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DETERMINANTS OF COMMUNICATING  
FORGIVENESS AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

BY

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## ABSTRACT

Forgiveness is encouraged in Islam as it helps to restore relationships among people. There are several ways that people usually used in forgiving others, but they differ from individual to individual. As such, this study examines the determinants of communicating forgiveness among university students. The specific objectives of this study are (1) to find out the level of forgiveness among IIUM students, (2) to identify ways of communicating forgiveness among students, (3) to identify different ways of communicating forgiveness across different demographic characteristics, (4) to identify different ways of communicating forgiveness across different personality types, and (5) to examine the relationship between ways of communicating forgiveness and religious commitment. The data were collected from 390 students from four kulliyah (faculty), namely, Architecture and Environmental Design (AED), Engineering (ENGIN), Economics and Management Sciences (ENMS), and Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (IRKHS), using a stratified random sampling procedure. These kulliyah were selected to represent two main educational streams in the IIUM Gombak Campus. Descriptive and Inferential statistics were employed to answer the objectives and to test the hypotheses of the study. Three general hypotheses were generated in this study. The first two hypotheses were to find out the differences between ways of communicating forgiveness across different demographic characteristics and across different personality types. The third hypothesis was to find out the relationship between ways of communicating forgiveness and religious commitment. The results showed that the level of forgiveness among the students is quite high and the commonly used ways in communicating forgiveness among them are the direct approach, the conditional approach, the spiritual approach, and the avoidance approach. However, it is found that regardless of demographic characteristics and personality types, the three main approaches in forgiving others are the direct approach, the conditional approach, and the spiritual approach. The avoidance approach is frequently used only among selected groups such as female students, younger students, undergraduate students, and Malaysian students. It is also found that ways of communicating forgiveness are positively related to religious commitment. In addition, the respondents were also asked to share their experience in ways of communicating forgiveness using open-ended questionnaire. The responses were content-analyzed. It is found that the content analysis results support the quantitative analysis.

## ملخص البحث

إن الدين الإسلامي يحض على مبدأ التسامح؛ لأنه يساعد على إحياء واستعادة العلاقات الحميمة بين الناس. فهناك أساليب عديدة في العفو والتسامح التي ما يلجأ إليها البشر عادة، تختلف باختلاف الأفراد. وعلاوة على ذلك، فإن هذه الدراسة تبحث عن محددات التواصل التسامحي بين أوساط طلبة الجامعة. وجاءت الأهداف المحددة لهذه الدراسة لتشمل على ما يلي: (١) الوقوف على مستوى الحدي (المستوى العام) لمبدأ التسامح بين أفراد الطلاب بالجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا، (٢) تحديد أساليب التسامح بين الطلبة، (٣) سبر الأساليب المختلفة في التسامح وفقاً لصفات الديموغرافية الشخصية المختلفة، (٤) سبر الأساليب المختلفة في التسامح وفقاً لذوات الشخصيات المتنوعة، (٥) إبراز العلاقة بين أساليب التسامح والالتزام الديني. وقد تم جمع هذه البيانات من ٣٩٠ طالباً من أربع كليات، وهي: كلية الإعمار وتصميم البيئة، وكلية الهندسة، وكلية الاقتصاد والعلوم الإدارية، وكلية معارف الوحي والعلوم الإنسانية، مستخدماً عملية التوزيع العشوائي للاستبيانات. وقد تم اختيار هذه الكليات لتمثل أهم روافد التعليم في الحرم الرئيس للجامعة الإسلامية العالمية بماليزيا. وجاءت نتيجة الاحصائيات الوصفية والاستدلالية إبرازاً للأهداف، وجواباً لفرضيات الدراسة الثلاثة. فجواب أول اثنين من الفرضيات هو معرفة الخلافات حول أساليب التسامح عبر الخصائص الديموغرافية وعبر أنواع الشخصيات البشرية مختلفة. فضلاً عن معرفة الوعي الديني تجاه مبدأ التسامح. واستخلصت الدراسة بأن مستوى التسامح بين الطلاب مرتفع جداً، والأساليب المستخدمة في المسامحة هو الأسلوب المباشر، و الأسلوب الاشتراطي، والأسلوب الروحي، والأسلوب التحفظي. وبغض النظر عن الخصائص الديموغرافية وأنواعها، وجدت الأساليب الثلاثة الرئيسة، وهي: الأسلوب المباشر، والأسلوب الاشتراطي، والأسلوب الروحي هي الأكثر استخداماً في مسامحة الآخرين. وأما الأسلوب التحفظي، فيشيع استعماله بين فئة الطالبات، والطلبة الأحدث سناً، وطلبة البكالوريوس دون غيرهم. وتبين أيضاً أن أساليب المسامحة ترتبط إيجابياً مع الوعي الديني وإلتزامه. ومن خلال الأسئلة المطروحة في الاستبيانات توافقت تحليل المحتوى بنتائج التحليل الكمي.

## APPROVAL PAGE

I certify that I have supervised and read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Communication).

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Saodah Wok  
Supervisor

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Master of Human Sciences (Communication).

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Badri Najib Zubir  
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Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed  
Knowledge and Human Sciences

## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is the results of my own investigation, except where otherwise stated. I also declare that is has not been previously or concurrently submitted as a whole for any other degree at IIUM or other institutions.

Noor Aishah Binte Hussin

Signature.....

Date.....

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*This thesis is dedicated to my family,  
Hussin Bin Haji Ahamad, Roslinda Binte Malisah,  
and Siti Nadirah Binte Hussin, for their love, patience, and support.*

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# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Allah mentioned in the Holy *Qur'an* “*But indeed if any show patience and forgive, that would be an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs*” (*Asy-Shura*, 42: 43). The Prophet *S.A.W.* (peace be upon him) set a good example for Muslims to follow. He always forgave others including the non-believers. He never harboured resentment or anger towards them; instead he forgave them and prayed for them so that Allah will give them guidance (*hidayah*). This shows the importance of forgiveness in human relationships.

Recent research suggests that forgiveness is an essential aspect of maintaining human relations, providing a process for continued intimacy in the midst of imperfect relationships (Robinson, 1988). Hook, Worthington, and Utsey (2008) found a relationship between collectivism and forgiveness, whereby collectivistic forgiveness often occurs within a broad context of social harmony, reconciliation, and relational repair. Therefore, in order to maintain a good relationship, people must forgive each other.

People communicate both verbally and non-verbally. Sometimes, unconsciously and unintentionally, people say or do things that might hurt others. These hurtful incidents will affect the relationship between both parties. It will also cause the victim to suffer a wide variety of emotions such as anxiety and hostility (Learly et al., 1998). The intensity of negative effects of these hurtful incidents will increase if they share an intimate relationship. However, using the right way to

communicate forgiveness will help in relationship recovery and also will minimize all the negative effects to which feelings of unforgiving may lead.

Forgiveness has deep religious roots (McCullough & Worthington, 1999). Islam itself encourages people to be forgiving of others because with forgiveness people are able to live in peace and harmony (Hanapi, 2007). It is mentioned in the *al-Qur'an*, “*The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto (in degree): but if a person forgives and makes reconciliation, his reward is due from Allah: for (Allah) Loveth not those who do wrong*” (*Asy-Shura*, 42: 40).

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

As human beings, we frequently make mistakes because nobody is perfect in this world except *Allah S.W.T.* Sometimes, we make mistakes unintentionally, but at other times, we deliberately do wrong to others. It is said, “to err is human and to forgive is divine.” Both parts of this statement are very true. As human beings, we are responsible for every single act that we do, so, when we make mistakes, we should ask for forgiveness. Forgiving each other, even forgiving one’s enemies, is one of the most important Islamic virtues.

However, people are ignorant of the importance of forgiveness in their lives. Some even resort to revenge because of anger and grudges. In the worse cases, they even commit crimes like assault and murder just for revenge. One example is the case of a Korean student in Virginia Tech Polytechnic in the United States who killed his classmates because he was insulted as being a nerd (BBC News). He killed others because he was unable to forgive the insults. However, using the right way to seek forgiveness will help the hurt party to be more forgiving. This will then help make the world a better place, so people can live in peace and harmony.

In most cases people do forgive, but in different ways. The ways differ according to their personality, religiosity, and other demographic characteristics. As such, this study investigates the determinants of communicating forgiveness among university students. Much research has been conducted on forgiveness. However little has been done in terms of the communication field and in *Islam*.

### **1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The general objective of the study is to find out the determinants of communicating forgiveness among university students.

The specific objectives of this study are:

- 1) To find out the level of forgiveness among IIUM students.
- 2) To identify ways of communicating forgiveness among students.
- 3) To identify different of ways of communicating forgiveness across different demographic characteristics.
- 4) To identify different of ways of communicating forgiveness across different personality types.
- 5) To examine the relationship between ways of communicating forgiveness and religious commitment.

### **1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

Theoretically, this study investigates communicating forgiveness in the context of an educational setting. The three stage model of forgiveness by Gordon and Baucom (1998) is limited to only marital relationship within a family, the smallest unit of

society or an organization. As such, this study tries to add dimensions to this model in which the three stages can also be generalized to a larger relationship setting.

There are limited literature and scholarly studies that address the issue of forgiveness in the light of Islam. This study, therefore, tries to address forgiveness from the Islamic perspective. The findings of this study may contribute to the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) community and to the Muslim society as a whole. Muslims know the importance of forgiveness but they know so little about the various ways to communicate forgiveness among themselves.

### **1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This study investigates the determinants of communicating forgiveness among students. It was conducted in IIUM Gombak Campus, Selangor, among IIUM undergraduate and postgraduate students. A total of 390 students were randomly selected to participate in this study. Only Muslim students were selected although there are non-Muslim students enrolled in the university. This study attempts to extend the literature concerning forgiveness from the Islamic perspective. In addition, it also identifies ways that Muslims from various backgrounds forgive others.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter reviews the literature pertaining to the main concepts of this study, namely, ways of communicating forgiveness and its determinants. It also discusses the three stage model of forgiveness, the hypotheses of the study, and the theoretical framework underpinning the study.

#### **2.2 DEFINITION OF FORGIVENESS**

Many researchers have tried to conceptualize and define forgiveness. The definition varies from an intrapsychic phenomenon (Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998) to a motivational change to both psychological and social dimensions (McCullough et al., 1998; Worthington, 1998). According to McCullough et al. (2007), all of these definitions are based on the idea that forgiveness involves temporal change.

According to Wade, Gorsuch, and Rosik (1990: 40), forgiveness is “the degree to which individuals have forgiven a specific person who has hurt them”. It is also defined as, “an intrapsychic phenomenon in which it is a freely chosen act by a victim involving both a reduction in resentment and the offering of compassion, mercy, and love to the offender” (Enright, Freedman, & Rique, 1998: 759). Fincham (2000: 133) also shared this view and indicated that there are two dimensions in forgiveness. Reduction in resentment is considered as the negative dimension of forgiveness, while offering of compassion as the positive dimension.

In contrast, McCullough et al. (1998: 759) view forgiveness as a function of a changed motivational state, specifically, the termination of revenge and the introduction of avoidance motives following an offense. They mentioned that:

This is where a person becomes (a) decreasingly motivated to retaliate against an offending relationship partner; (b) decreasingly motivated to maintain estrangement (separation) from the offender; and (c) increasingly motivated by conciliation and goodwill for the offender, despite the offender's hurtful actions.

Worthington (1998: 59) also defined forgiveness as, "a motivation to reduce avoidance of and withdrawal from a person who has hurt us, as well as the anger, desire for revenge and urge to retaliate against that person. Forgiveness also increases the pursuit of conciliation toward that person if moral norms can be re-established, as good as or even better than they were before the hurt".

Baumeister, Exline and Sommer (1999), on the other hand, indicate that both social and psychological dimensions exist in forgiveness as forgiveness can occur between two parties or within a single individual. In addition, Exline and Baumeister (2000: 133) defined forgiveness as the "cancellation of a debt" by "the person who has been hurt or wronged".

Younger et al. (2004: 849) found that, in general, forgiveness includes letting go of negative effects and also interpersonal dimensions that include reconciliation, forgetting (or not), and simply behaving as if the event had never happened. Besides that Borris-Dunchunstang (2007) defines forgiveness as a process that shows people how to heal emotional pain by choosing to see the person who caused the pain differently. It is about changing the way we think about ourselves and the way we see the world.

The Arabic word used to describe forgiveness is *al-'afwu*, which literally means "to release", "to heal", "to restore", and "to remit" (Siddiqi, 2008). This

meaning in Arabic for forgiveness is supported by research by Western scholars that forgiveness is an essential part of healing which enables us to release our anger, pain, and suffering. As we learn to forgive and heal our emotional pain, we begin to experience the gift of inner peace.

In this study, forgiveness is defined as the degree to which individuals have forgiven a specific person who has hurt them which include letting go of negative effects and trying to reconcile, to forget (if possible), and behave as if the event had not happened.

