

# A Review on University Students' Resilience and Levels of Social Exclusion and Forgiveness

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## Abstract

The aim of this research is to review the relationship between university students' resilience and levels of social exclusion and forgiveness. Study group of the research includes 355–206 (58%) female and 149 (42%) male–students who marked at least one item in Risk Factors Determination List. This study is a correlational survey model. The Resilience Scale, The Risk Factors Determination List, The Social Exclusion Scale for Adolescents and Forgiveness Scale are used as data collection tools. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient and Multiple Linear Regression Analysis are used in data analysis. In the wake of correlation analysis, a significant relationship cannot be found between resilience and forgiveness level. A negative and significant relationship is found between resilience and exclusion and negligence sub-dimensions of social exclusion. In the wake of regression analysis, sub-dimensions of social exclusion predict resilience. In order to increase the resilience of university students, rejection by their friends should be minimized, and in order to prevent individuals from being exposed to social exclusion, communication skills can be improved. Social support, which is among the protective factors of resilience, has an important place in life of university students. Therefore, social activities that every student can participate in can be hold.

**Keywords:** forgiveness, resilience, social exclusion, university students

## 1. Introduction

Individuals face many situations that change their lives. However, each person may not give the same reaction to these situations. While some may be helpless under pressure, some may appear to suffer no harm in the face of severe illness, loss of a relative with a special place in their lives, exposure to natural disasters, terrorism, war, etc. (National Institute of Mental Health, 1995). According to American Psychological Association (2011) resilience, that is one of the factors causing the reactions of individuals to be different, is used in the sense of restoring to the previous situation, i.e. flexibility, and it is the process of adapting to many challenging life experiences. Resilient is used for individuals who are able to make progress unexpectedly and show success in challenging conditions (one who can recuperate quickly), and “resilience” is used as personality trait of these individuals (Terzi, 2008). Being flexible does not mean not having any difficulty or not encountering any negative situation, but is the ability to recover successfully by going back to the previous situation in risky conditions, despite serious threats to adaptation and development (APA, 2011; Masten, 2001). According to Garmezy (1993), the problem encountered is interpreted as a dynamic process which involves a positive adaptation process in a negative situation such as stress and distress. In Turkey “resilience” word is met by psikolojik sağlamlık (Gizir, 2007), yılmazlık (Öğülmüş, 2001), dayanıklılık (Taşgın & Çuhadaroğlu-Çetin, 2006) and kendini toparlama gücü (Terzi, 2006), and these concepts are used in the literature. In this study, the resilience notion was studied.

In classical psychology, the focus is on the individual's psychological illnesses, various mood disorders and problems that lead to adversities. Positive psychology, which has recently brought a new perspective to psychology, has developed a point of view that enables individuals considered as psychologically normal to be happier and healthier, and to discover their own potential and use them more. This approach, which emphasizes the strengths of human beings rather than the weaknesses, has directed the course of studies to resilience notion. Resilience focuses on the strengths of individuals and their ability to overcome negative situations by using their own sources (Seligman & Csikzentmihaly, 2000). Resilience, as a notion, has attracted attention for the first time

in a sample in which homeless and poor people cope with difficulties with their strong will, good fortune, strict and disciplined efforts. In the 1950s, the notion “survivor” was used for individuals who did not show social emotional disorder or noncompliance despite being exposed to various risks such as having an alcoholic parent, having a disease, and an abusive partner (Tarter & Vanyukov, 1999).

In resilience, there are two main factors as protective factors and risk factors. With the interaction of environmental and individual factors, reactions to negative occurrences and psycho-social stress change (Rutter, 1999). The risk factors that lead to the possibility of the occurrence of the negative situation or cause it to continue are examined under three headings. These are family, environmental-social and individual-related risk factors. Risk factors may consist of sociocultural, genetic and demographic factors (Gizir, 2007; Terzi, 2008). Family-related risk factors include violence in the family, a parent’s mental or physical illness, the use of substance and alcohol by parents, abuse and divorce. Environmental risk factors include low socioeconomic level, immigration, unemployment and the existence of violence such as terror and war (Esen-Aktay, 2010). Finally, risk factors related to the individual include genetic disorders, harassment, preterm delivery, aggressive personality structure, lack of effective coping strategies for problems (Gizir, 2007; Karairmak, 2006; Terzi, 2006).

