Conflict and willingness to cooperate at work: The role of apology and forgiveness.

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ABSTRACT: We investigate the relationship between conflict, apology, forgiveness and work outcomes over two studies. In Study 1, we explore the research questions with semi-structured interviews from thirty organizational employees in Queensland. Results indicated that apologies without a behavioural change were not perceived as genuine and might not foster forgiveness or productivity. Study 2 quantitatively examines the connection between perceived apology sincerity, forgiveness attitudes and willingness to co-operate. Data from 355 undergraduates revealed that the link between relationship conflict and willingness to cooperate was mediated by forgiveness. Additionally, perceived apology sincerity and forgiveness attitudes were positively linked with forgiveness. Increased positive forgiveness attitudes, perceived apology sincerity were connected with willingness to cooperate. We discuss the implications of our results.

Keywords: Conflict management, perceptions, attitudes and interpersonal behaviours

Introduction

Conflict is a pervasive organizational problem impacting employees’ work and interactions. Conflict can be broadly defined as the experience between parties or among parties that their goals or interests are incompatible or in opposition (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008; Korsgaard, Jeong, Mahony, & Pitariu, 2008). In particular, conflict between co-workers often results in decreased productivity, morale and job satisfaction (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003; Iverson & Zatzick, 2011). In the present research, we argue that conflict management or resolution has benefits for the individual employees because it may assists in the restoration of working relationships, which in turn, should positively impact the employees’ willingness to cooperate at work. Cooperation is the process by which individuals, groups and organizations come together, interact and form different relationships for mutual gain or benefit (Smith, Carroll & Ashford, 1995). In this regard, the willingness to cooperate is core to interpersonal relationships that can eventually foster employee productivity. Yet, many conflict episodes are rarely fully resolved but flare out from time to time (Ayoko & Hartel, 2003) and may demotivate workers’ willingness to cooperate. Thus, in the present research, we propose that conflict resolution or management strategy such as forgiveness is an important construct that may be employed as a means of resolving conflict in the work environment (e.g. Freedman & Enright, 1996).

Forgiveness is described as a transformation of motives and emotions from a hostile to a more pro-social orientation towards a transgressor following a hurtful event (McCullough 2000;
In this respect, forgiveness assists individuals to repair damaged workplace relationships and overcome “debilitating thoughts and emotions that result from interpersonal injury” (see Aquino, Grover, Goldman, & Folger, 2003 p. 210) such as conflict. We are aware that conflict triggers negative emotions such as shame and guilt (Chen & Ayoko, 2012) and that the interactive effect of relationship and task conflict contributes substantially to predict the propensity to leave the current job (Medina, Munduate, Dorado, Martinez & Guerra, 2005). The above suggests that conflict has the propensity to elicit employees’ unwillingness to cooperate at work. Yet, research that examines factors (e.g. forgiveness) that are critical to managing conflict for future cooperation at work is still relatively scarce. Thus, we conducted two studies to examine the relationship between conflict, apologies, forgiveness and work outcomes (e.g. willingness to co-operate).

Our research makes three significant contributions to literature. First, research into the role of conflict management strategies (avoiding, accommodating, problem solving etc.) still leave many conflicts unresolved at work (Coleman, 2000). By investigating the connection between conflict and apology, we extend the literature on how apology may be used to resolve conflict. Secondly, little research has investigated the aftermath of conflict at work. By isolating the role of conflict in employee’s willingness to cooperate after conflict, our understanding of how to improve cohesion and productivity should significant improve. Finally, we extend literature on conflict by digging deeper into the nexus between conflict, apology, forgiveness and willingness to cooperate. Outcomes of our study should assist managers in gaining insight into fostering cohesion after conflict episodes.

**STUDY 1**

**Research Design and Methodology**

We collected data from a sample of thirty randomly selected participants from private and public organizations in S.E. Queensland. 50% of them were from the private sector (law firms, banks) while the remaining participants were from public sector organizations (health, insurance accounting etc). 53% were female and majority of the participants were in the age range of 20-29 years. Qualitative data are particularly appropriate for answering research question on perceptions (Crab & Miller, 1992). Responses to the in-depth interview questions were transcribed and analysed.
Data Analysis: Systematic interpretative analysis

We analysed data using systematic interpretative techniques (i.e. content coding, content analysis, linguistic text analysis) (cf Jehn, 1997) to identify the major themes arising from the data. With this method, data segments are discrete thought units that were initially identified, categorized and sorted into themes. Three raters who were familiar with the process of content analysis but unfamiliar with research aims were employed to analyse the data. Crab and Miller (1992), argue that this process reduces researcher’s bias and increases credibility. Inter-rater reliability was 87%.