In addition, communicating forgiveness is defined as the ways used to communicate forgiveness. Seven approaches of forgiveness are identified in communicating forgiveness. They are the avoidance approach, the non-verbal display approach, the minimizing strategy approach, the direct approach, the conditional approach, the discussion approach, and the spiritual approach. Five of the forgiveness communication approaches listed above were taken from Waldron and Kelley's (2005), while the remaining two approaches, the avoidance approach and the spiritual approach, are added by this researcher based on the Islamic background. There are many theories and models of forgiveness found in the literature such as the Personal Construct Model (Kelly, 1955; Smith, 1981), the Moral Development Theory (Kohlberg, 1969), the Three-stage Model (Gordon & Baucom, 1998), the Grudge Theory (Baumeister, Exline, & Sommer, 1999), and the Forgiveness Theory (Worthington & Wade, 1999). However, this study uses the three-stage model by Gordon and Baucom (1998).

### **2.3 THE THREE-STAGE MODEL OF FORGIVENESS**

The most suitable theory to describe forgiveness is the three-stage model by Gordon and Baucom (1998) which was developed in the context of marriage within the family as the smallest unit of society or an organization. This study employs a higher context of an organization which is the educational institution.

The three major stages of the forgiveness process includes (1) absorbing and experiencing the impact of the interpersonal trauma; (2) searching for meaning as to why the trauma occurred, along with the implications for this new understanding; and (3) moving forward with one's life within the context of a new set of relationship beliefs. This model is unique as it includes affective, cognitive, and behavioural tasks at each stage in the process of moving from the experience of conflict to forgiveness.

The first stage is the affective stage. This stage indicates that conflicts are unexpected and that they have major implications for the well-being of a person. The affective process is accompanied by an overwhelming array of emotions, such as fear, hurt, or anger. In addition, people may find themselves acting in ways that are different from their normal selves. As a result, the interactions between the people involved are often chaotic, intensely negative, and are likely to lead to further frustration and anger.

The second stage is the cognitive or "meaning stage" where people explore more thoroughly why the event occurred. This is where people search for meaning. The meaning may come from two sources: (i) seeking to understand the causes of trauma and/or (ii) attempting to find a positive impact from the events on their lives such as greater spiritual growth and a better understanding of life. This helps the individuals to regain some sense of control over their lives. By knowing why the event happened, both parties will try to prevent the same event from happening again.

The last stage is the moving-on stage which is behavioural in nature. This stage emphasizes that forgiveness involves having positive thoughts about the other person and forgetting the hurtful incident(s). Re-evaluation of the relationship will take place, but most of the time both parties will forgive each other and start over with a new relationship.

A theory is a general statement or a set of statements that summarizes our understanding of the way the world works, and is testable (Severin & Tankard, 2001). According to Saodah (2006), theory is man-made and it evolves, continually being refuted and replaced by new theory. Religion, on the other hand, is higher than theory as it is not testable, cannot be refuted and cannot be replaced by new one. In Islam, it is a way of life with the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* as guidance. Furthermore, forgiveness is part and parcel of life, and Allah S.W.T has laid out the guidelines for human beings to follow.

## **2.4 FORGIVENESS IN ISLAM**

Islam identifies two aspects of forgiveness: (a) Allah's forgiveness; and (b) human forgiveness. We need both, because we do wrong both in our relations with Allah as well as in our relations with each other, whether intentionally or unintentionally.

Allah the Almighty is the most Forgiving. As mentioned in the Qur'an: *"Indeed! God does not forgive the sin of ascribing partners to Him, but He forgives anything else to whom He pleases, and whoever takes partners with God has gone astray into far error"* (*An-Nisa'*, 4: 116). Therefore, we must turn to Allah to seek His forgiveness because we need Allah's mercy and forgiveness all the time.

Just as it is important to believe in the mercy and forgiveness of Allah, it is also necessary to base all human relations on forgiveness. How can we expect Allah's

forgiveness while we do not forgive those who do wrong to us? In the Qur'an Allah described the Believers as: *"Those who avoid major sins and acts of indecencies and when they are angry they forgive"* (Asy-Syura, 42: 37). In one hadith, Prophet Mohammad S.A.W said that Allah has commanded him to do nine things. One of them he mentioned was *"that I forgive those who do wrong to me"*. Allah also mentioned in the Qur'an: *"The reward of the evil is the evil thereof, but whosoever forgives and makes amends, his reward is upon Allah"* (Asy-Syura, 42:40). Abu Huraira reported Prophet Muhammad S.A.W also said: *"Charity does not in any way decrease the wealth; and the servant who forgives, Allah adds to his respect; and the one who shows humility Allah elevates him in the estimation (of the people)"* (narrated by Muslim).

Abdullah Yusuf Ali (2006) mentioned that "it is harder to be patient and forgive, but in reality it is considered as the highest and noblest form of courage and resolution". Therefore, it is very important for us to forgive others. Allah mentioned in the Holy Qur'an, *"But indeed if any show patience and forgive, that would be an exercise of courageous will and resolution in the conduct of affairs"* (Asy-Shura, 42: 43).

## **2.5 WAYS OF COMMUNICATING FORGIVENESS**

There are several ways of communicating forgiveness to others. A few researchers have identified several communication approaches in forgiveness. Kelley (1998), for example, identified three communication approaches in the forgiveness process which include *direct*, *indirect*, and *conditional* approaches. On the other hand, Waldron and Kelley (2005) came up with five types of forgiveness-granting communication strategies. First, the *non-verbal display approach* refers to the display of forgiveness

through nonverbal acts such as a hug or a handshake. Second, the *conditional approach* emphasizes that forgiveness is granted when the other party changes his/her behaviour. Third, the *minimizing strategy approach* indicates that the offense was not very important and the hurt party acts as if nothing had happened. Fourth, the *discussion approach* implies that both parties discuss with each other and try to identify the solution before forgiving each other. Lastly, the *explicit forgiveness approach* indicates that forgiveness is communicated directly to the other party by saying “I forgive you”. All these strategies and approaches indicate that communication of forgiveness can lead to relationship recovery among people. However, those studies lack the spiritual dimension of the human being.

Ways of communicating forgiveness sometimes will be affected by other factors, too. One of these factors is religiosity. People with various levels of religiosity will have different ways of communicating forgiveness. So far, there is no study yet pertaining to religiosity and ways of forgiving others. As such, this study tries to identify other communication approaches used among Muslims, especially students, to communicate forgiveness.

## **2.6 DETERMINANTS OF COMMUNICATING FORGIVENESS**

There are several factors that might affect their forgiveness. Among the widely conducted studies, three main determinants of forgiveness are demographic characteristics (McCullough et al., 1998; Orathinkal et al., 2008), personality (Emmons, 2000; McCullough et al. 2001), and religiosity (Bedell, 2002; McCullough et al., 1998; Orathinkal et al., 2008).

## **2.6.1 Demographic Characteristics**

Previous research has identified numerous demographic variables that might affect the act of forgiveness, for example, age and gender (Enright and Zell, 1989; McCullough et al., 1998; Finkel et al., 2002; Orathinkal et al., 2008), and culture (Enright and Zell, 1989). Additionally, this study tried to look at other demographic factors that may affect the ways people use to communicate forgiveness among them. It is speculated that nationality, level of study, and educational stream (art-based and science-based) are additional factors that may influence ways of communicating forgiveness.

### ***2.6.1.1 Gender***

Several studies have identified that gender affects the act of forgiving. Initially, Enright and Zell (1989) suggested no gender differences with regards to forgiveness. However, Finkel et al. (2002) who conducted a study on undergraduate students found that female students were more forgiving than male students. This is supported by Orathinkal et al.'s (2008) study. They also found that women tend to forgive more than men. However, no study has been conducted yet on the differences between genders in ways of communicating forgiveness. Based on this research, this study postulates that there are differences between males and females in ways used to communicate forgiveness.

Another factor that might influence the act of forgiveness is age.

### ***2.6.1.2 Age***

Enright and Zell (1989) found that age is related to the act of forgiving whereby older people are more forgiving. Some research has found that the tendency to forgive

increases with maturity (Covert, 2005; DiBlasio & Proctor, 1993; Romig & Veenstra, 1998). Girard and Mullett (1997) looked at a sample of adolescents, young, middle-aged, and older adults. They also found that older adults are more likely to forgive than the younger ones. In addition, Walker and Gorsuch (2002) suggested that as people grow older, there is a slight increase in the disposition to be more forgiving. Based on previous research, it is believed that there are differences between young and older students in ways of communicating forgiveness.

The third factor that might influence the act of forgiveness and ways of communicating forgiveness is marital status.

#### ***2.6.1.3 Marital Status***

Merolla (2008) found that ways of communicating forgiveness differ according to relationship status. Results showed that dating partners tend to use more of the conditional approach in communicating forgiveness. This approach is used more between couples because of the high level of effort required to maintain the relationship and its exclusivity (Davis & Todd, 1982; Merolla, 2008). Based on these studies, it is believed that there are differences between single and married students on ways of communicating forgiveness.

Besides demographic characteristics, the personality type is another determinant that will affect the ways students communicate forgiveness.

#### ***2.6.1.4 Personality Type***

McCullough et al. (2001) mentioned that individual differences might influence forgiveness. The previous research conducted was mostly focused on the five-factor model of personality (Emmons, 2000; Ross et al., 2004; Walker & Gorsuch, 2002).

However, this study focuses mainly on the different personality types among the individuals. According to Dunham (1984), there are two types of personality which are Type A and Type B personalities. Type A people tend to work aggressively and are under pressure. They are also very impatient and competitive. On the other hand, Type B people prefer a low-pressure life and are more relaxed, easy-going, and they are sociable people. Due to these differences, it is believed that they will be using different ways to communicate forgiveness.

Another important factor that is believed to influence ways of communicating forgiveness is religious commitment.

#### ***2.6.1.5 Religious Commitment***

Researchers have found that religion might affect the act of forgiveness (Bedell, 2002; McCullough et al., 1998; Orathinkal et al., 2008). According to Newberg et al. (2000), over the centuries, many cultures have believed that God or the gods have encouraged forgiveness as an act of love. This is supported by Bedell (2002) who mentioned that the relationship between religion and forgiveness is evident in that forgiveness is heavily rooted in many theologies.

According to Rohrbaugh and Jessor (1975), religiosity is the impact of religion on a person's daily life and the extent to which an individual participates in ritual practices. Studies have found that personal religiosity is associated with an increased willingness to forgive (Enright, Santos & Al-Mabuk, 1989, McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Rye & Pargament, 2002). Enright and Zell (1989) found that those who engage in practicing their faith show a greater level of forgiveness than those who are not. Based on these studies, it is believed that religious commitment will influence ways used to communicate forgiveness.

## **2.7 HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY**

Based on the previous studies on forgiveness, this study proposes the following hypotheses (GH: General Hypothesis; SH: Sub-Hypothesis).

*GH1:* Ways of communicating forgiveness vary across different demographic subgroups.

*SH1.1:* There are differences between male and female students in terms of ways of communicating forgiveness.

*SH1.2:* There are differences between younger and older students in terms of ways of communicating forgiveness.

*SH1.3:* There are differences between science-based students and art-based students in terms of ways of communicating forgiveness.

*SH1.4:* There are differences between Malaysian and International students in terms of ways of communicating forgiveness.

*SH1.5:* There are differences between single and married students in terms of ways of communicating forgiveness.

*SH1.6:* There are differences between undergraduate and postgraduate students in terms of ways of communicating forgiveness.

*GH2:* Ways of communicating forgiveness are different across personality types.

*GH3:* There are positive relationships between ways of communicating forgiveness and religious commitment.

## **2.8 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Figure 2.1 illustrates the theoretical framework of this study. The model offers a set of three relationships. The first relationship is between demographic characteristics and ways of communicating forgiveness. The second relationship is between personality types and ways of communicating forgiveness. The third relationship is between religious commitment and ways of communicating forgiveness. These relationships were derived from the literature.

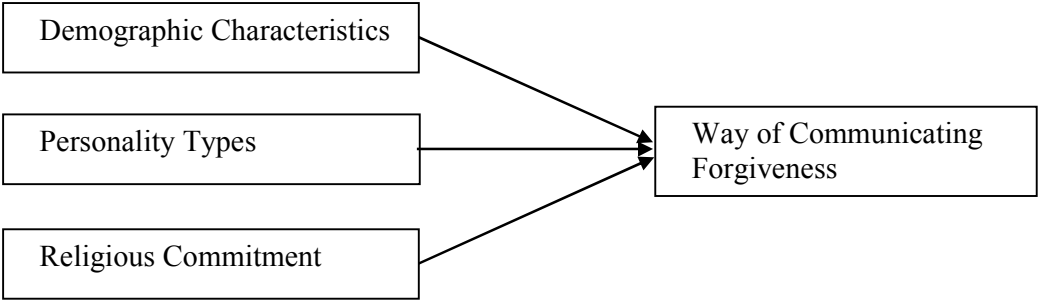


Figure 2.1: Theoretical Framework

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter describes the methodology used in the study to answer the research questions and to test the hypotheses. This includes the research design, the population, sample size, sampling procedure, research instrument, pre-testing of the research instrument, reliability and validity, operational definition of the variables, data collection, data analysis, and limitation of the study.

#### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study uses a descriptive cross-sectional survey research design to gather information from the respondents. Self-administered questionnaires were distributed to the students to obtain the desired information. Survey design is used because of its inexpensive cost, ability to obtain current information, and ability to obtain a great deal of information at one time (Berger, 2000).

#### **3.3 POPULATION**

The population of this study consists of students of the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) Gombak Campus, Selangor. IIUM is a private publicly-funded university sponsored by eight different governments of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Although the university is founded on Islamic principles, it accepts non-Muslim students as well. There are approximately 30000 students from over 100 countries studying in IIUM, combining both Islamic and non-Islamic

countries. IIUM is recognized by the OIC countries as an institution that produces many international graduates.

There are seven kulliyahs in this campus, namely, Kulliyah of Architecture and Environmental Design (AED), Kulliyah of Engineering (ENGIN), Kulliyah of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), Institute of Education (INSTED), Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences (IRKHS), Kulliyah of Economics and Management Sciences (ENMS), and Ahmad Ibrahim Kulliyah of Laws (LAWS).

### 3.4 SAMPLE SIZE

The population of students, both undergraduate and postgraduate, in IIUM Gombak Campus, is approximately 15000. Based on a 95% confidence level, the number of the sample to represent IIUM students is 390 students (Israel, 1992).

Students from AED, ENGIN, IRKHS, and ENMS were selected to represent the population of IIUM students. These four kulliyahs were selected after the researcher drew lots based on the educational stream, that is the science-based and the art-based streams. Table 3.1 presents the number of students from the four kulliyahs selected.

Table 3.1  
Sample Distribution based on Kulliyah

Kulliyah	Total No. of Students	No. of Sample	Percentage	
			Each Kulliyah	Overall
AED	849	35	4.1	9.0
ENGIN	1473	60	4.1	15.4
ENMS	2126	87	4.1	22.3
IRKHS	5099	208	4.1	53.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>9547</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The response rate is maximum (100.0%) with all 390 students responded to the questionnaire. From the 390 respondents, 29.2% are postgraduate students and 70.8% are undergraduate students. This is representative and proportionate to the population of students in terms of their level of study.

### **3.5 SAMPLING PROCEDURE**

This study uses a stratified random sampling procedure to collect data from the sampling frame. According to Wimmer and Dominick (1997), a stratified random sample is the approach used when an adequate representation of a sub-sample (strata or segment) is desired. For this study, the main stratum is the kulliyah educational stream. The students were then selected based on the proportion of gender, nationality, and level of study. The number of female to male students in the university is 6:4, while Malaysian to international students is 8:2, and undergraduate to postgraduate students is 2:1.

The reason for using stratified random sampling is to ensure proper representation of the stratification variables to enhance representation based on the kulliyah educational stream. This is because according to De Vaus (2002), stratified random sampling is used to produce more representative and more accurate samples than simple random sampling.

From the seven kulliyahs in the campus, three of them are classified as science-based which includes AED, ENGIN, and ICT, while the remaining four kulliyahs, ENMS, INSTED, IRKHS, and LAWS are the art-based. To ensure equal chance of being selected, the researcher drew lots from the educational streams. AED and ENGIN were selected to represent the science-based kulliyah, while IRKHS and ENMS represented the art-based kulliyah.

Letters of permission were sent to the Admissions and Records Division (A&R) and Centre for Postgraduate Studies (CPS) in order to obtain the number of students from the selected kulliyahs as of November 2009 (Appendix A). The exact number of students from these four kulliyahs according to the strata was requested from the A&R and CPS.

### **3.6 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

Questionnaires were used for the study. The advantages of using a questionnaire are that it is relatively cheap, it is able to collect information from a large sample within a short time, and it provides anonymity (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000).

The questionnaire consists of six sections (Appendix B) which address the objectives of the study.

Section 1: Demographic profile – asks for the basic information of the respondents.

Based on previous studies, gender and age (Enright & Zell, 1989), and marital status (Younger et al., 2004) were among the information needed for studying forgiveness. For this study, beside gender, age, and marital status, kulliyah and level of study were also requested from the respondents.

Section 2: Tendency to forgive – asks the respondents about their general tendencies towards forgiving a person who has hurt them. It was measured using six items that ask the respondents about their general tendencies to forgive others. Two of the items were adapted from Brown's (2003) Tendency to Forgive Scale (TTF). The remaining items were added to the scale by the researcher.

Section 3: Ways of forgiving – tries to identify ways that people frequently use to forgive the person who has hurt them. It was measured using seven items that ask the respondents ways that they usually use to forgive others. Five of the items were adapted from Waldron and Kelley's (2005) Forgiveness Granting Strategies. The remaining two items were added to the scale by the researcher.

Section 4: Religious commitment – taps information concerning the level of religiosity of the respondents. It was measured using ten items that ask the respondents their commitment to religion. The items were adapted from Morgan and Hunt's (1994) measurement of relationship commitment and Worthington et al. (2003) religious commitment inventory (RCI-10).

Section 5: Personality type – tries to identify the personality type of the students. It was assessed using Brief, Schuler and Sell's (1981) measurement of Type A and Type B personalities. It was measured using five items that describe an individual personality.

Section 6: Reflections when forgiving others – asks the respondents to share their experiences when dealing with forgiveness during their study.

### **3.7 PRE-TESTING OF THE RESEARCH INSTRUMENT**

The research instrument was pre-tested before the actual survey was conducted. Thirty undergraduate and postgraduate students from INSTED and ICT (7% of the sample size) were randomly selected in the respective kulliyah to complete the questionnaire in January 2010. The pre-testing was held to identify any errors in the questionnaire, such as, misspellings, misplaced items, and to detect confusing questions as well as to

indicate the length of time needed to complete a single questionnaire. The pre-testing looked into whether the respondents can understand each question.

Based on the pre-testing, necessary changes and modifications were made to the questionnaire specifically for the items in Section 5. Initially there were seven items measuring personality types but two of them were deleted as the respondents were confused of the meaning and some of them left the two items unanswered.

### **3.8 RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY**

Reliability is the consistency of a measure within itself (Reinard, 2001). There are several ways to determine the reliability of a measurement. This study uses three methods to ensure the reliability of the measurement which includes internal reliability, test-retest reliability, and multi-method reliability. The internal reliability is determined using the Cronbach's alpha, while test-retest reliability is measured using the pre-test and the post-test of the research instrument, and the multi-method reliability makes use of content analysis to support the quantitative analysis findings.

Intercoder reliability is used to measure the reliability of the content analysis. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2000), intercoder reliability refers to the level of agreement among independent coders who code the same content using the same coding instrument. This study uses Holsti's (1969) formula to calculate the reliability. The calculation for reliability is as follows:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2(M)}{N1 + N2}$$

According to Wimmer and Dominick (2000), M is the number of coding decisions on which two coders agree, and N1 and N2 are the total number of coding decisions by the first and second coder, respectively. In this study, the two coders

judged a sub-sample of 216 and agreed on 197 of them, so the calculation is as follows:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{2(197)}{216 + 216} = 0.89$$

The result shows that the reliability of the content analysis is acceptable with reliability coefficient of 0.89.

Validity, on the other hand, is the degree to which a measure actually measures what is claimed (Reinard, 2001). There are four types of validity. They are face validity, predictive validity, concurrent validity, and construct validity (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000). Face validity has the most basic validity. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2000), face validity is achieved by examining the measurement device to see whether, on the face of it, it measures what it appears to measure. For example, the level of forgiveness among the students was assessed using six items question items asking their tendency to forgive others.

All concepts that were measured using more than three items like tendency to forgive, ways of communicating forgiveness, religious commitment, and personality type, were tested for its internal reliability. According to De Vaus (2002), a good measure may have reliability coefficient of 0.70 and above. Table 3.2 presents the reliability test for the selected variables for both the pre-test and the post-test.

Table 3.2  
Reliability Test for Selected Variables

Variables	No. of Items	Alpha Cronbach	
		Pre-test (n=30)	Post-test (n=390)
Level of Forgiveness	6	0.86	0.81
Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	7	0.71	0.70
Religious Commitment	10	0.85	0.89
Personality Type	5	0.69	0.68

Level of forgiveness reported high reliability in the pre-test with Cronbach's alpha of 0.86. Therefore, there was no need to drop any of the items. The reliability of level of forgiveness remained high during the post-test, with  $\alpha=0.81$ .

Ways of communicating forgiveness were measured using seven items. For the pre-test, the Cronbach's alpha was 0.71. No item was deleted from the measurement. The reliability coefficient of ways of communicating forgiveness in the post-test is 0.70.

Religious commitment reported high reliability in the pre-test with Cronbach's alpha of 0.85. Therefore, there was no need to drop any of the items. The reliability of religious commitment remained high during the post-test, with  $\alpha=0.89$ .

Personality type was measured using Brief, Schuler and Sell's (1981) measurement of Type A and Type B personalities. Initially seven items were used in the pre-test. Factor analysis was conducted and two items were deleted from the measurement. The items were "express feelings – sit on feelings" and "many interests – few interests". The reliability coefficient then increased to 0.69. In the actual study, the reliability of personality type is  $\alpha=0.68$ .

### **3.9 OPERATIONAL DEFINITION OF VARIABLES**

There are four main concepts in this study. These concepts are the tendency to forgive (TTF), ways of communicating forgiveness, religious commitment, and personality type.

Tendency to forgive was measured using a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1-never to 6-always. Examples of the items are "I tend to get over it quickly when someone hurts my feelings" and "I forgive because I feel it is useless to bear grudge towards others". The tendency to forgive is calculated based on the mean score of the

six items (M=4.25, SD=0.81). The lower the mean score, the less forgiving an individual is.

Ways of communicating forgiveness were also measured using a six-point Likert scale ranging from 1-never to 6-always. Each of the items asked in this section represents an approach used by an individual to forgive others. There are seven approaches identified: (M: Mean; SD: Standard Deviation)

1. **Avoidance approach** – “When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them” (M=4.42, SD=1.24),
2. **Non-verbal display approach** – “When I am hurt, I gave them a look that communicates forgiveness” (M=3.72, SD=1.18),
3. **Minimizing strategy approach** – “When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me” (M=3.88, SD=1.23),
4. **Direct approach** – “I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing” (M=4.92, SD=1.15),
5. **Conditional approach** – “I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake” (M=4.85, SD=1.10),
6. **Discussion approach** – “When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her” (M=3.62, SD=1.35), and
7. **Spiritual approach** – “When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person’s well-being” (M=4.47, SD=1.27).

The overall mean for ways of communicating forgiveness is 4.27 with standard deviation of 0.71.

Religious commitment was rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1-not at all true of me to 5-totally true of me. Examples of the items are “I am extremely committed to my religion” and “My religion makes my life more meaningful”. It was calculated based on the mean score of the ten items ( $M=4.16$ ,  $SD=0.59$ ). The higher the value, the more religious an individual is.

Personality type was measured using semantic differential scale. The scale is an eight-point bipolar rating scale using adjectival opposites. A Type A personality is never late, very competitive, always rushed, tries to do many things at one time, and fast. The Type B personality, on the other hand, is more relaxed, casual about appointments, not competitive, never feels rushed under pressure, takes things one at a time, and is slow in doing things. Five items were used to measure the personality type. The points for all five items were added to identify which personality type each individual belongs to. Those who score 20 points and below are classified as a Type B personality, while those who score 21 points and above are classified as a Type A personality.

### **3.10 DATA COLLECTION**

The actual survey was conducted after the pre-testing was done and the questionnaire was adjusted accordingly. The questionnaires were distributed to the students at the respective kulliyah during class time and at the appropriate places where they normally meet like at the Kulliyah cafeteria. The respondents were directly approached by the researcher. They were asked for their willingness to participate in the survey before the researcher handed the questionnaire to them. The duration for data collection was one month over the period 1-28 February 2010.

### **3.10.1 Demographic Profiles of the Respondents**

The demographic profiles of the respondents are presented in Table 3.3. A total of 390 students responded to the questionnaire. Two-thirds of them are female (66.7%) and the remaining are male (33.3%). About seven in ten of the students are aged between 19-24 years old (71.8%). This number corresponds to the level of study of the respondents whereby 70.8% of them are undergraduate students and the remaining are postgraduate students (29.2%). The majority of them are still single (86.7%) and only 13.3% of the respondents are married. The number of respondents from each kulliyah is proportionate to the number of students in the population. More than half of the respondents are IRKHS students (53.1%) as IRKHS has the highest number of students in IIUM. This also indicates that there are more students in the art-based kulliyah (77.4%) than the students in the science-based kulliyah (22.6%). More than three-quarters of the respondents are Malaysians (75.9%) and the remaining are International (24.1%).

