

The impact of negative criticism from a boss to a subordinate and the process of forgiveness at work



Abstract

The paper presents some of the results of a research project entitled Repentance and Forgiveness. The phenomenon that is the focus of the study is distinguished from the concept of conflict, which is thought to be a broader, more complex process. The main aim of the study is to find out what kind of hurt domestic workers experience at work, what negative criticism they receive, how they can forgive these situations, and how the latter affect the characteristics of the respondents. Does it matter from whom we receive unpleasant comments, or do we detach ourselves from them and only the offence is important? The research took three years to complete, ending in August 2022. 196 employees were asked about the impact of situations in a particular workplace; criticisms from colleagues, both friends and non-friends, and those in a particular position; how it affects the individuals, and how the respondents were able to deal with these offences. The research method was a quantitative, questionnaire-based survey. The research mainly aimed at addressing criticisms of emotional regret, and it explores the issue of forgiveness from this perspective. In this research, therefore, the focus is on the emotional effects of both the criticism and the process of mitigation. This study shows that people are in some way, directly or indirectly, in constant contact with their bosses. The criticism they receive from superiors can have an enormous impact on their mood.

Keywords: regret, criticism, forgiveness, process, offence

JEL code: M54, M59

INTRODUCTION

In every human relationship, there are situations of injustice. However, there are big individual differences, to what extent individuals suffer and how they deal with the situation. This is clearly influenced by family patterns and personality. Hurt can be intentional or unintentional but both can lead to getting hurt.

There can also be multiple ways of resolving grievances in the workplace, if the people involved want to impose their own views on their partner, then forgiveness is not the path to resolution. The other way for the parties is to mutually consider each other's interests and aspirations and together seek a solution to resolve the situation.

The typical human experience after regret is anger, which is one of the most powerful human emotions. The way it is experienced and expressed in direct human relationships is completely different from the way it is experienced and expressed in a workplace, where it is worth expressing and managing constructively.

In addition to anger, other negative emotions can also develop, such as disappointment, sadness and pain. Letting go of anger is forgiveness, which is a complex process of moving forward. It is also an expectation of oneself that after a certain period one can forgive. Anger is a stressor, which eventually affects the mental and physical health of the employee.

In general, the workplace has people of different habits and temperaments, so in all workplace communities grievances occur and people react in diverse ways to such situations. Employers have a great responsibility and economic interest in ensuring a decent work environment and communication in the workplace. Exploring and examining situations of hurt and forgiveness is an important topic from a psychological, sociological, and economic point of view.

The researchers examined situations where employees felt they were hurt by their boss. The question was to characterise these situations and examine their negative impact on the individual. In the hypotheses, we investigated the impact of different types of regret from the manager and examined the nature of the forgiveness process. A questionnaire-based quantitative study was used for the analysis.

The structure of the paper is as follows: the literature review presents two responses to regret from the perspective of anger and settlement to forgiveness. We explain in more detail how forgiveness works, describing the steps involved in its processing. These chapters are followed by a discussion of the research methodology and then a presentation of the research findings and conclusions.

1. LITERATURE BACKGROUND: REGRET AND FORGIVENESS

What is forgiveness? “Forgiveness can be seen as one response to interpersonal harm, focusing on the prosocial change in the cognitive, emotional, and behavioural responses of the person who has suffered harm.” (Szondy, 2006, 15) It is not really about the offender, but about the release of the anger that negatively affects the person concerned. “Forgiveness can be defined in terms of its effects as an emotion-focused coping mode that successfully reduces the stress response to interpersonal harm.” (Szondy, 2006, 15) “The effectiveness of reparation is influenced by who makes the decision on reparation, a decision made within an institutional framework is more effective than a decision on reparation made by the wrongdoer.” (Papp–Kovács, 2015, 265) An individual recognises that someone is hurting him or her but decides to move on, a dimension that is discussed in detail in psychology. There is consensus that forgiveness induces a positive psychological change towards the offender (McCullough et al., 2006).

Over the past few years, several papers have been inspired by the exploration of the process of forgiveness. There are many definitions of forgiveness, but they all agree on one thing: when people forgive, their (emotional and cognitive) responses towards those who have wronged them become increasingly positive (McCullough et al., 2009).

Forgiveness can be intrapersonal, where the change takes place within the offended party, or interpersonal, in which case it is a process between the two parties involved in

which the relationship between the parties is restored. In the first case, the focus is on the emotional and motivational changes within the person, in the second case it is on the changes in the relationship.

Forgiveness is the easing/removal of the hurt person's negative attitude towards his/her offender(s), whereby all negative feelings are removed. McCullough (2000) argues that positive motivational changes also occur in the offended. This has now led to the emergence of a new psychological paradigm, so-called positive psychology.