Results of the Systematic Interpretative Analysis

The connection between conflict and apology

First, the thematic analysis revealed that employees find it difficult to relate to the concept of apology at work. Majority (75%) of the participants stated that conflict is a hard concept to understand and also remarked that they had not given much thought to the issue of apology in the context of workplace conflict as illustrated below:

A: See I find this word apology difficult to get around. .....but there was never any attempt to make an apology, and .....see I just find that difficult to understand... what all that’s about..”
S: So, the apology’s irrelevant really, it’s action that you would’ve wanted?
I: Yeah, because an apology’s not going to remove the stressor. And to me it wouldn’t even feel as if it genuine.

Similarly, majority of the respondents were also unsure of what forgiveness is as indicated in the excerpts below:

I: Forgive, hmm...I think I came to accept that I needed to change my behaviour – I needed to stop being so emotionally needy and blah blah blah –....So, forgive, I’m not sure what forgive means, it’s a funny term. I think I’m a bit resistant to the term forgive.
T: Yeah, I struggle with the term forgiveness. I truly don’t quite understand what it means. I suppose I feel that I haven’t recovered totally, once I’m recovered totally, then it will be over.

In the same vein, apology was linked with individual’s personality and respondents remarked that it may not be in the nature of some people to apologize. Also, participants suggested that apology would be readily given by some individuals than others as indicated the excerpt below:

C. Um, yeah possibly. I think that [with] the type of personality though, of this individual [an apology] probably wouldn’t have helped the situation anyway.
S: Mmm hmm, why is that?
C: Um, I just think that perhaps, like even an apology from this person, I wouldn’t be convinced that it was a genuine and sincere apology, and I wouldn’t be convinced that it wouldn’t happen again. I guess I would think that it was a superficial type of apology.
Moreover, over 79% of the respondents were of the opinion that apologies are not usually genuine or even sincere as demonstrated by the excerpt below:

*S: So you didn’t think it was sincere, his apology?
*L: No, definitely not. He was as sarcastic as all get out.
*S: So the apology didn’t help you to get over your feelings?
*L: No, because I know that he doesn’t respect me.

The relationship between apology and forgiveness

About 60% of the participants were of the opinion that the link between apology and forgiveness was not straightforward. These respondents discussed at length that apology without a change in behaviour was not a genuine apology as demonstrated by the excerpt below:

*S: So an apology wouldn’t have helped?
*I: I don’t think so. If there was an apology and the behaviour discontinued, yes it would have helped. But if there was an apology and the behaviour would have continued, which is what I kind of would anticipate would have happened in this particular situation, then, I don’t think it would have helped at all.

Some other respondents were of the opinion that “it is not so much of the apology per se, but it’s the acknowledgement of what the situation was for the victim that will bring forth forgiveness as described succinctly below:

*I: Maybe, but because the behaviour was so embedded. The behaviour was a daily process of controlling…. I imagine an apology would have done something. But I don’t know how much good it’s going to do for a tiger snake to apologize after it’s bitten you and almost killed you.

The Role of Apology and Forgiveness in Resolving Workplace Conflict

Overall, data revealed that in 90% of the workplace conflict events, offenders do not tender apology. Rather, they refuse to accept responsibility for causing the conflict. Data also showed that other approaches such as “encouraging one or the both parties in conflict to leave the organization” and conflict avoidance were the most popular conflict management strategies used.

Study 1: Discussion, Implications and Conclusion

Literature that spans the last fifty years suggests that conflict is pervasive and are damaging to group and organisational effectiveness (Jehn & Nendersky, 2003). In the current research, we explored the role of apology and forgiveness in resolving conflict at work. Findings showed that employees believed that apology that does not involve a change in behaviour is not genuine and may not elicit...
forgiveness. Besides, results showed a weak link between apology and forgiveness and conflict resolution. Managers need to model apology and forgiveness and assist the development of this virtue in other group members.