Table 3.3  
Demographic Profiles of the Respondents

<b>Demographic Profiles of the Respondents</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	130	33.3
Female	260	66.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Age</b>		
19-24 years old	280	71.8
25 years and above	110	28.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Level of Study</b>		
Undergraduate	276	70.8
Postgraduate	114	29.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Marital Status</b>		
Single	338	86.7
Married	52	13.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Kulliyah</b>		
AED	39	10.0
ENGIN	49	12.6
ENMS	95	24.4
IRKHS	207	53.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Educational Stream</b>		
Science-based	88	22.6
Art-based	302	77.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>Nationality</b>		
Malaysian	296	75.9
International	94	24.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### 3.11 DATA ANALYSIS

All items in the questionnaire were coded and analysed using SPSS WIN 16.0 software. Descriptive and Inferential statistics were used to answer the objectives and hypotheses of the study.

Descriptive statistics like percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to describe the demographic profile of the respondents and the overall description of each variable.

Inferential statistics were also used for the analysis of relationships and analysis of differences. Correlation and regression were employed to test significant relationships, while t-test were used to measure significant differences of gender, age, educational stream, nationality, marital status, level of study, and personality concerning ways of communicating forgiveness.

### **3.12 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study is limited to ways of communicating forgiveness and its determinants. The respondents were confined to graduate students only. Even though IIUM accommodates both Muslim and non-Muslim students, only Muslim students were selected. The respondents come from different parts of the world. As such, this study is not limited to only Malays although it is conducted in Malaysia.

The instrument used was constructed in a close-ended format which limits the study to only a few ways of communicating forgiveness. There are many other ways that may be used to communicate forgiveness. As such, the instrument can be improved with open-ended questions asking specific ways used to communicate forgiveness. The answers given can provide richer information especially in terms of the linguistic approach.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents results of the analysis together with the discussions and implications of the study. The results are presented according to the objectives of the study as stated in Chapter One.

#### **4.2 LEVEL OF FORGIVENESS AMONG IIUM STUDENTS**

The level of forgiveness indicates how forgiving an individual is. Table 4.1 describes the level of forgiveness among IIUM students. On the whole, more than two-thirds of the respondents (70.8%) are forgiving ( $M=4.25$ ,  $SD=0.80$ ). The highest mean goes to “I forgive because I believe that every good act helps make the world a better place to live” ( $M=4.64$ ,  $SD=1.11$ ), followed by “I forgive because I believe that everybody makes mistakes” ( $M=4.54$ ,  $SD=1.08$ ), and “I forgive because I feel it is useless to bear grudges towards others” ( $M=4.31$ ,  $SD=1.13$ ). The lowest mean goes to “I forgive because I can understand the feelings of the person who had hurt me” ( $M=3.96$ ,  $SD=1.17$ ).

This study found that Muslim students in Malaysia are forgiving and the level of forgiveness among the students is quite high ( $M=4.25$ ,  $SD=0.80$ ). However, a study in New England (Brown, 2003) contradicted the present study. Brown found that the level of forgiveness among college students is rather low ( $M=3.73$ ).

Islam emphasizes the importance of forgiveness in human daily lives. It is one of the virtues Muslims should possess. It is mentioned in the Qur'an that every

Muslim should be forgiving to others, “*Hold to forgiveness; command what is right; But turn away from the ignorant*” (Al-A’raf, 7:199). Allah also describes the Muslims in the Qur’an as: “*Those who avoid major sins and acts of indecencies and when they are angry they forgive.*” (Asy-Syura, 42:37).

Based on the findings, Muslim students in IIUM appeared to be forgiving. It could be that the Islamic values have influenced the way they exercise forgiveness. In addition, the Islamic environment in the university may also facilitate the students to be more forgiving to others.

Table 4.1  
Level of Forgiveness

Tendency to Forgive Scale	Level of Forgiveness*						Mean	SD	Overall %
	1	2	3	4	5	6			
I tend to get over it quickly when someone hurts my feelings.	1.3	8.7	19.5	35.6	24.9	10.0	4.04	1.14	67.3
When someone did something wrong to me, my approach is just to forgive and forget.	2.1	7.2	20.0	35.6	27.4	7.7	4.02	1.12	67.0
I forgive because I can understand the feelings of the person who had hurt me.	2.3	9.2	20.5	33.3	27.2	7.4	3.96	1.16	66.0
I forgive because I feel it is useless to bear grudges towards others.	1.5	5.1	14.4	31.8	34.1	13.1	4.31	1.12	71.8
I forgive because I believe that everybody makes mistakes.	1.0	2.6	12.6	28.2	36.9	18.7	4.54	1.07	75.7
I forgive because I believe that every good act helps make the world a better place to live.	0.8	3.1	10.0	29.0	31.5	25.6	4.64	1.11	77.3
<b>Total</b>							<b>4.25</b>	<b>0.80</b>	<b>70.8</b>

\* 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

Most of the items have means of more than 4.0 (Table 4.2). When analyzed using a one-sample t-test, only three of the items were found to be significantly positive. They are “I forgive because I feel it is useless to bear grudges towards

others” (t=5.462, p=0.000), “I forgive because I believe that everybody makes mistakes” (t=9.851, p=0.000), and “I forgive because I believe that every good act helps make the world a better place to live” (t=11.496, p=0.000). The three statements are in line with Islamic teachings. Prophet Muhammad *S.A.W* once said: “*Every son of Adam makes mistakes, and the best of those who make mistakes are those who repent*” (narrated by Tirmidhi). In another hadith, 'Umar A.S. was heard to say, “*Anyone who does not show mercy will not be shown mercy. Anyone who does not forgive will not be forgiven. Anyone who does not turn in repentance will not be turned to nor will he be protected or guarded*” (narrated by Bukhari).

Table 4.2  
One-sample t-test on Level of Forgiveness

<b>Tendency to Forgive Scale</b>	<b>Mean *</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>t**</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>p</b>
I tend to get over it quickly when someone hurts my feelings.	4.04	1.14	0.708	389	0.479
When someone did something wrong to me, my approach is just to forgive and forget.	4.02	1.12	0.407	389	0.685
I forgive because I can understand the feelings of the person who had hurt me.	3.96	1.16	-0.653	389	0.514
I forgive because I feel it is useless to bear grudges towards others.	4.31	1.12	5.462	389	0.000
I forgive because I believe that everybody makes mistakes.	4.54	1.07	9.851	389	0.000
I forgive because I believe that every good act helps make the world a better place to live.	4.64	1.11	11.496	389	0.000

\* 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

\*\* Test value=4.0

### 4.3 WAYS OF COMMUNICATING FORGIVENESS

There are seven ways of communicating forgiveness (Table 4.3). Majority of the respondents reported using the direct approach, “I forgive the person when he/she asks gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing” in forgiving others (82.0%), followed by the conditional approach, “I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake” (80.8%). Almost three-quarters of the respondents mentioned using the spiritual approach, “When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for the person’s well-being” (74.5%), and the avoidance approach, “When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive him/her” (73.7%).

The lesser used approaches are the discussion approach “When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her” (60.5%), the non-verbal display approach “When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness” (62.2%), and the minimizing strategy approach “When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me” (64.7%).

The results are consistent with findings by Kelley (1998) and Waldron and Kelley (2005) who found that the direct approach is the most frequent approach used by people. The direct approach which involves an apology helps people to be more forgiving. This finding also supports the study by Bono, McCullough, and Root (2008) that found that an apology helps the individual to forgive those who hurt them.

The second most frequently used approach is the conditional approach which support earlier finding by Waldron and Kelley (2005). However, the third most frequently approach found in this study is the spiritual approach. This finding contradicts the findings by Kelley (1998) who found that the conditional approach is the third most frequently used in her study, instead of second.

Table 4.3  
Ways of Communicating Forgiveness to Others

Approach	Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	Rating*						Mean	SD	Overall %
		1	2	3	4	5	6			
Avoidance	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	2.6	5.1	12.8	27.7	31.0	20.8	4.42	1.24	73.7
Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	4.4	11.0	23.1	33.8	24.4	3.3	3.73	1.17	62.2
Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	3.1	12.1	20.0	31.5	25.6	7.7	3.88	1.23	64.7
Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	1.3	2.3	8.7	17.2	32.1	38.5	4.92	1.15	82.0
Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	1.0	1.5	9.5	20.5	34.1	33.3	4.85	1.10	80.8
Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	7.4	13.8	22.6	27.9	21.3	6.9	3.63	1.34	60.5
Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	2.1	5.1	13.3	28.2	25.4	25.9	4.47	1.26	74.5
<b>TOTAL</b>								<b>4.27</b>	<b>0.71</b>	<b>71.2</b>

\*1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

Besides the direct approach and the conditional approach, the respondents also indicated the use of spiritual approach and avoidance approach. The spiritual approach is the most favourable in Islam as the individual prays for the other party's well-being. It is mentioned in the Qur'an that an individual should forgive the person who had hurt them and pray that Allah will also forgive him/her, *"Thus it is due to mercy from Allah that you deal with them gently, and had you been rough and hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you; pardon them therefore and ask pardon for them, and take counsel with them in the affair; so when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah; surely Allah loves those who trust"* (Ali-Imran, 3:159).

Majority of the respondents of this study reported preferring to use the direct approach and the conditional approach when forgiving others. However, many of them also reported using the spiritual approach. Thus, spiritual approach is a choice often used by them when facing difficult situations.

#### **4.4 WAYS OF COMMUNICATING FORGIVENESS ACROSS SELECTED DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS**

The third objective of the study is to find out the differences in ways of communicating forgiveness across different demographic characteristics of the respondents. The demographic characteristics are gender, age group, educational stream, nationality, marital status, and level of study.

##### **4.4.1 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Gender**

Male and female use several ways in communicating forgiveness (Table 4.4). Both male (82.2%) and female (81.8%) indicated that they prefer to use the direct approach in forgiving others. Majority of the female respondents (81.3%) also reported that they

use the conditional approach more frequently compared to male respondents (79.7%). However, both male and female mentioned that they also use the spiritual approach most of the time, with 72.3% and 75.7%, respectively. The least used approach is the discussion approach with only 60.5 percent male and 60.3 percent female reported using it when forgiving others. Female respondents (75.5%) reported greater use of avoidance approach compared to male (69.7%).

Table 4.4  
Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Gender

Approach	Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	Gender	N	Mean *	SD	Overall %
Avoidance	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	Male	130	4.18	1.27	69.7
		Female	260	4.53	1.21	75.5
Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	Male	130	3.74	1.17	62.3
		Female	260	3.72	1.18	62.0
Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Male	130	3.94	1.29	65.7
		Female	260	3.85	1.20	64.2
Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrongdoing.	Male	130	4.93	1.08	82.2
		Female	260	4.91	1.18	81.8
Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Male	130	4.78	1.06	79.7
		Female	260	4.88	1.11	81.3
Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Male	130	3.63	1.34	60.5
		Female	260	3.62	1.35	60.3
Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being.	Male	130	4.34	1.20	72.3
		Female	260	4.54	1.29	75.7

\* 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

The direct approach is the most preferable approach for both male and female respondents. One important aspect of the approach is apology. By apologizing, it

helps the individual to forgive the other party more easily as that party admits the mistake that they have made. It is mentioned in a hadith that a person should forgive when someone apologizes to him/her, “*Whoever is offered an apology from a fellow Muslim should accept it unless he knows that the person apologising is being dishonest*” (narrated by Baihaqi).

#### **4.4.2 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Age**

Ways of communicating forgiveness vary according to the age group of the respondents (Table 4.5). The two frequently used approaches among the two age groups are the direct approach and the conditional approach. Both the older students (25 years old and above) and the younger students (19 to 24 years old) indicated that they frequently use the direct approach, with 82.5% and 81.7%, respectively. The older students (82.3%) and the younger students (80.3%) also reported using the conditional approach most of the time. Additionally, about seven in ten of the older students (77.5%) and the younger students (73.5%) claimed using the spiritual approach in forgiving others. The older students seem to use more of the discussion approach (65.0%) than the younger students (58.7%). On the other hand, the younger students reported that they like to use the avoidance approach (74.8%) compared to the older students (70.8%).

Regardless of age group, the preferred ways to forgive others are the direct approach and the conditional approach. The spiritual approach emerged as the third mostly used approach in forgiving others.