The protective factors that have an effect on the resistance of the person against risk factors (Owen, 2015) are composed of internal and external factors. Internal control focus and self-control, empathy, active problem-solving skills, positive personality traits, realistic plans by taking appropriate steps to realize them, effective management of emotions, sense of humor, optimistic viewpoint, intelligence, self-confidence and self-possessing value are individual protective factors (APA, 2011; Eminağaoğlu, 2006; Karairmak, 2006). External (environmental) factors can be counted as strong bonds and effective communication within the family, supportive parenting attitude, adult supervision and guidance, providing social support in the family or environment and having encouraging relations as a role model for the individual, and low income level (APA, 2011; Esen-Aktay, 2010; Malak, 2011).

It is not possible to mention equal resilience for each individual. Some people have a higher resilience level and others have lower (Eminağaoğlu, 2006). One of the factors that lead to these differences is participating in a particular group or not. Being part of a certain group has an important place in meeting important social and psychological needs of the individual, gaining a positive social identity, being perceived as an important and valuable person (Cemalcılar & Kağıtçıbaşı, 2014). Social exclusion is one of the situations that will prevent an individual from joining a group to cooperate with that group, to get group assistance for the works that she/he cannot do alone and to establish interpersonal positive relations (Stout, 2009). Social exclusion is the alienation of the individual from the group sometimes by clearly making individual feel that she/he is not wanted, and sometimes without an explanation (William, 2007b). In social exclusion that can be experienced at the individual or community level, negligence and omitting are in question (Stout, 2009). It is the social disconnection status seen in one or more of the socioeconomic and cultural systems of individuals whose social ties (social relations, social cohesion and integration) are weak due to economic and structural factors (Silver, 2007; Tartanoğlu, 2011).

When the relevant literature is reviewed, it is seen that social exclusion notion is studied in different areas. In addition to the studies dealing with social exclusion notion together with the economy, there are studies dealing with social and cultural processes (Miroğlu-Öztürk, 2018). When the historical development of social exclusion is considered, the exclusion come to the fore as a social problem as individuals with mental and physical disability, substance addicts, elderly and abused children, criminals and other social incompatibilities are considered as excluded groups, and as it is stated that exclusion of these individuals are not included in the scope of social security (Silver, 1994). Different perspectives and definitions have emerged with the expansion of the notion over time. Farrington (2002), who introduced social exclusion as a process with different sources working dynamically rather than a situation, expresses social exclusion as a process preventing social participation as a result of lack of social, political, economic and political resources.

Positive social relations established during adolescence have a special importance in the lives of individuals. In these relations, the individual has a socio-emotional and psychological support but also develops self-efficacy in the friendship environment and learns many social and physical skills (Siyez, 2013). However, in the exclusion, it is evoked through behaviors that the existence of the individual is meaningless and worthless. The person who experiences social exclusion is ignored by her/his environment through neglecting behaviors. Sometimes, social exclusion is difficult to cope with for an individual, although she/he is not subject to physical violence and bad words (A. Akın, Uysal, & U. Akın, 2016; Kavaklı, 2018; Williams, 2007a). It is stated that in the wake of social exclusion; individuals who see themselves as different with the increase in alienation from society perform risky behaviors such as substance use and alcohol use (Karakan, 2018). In addition, it is seen that individuals experiencing social exclusion are more vulnerable to the risks that are likely to be encountered in daily life, and that troubles occur in fulfilling their duties and responsibilities with the weakening of social ties (Özkul, 2004).

The social implications can be counted as inclination towards criminal behaviors because of not meeting the basic needs of the individual, increase in rebellion to the rules by questioning the institutions and the rules, and the degeneration of value judgments accepted by society and social responsibility (Çakır, 2002).

Communication is an unavoidable element for a social being (Bozkurt, 2013). Communication is sometimes carried out effectively and correctly and sometimes it is exposed to conflicts (Dökmen, 2014). Communication conflicts with interpersonal communication can cause disagreements between individuals and cause people to experience negative feelings such as anger, revenge, wrath and stress in the face of the problems they experience. In this context, forgiveness has an important place for providing social association and maintaining relationships (Dökmen, 2014). Forgiveness notion has long existed as one of the subjects of previous philosophy and religion researches (Kara, 2009). In psychology, researches on forgiveness notion have gained speed and the importance of positive psychology has increased in recent years. Although there are studies and researches on forgiveness, there is not a universal definition accepted by everyone (Berry, Worthington, O'Coonor, Parrot, & Wade, 2005). Forgiveness means to accept the event, the situation or the person instead of ignoring or forgetting, in the face of a violation (Aydn, 2017). With relinquishing the right of behaving negatively, the feeling of positive emotions such as empathy, compassion, affection and tolerance for the violating person is also deemed as forgiveness (Taysi, 2007; McCullough, Fincham, & Tsang, 2003). However, for forgiveness to be healthy, the forgiving person must be truly stripped of negative emotions (Auerbach, 2005).