STUDY 2

Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

The connection between conflict, apology, forgiveness, and willingness to cooperate may be explained by attribution theory (Weiner, 1986). Attribution Theory (AT, Kelley, 1973; Ross and Fletcher, 1985) explores how individuals attribute causes to events, and how they spontaneously explain failures or conflicts. According to AT, how individuals perceive a situation directly affects their behavioural responses to that event (Martinko & Thomson, 1998; Weiner, 1986). Moreover, AT provides a means to explain constructs relevant to forgiveness such as apology and behavioural control (Weiner, 1985). For example, our beliefs about the cause of events may be a key driver in arriving at varying evaluations and reactions to the conflict. Such evaluations, in turn, evoke distinct emotions and behaviours (Weiner, 1985; Weiner, 1995) upon which decisions to apologize or forgive are based. Overall, we anchor our research on AT to explain how conflict may trigger employees’ perception of behaviours such as willingness to apologize, levels of forgiveness and cooperation in future. Given Study 1’s results, we developed and tested a conceptual model that depicts perceived apology sincerity, and attitudes to forgiveness as direct antecedents of employees’ willingness to cooperate given conflict. Also, we conceptualised forgiveness as a mediator of this relationship.

Conflict, perceived apology sincerity and levels of forgiveness

We define conflict as the perceived incompatibilities or differences by parties of the views, wishes and desires that each holds (De Dreu & Gelfand, 2008; Koorsgard et al., 2008) regardless of any overt displays of hostility (Deutsch & Shichman, 1986). We know that perceived differences produce psychological states that include feelings, cognitions and motivations that trigger behaviours intended to reduce or resolve the tension (De Dreu, West, Fischer & MacCurtain, 2001). In particular, the results of our qualitative study (Study 1) revealed that critical to forgiveness is the perception of a sincere apology. McCullough, Worthington and Rachal (1997) propose that apologies have the potential to allow the victim to empathize with the offender to foster an individual’s forgiveness.
following conflict. Similarly, following workplace conflict, sincere apologies can motivate forgiveness as the transgressor is perceived to be remorseful and thus, unlikely to commit the abhorrent behaviour again (Davis & Gold, 2011; Donnoli & Wertheim, 2012) while there is evidence that the tendency to forgive is influenced by behavioural consistency (Hui, Lau, Tsang & Pak, 2011). Thus, we argue that given conflict, perceived sincere apology (like remorse) should be trigger consistent behavioural consistency, which in turn, should be linked with increased forgiveness.

_Hypothesis 1a:_ Perceived apology sincerity will be positively linked with forgiveness

**Conflict, perceived apology sincerity and willingness to cooperate**

Davis and Gold (2011) show that greater perceived remorse leads to greater forgiveness. Moreover, perceived apology sincerity associated with reduced negative emotions such as anger (Hubbard, Hendrickson, Fehrenbach & Sur, 2013) which may increase the cooperativeness of the victim. Similarly, McNulty (2010) suggests that a sincere apology may signal to the victim a reduced likelihood of reoffending. Given the above, we anticipate that perceived apology sincerity will be positively linked willingness to cooperate. Thus:

_Hypothesis 1b:_ Perceived apology sincerity is positively associated with willingness to cooperate.

**Attitudes towards forgiveness and actual forgiveness**

Personality factors are correlated with forgiving behaviours (Maltby et al., 2008). For example, internal factors such as self-esteem, narcissism and need for structure are associated with reduced disposition to forgive and actual forgiveness (Eaton et al., 2006). Results from our Study 1 also revealed that individuals differ in their attitude to forgiveness and that some individuals are more forgiving than others. Also, from attribution theory, we know that attitudes are underlying factors in establishing a cause for behaviours and are critical to establishing forgiveness. Altogether, we argue that an individual with a positive attitude towards forgiveness will be more likely to be linked with actual forgiveness Thus:

_Hypothesis 2a:_ Attitudes towards forgiveness is positively associated with actual forgiveness

**Conflict, attitudes towards forgiveness and willingness to cooperate**
Co-operation is often described as being in polar opposition to conflict (King, Hebl & Beal, 2009). It is the wilful contribution of employee’s effort to the successful completion of interdependent organizational tasks (Wagner, 1995) and is manifested as employee’s willingness to work with other (Chatman & Barsade, 1995). In the current research, we propose that individuals with a positive attitude towards forgiveness will also be associated with willingness to cooperate. This is because cooperative behaviours can be influenced by personality (Liebrand & McClintock, 1988). Maltby and colleagues also show that personality factors may predict victim’s behaviours (e.g. revenge) even two years following a conflict. Given the above, we reason that individuals who have a positive disposition to be more forgiving would be more likely to engage in positive behaviours such as willingness to cooperate after a conflict episode. Similarly, we posit that individuals with a positive attitude to forgive will also be willing to cooperate with offender. In sum, we speculate that positive attitude towards forgiveness will be connected with willingness to cooperation. Thus:

Hypothesis 2b: Attitudes towards forgiveness is positively associated with willingness to cooperate.