Table 4.5  
Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Age

Approach	Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	Age	N	Mean*	SD	Overall %
Avoidance	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	19-24 years old	280	4.49	1.19	74.8
		25 years and above	110	4.25	1.34	70.8
Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	19-24 years old	280	3.73	1.14	62.2
		25 years and above	110	3.74	1.25	62.3
Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	19-24 years old	280	3.95	1.20	65.8
		25 years and above	110	3.70	1.29	61.7
Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	19-24 years old	280	4.90	1.14	81.7
		25 years and above	110	4.95	1.18	82.5
Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	19-24 years old	280	4.82	1.07	80.3
		25 years and above	110	4.94	1.15	82.3
Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	19-24 years old	280	3.52	1.31	58.7
		25 years and above	110	3.90	1.39	65.0
Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	19-24 years old	280	4.41	1.30	73.5
		25 years and above	110	4.65	1.15	77.5

\* 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

#### 4.4.3 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Educational Stream

The direct approach and the conditional approach are the two frequently used approaches among the arts-based students (Table 4.6). It is found that the arts-based students (83.7%) used the direct approach more frequently than the science-based students (76.2%). The arts-based students (81.8%) also indicated that they used the

conditional approach more frequently than the science-based students (77.3%). However, both the arts-based and the science-based students showed similar results in the use of the spiritual approach, with 74.5% and 74.7%, respectively.

Table 4.6  
Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Educational Stream

Approach	Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	Educational Stream	N	Mean*	SD	Overall %
Avoidance	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	Science-based	88	4.42	1.30	73.7
		Arts-based	302	4.42	1.22	73.7
Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	Science-based	88	3.56	1.19	59.3
		Arts-based	302	3.78	1.16	63.0
Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Science-based	88	3.84	1.32	64.0
		Arts-based	302	3.89	1.20	64.8
Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Science-based	88	4.57	1.17	76.2
		Arts-based	302	5.02	1.12	83.7
Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Science-based	88	4.64	1.04	77.3
		Arts-based	302	4.91	1.11	81.8
Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Science-based	88	3.68	1.30	61.3
		Arts-based	302	3.61	1.36	60.2
Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Science-based	88	4.48	1.08	74.7
		Arts-based	302	4.47	1.31	74.5

\* 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

The arts-based students tended to use more of the direct approach and the conditional approach compared to the science-based students. However, regardless of the educational stream, the students use the spiritual approach most of the time. This

shows that the students are practicing the Islamic knowledge that they have learnt both in school and in the university. In addition, more than two-thirds of the science-based and the art-based students (73.7% each) use the avoidance approach. However, these students only avoid the other party temporarily, like not talking to one another for a period of time. They will reconcile with each other after some time when they already forgive each other.

#### **4.4.4 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Nationality**

Table 4.7 presents ways of communicating forgiveness by nationality. Both Malaysian and International students reported using the direct approach and the conditional approach frequently in forgiving others. Specifically, 81.5% Malaysian students and 83.7% International students indicated using the direct approach in forgiving others. The conditional approach is also frequently used among the Malaysian students (80.5%) and the International students (82.2%). The results also show that the Malaysian students tend to use more of the avoidance approach (75.3%) compared to the International students (68.2%). However, there is not much difference in the use of the spiritual approach between both Malaysian students (75.0%) and the International students (73.2%).

The direct approach and the conditional approach emerged as the two frequently used approaches among the Malaysian and the International students too. So is the spiritual approach, whereby the students use it most of the time. This shows that Islamic teaching is universal amongst in the country that profess to practice Islam. Despite having different cultural backgrounds, both Malaysian and International students still adhere to the Islamic teaching and try to be forgiving to others. It is mentioned in the Holy Qur'an: "*O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a*

*male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things)” (Al-Hujurat 49:13).*

Table 4.7  
Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Nationality

Approach	Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	Nationality	N	Mean*	SD	Overall %
Avoidance	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	Malaysian	296	4.52	1.19	75.3
		International	94	4.09	1.34	68.2
Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	Malaysian	296	3.78	1.15	63.0
		International	94	3.55	1.23	59.2
Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Malaysian	296	3.98	1.17	66.3
		International	94	3.56	1.35	59.3
Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Malaysian	296	4.89	1.15	81.5
		International	94	5.02	1.14	83.7
Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Malaysian	296	4.83	1.09	80.5
		International	94	4.93	1.12	82.2
Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Malaysian	296	3.58	1.35	59.7
		International	94	3.78	1.30	63.0
Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person’s well-being	Malaysian	296	4.50	1.24	75.0
		International	94	4.39	1.34	73.2

\* 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

#### 4.4.5 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Marital Status

In terms of marital status, the two frequently used approaches in forgiving others are the direct approach and the conditional approach (Table 4.8). Majority of the single

students (81.7%) and the married students (84.0%) indicated using the direct approach all the time. A similar result is found for the conditional approach, where 80.5% of the single students and 83.4% of the married students reported using it regularly. The spiritual approach is found to be the third frequently used among the single and the married students, with 74.2% and 77.0%, respectively. However, there is a tendency for the single students to use the avoidance approach most of the time (74.2%) compared to the married students (70.2%). The married students, on the other hand, reported that they tended to use more of the discussion approach (66.3%) than the single students (59.5%).

Table 4.8  
Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Marital Status

Approach	Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	Marital Status	N	Mean*	SD	Overall %
Avoidance	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	Single	338	4.45	1.24	74.2
		Married	52	4.21	1.23	70.2
Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	Single	338	3.72	1.18	62.0
		Married	52	3.75	1.14	62.5
Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Single	338	3.89	1.20	64.8
		Married	52	3.81	1.40	63.5
Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Single	338	4.90	1.16	81.7
		Married	52	5.04	1.05	84.0
Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Single	338	4.83	1.11	80.5
		Married	52	5.00	1.01	83.4
Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Single	338	3.57	1.35	59.5
		Married	52	3.98	1.26	66.3
Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Single	338	4.45	1.29	74.2
		Married	52	4.62	1.03	77.0

\* 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

Both single and married students prefer using the direct approach and the conditional approach when forgiving others. Additionally, the avoidance approach is more common among the single students while the discussion approach is used more among the married students.

#### **4.4.6 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Level of Study**

Both the undergraduate and postgraduate students reported using the direct approach and the conditional approach most of the time (Table 4.9). About eight in ten of the undergraduate students (81.9%) and the postgraduate students (83.0%) indicated using the direct approach frequently. The second frequently used approach mentioned by the undergraduate students and the postgraduate students is the conditional approach, with 80.5% and 81.8%, respectively. The spiritual approach in forgiving others ranked third with 73.2% undergraduate students and 77.8% postgraduate students reported using it most of the time. The avoidance approach is found to be used more by the undergraduate students (74.5%) compared to the postgraduate students (71.5%). On the other hand, the postgraduate students (63.2%) tended to use the discussion approach more than the undergraduate students (59.3%).

Regardless of level of study, the direct approach is the most preferable approach in forgiving others, followed by the conditional approach, and the spiritual approach. In addition, the undergraduate students indicated that they prefer to use the avoidance approach, while the postgraduate students prefer to use the discussion approach.

Table 4.9  
Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Level of Study

Approach	Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	Level of Study	N	Mean*	SD	Overall %
Avoidance	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	Undergraduate	276	4.47	1.25	74.5
		Postgraduate	114	4.29	1.20	71.5
Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	Undergraduate	276	3.67	1.18	61.2
		Postgraduate	114	3.87	1.15	64.5
Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Undergraduate	276	3.92	1.20	65.3
		Postgraduate	114	3.78	1.31	63.0
Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Undergraduate	276	4.89	1.14	81.9
		Postgraduate	114	4.98	1.16	83.0
Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Undergraduate	276	4.83	1.10	80.5
		Postgraduate	114	4.91	1.09	81.8
Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Undergraduate	276	3.56	1.33	59.3
		Postgraduate	114	3.79	1.35	63.2
Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Undergraduate	276	4.39	1.30	73.2
		Postgraduate	114	4.67	1.13	77.8

\* 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

#### 4.4.7 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Personality Type

Ways of communicating forgiveness is also analyzed across personality type (Table 4.10). It is found that majority of Type A personality students (81.8%) and Type B personality students (82.0%) used the direct approach frequently. Both Type A (80.8%) and Type B (82.0%) personality students also reported using the conditional approach regularly. About seven in ten of the Type A personality students (74.8%) and Type B personality students (70.0%) indicate using the spiritual approach most of the time. However, Type A personality students indicated that they prefer using

multiple approaches like the non-verbal display approach (62.2%), the minimizing strategy approach (65.2%), and the discussion approach (60.8%) more than the Type B personality students (60.7%, 57.3% and 54.0%, respectively).

The direct approach, the conditional approach, and the spiritual approach emerged as the three most approaches regularly used to forgive others among Type A and Type B personality students. However, Type A personality students tended to use multiple approaches in forgiving others compared to Type B personality students.

Table 4.10  
Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Personality Type

Approach	Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	Personality Type	N	Mean*	SD	Overall %
Avoidance	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	Type A	365	4.44	1.23	70.0
		Type B	25	4.16	1.40	69.3
Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	Type A	365	3.73	1.15	62.2
		Type B	25	3.64	1.50	60.7
Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Type A	365	3.91	1.21	65.2
		Type B	25	3.44	1.45	57.3
Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Type A	365	4.91	1.14	81.8
		Type B	25	5.00	1.29	83.4
Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Type A	365	4.85	1.09	80.8
		Type B	25	4.92	1.15	82.0
Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Type A	365	3.65	1.32	60.8
		Type B	25	3.24	1.59	54.0
Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Type A	365	4.49	1.23	74.8
		Type B	25	4.20	1.63	70.0

\* 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

#### 4.4.8 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness and Religious Commitment

The last objective of the study is to find out the relationship between ways of communicating forgiveness and religious commitment (Table 4.11). Only four of the ways are found to have meaningful relationships with religious commitment although all of them are significant. Religious commitment is found to have significant relationship with the spiritual approach ( $r = 0.385$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), followed by the direct approach ( $r = 0.240$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), the conditional approach ( $r = 0.215$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), and non-verbal display approach ( $r = 0.214$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ).

Table 4.11  
Correlation between Ways of Communicating Forgiveness and Religious Commitment

Ways of Communicating Forgiveness (N=390)	Religious Commitment	
	r	p
Avoidance approach	0.138	0.006
Non-verbal display approach	0.214	0.000
Minimizing strategy	0.136	0.007
Direct approach	0.240	0.000
Conditional approach	0.215	0.000
Discussion approach	0.192	0.000
Spiritual approach	0.385	0.000

Forgiveness is encouraged in Islam as it helps to restore relationships. Prophet Muhammad *S.A.W.* said: “*Avoid bad relations with one another, for that is the unhappy thing*” (narrated by Tirmidhi). The minimizing strategy approach and the avoidance approach are less favourable in Islam. This because when people ignore or avoid the hurtful feeling, the feeling of grudges will start to grow inside their heart and

keeping grudges is not encouraged in Islam. Additionally, avoiding the other party because of hurt does not help in solving the problem. Some people, to a certain extent, without realizing it, even sever the relationships with the other party. That is why Islam only allows Muslim to avoid his brothers for only three days, so as to maintain relationship among them.

Prophet Muhammad *S.A.W.* mentioned that a Muslim should not avoid his brother for more than three days. Anas ibn Malik reported that the Prophet *S.A.W.* also said, “*Do not hate one another nor envy one another nor shun one another. Slaves of Allah, be brothers! It is not lawful for a Muslim to refuse to speak to his brother (Muslim) for more than three nights*” (narrated by Bukhari).

#### **4.5 HYPOTHESES TESTING**

Based on the previous studies, this study proposes three main hypotheses. This section presents the hypotheses testing together with the discussion and implication of the study.

##### **4.5.1 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness and Demographic Subgroups**

As stated in Chapter Two, Hypothesis One is as follows:

*GHI*: Ways of communicating forgiveness will be different across different demographic subgroups.

*SHI.1*: There are differences between male and female in terms of ways of communicating forgiveness.

*SHI.2*: There are differences between younger and older students in terms of ways of communicating forgiveness.

*SHI.3:* There are differences between arts-based students and science-based students in terms of ways of communicating forgiveness.

*SHI.4:* There are differences between Malaysian and International students in terms of ways of communicating forgiveness.

*SHI.5:* There are differences between single and married students in terms of ways of communicating forgiveness.

*SHI.6:* There are differences between undergraduate and postgraduate students in terms of ways of communicating forgiveness.

#### **4.5.2 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Gender**

There is not much difference between male and female in most of the ways of communicating forgiveness to others (Table 4.12). The two frequently used approaches between the two genders are the direct approach and the conditional approach. Both male and female students also reported using the spiritual approach most of the time.

Table 4.12  
Independent Sample t-test on Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Gender

Approach	Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	Gender	N	Mean*	SD	t	df	p
Avoidance	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	Male	130	4.18	1.27	-2.651	388	0.008
		Female	260	4.53	1.21			
Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	Male	130	3.74	1.17	0.122	388	0.903
		Female	260	3.72	1.18			
Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Male	130	3.94	1.29	0.698	388	0.485
		Female	260	3.85	1.20			
Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Male	130	4.93	1.08	0.156	388	0.876
		Female	260	4.91	1.18			
Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Male	130	4.78	1.06	-0.849	388	0.396
		Female	260	4.88	1.11			
Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Male	130	3.63	1.34	0.053	388	0.958
		Female	260	3.62	1.35			
Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Male	130	4.34	1.20	-1.507	388	0.133
		Female	260	4.54	1.29			

\* 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

However, there is a significant difference between male (M=4.18, SD=1.27) and female (M=4.53, SD=1.2) in the use of the avoidance approach. The result shows that female students (t=-2.651, p=0.008) tend to use it more than the male students. This indicates that from the seven approaches, only the avoidance approach was found to yield significant difference in terms of gender. Therefore, SH1.1 is partially supported.