Worthington (2005) found that in the workplace, the relationship between the parties determines what is considered forgiveness. If there is no direct communication or working relationship, then the reduction or elimination of negativity is a sign of forgiveness. However, if there is a close working relationship, the process goes further towards positive change. It is a coping mechanism that aims to alleviate distress (Worthington–Scherer, 2004), to reduce the negatives. If the relationship between the parties allows it (Worthington, 2005), forgiveness can also amplify positive feelings, thoughts, and motives, which then lead to relationship-building behaviours and the maintenance of the relationship.

According to Fehr et al. (2010) situational factors play a greater role in forgiving a grievance than personality traits. According to Exline et al. (2003) the recovery of a sense of justice can play a significant role in forgiving a grievance.

The REACH Forgiveness method of promoting forgiveness is one of the most widely used approaches to forgiveness in psychoeducation (Worthington, 2020). The acronym refers to the steps in the processing process:

- Recall of the insult (R=recall), which is the recall or reliving of the pain or anger that accompanied the insult.
- Empathy with the perpetrator (E= empathy), which is also looking at the situation from the perspective of the offender.
- The altruistic giving of forgiveness (A= altruism), whereby altruistic forgiveness, altruistic kindness, is formed by thinking through a situation in our lives when we have been hurt and forgiven.
- Commitment to forgiveness (C= commit), i.e., thinking through the pros and cons of forgiveness.
- And finally, persistence (H= holding). Once we have made the decision, we stick with it.

A longitudinal study (Maltby et al., 2008) proved that people who are usually angry in life tend not to forgive even after a long time and rather they want revenge. According to several studies, people who can forgive are happier and more satisfied. Van Oyen Witvliet et al. (2001) showed that the physical condition and general health of people who could forgive improved significantly. Sarinopoulos (2000) found similar results; namely the more forgiving people were, the less likely it was to suffer from serious health problems.

Most people think of stress as just an unpleasant, everyday “nervous tension” and do not realise that it affects every cell in our body, mobilising our entire physiological system. It is non-specific because the same hormones (e.g., ACTH, cortisol) are released

in response to a wide variety of stressors (e.g., cold, heat, immense pleasure, or grief) because the pituitary and adrenal glands cannot distinguish between these stimuli, only other areas of our brain can (Selye, 1983).

Therefore, if you offend somebody or you are being offended by somebody it usually causes stress in both participants. In the case of prolonged stress, however, the body's physiological defensive reaction, mobilisation, is forced to persist, which can cause all kinds of chronic illnesses, what Selye (1966) calls adaptive diseases.

Luskin (2003) found that forgiveness could be acquired and added that forgiveness can be a teachable skill with a lot of practice. In his research he gave examples how powerful forgiveness was by mentioning stories about families of different religions whose loved ones were killed but because they were taught to forgive and how to forgive, they did forgive and became more balanced, satisfied and self-confident. The way how to forgive largely depends on the relationship between the participants, the closer the bond is with the other, the more likely it is to forgive sooner (Fow, 1996).

Witvliet et al. (2001) interviewed people who were offended and hurt by someone. The study examined the immediate emotional and physiological effects that occurred when participants (35 females, 36 males) rehearsed hurtful memories. While they were thinking on their answers, she was watching their reactions, whether there was any change in their blood pressure, muscle tension or sweat. Her results proved that the interviewees' blood pressure and heart rate significantly increased, and they sweated more. Upon the process of their forgiving the people who offended them, they slowly started to show signs of relief.

There are many ways to deal with these situations. People can react out of anger at our wounded pride, reject the criticism, or even retaliate, which may help protect our ego, but this is likely to result in arguments, alienation, and further tension. It can help to overcome feelings of resentment if the events are observed from the outside and consider what the impression would be if we had heard the story from someone else. This method enables us to recognise and acknowledge our weaknesses or mistakes, which is essential if we are to learn from them.

When people forgive, they will feel that the burden they have been carrying has ceased and they will feel relieved (Martin et al., 2003). Negative emotions are removed and soon positive emotions start to develop in them.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH – METHODOLOGY

The research of the authors – titled Repentance and Forgiveness – was launched in 2019 and concluded in August 2022. The basic aim of the research is to understand the processes of regret in the workplace and the subsequent forgiveness process. The goal of the study was to find out what kind of hurt domestic workers experience at work, what negative criticism they receive and how they can forgive these situations and how the latter affect the characteristics of the respondents. Does it matter from whom we receive unpleasant comments, or do we detach ourselves from them and only the offence is important?