Actual forgiveness and willingness to cooperate

We have already established that conflict can trigger dissatisfaction and poor morale (Iverson & Zatzick, 2011). Extant literature also suggests that when there is a transgression (e.g. conflict), victims are more prone to avoidance, withdrawal or revenge (Vasalou, Hopfensitz & Pitt, 2008). The tendency to withdrawal after an offence suggests that the motivation to cooperate will be minimal. Nevertheless, we know that forgiveness is a pro-social process through which the above negative motivations towards the offender may be reduced and replaced by positive motivations (McCullough, 2001) such as willingness to cooperate. In this study therefore, we argue that in the face of conflict, individuals who have a positive attitude to forgive will also be linked with increased willingness to cooperate. Thus:

Hypothesis 3: Actual forgiveness will be positively linked to individual’s willingness to cooperate with offender.

Forgiveness as a mediator in the relationship between perceived apology sincerity, attitude towards forgiveness and willingness to cooperate
Individuals with cooperative disposition are motivated to understand and uphold social group norms, satisfied by group interactions and are expectant of cooperative behaviour from others (Chatman & Barsade, 1995). In the current research, we propose that given conflict, levels of forgiveness will mediate the relationship between apology sincerity, attitudes towards forgiveness and willingness to cooperate. Prior research findings suggest that apologies are effective at increasing victim forgiveness and reducing anger and aggression toward the transgressor (e.g., Bennett & Earwaker, 1994). Specifically, apologies that appear to be sincere are more successful at increasing reconciliation (Hatcher, 2011; Risen & Gilovich, 2007; Tomlinson, Dineen, & Lewicki, 2004). Based on the above, we propose that forgiveness will mediate the relationship between apology sincerity, positive attitudes to forgiveness and will and willingness to cooperate after conflict. Thus:

_Hypothesis 4a: The relationship between perceived apology sincerity and willingness to cooperate will be mediated by level of forgiveness._

_Hypothesis 4b: The relationship between attitudes to forgiveness and willingness to cooperate will be mediated by level of forgiveness._

**METHOD**

**Participants**

359 students (38% male and 62% female) were recruited from one of the major universities in South East Queensland. Age ranged from 15-20 (47.1%) to 41-50 (0.60%) (See Table 1).

Insert Table 1 about here

**Measures**

We adapted Jehn’s Conflict Scale (1995) to measure conflict: relationship conflict ($\alpha = .87$) and task conflict ($\alpha = .94$). Examples of items for relationship conflict include “We disagree about non-work (social or personality) things” and for task conflict, “We had task-related disagreements”). We measured forgiveness with an adapted scale from Guerrero and Bachman’s (2006)’s forgiveness scale. Items include “To what extent have you forgiven the person you rated on this attitude scale”. Similarly, we measured perceived apology sincerity scale also with another adapted Guerrero and Bachman’s (2006) Apology/Making Amends scale ($\alpha=.93$) and with items like: “To what extent did
the offender offer you a sincere apology for her/his words or actions?” Additionally, we measured attitude toward forgiveness with an adapted Brown (2003) attitude to forgive scale. Items include: “I believe that forgiveness is a moral virtue”. We also measured willingness to cooperate with adapted Scott, Bishop and Chen (2003) willingness to cooperate scale. Sample items include” I am willing to share more information with offending employee about work after a conflict event” All scales had a 7 Likert anchor e.g. from 1 “Strongly Disagree” to 7 “Strongly Agree”.

RESULTS

The aim of this study is to examine the role of conflict, apology and forgiveness in the workplace context. We employed Hayes’ PROCESS (Hayes, 2012) bootstrapping for data analysis. Results are based on 10,000 bootstrapped samples and are judged to be significant if the 95% Confidence Intervals for the indirect effect do not go through 0 (Hayes, 2012).

Preliminary Analyses

Confirmatory factor analysis

A series of confirmatory factor analyses (CFA) were conducted to test the factor structures of these measures. Perceived apology sincerity and attitudes towards forgiveness items loaded onto the latent constructs with a root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) of .07, comparative fit index (CFI) of .97 and a normative fit index (NFI) of .96. Measures of willingness to cooperate also reflected good model fit with a RMSEA of .04, a CFI of .99 and a NFI of .98. Conflict measures had a good model fit (RMSEA = .08, CFI = .95, NFI = .93).