### **4.5.3 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Age**

The respondents of different age groups also reported that the direct approach and the conditional approach are the frequently used approaches in forgiving others, followed by the spiritual approach (Table 4.13). However, the discussion approach is the only approach found to have a significant difference between the age groups ( $t=-2.547$ ,  $p=0.011$ ). The result shows that the older students ( $M=3.90$ ,  $SD=1.39$ ) tended to use this approach more than the younger students ( $M=3.52$ ,  $SD=1.31$ ). Therefore, SH1.2 is partially supported.

Table 4.13  
Independent Sample t-test on Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Age

Approach	Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	Age	N	Mean*	SD	t	df	p
Avoidance	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	19-24 years old	280	4.49	1.19	1.73	388	0.085
		25 years & above	110	4.25	1.34			
Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	19-24 years old	280	3.73	1.14	-0.86	388	0.931
		25 years & above	110	3.74	1.25			
Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	19-24 years old	280	3.95	1.20	1.79	388	0.075
		25 years & above	110	3.70	1.29			
Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	19-24 years old	280	4.90	1.14	-0.395	388	0.693
		25 years & above	110	4.95	1.18			
Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	19-24 years old	280	4.82	1.07	-0.961	388	0.337
		25 years & above	110	4.94	1.15			
Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	19-24 years old	280	3.52	1.31	-2.547	388	0.011
		25 years & above	110	3.90	1.39			
Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	19-24 years old	280	4.41	1.30	-1.682	388	0.093
		25 years & above	110	4.65	1.15			

\* 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

#### 4.5.4 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Educational Stream

In terms of educational stream, both the science-based students and the arts-based students reported similar use in most of the ways in communicating forgiveness to others (Table 4.14). Although, the direct approach and the conditional approach are frequently used among the students, it is found that there are significant differences in

the use of these two approaches between the two educational streams. The result shows that the arts-based students tend to use the direct approach more than the science-based students ( $t=-3.293$ ,  $p=0.001$ ). A similar result was found for the conditional approach where the arts-based students indicated using it more than the science-based students ( $t=-2.099$ ,  $p=0.036$ ). Therefore, SH1.3 is partially supported.

Table 4.14  
Independent Sample t-test on Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Educational Stream

Approach	Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	Educational Stream	N	Mean*	SD	t	df	p																																																																									
Avoidance	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	Science-based	88	4.42	1.30	0.022	388	0.983																																																																									
		Arts-based	302	4.42	1.22				Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	Science-based	88	3.56	1.19	-1.563	388	0.119	Arts-based	302	3.78	1.16	Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Science-based	88	3.84	1.32	-0.312	388	0.755	Arts-based	302	3.89	1.20	Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Science-based	88	4.57	1.17	-3.293	388	0.001	Arts-based	302	5.02	1.12	Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Science-based	88	4.64	1.04	-2.099	388	0.036	Arts-based	302	4.91	1.11	Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Science-based	88	3.68	1.30	0.446	388	0.656	Arts-based	302	3.61	1.36	Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Science-based	88	4.48	1.08	0.025	388
Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	Science-based	88	3.56	1.19	-1.563	388	0.119																																																																									
		Arts-based	302	3.78	1.16				Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Science-based	88	3.84	1.32	-0.312	388	0.755	Arts-based	302	3.89	1.20	Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Science-based	88	4.57	1.17	-3.293	388	0.001	Arts-based	302	5.02	1.12	Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Science-based	88	4.64	1.04	-2.099	388	0.036	Arts-based	302	4.91	1.11	Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Science-based	88	3.68	1.30	0.446	388	0.656	Arts-based	302	3.61	1.36	Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Science-based	88	4.48	1.08	0.025	388	0.980	Arts-based	302	4.47	1.31								
Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Science-based	88	3.84	1.32	-0.312	388	0.755																																																																									
		Arts-based	302	3.89	1.20				Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Science-based	88	4.57	1.17	-3.293	388	0.001	Arts-based	302	5.02	1.12	Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Science-based	88	4.64	1.04	-2.099	388	0.036	Arts-based	302	4.91	1.11	Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Science-based	88	3.68	1.30	0.446	388	0.656	Arts-based	302	3.61	1.36	Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Science-based	88	4.48	1.08	0.025	388	0.980	Arts-based	302	4.47	1.31																					
Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Science-based	88	4.57	1.17	-3.293	388	0.001																																																																									
		Arts-based	302	5.02	1.12				Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Science-based	88	4.64	1.04	-2.099	388	0.036	Arts-based	302	4.91	1.11	Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Science-based	88	3.68	1.30	0.446	388	0.656	Arts-based	302	3.61	1.36	Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Science-based	88	4.48	1.08	0.025	388	0.980	Arts-based	302	4.47	1.31																																		
Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Science-based	88	4.64	1.04	-2.099	388	0.036																																																																									
		Arts-based	302	4.91	1.11				Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Science-based	88	3.68	1.30	0.446	388	0.656	Arts-based	302	3.61	1.36	Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Science-based	88	4.48	1.08	0.025	388	0.980	Arts-based	302	4.47	1.31																																															
Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Science-based	88	3.68	1.30	0.446	388	0.656																																																																									
		Arts-based	302	3.61	1.36				Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Science-based	88	4.48	1.08	0.025	388	0.980	Arts-based	302	4.47	1.31																																																												
Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Science-based	88	4.48	1.08	0.025	388	0.980																																																																									
		Arts-based	302	4.47	1.31																																																																												

\* 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

#### 4.5.5 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Nationality

The result shows that there are significant differences between nationalities in the use of the avoidance approach and the minimizing strategy approach (Table 4.15). It is reported that the Malaysian students tended to use the avoidance approach ( $t=3.012$ ,  $p=0.003$ ) and the minimizing strategy approach ( $t=2.860$ ,  $p=0.004$ ) more than the International students ( $M=4.09$  and  $M=3.56$ , respectively).

Table 4.15  
Independent Sample t-test on Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Nationality

Approach	Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	Nationality	N	Mean*	SD	t	df	p																																																																									
Avoidance	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	Malaysian	296	4.52	1.19	3.021	388	0.003																																																																									
		International	94	4.09	1.34				Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	Malaysian	296	3.78	1.15	1.667	388	0.096	International	94	3.55	1.23	Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Malaysian	296	3.98	1.17	2.860	388	0.004	International	94	3.56	1.35	Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Malaysian	296	4.89	1.15	-1.003	388	0.317	International	94	5.02	1.14	Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Malaysian	296	4.83	1.09	-0.753	388	0.452	International	94	4.93	1.12	Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Malaysian	296	3.58	1.35	-1.252	388	0.211	International	94	3.78	1.30	Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Malaysian	296	4.50	1.24	0.712	388
Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	Malaysian	296	3.78	1.15	1.667	388	0.096																																																																									
		International	94	3.55	1.23				Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Malaysian	296	3.98	1.17	2.860	388	0.004	International	94	3.56	1.35	Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Malaysian	296	4.89	1.15	-1.003	388	0.317	International	94	5.02	1.14	Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Malaysian	296	4.83	1.09	-0.753	388	0.452	International	94	4.93	1.12	Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Malaysian	296	3.58	1.35	-1.252	388	0.211	International	94	3.78	1.30	Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Malaysian	296	4.50	1.24	0.712	388	0.477	International	94	4.39	1.34								
Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Malaysian	296	3.98	1.17	2.860	388	0.004																																																																									
		International	94	3.56	1.35				Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Malaysian	296	4.89	1.15	-1.003	388	0.317	International	94	5.02	1.14	Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Malaysian	296	4.83	1.09	-0.753	388	0.452	International	94	4.93	1.12	Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Malaysian	296	3.58	1.35	-1.252	388	0.211	International	94	3.78	1.30	Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Malaysian	296	4.50	1.24	0.712	388	0.477	International	94	4.39	1.34																					
Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Malaysian	296	4.89	1.15	-1.003	388	0.317																																																																									
		International	94	5.02	1.14				Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Malaysian	296	4.83	1.09	-0.753	388	0.452	International	94	4.93	1.12	Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Malaysian	296	3.58	1.35	-1.252	388	0.211	International	94	3.78	1.30	Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Malaysian	296	4.50	1.24	0.712	388	0.477	International	94	4.39	1.34																																		
Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Malaysian	296	4.83	1.09	-0.753	388	0.452																																																																									
		International	94	4.93	1.12				Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Malaysian	296	3.58	1.35	-1.252	388	0.211	International	94	3.78	1.30	Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Malaysian	296	4.50	1.24	0.712	388	0.477	International	94	4.39	1.34																																															
Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Malaysian	296	3.58	1.35	-1.252	388	0.211																																																																									
		International	94	3.78	1.30				Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Malaysian	296	4.50	1.24	0.712	388	0.477	International	94	4.39	1.34																																																												
Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Malaysian	296	4.50	1.24	0.712	388	0.477																																																																									
		International	94	4.39	1.34																																																																												

\*1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

On the other hand, there is not much differences between the Malaysian and the International students in the remaining ways of communicating forgiveness to others. This indicates that the SH1.4 is partially supported.

#### **4.5.6 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Marital Status**

Among the seven ways to communicate forgiveness, it is found that the discussion approach has a significant difference in terms of marital status (Table 4.16). The result indicates that married students prefer using the discussion approach more than the single students ( $t=-2.057$ ,  $p=0.040$ ). According to Gordon, Baucom, and Snyder (2000), the discussion approach allows couples to address emotional healing and sense-making in the relationship. As such, SH1.5 is partially supported.

This result contradicts the findings of Merolla (2008) who found that the conditional approach was often used by dating partners. It is used more between couples because of the high level of effort required to maintain the relationship and its exclusivity (Davis & Todd, 1982; Merolla, 2008).

Apart from the direct approach in forgiving others, Islam also encourages using the discussion approach. Couples in conflict are advised to discuss with each other when problems arise and when the problem cannot be solved between them, a third party is called to participate and to help in the discussion. It is mentioned in the Qur'an: *"If ye fear a breach between them twain, appoint (two) arbiters, one from his family, and the other from hers; if they wish for peace, Allah will cause their reconciliation: For Allah hath full knowledge, and is acquainted with all things"* (An-Nisa' 4: 35).

Table 4.16  
Independent Sample t-test on Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Marital Status

Approach	Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	Marital Status	N	Mean*	SD	t	df	p
Avoidance	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	Single	338	4.45	1.24	1.292	388	0.197
		Married	52	4.21	1.23			
Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	Single	338	3.72	1.18	-0.144	388	0.886
		Married	52	3.75	1.14			
Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Single	338	3.89	1.20	0.436	388	0.663
		Married	52	3.81	1.40			
Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Single	338	4.90	1.16	-0.814	388	0.416
		Married	52	5.04	1.05			
Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Single	338	4.83	1.11	-1.051	388	0.294
		Married	52	5.00	1.01			
Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Single	338	3.57	1.35	-2.057	388	0.040
		Married	52	3.98	1.26			
Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Single	338	4.45	1.29	-0.866	388	0.387
		Married	52	4.62	1.03			

\* 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

#### 4.5.7 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Level of Study

This study also tries to identify the differences in ways of communicating forgiveness between the level of study of the respondents (Table 4.17). Besides the two frequently used approaches, the direct approach and the conditional approach, there is a tendency for the undergraduate students to use the avoidance approach more (M=4.47, SD=1.25) compared to the postgraduate students (M=4.29, SD=1.20). In contrast, the

postgraduate students used more of the discussion approach (M=3.79, SD=1.35) than the undergraduate students (M=3.56, SD=1.33). The results also indicate that the postgraduate students (M=4.67, SD=1.13) tend to use the spiritual approach more than the undergraduate students (M=4.39, SD=1.30).

Table 4.17  
Independent Sample t-test on Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Level of Study

Approach	Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	Level of Study	N	Mean*	SD	t	df	p
Avoidance	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	Undergraduate	276	4.47	1.25	1.318	388	0.188
		Postgraduate	114	4.29	1.20			
Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	Undergraduate	276	3.67	1.18	-1.523	388	0.129
		Postgraduate	114	3.87	1.15			
Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Undergraduate	276	3.92	1.20	0.993	388	0.321
		Postgraduate	114	3.78	1.31			
Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrongdoing.	Undergraduate	276	4.89	1.14	0.751	388	0.476
		Postgraduate	114	4.98	1.16			
Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Undergraduate	276	4.83	1.10	0.461	388	0.481
		Postgraduate	114	4.91	1.09			
Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Undergraduate	276	3.56	1.33	0.831	388	0.122
		Postgraduate	114	3.79	1.35			
Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Undergraduate	276	4.39	1.30	0.134	388	0.053
		Postgraduate	114	4.67	1.13			

\* 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

However, the result shows that there are no significant differences between the respondents' level of study in communicating forgiveness to others. Therefore, SH1.6 is not supported.

#### **4.5.8 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness and Personality Type**

Hypothesis Two as stated in Chapter Two is as follow:

GH2: Ways of communicating forgiveness will be different across personality types.