Due to the sensitivity of the topic, it took three years to manage the questionnaires. The survey was conducted in several ways. On the one hand, respondents completed the questionnaire in-person, some were reached by e-mail, while most respondents answered via a social media platform. In the case of in-person responses, the willingness to complete was 20%, a similar proportion was found for the email solicitation, while the willingness to complete via the internet could not be measured by the researchers.

The split-half reliability was used to test the reliability of the questionnaires. The Spearman Brown coefficient is 0.832, which is an acceptable value. The trial questionnaires were completed by five respondents and none of them had problems with interpretability, so the questions were asked in an unmodified form. All responses received were included in the analysis because all were appropriate for the analysis. The structure of the questionnaire is summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Structure of the questionnaire

Specific questions	Reprimand	Forgiveness
Residence Highest level of education Position Size of job Activity of the organisation Ownership of the organisation	Abusive situations Impact of negative criticism on the individual Ranking of offending situations	Handling situations of abuse How can we forgive? When to forgive?

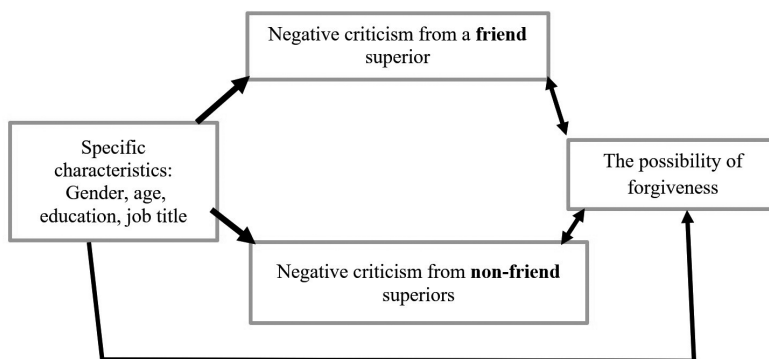
Source: Own table

Several areas of regret and forgiveness were explored in the authors' research:

1. Situations where we feel hurt at work.
2. Impact of hurtful situations depending on who is hurting you.
3. Impact of negative criticism on the individual.
4. Ranking hurtful situations.
5. Actors of forgiveness and its timeliness.

The following set of objectives were used in the paper (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Objectives of the research



Source: Own figure

In the target structure, we examined how negative criticism was perceived by respondents depending on whether it was received from a friend or a non-friend superior. These reactions were analysed by gender, age, education and job title. The research also looked at what forgiveness depends on and vice versa, which characteristics are affected by the criticism. We also analysed forgiveness to see if there are differences by gender, age, position, and education.

The literature mainly focused on the process of regret and forgiveness, and less on the relationship system between the interacting persons. Forgiveness according to different attributes is shown, but not the emotional relationship of the persons involved within and between the different positions. Therefore, the paper addresses the validity of the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Research participants will differentiate between negative criticisms of their attribute according to whether the negative comment or action comes from a friend or non-friend superior.

Hypothesis 2: The ability to forgive criticism depends on whether a friend or a non-friend supervisor has previously given the criticism.

Table 2 introduces the characteristics of the sample.

Table 2 Characteristics of the sample, n = 196

Features	
Gender	Men: 61 persons Female: 135 persons
Place of residence	Northern Hungary: 25 persons Northern Great Plain: 4 persons Southern Great Plain: 13 persons Central Hungary: 26 persons Central Transdanubia: 10 persons Western Transdanubia: 6 persons South Transdanubia: 0 persons Budapest: 112 persons
Highest level of education	Primary education: 2 persons Secondary education without school leaving certificate: 1 person Secondary education with school leaving certificate: 29 persons Higher vocational education): 13 persons Higher education (graduate): 151 persons
Position in the organisation	Employed: 133 Basic manager: 13 people Intermediate manager: 16 persons Senior manager: 6 persons Currently not working 28
Size of workplace	Micro enterprise: 14 persons Small business: 27 persons Medium enterprise: 45 persons Large enterprise: 81 persons Currently not working: 29 persons

Source: Own table based on questionnaire research

We used univariate and multivariate statistical methods to analyse the sample. For the analysis, we used SPSS version 28. The methods of analysis were Chi-square test, ANOVA, correlation, factor, and cluster analysis.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

Respondents were first asked to answer questions about the impact of negative criticism of their person. Here we distinguished between negative comments from managers who have a good relationship with the respondent, who are friends, or from superiors with whom the respondent does not have a friendly relationship. In response to these questions, respondents were asked to indicate on a five-point Likert scale how sensitive they were to criticism. A score of one indicated poor, while a score of five indicated excellent. Table 3 shows the mean and standard deviation of the responses given:

Table 3 Reactions to criticism from a friend and non-friend boss
(mean, standard deviation), n = 196