Descriptive statistics and correlations

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations and correlations for conflict and each of the variables within the model.

|..........................................................|
|..........................................................|
| Insert Table 2 about here |
|..........................................................|

Control variables.

Gender (i.e. male) predicted scores on forgiveness ($F (1,253) = 4.33, p = .039$), perceived apology sincerity ($F (1, 319) = 12.56, p < .001$) while attitude towards forgiveness ($F (1, 317) = 6.16, p = .014$) correlated with females. Age (i.e. 31-40 yrs) significantly predicted scores on attitudes...
towards forgiveness ($F(3, 317) = 3.21, p = .023$) and ethnicity (collectives) was significantly related to scores of perceived apology sincerity ($F(8, 308) = 2.62, p = .010$). Tenure (i.e. 2-5 years) in workplace was also significantly related to forgiveness ($F(4, 225) = 2.82, p = .026$). All of the above demographic variables except organizational industry were controlled in the main analyses.

**Conflict and forgiveness**

As part of the preliminary analysis, we wanted to see the relationship between different types of conflict, forgiveness, individuals’ willingness to co-operate. Specifically, the results showed a negative association between relationship conflict and willingness to cooperate ($b = -0.08$, $p = .378$, LLCI = -0.26, ULCI = 0.10). Additionally, the relationship between relationship conflict and willingness to cooperate was mediated by levels of forgiveness ($TE = -0.16$, $p = .091$, LLCI = -0.35, ULCI = 0.03). Task conflict was not significantly linked with forgiveness or willingness to cooperate.

**Main Analyses: Direct Effects**

Table 3 presents a summary of the direct effects. Perceived apology sincerity was positively associated with forgiveness ($b = 0.56$, $p < .001$, LLCI = 0.44, ULCI = 0.67). Therefore, we retain H1a. No significant association between perceived apology sincerity and willingness to cooperate was revealed. Thus, we reject H1b.

Results indicated a significant positive association between attitudes towards forgiveness and actual forgiveness (H2a) suggesting that when an individual has a greater positive attitude towards forgiveness they were increasingly likely to be more forgiving ($b = 0.42$, $p = .001$, LLCI = 0.30, ULCI = 0.54). Therefore, we accept H2a. Results also revealed that individuals who reported an increase in positive attitude towards forgiveness also reported increase in willingness to cooperate ($b = 0.31$, $p < .001$, LLCI = 0.17, ULCI = 0.45). Thus, we accept H2b.

Furthermore, we hypothesized that forgiveness would be positively related to individual’s willingness to cooperate with the offender (H3). Results showed that increased forgiveness were associated with increased willingness to cooperate ($b = 0.21$, $p < .001$, LLCI = 0.06, ULCI = 0.35). Thus, we retain Hypothesis 3.
Forgiveness as a Mediator

The results of the indirect effects of levels of forgiveness analyses are summarized in Table 4. An indirect relationship was found between perceived apology sincerity and willingness to cooperate. Although there was no significant total effect ($TE = 0.07, p = .212, LLCI = -0.05, ULCI = 0.20$), however, when the level of forgiveness was considered, higher levels of perceived apology sincerity were associated with increased willingness to cooperate ($IE = 0.11, LLCI = 0.02, ULCI = 0.23$). Therefore, the relationship between apology sincerity and willingness to cooperate is partially mediated by level of forgiveness, and we therefore retain H4a.

An examination of the model also showed a significant total effect ($TE = 0.40, p < .001, LLCI = 0.27, ULCI = 0.53$), and a significant indirect effect ($IE = 0.13, SE = 0.05, LLCI = 0.01, ULCI = 0.17$) of the levels of forgiveness as mediator between attitudes towards forgiveness and willingness to cooperate. Over all, level of forgiveness partially mediates the relationship between attitudes towards forgiveness and willingness to cooperate. We accept H4b.

DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSION

Research findings have advanced our understanding about the nature of conflict (De Witt et al., 2012), forgiveness and apology and the role they might play in repairing damaged interactions after transgression such as conflict (Davis & Gold, 2011; Hui et al., 2011). We extend this understanding by investigating, in two studies, the connection between conflict, apology, attitudes to forgiveness, forgiveness sincerity and willingness to cooperate at work. We found that only relationship conflict was linked with forgiveness and willingness to cooperate. Also apologies without behavioural change were not perceived as genuine and may not foster forgiveness and productivity. Perceived apology sincerity and attitude to forgiveness were linked with forgiveness while increased positive attitude to forgiveness were associated with willingness to cooperate. Our findings reiterate the results of previous research (e.g. Brown, 2003; Eaton et al., 2005). For example, Eaton and colleagues showed that certain traits can inhibit the ability to forgive and actually forgive. In support of the above findings, our study also showed that a positive attitude towards forgiveness was
associated with increased actual forgiveness. Similarly, research on the sincerity of apology has uncovered the important role of genuine apology in the activating forgiveness in the victim (Donnoli & Wertheim, 2012). Our research findings confirm this. We found that individuals who reported increased apology sincerity also reported increased levels of forgiveness. Our results extend literature by showing that given conflict, increased positive forgiveness attitudes, perceived apology sincerity and actual forgiveness were connected with willingness to cooperate. Finally, we extend conflict literature by demonstrating that individuals who engage in relationship (than task) conflict also reported low levels of forgiveness.

**Practical Implications, Limitations and Future Research**

Managers and organizational leaders who are interested in increasing cooperation and cohesion after a conflict event should model a positive attitude towards forgiveness and display genuine apology and forgiveness at work. Our study 1 findings suggest when there is conflict; apologies without a behavioural change may not foster productivity. By encouraging employees to activate a positive behavioural change (e.g. apologies/forgiveness) after conflict, productivity should be higher through increased willingness to cooperate at work. Although we conducted both qualitative and quantitative studies that bear strength to our results, our research is limited by the self-report and cross-sectional nature of Study 2. Other than personality traits, future research should use both qualitative and longitudinal methods to examine the antecedents of a positive attitude towards forgiveness (e.g. climate) and willingness to co-operate at work.

**Concluding Remarks**

The present research examines the nexus between apology, forgiveness and willingness to cooperate after a conflict episode. Our results showed relationship conflict is negatively associated with forgiveness and willingness to cooperate. However, sincere apologies and a positive attitude towards forgiveness were linked to forgiveness and willingness to cooperate. These findings extended the literature on conflict and forgiveness. We now know which type of conflict is related to forgiveness and willingness to cooperate at work while we have a better understanding of the need to foster genuine apology and positive attitude to increase cooperation and productivity after conflict.
References


Table 1. *Participant Characteristics for Study 2*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Participant Characteristic</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent (%)</th>
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<td><strong>Ethnicity</strong></td>
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<td>Asian</td>
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<td>Indian</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Task Conflict</td>
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<td>2.92 (1.10)</td>
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<td>2. Relationship Conflict</td>
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<td>2.23 (0.95)</td>
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<td>3. Process Conflict</td>
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<td>5. Perceived Apology Sincerity</td>
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<td>6. Levels of Forgiveness</td>
<td>255</td>
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<td>7. Willingness to Cooperate</td>
<td>313</td>
<td>4.13 (0.98)</td>
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*Note.** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed); *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
Table 3. *Direct effects of the relationship between perceived apology sincerity, attitude towards forgiveness to level of forgiveness and willingness to cooperate*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>$B$</th>
<th>$SE$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
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<th>95% Bias Corrected LLCI</th>
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<td><em>Willingness to Cooperate</em></td>
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<td>Perceived Apology Sincerity</td>
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<td>-2.03</td>
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<td>0.09</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Direct effects are considered significant ($\alpha = .05$) if the LLCI and ULCI do not contain 0. Number of bootstrap samples for bias corrected intervals is 10,000.
Table 4. *Indirect effect of perceived apology sincerity, attitudes to forgiveness to willingness to cooperate via Level of Forgiveness*

| Willingness to Cooperate |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Effect             |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Perceived Apology        | 0.04 | 0.08 | 0.50 | .617 | -0.12 | 0.21 |
| Sincerity                | 0.40 | 0.09 | 4.50 | <.001 | 0.22 | 0.57 |
| Attitude Towards         |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Forgiveness              |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Indirect Effect          |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Perceived Apology        | 0.26 | 0.07 | - | - | 0.13 | 0.42 |
| Sincerity                | 0.13 | 0.05 | - | - | 0.05 | 0.25 |

*Note.* Indirect effects are considered significant (α = .05) if the LLCI and ULCI do not contain 0. Number of bootstrap samples for bias corrected intervals is 10,000.