture. In the analysis of individualist/collectivist countries, although it has been claimed that Turkey is in the middle level on the individualism list of fifty countries (Hofstede, 1984), many arguments have been put forward indicating that it is impossible to classify Turkey into a specific category. When the literature is considered, the culture of individualism in Turkey appears to be one step ahead of that in Iran. Triandis' (1995) study suggested that people in collectivist cultures display greater conformist behaviours. This is because the people in this culture will make more effort to get approval from the group, to protect the values of the group and to be loved by the group. When the individual gains glory and fame, it may not be welcomed by the people living in these cultures. Individualism and collectivism have been defined as two main styles of self-construal, and these dimensions have been used to explain psychological differences between cultures (Hofstede, 1984; Triandis, 1995). Slomowski and Dunn (1996) show that tolerance and social skills allow individuals to understand the behaviours of others and that positive thinkers always focus on seeing the positive aspects of life and situations.

This research has some limitations. First, a cross-sectional research design was used. For this reason, the cause and effect relationship cannot be established based on the findings. Second, the students who participated in these intercultural surveys consisted of individuals continuing their university educations in the developed cities of two different countries. Thus, the generalizability of the findings to different samples is low. Finally, in this research, data were collected from participants in both countries using self-report scales. As a result, the research results may have been affected by mistakes involving self-report style scales, such as socially desirable responses.

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