Forgiveness has been classified at various levels. These are self-forgiveness, forgiving another person, ethnic groups in the community and nations' forgiving each other (Hepp-Dax, 1996). There are several factors that affect forgiveness, as are the types of forgiveness. These can be listed as personality traits, apology and characteristics related to the offense (Şahin, 2013). It is seen that people with negative personality traits cannot easily forgive a person who commits a crime against them; they have more anger, hostility and hatred (Berry et al., 2005). Another feature, apology, is one of the signs indicating the willingness to be forgiven (Alpay, 2009) and varies according to the size of the offense. The increase in the size of the crime and the existence of bad intentions related to the crime decreases the apology's likelihood of being accepted (Scobie & Scobie, 1998). Empathy is an important factor that affects a person's forgiveness, and plays an important role in determining the level of forgiveness of a person (Dökmen, 2014; McCullough et al., 1998). Another factor is the characteristics of the offense. In the study, it was concluded that factors like consequences of the violation, what the violation cost, how much the person is responsible for the violation, the size of the violation affect the process of forgiveness significantly (Bugay & Demir, 2011).

In psychodynamic approach, forgiveness notion has not been studied in depth. When Freud's works are examined, it is seen that he used it five times but it was far from being scientific (Akhtar, 2002). In psychodynamic approach, forgiveness begins in the first years of life (Taysi, 2007) and Freud tries to explain the development of forgiveness in the framework of mother-infant. That the mother always responds to her baby's wishes, and adopts a forgiving attitude teaches forgiving to the baby. Every development period is effective in the development of forgiving ability. For example, it develops the capacity to let go and abandon, as the stool is not good for the child during anal period. In the oedipal period, the child forgives her or his parents' sexual betrayal toward her/himself (Akhtar, 2002). Another model of forgiveness is the two-component motivational system in the model developed by McCullough et al. in 1998 and it forms the basis of forgiveness. In the model, two negative emotions correspond to two motivational systems. The first negative perception is trauma. The person motivationally avoids personal and psychological contact to the person in charge of injury. The second negative feeling is justifiably feeling angry. The individual is angry with the person who hurt her/him and wants to take revenge on her/him. These distinctive motivations work together to create what people call forgiveness. When the individual pardons the offender, her/his perception of the violation changes and she/he does not work to take revenge and not avoid the offender (McCullough et al., 1998).

When the related literature is scanned, it is seen that resilience notion has been studied with conscious awareness in adolescents (Sünbül, 2016), with deprivation and well-being in individuals with parental retardation (Özünlü, 2018), with emotional intelligence level in university students (Malak, 2011), with the relationship between parenting and self-esteem in young adulthood (Akça, 2012), with self-esteem and social self-efficacy in university students (Traş, Arslan, & Hamarta, 2013). In addition, there is a study in which the relationship between resilience, life satisfaction and loneliness are examined (Yakıcı & Traş, 2018). However, there is no study that examines the relationship between the level of social exclusion, forgiveness and resilience. The aim of this study was to investigate whether university students significantly predict the levels of resilience, social exclusion and forgiveness.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Research Model

This research was conducted according to correlational survey model. Survey model aims to determine a past or continuing situation as it is. The individual, event or object in question is defined as it is and according to its own conditions (Karasar, 2018).

### 2.2 Study Group

The study group of the research was composed of 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> grade university students who study in a state university in Central Anatolia Region in 2018-2019 years. The students were informed about the research. The study group was selected by simple random sampling method (Karasar, 2018). Data collection tools were distributed to 500 university students. In the scales obtained, the ones in which there was not any markings in the Risk Factors Determination List, or the blank and deficient ones were not entered in data. The analysis was conducted on 355 data in total.