Independent sample t-test was employed to identify the differences between the personality types of students in ways of communicating forgiveness (Table 4.18). The results show that there is a tendency for Type A personality students to use the avoidance approach (M=4.44, SD=1.23), the minimizing strategy approach (M=3.91, SD=1.84), and the discussion approach (M=3.65, SD=1.49) more than the Type B personality students (M=4.16, M=3.44, and M=3.24, respectively). On the other hand, the Type B personality students reported that they used more of the direct approach (M=5.00, SD=1.29) and the conditional approach (M=4.92, SD=1.15) compared to Type A personality students (M=4.91 and M=4.85, respectively). However, the differences between these approaches were not significant enough. As such, GH2 is not supported.

Table 4.18  
Independent Sample t-test on Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Personality Type

Approach	Ways of Communicating Forgiveness	Personality Type	N	Mean*	SD	t	df	p
Avoidance	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	Type A	365	4.44	1.23	1.076	388	0.282
		Type B	25	4.16	1.40			
Non-verbal display	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	Type A	365	3.73	1.15	0.389	388	0.698
		Type B	25	3.64	1.50			
Minimizing strategy	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	Type A	365	3.91	1.21	1.842	388	0.066
		Type B	25	3.44	1.45			
Direct	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	Type A	365	4.91	1.14	-0.369	388	0.712
		Type B	25	5.00	1.29			
Conditional	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	Type A	365	4.85	1.09	-0.324	388	0.746
		Type B	25	4.92	1.15			
Discussion	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	Type A	365	3.65	1.32	1.487	388	0.138
		Type B	25	3.24	1.59			
Spiritual	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being	Type A	365	4.49	1.23	1.124	388	0.262
		Type B	25	4.20	1.63			

\*1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always

#### 4.5.9 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness and Religious Commitment

Hypothesis Three (GH3) states that there are positive relationships between ways of communicating forgiveness and religious commitment.

Regression analysis was conducted to test the third hypothesis (Table 4.19). Results showed that all ways of communicating forgiveness are significantly related to

religious commitment. The spiritual approach has the highest relationship with religious commitment (Beta=0.385), followed by the direct approach (Beta=0.240), the conditional approach (Beta=0.215), the non-verbal display approach (Beta=0.214), the discussion approach (Beta=0.192), the avoidance approach (Beta=0.138), and the minimizing strategy approach (Beta=0.136). Therefore, GH3 is supported.

This shows that ways of communicating forgiveness is influenced by religious commitment. Students with a high level of religious commitment will use the spiritual approach more as compared to the other approaches. This finding supports the previous studies which found that religiosity is associated with increased willingness to forgive (Enright, Santos & Al-Mabuk, 1989, McCullough & Worthington, 1999; Rye & Pargament, 2002). The finding is also consistent with the Islamic teachings that encourage forgiveness in human lives.

Prophet Muhammad *S.A.W.* said: *“There is no believing servant who supplicates for his brother behind his back (in his absence) that the Angels do not say: The same be for you too”* (narrated by Muslim).

Table 4.19  
Simple Multiple Regression between Ways of Communicating Forgiveness with Religious Commitment

<b>Summary of Correlation and Regression Statistics</b>	<b>Avoidance Approach</b>	<b>Non-verbal Display Approach</b>	<b>Minimizing Strategy Approach</b>	<b>Direct Approach</b>	<b>Conditional Approach</b>	<b>Discussion Approach</b>	<b>Spiritual Approach</b>
Constant	3.206	1.955	2.688	2.969	3.185	1.795	1.032
B	0.291	0.426	0.286	0.468	0.400	0.440	0.827
Beta	0.138	0.214	0.136	0.240	0.215	0.192	0.385
t	2.748	4.311	2.713	4.868	4.328	3.863	8.222
p	0.006	0.000	0.007	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
F	7.551	18.582	7.362	23.698	18.731	14.921	67.602
df1, df2	1, 388	1, 388	1, 388	1, 388	1, 388	1, 388	1, 388
p	0.006	0.000	0.007	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
R <sup>2</sup>	0.019	0.046	0.019	0.058	0.046	0.037	0.148

#### 4.6 EXPERIENCES IN WAYS OF COMMUNICATING FORGIVENESS

The respondents were also asked to share their experiences in ways of communicating forgiveness. Out of 390 respondents, more than half of them (55.4%) willingly shared their experiences (Table 4.20). Most of them mentioned that the hurt incidents involved their friends or classmates or group members throughout their study. Most of them revealed using a single way to forgive others, while others indicated using multiple approaches.

More than two-fifths of the respondents (42.6%) mentioned that they used the spiritual approach in forgiving others, followed by the avoidance approach (20.4%). Quite a number of them used the discussion approach (9.3%), the direct approach (8.3%), the conditional approach (8.3%), and the minimizing strategy approach (7.9%). The least used approach among them is the non-verbal display approach (0.5%). There are also other ways in forgiving others that they mentioned which are not included in the study.

Table 4.20  
Ways of Communicating Forgiveness

Ways of Communicating Forgiveness (N=216)	Frequency*	Percentage
Avoidance Approach	44	20.4
Non-verbal display Approach	1	0.5
Minimizing strategy Approach	17	7.9
Direct Approach	18	8.3
Conditional strategy	18	8.3
Discussion approach	20	9.3
Spiritual approach	92	42.6
Others (e.g. “try to have positive thinking of the other party” and “try to understand the other party’s situation”)	19	8.8

\*Multiple responses

#### **4.6.1 Avoidance Approach**

About one-fifth of the students revealed that they usually use the avoidance approach in forgiving other (20.4%). Most of the respondents mentioned that they do forgive the other party but after some time. However, when the incident occurred, they try to avoid the other party temporarily and try to understand the situation. For example:

- A female Malaysian undergraduate student said: “Occasionally my friends do hurt me. When that happens I always avoid them as I might hurt them in return”.
- Another female Malaysian undergraduate student mentioned: “When I am hurt, I will avoid the person until I can forget the sadness and the hurt that he/she did to me. I will avoid seeing him/her for a while”.
- Another female Malaysian undergraduate student also said: “When my friend hurts me, I avoid her for some time. After I calm down, I forgive her and talk to her again”.

This result is similar to the quantitative analysis result (Table 4.4 and Table 4.7) where female students and Malaysian students tend to use the avoidance approach more than the male students and the International students.

#### **4.6.2 Non-verbal Display Approach**

Only one respondent mentioned using the non-verbal display approach in forgiving others. Some of the examples of the nonverbal display approach are giving the other party a hug or giving the other party a look that communicates forgiveness. It is the least used approach among students in communicating forgiveness. Nonetheless, a

male International postgraduate student wrote: “When someone hurts me, I will just forgive them and keep smiling”.

The same result is found in the qualitative analysis whereby the non-verbal display approach is among the least used approaches among the students in communicating forgiveness (Table 4.3).

#### **4.6.3 Minimizing Strategy Approach**

Only a few of the respondents mentioned using the minimizing strategy approach (7.9%). Usually they just ignore the hurtful incidents and act as if nothing had happened. Some of the examples given by of the students using this approach are as follows:

- A male Malaysian undergraduate student said: “I never show my feeling when someone hurts me. I’ll ignore that mistake and act as usual”.
- A female Malaysian undergraduate student mentioned: “My friends always hurt me but they do not realize it because I always keep it in my heart. I always treat them well like nothing had happened as I can easily forgive people”.
- A male Malaysian postgraduate student said: “I’ll act as if nothing had happened”.

This finding is consistent with the quantitative analysis result which found that the minimizing strategy approach is used more among the Malaysian students than the other students (Table 4.15).

#### **4.6.4 Direct Approach**

The direct approach is another way that students mentioned using in communicating forgiveness (8.3%). Many of them said that they easily forgive the other party when that party apologizes for their mistakes. Some mentioned that it is easier for them to forgive when the other party apologizes. Here are some of the responses that they mentioned:

- A female Malaysian undergraduate student said: “As long as someone says sorry and admits their mistakes, I will always forgive them”.
- A female International undergraduate student mentioned: “I forgive the person when he/she apologizes for the mistake”.
- Another female International undergraduate student also said: “I forgive my group members when they apologize to me”.

This finding is similar to the quantitative analysis which also found that regardless of nationality, the students frequently used the direct approach (Table 4.7).

#### **4.6.5 Conditional Approach**

Some of the respondents indicated the use of the conditional approach in forgiving others (8.3%). They mentioned that forgiveness is granted when the other party changed their behaviour and promised not to make the same mistake again.

- A female International undergraduate student mentioned: “I forgive my friend when he/she changes her attitude and behaviour”.
- A male Malaysian undergraduate student said: “I will forgive the person when he/she realizes his/her mistakes and tries to improve his/her behaviour”.

- A female International postgraduate student shared: “I forgive the person as long as he/she will not do it again”.

This result is supportive of the quantitative analysis result. It was found that female students prefer using the conditional approach more than the male students (Table 4.4).

#### **4.6.6 Discussion Approach**

The students also mentioned using the discussion approach when forgiving others (9.3%), in some cases. They usually discuss the incident with the other party and come up with solution. Some of them indicated that discussion helps them to understand each other.

- A female International undergraduate student said: “I had an argument with my roommate but later we discussed with each other about the problem and made up with each other. I forgive her because I made mistakes too”.
- Another female Malaysian undergraduate student wrote: “I’ll always forgive my friends after discussing the mistakes with them and after they make amends”.
- A female International postgraduate student said: “Try to talk to each other and forgive one another”.

This qualitative analysis result also found a similar finding whereby the discussion approach is used more by the International students than the Malaysian students (Table 4.7).

#### 4.6.7 Spiritual Approach

About two-fifths of the students indicated that they forgive others using the spiritual approach (42.6%). Most of them reported frequently turning to Allah and pray to Him when they are hurt.

- A female Malaysian undergraduate student mentioned: “Most of the time when I’m hurt, I tend to forgive and forget quickly. It’s simple because I believe that everybody makes mistakes. But when things become worse, I always turn to Allah and it heals”.
- A male Malaysian undergraduate student said: “Pray to God and accept that no one is perfect”.
- Another male Malaysian postgraduate student wrote: “I believe that human beings make mistakes. So I always pray to Allah to bless the person because I know I make mistakes too”.

Interestingly, some students mentioned that they just forgive and forget as they do not like to keep grudges in their heart, while others said that they do forgive but it is hard to forget. However, there are a few cases where the students said that they are the one asking for forgiveness from the other party even though they are not in the wrong.

Many of the respondents who shared their experiences mentioned using the spiritual approach. This result is consistent with the qualitative result that showed that the spiritual approach is one of the top three frequently used approaches among the students.

#### **4.6.8 Other Approaches**

Only one in ten of the students used other approaches in forgiving others (8.8%). Some of them mentioned that they try to have positive thinking about the other party and try to understand the other party's situation in forgiving others.

However, there are also a few extreme cases where the respondents mentioned that they do not forgive and do not forget when their friends hurt them.

#### **4.7 SUMMARY**

The findings showed that the level of forgiveness among IIUM students is quite high and the frequently used ways in communicating forgiveness among them are the direct approach, the conditional approach, the spiritual approach, and the avoidance approach. However, it is found that regardless of demographic characteristics and personality types, the three main approaches in forgiving others are the direct approach, the conditional approach, and the spiritual approach. The avoidance approach is frequently used only among selected groups such as female students, younger students, undergraduate students, and Malaysian students. Married students, on the other hand, tended to use the discussion approach more in forgiving others. It is also found that ways of communicating forgiveness are positively related to religious commitment. In addition, the content analysis results supports the quantitative analysis where the spiritual approach is frequently used among the students compared to the other approaches.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter concludes the study by giving a summary of the research objectives, the findings and the hypotheses testing, the conclusion of the study, and suggestions for future research.

#### **5.1 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The general objective of the study is to find out the determinants of communicating forgiveness among university students. The specific objectives of this study are: (1) to find out the level of forgiveness among IIUM students, (2) to identify ways of communicating forgiveness among students, (3) to identify different ways of communicating forgiveness across different demographic characteristics, (4) to identify different ways of communicating forgiveness across different personality types, and (5) to examine the relationship between ways of communicating forgiveness and religious commitment.

#### **5.2 FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

This section summarizes the findings of the study based on the research objectives.

##### **5.2.1 Level of Forgiveness among IIUM Students**

Forgiveness is one of the most important teachings of Islam. The study found that the level of forgiveness among IIUM students is quite high.

### **5.2.2 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness among Students**

There are seven ways identified in communicating forgiveness to others. They are:

- (1) The avoidance approach, is where the hurt party avoids the other party temporarily in order to understand the incident and forgiveness is granted after some time,
- (2) The non-verbal display approach, is where the hurt party uses non-verbal gestures such as a hug or a handshake to communicate forgiveness,
- (3) The minimizing strategy approach, is where the hurt party ignores the hurtful incident and acts as if nothing had happened,
- (4) The direct approach, is where the hurt party forgives the person when they apologize for their mistake,
- (5) The conditional approach, is where the hurt party uses condition such as change of behaviour of the other party before forgiving the other party,
- (6) The discussion approach, is when both parties face each other and discuss with one another about the incident before forgiving each other, and
- (7) The spiritual approach is where the hurt party turns to Allah and prays for the other party's well-being when they are hurt.

The results showed that the most frequently used approaches are the direct approach, followed by the conditional approach, the spiritual approach, and the avoidance approach. The least used approach among the students is the discussion approach.

### **5.2.3 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness across Selected Demographic Characteristics**

Ways of communicating forgiveness differ across demographic characteristics. However, regardless of demographic characteristics, most of the students indicated that they use the direct approach, followed by the conditional approach, and the spiritual approach most of the time. The avoidance approach, on the other hand, is used more by female students, younger students, Malaysian students, single students, and the undergraduate students.

The non-verbal display approach, the minimizing strategy approach, and the discussion approach are among the least used approaches by the students regardless of demographic characteristics.

### **5.2.4 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness by Personality Type**

Both Type A and Type B personality type of students indicated that the three most frequently used approaches are the direct approach, the conditional approach, and the spiritual approach. Type B personality students tend to use the direct approach and the conditional approach most of the time compared to the Type A personality students. On the other hand, Type A personality students indicated that they used multiple approaches in communicating forgiveness. They tended to use the avoidance approach, the non-verbal display approach, the minimizing strategy approach, the discussion approach, and the spiritual approach more than the Type B personality students.

### **5.2.5 Ways of Communicating Forgiveness and Religious Commitment**

Out of the seven approaches in communicating forgiveness, only four of them are found to have a meaningful relationship with religious commitment. They are the spiritual approach, the direct approach, the conditional approach, and the non-verbal display approach.

## **5.3 HYPOTHESES TESTING RESULTS**

This study postulated that there are differences in ways of communicating forgiveness among different demographic characteristics. To test the differences, t-test analysis was conducted and it was found that the GH1: Ways of communicating forgiveness vary across different demographic subgroups, is partially supported. The results showed that only a few ways have significant differences across different demographic characteristics. It was found that the avoidance approach is used more among female students than the male students. The older students and the married students also reported using the discussion approach more than the younger students and the single students. The arts-based students indicated that they used the direct approach and the conditional approach more than the science-based students. The Malaysian students, on the other hand, used the minimizing strategy approach more than the International students. However, there is no difference between the level of study, undergraduate and postgraduate, in ways of communicating forgiveness.

There are differences in ways of communicating forgiveness between different personality types. It was found that Type B personality students tended to use the direct approach and the conditional approach more than the Type A personality students. On the other hand, Type A personality students tended to use multiple approaches in communicating forgiveness. However, when analyzed using

independent t-test analysis, the results showed that the differences were not distinct enough. As such, GH2: Ways of communicating forgiveness are different across personality types, is not supported.

Lastly, the study hypothesized that there are positive relationships between ways of communicating forgiveness and religious commitment. The results showed that all ways of communicating forgiveness are significantly related to religious commitment. Therefore, GH3: There are positive relationships between ways of communicating forgiveness and religious commitment, is supported.

The three-stage model by Gordon and Baucom (1998), gives an overview of the process of forgiveness that involves the affective, cognitive, and behavioural stages. It was found that the three processes of forgiveness can also be generalized to the communication aspect of forgiveness. The three processes are found to be involved when using each of the approaches of communicating forgiveness. Additionally, this model was initially used only in the context of marriage; however, this study has found that this model can also be generalized to a larger relationship setting and organization setting which is the educational institution.

Conversely, this theory lacks the spiritual aspect. The model only includes the three stage processes involved in forgiving other. However, when the religious perspective is included in the model, it will change slightly whereby the time for the three processes to occur must be within three days as stated in the hadith. Islam has provided a guideline in forgiving others for Muslims to follow. A person cannot avoid his brothers for more than three days and to forgive and reconcile is a better resolution so as to maintain the relationship. As such, the processes must occur within three days and people have to forgive and reconcile within the stipulated time.

Prophet Muhammad *S.A.W* said: *“It is not lawful for anyone to cut himself off from his Muslim brother for more than three nights so that when they meet, one of them turns his face away in avoidance and the other one turns his face away as well. The better of them is the one who initiates the greeting”* (narrated by Bukhari). Additionally, the process of forgiving others will become shorter when they always turn to Allah, as they will easily forgive each other.

#### **5.4 CONCLUSION**

The results showed that IIUM students appeared to be highly forgiving. This study contradicts the findings by Brown (2003) who found that the level of forgiveness among college students in New England as rather low.

The commonly used ways in communicating forgiveness among the students are the direct approach, the conditional approach, the spiritual approach, and the avoidance approach. However, it is found that regardless of demographic characteristics and personality types, the three main approaches in forgiving others are the direct approach, the conditional approach, and the spiritual approach. This finding is similar to the finding by Waldron and Kelley (2005) who found that the direct approach and the conditional approach are the top two ways in communicating forgiveness. However, Muslims students commonly used the spiritual approach of communicating forgiveness as it is encouraged in Islam. Prophet Muhammad *S.A.W*. said: *“There is no believing servant who supplicates for his brother behind his back (in his absence) that the Angels do not say: The same be for you too”* (narrated by Muslim). On the other hand, the avoidance approach is frequently used by selected groups such as female students, younger students, undergraduate students, and

Malaysian students. Meanwhile, married students tended to use the discussion approach more in communicating forgiveness.

It is also found that ways of communicating forgiveness are positively related to religious commitment. Four of the ways that are found to have meaningful relationships with religious commitment are the spiritual approach, the direct approach, the conditional approach, and the non-verbal display approach.

In addition, the content analysis results support the quantitative analysis, where the spiritual approach is frequently used among the students to forgive others compared to the other approaches.

## **5.5 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The following suggestions are recommended for future research.

This study only focuses on selected demographic characteristics that may affect the communication of forgiveness among students such as gender, age, educational stream, marital status, nationality, and level of study. However, there are many other demographic characteristics that may influence the way people communicate forgiveness such as race, education level, income group, and religious affiliation.

The sample of this study is limited to graduate students only. A different sample such as different age groups, or different races, or different religions, or different cultures, may use different ways of communicating forgiveness. Additionally, the use of qualitative analysis will provide richer information about the different ways used to communicate forgiveness compared to quantitative analysis.

With students as the respondents in this study, the act of forgiveness has evolved mostly among friends, classmates, or group members. Other types of

relational commitment may also affect the ways people communicate forgiveness such as family relationships, dating relationships, and work relationships.

Situational factors may also affect the way people communicate forgiveness among themselves. Offense severity, degree of hurtfulness, and emotional involvement like love, empathy, and fear of losing one's love can be taken into consideration for future research.

Additionally, there are also extreme cases where there are people who use the "no way of forgiving approach" as they do not forgive and do not forget. The "no way of forgiving approach" can be considered as an approach by itself in future research. By identifying the reasons and situations that lead to this approach may help people to understand better why some people are less forgiving than others. Furthermore, it can be used as a lesson to others so that they will try to avoid making the same mistakes repeatedly which may lead to the unforgiving behaviour of others.

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## APPENDIX I

### LETTER OF PERMISSION

16 Nov 2009

**Dean**  
**Admissions and Records Division**  
**International Islamic University Malaysia**

Through:  
**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Saodah Wok**  
Lecturer and Supervisor  
Department of Communication  
Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences

*Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh*

Dear Sir,

#### **REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO ACQUIRE DATA OF IRKHS, ENMS, AED, AND ENGINEERING STUDENTS' BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

May this letter reach you in the best of Iman and health.

Regarding the above mentioned matter, I would like to request from the Admissions and Records Division for permission to acquire data of IRKHS, ENMS, AED, and ENGINEERING students for the fulfillment of my thesis. The data consisting of number of students based on their **nationality, gender, programme, and level of study** at IIUM. The requested data is significant towards the completion of my research which will be conducted in IIUM.

Kindly rest assured that the materials are requested and needed for academic purposes only (see attached). The data and information acquired will not be circulated to other parties without prior permission from your office. I am fully aware that should I breach this undertaking, the university has fully right to take any appropriate action including legal action against me.

Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Thank you and *Wassalam*.

Yours sincerely,

**Noor Aishah Binte Hussin**

G0723000 (H/P: 0167633209)

Department of Communication, KIRKHS

16 Nov 2009

**Dean  
Centre for Postgraduate Studies  
International Islamic University Malaysia**

Through:  
**Assoc. Prof. Dr. Saodah Wok**  
Lecturer and Supervisor  
Department of Communication  
Kulliyyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences

*Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh*

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Your cooperation is highly appreciated.

Thank you and *Wassalam*.

Yours sincerely,

**Noor Aishah Binte Hussin**  
G0723000 (H/P: 0167633209)  
Department of Communication, KIRKHS

**APPENDIX II**

**DETERMINANTS OF COMMUNICATING FORGIVENESS**

**AMONG UNIVERSITY STUDENTS**

This study attempts to find out the determinants of communicating forgiveness among university students. The questionnaire is divided into six sections that represent the objectives of the study.

Please answer to the best of your ability that represents you the most.

Your responses will be treated as confidential and the findings are meant for academic purposes only.

If you have any inquiry about the research, please contact the researcher.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Noor Aishah Hussin  
Department of Communication  
International Islamic University Malaysia  
Tel: 016-7633209  
E-mail: aishahhussin\_iiu@yahoo.com

## SECTION 1: DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Please tick (√) the relevant box that corresponds to your chosen answer or fill in the blank.

1. Gender:  1) Male  2) Female
2. Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years old
3. Kulliyah:  1) AED  2) ENGIN  
 3) ENMS  4) IRKHS
4. Nationality:  1) Malaysian  2) International
5. Marital Status:  1) Single  2) Married
6. Level of Study:  1) Undergraduate  2) Postgraduate

## SECTION 2: TENDENCY TO FORGIVE

The following are questions that ask about how you react when someone hurts you. Read each item, then CIRCLE the number that indicates how you typically respond to it by using the following scale: 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always.

No.	TENDENCY TO FORGIVE SCALE	Level of Forgiveness
1.	I tend to get over it quickly when someone hurts my feelings.	1 2 3 4 5 6
2.	When someone did something wrong to me, my approach is just to forgive and forget.	1 2 3 4 5 6
3.	I forgive because I can understand the feelings of the person who had hurt me.	1 2 3 4 5 6
4.	I forgive because I feel it is useless to bear grudges towards others.	1 2 3 4 5 6
5.	I forgive because I believe that everybody makes mistakes.	1 2 3 4 5 6
6.	I forgive because I believe that every good act helps make the world a better place to live.	1 2 3 4 5 6

### SECTION 3: WAYS OF COMMUNICATING FORGIVENESS TO OTHERS

The following are ways that people always use to forgive others. For each of the following items, please CIRCLE the ways that you always use to forgive when someone hurts you according to the following scale: 1=Never, 2=Rarely, 3=Occasionally, 4=Sometimes, 5=Often, 6=Always.

No.	WAYS OF COMMUNICATING FORGIVENESS	Rating
1.	When I am hurt, I will avoid the person temporarily in order to understand the incident and to forgive them.	1 2 3 4 5 6
2.	When I am hurt, I give them a look that communicates forgiveness.	1 2 3 4 5 6
3.	When I am hurt, I try to ignore the feeling and act warmly towards the person who had hurt me.	1 2 3 4 5 6
4.	I forgive the person when he/she gives an apology for his/her wrong-doing.	1 2 3 4 5 6
5.	I forgive the person if he/she promises not to make the same mistake.	1 2 3 4 5 6
6.	When someone hurts me, I discuss the offense with him/her.	1 2 3 4 5 6
7.	When someone hurts me, I always turn to Allah and pray for that person's well-being.	1 2 3 4 5 6

### SECTION 4: RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT

For each of the following items, please CIRCLE the number that best describes you using the following scale: 1=Not at all true of me, 2=Somewhat true of me, 3=Moderately true of me, 4=Mostly true of me, 5=Totally true of me.

No.	RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT	Scale
1.	I am extremely committed to my religion.	1 2 3 4 5
2.	I am proud of my religion and always tell others about the good values in my religion that they should follow.	1 2 3 4 5
3.	My religion makes my life more meaningful.	1 2 3 4 5
4.	My religious beliefs lie behind my whole approach of life.	1 2 3 4 5
5.	I keep on improving my religion through religious activities.	1 2 3 4 5
6.	I always follow the teaching and the common practices of my religion.	1 2 3 4 5
7.	Religion is especially important to me because it answers many questions about the meaning of life.	1 2 3 4 5
8.	I often read books and magazines about my faith.	1 2 3 4 5
9.	I enjoy spending time with others of my religious affiliation.	1 2 3 4 5
10.	I spend time trying to grow in understanding of my faith.	1 2 3 4 5