58% of the students were female and 42% were male. 51.3% of the participants were second grade (n = 182), 43.9% were third grade (n = 156) and 4.5% were fourth grade (n = 16) students. The ages of the participants ranged between 18 and 34 and the average age was 20.49 (Ss = 1.95).

### 2.3 Data Collection Tools

In this study, The Resilience Scale, Risk Factors Determination List, The Social Exclusion Scale for Adolescents, The Forgiveness Scale, and Personal Information Form were used as data collection tools.

#### 2.3.1 The Resilience Scale

Along The Resilience Scale developed by Wagnild and Young (1993) was adapted to Turkish by Terzi (2006). The construct validity of the scale was determined by factor analysis. In the validity study of similar scales, a significant correlation was found between the TRS (The Resilience Scale) and the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale ( $r=.83$ ). The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was .82; test-retest reliability coefficient was determined as  $r=.84$ . The item total correlations were between .03 and .69 (Terzi, 2008). The Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated as .92.

#### 2.3.2 Risk Factors Determination List

In order to determine the individuals who have risk factors for resilience, the related literature have been scanned and a risk factor determination list consisting of 30 items has been established (Terzi, 2008).

#### 2.3.3 The Social Exclusion Scale for Adolescents

Developed by Gilman, Carter-Sowell, Dewall, Adams, and Carboni (2013), this scale was adapted to Turkish by A. Akın, Uysal, and U. Akın (2015). In conclusion of DFA that is applied to test the construct validity of the scale, it was found that it has a structure consisting of two sub-dimensions as Negligence and Exclusion, and 11 items which were similar to the original form of social exclusion scale ( $x^2 = 80.64$ ,  $sd = 41$ ,  $RMSEA = .056$ ,  $NFI = .96$ ,  $NNFI = .97$ ,  $IFI = .98$ ,  $RFI = .95$ ,  $CFI = .98$ ,  $GFI = .95$  and  $SRMR = .048$ ). The factor load values of the items in the measuring instrument ranged from .71 to .88. The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficients which were used to calculate the internal consistency of the SES were .93 for negligence subscale, .90 for the exclusion subscale, and internal consistency reliability coefficients was obtained as .89 for the whole of the scale. Total item test correlations of the scale were between .51 and .70 (A. Akın, Uysal, & U. Akın, 2016). For this study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was calculated as .81 for negligence sub-dimension, .88 for the exclusion sub-dimension, and .85 for the whole scale.

#### 2.3.4 The Forgiveness Scale

Developed by Berry et al. (2004), The Forgiveness Scale was adapted to Turkish by Sariçam and Akın (2013); and KMO sample compliance coefficient was .66.6, and Barlett test  $\chi^2$  value was 518,353 ( $p < .001$ ,  $sd = 120$ ) as a result of exploratory factor analysis. In the confirmatory factor analysis made for the construct validity of the scale, it was observed that 10 items were consistent in one dimension ( $x^2 = 106.47$ ,  $sd = 32$ ,  $RMSEA = .077$ ,  $CFI = .89$ ,  $GFI = .95$ ,  $AGFI = .91$ ,  $SRMR = .062$ ) in keeping with the original form. The factor loads of the scale were between .52 and .77; and The Cronbach Alpha internal consistency reliability coefficient was found to be .67. Test-retest correlation coefficient was found to be .88 for the whole scale; in addition, the corrected total item correlations of the scale were found to be ranked between .37 and .48 (Sariçam & Akın, 2013). The Cronbach alpha coefficient for this study was calculated as .67.

### 2.3.5 Personal Information Form

The personal information form prepared by the researcher was formed to collect general information from the individuals participating in the research. Personal information form is composed of questions to determine the gender, age, department and class status of university students.

## 2.4 Data Collection Tools

### 2.4.1 Data Collection

In this study, data collection was done through the resilience scale, risk factors determination list, social exclusion and forgiveness scale for adolescents. Before the application, students were informed about the purpose of the study and data collection tools. After informing, data were collected from students who wanted to participate voluntarily. During the application, the researcher took part in the classroom environment of the students and answered the questions about the research. The average application time of the scales ranged from 20 to 25 minutes.

### 2.4.2 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by using SPSS 20.0 package program. The correlation between the scores obtained from the scales was calculated using Pearson's correlation coefficient. Multiple linear regression analysis was used for data analysis (Büyüköztürk, 2018). The statistical analysis of the data was handled in a way to reveal the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable.

## 3. Results

Table 1. Correlation results of university students related to resilience, social exclusion and forgiveness variables

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Resilience	-	-.383**	-.298**	.039
2. Social Exclusion/ Exclusion	-.383**	-	.307**	-.047
3. Social Exclusion/Negligence	-.298	.307**	-	.028
4. Forgiveness	.039	-.047	.028	-

\*\* . P< .01.

When Table 1 is examined, it is observed that there is a significant and low negative relationship between the mean scores obtained from the resilience scale of university students and the mean scores of the exclusion sub-dimension of the social exclusion scale ( $r = -.383, p < .01$ ). There is a significant and low negative correlation between the mean scores obtained from the resilience scale and the mean scores of the social exclusion scale ( $r = -.298, p < .01$ ). There is no significant correlation between the mean scores obtained from the resilience and mean scores on forgiveness scale ( $r = .039, p > .05$ ).

Table 2. Regression analysis results of university students related to resilience and social exclusion scale points

	Variables	B	SE	B	T
Social	Exclusion	-1.315	.207	-.322	-6.367
Exclusion Scale					
Sub- Dimensions	Negligence	-1.585	.403	-.199	-3.930

$R = .428, R^2 = .183, p < .001$ .

When Table 2 is examined, it can be seen that the total score obtained from the resilience scale significantly predicts the sub-dimensions of the social exclusion scale. ( $R = .428, R^2 = .183$ ) Total score of the resilience scale predicts 18% of the total variance related to sub-dimensions of the social exclusion scale.

## 4. Discussion

The aim of this study is to contribute to the literature by examining the relationship between resilience, social exclusion and forgiveness levels of university students.

There was no significant relationship between resilience and forgiveness scale scores. After reviewing related literature, Çapan and Arıcıoğlu (2014) found a significant and positive correlation between forgiveness and

resilience. Aslan's study on university students (2018) showed a positive correlation between resilience and forgiveness. In the study of Çapan (2018), resilience has an important positive role on forgiveness. As a result of his work on resilience, life satisfaction and forgiveness, Öztörel (2018) found a positive correlation between resilience and forgiveness. According to the results obtained from the study, it was concluded that resilience, life satisfaction and forgiveness and sub-dimensions of forgiveness were positively related. In Yaşar's (2015) study, the relationship between subjective well-being levels and resilience and forgiveness levels was positively correlated with resilience. When the studies conducted abroad were reviewed, it was seen that Broyles's (2005) study examined the relationship between resilience and forgiveness. As a result of the analyses, it was found that there was a statistical significance between resilience and forgiveness. Anderson (2006) found in his study that there is a positive relationship between resilience and forgiveness. Kumar and Dixit (2014) yielded a low but positive relationship between flexibility and resilience in their research on Indian youth. The findings obtained in conclusion of these studies do not show consistency with the findings obtained in this study. In the explanation of the reason why the findings are inconsistent with the current study between resilience and forgiveness, it can be taken into consideration that the sample group chosen is different, and that they have different age groups and different cultural, social and individual characteristics. In order to be able to explain the findings obtained in the previous studies more effectively, intercultural studies can be conducted with different sample groups.

A significant negative correlation was found between resilience, exclusion and negligence sub-dimensions of social exclusion scale. Studies investigating the relationship between resilience and social exclusion are quite limited. Findings from some of these studies are as follows; Niu, Sun, Tian, Fan, and Zhou (2016) in their study in China showed that flexibility is alleviating the negative effects of exclusion. To have effective social resources and social support, to establish positive relations with an adult in the social environment are among the external protective factors. There are studies conducted to examine the relationship between resilience and social support (Esen-Aktay, 2010; Rahat & İlhan, 2016). Findings from the researches show that there is a significant and positive relationship between resilience and social support. Individuals with high resilience level have the ability to maintain effective communication and relationships in social relations. Individuals with flexibility have the ability to communicate and maintain effective interpersonal communication (Benard, 1996; as cited in Terzi, 2006). Communication skills can be increased in order not to be exposed to social exclusion. Social support (family, friends, relatives, etc.), which are among the protective factors of resilience, have an important place in life of university students. For this reason, it can be ensured that the activities made for the students at universities can be made functional. For researchers, differentiation of the study group, longitudinal research, the relationship between resilience and social exclusion in different risk groups, and intercultural studies may be suggested.

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