Feature (criticised by the supervisor)	Not a friend leader		Friend leader		Average difference
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Creativity	2.80	1.046	3.02	1.15	0.21
Foreign language skills	2.92	1.078	3.14	1.10	0.22
Confidence	2.89	1.094	3.13	1.05	0.24
A critical approach	2.97	1.035	3.10	1.02	0.12
Responsibility	2.52	1.102	2.86	1.14	0.34
Ability to act	2.62	1.172	2.83	1.13	0.21
Ability to work in a team and to cooperate for common goals	2.67	1.085	2.96	1.11	0.29
Leadership ability	2.93	1.128	3.19	1.11	0.26
Ability to learn	2.70	1.192	2.95	1.17	0.26
Problem solving skills	2.65	1.151	2.93	1.16	0.28
Effective communication skills in oral, written, public and confined spaces	2.61	1.083	3.04	1.15	0.43
Analytical skills	2.88	1.020	3.11	1.02	0.23
Work discipline	2.71	1.172	2.96	1.20	0.25
Versatility	2.77	1.178	2.98	1.14	0.21
Accuracy	2.66	1.211	2.86	1.17	0.20
Dedication, commitment	2.65	1.164	2.89	1.18	0.24
Professional knowledge	2.61	1.129	2.89	1.18	0.28

Source: Own table based on questionnaire research

The results reflect the fact that respondents are more tolerant of negative criticism from superiors who are on friendly terms than from bosses with whom they are not on good terms. The most negative impact of unfriendly managers' criticism is on their sense of responsibility, effective communication skills, and professional knowledge. They have the least negative impact on critical thinking, leadership, and foreign language skills.

Non-friend bosses can weaken the ability to act, punctuality, and sense of responsibility with their non-positive comments, while they can do the least damage to leadership, foreign language skills, and confidence. The largest differences between the means were on the impact on effective communication skills, sense of responsibility, and teamwork between the critiques of the two types of leadership.

We also analysed whether there is a difference by gender, education, and job title in how these criticisms are perceived. We reduced the educational attainment into three groups: those without a school leaving certificate, those with a school leaving certificate but no diploma, and those with a degree. Position was also defined into three categories: incumbents, managers, and not currently employed. ANOVA tests were used to analyse whether there were differences in perceptions of criticism based on gender, position, and education. The Levene-test for homogeneity of variance was confirmed for all significant ANOVA tests. The results confirmed that significant differences were only identifiable for gender. The results for gender differences are summarised in Table 4.

Table 4 Reactions to criticism from a friend and non-friend boss in terms of gender (p=0.05), n = 196

Features	Not a friend leader	Friend leader
Creativity	No difference	No difference
Foreign language skills	There is a difference F: 7.626 sig.: 0.006	No difference
Confidence	There is a difference F: 5.977 sig.: 0.025	No difference
A critical approach	There is a difference F: 4.149 sig.: 0.043	No difference
Responsibility	There is a difference F: 6.720 sig.: 0.010	There is a difference F: 9.603 sig.: 0.002
Ability to act	There is a difference F: 10.485 sig.: 0.010	There is a difference F: 6.818 sig.: 0.010
Ability to work in a team and to cooperate for common goals	There is a difference F: 4.783 sig.: 0.030	There is a difference F: 4.415 sig.: 0.038
Leadership ability	No difference	There is a difference F: 7.384 sig.: 0.007
Ability to learn	There is a difference F: 16.673 sig.: 0.00	There is a difference F: 6.322 sig.: 0.013
Problem solving skills	There is a difference F: 16.489 sig.: 0.00	There is a difference F: 7.346 sig.: 0.007

Effective communication skills in oral, written, public and confined spaces	There is a difference F: 21.498 sig.: 0.00	There is a difference F:10.353 sig.:0.002
Analytical skills	There is a difference F: 6.37 sig.: 0.012	No difference
Work discipline	There is a difference F: 6.729 sig.: 0.010	There is a difference F: 11.877 sig.:0.001
Versatility	There is a difference F: 7.076 sig.: 0.008	There is a difference F: 6.772 sig.:0.010
Accuracy	There is a difference F: 8.03 sig.: 0.005	There is a difference F: 4.350 sig.: 0.038
Dedication, commitment	There is a difference F:4.672 sig.:0.032	There is a difference F: 5.996 sig.: 0.015
Professional knowledge	No difference	There is a difference F: 7.625 sig.: 0.006

Source: Own table based on questionnaire research

In both cases there was a significant difference between the genders for several traits. In all cases, women found it harder to cope with criticism than men, regardless of their relationship with their superiors. Women were particularly negatively affected by negative insults about their professionalism, commitment, punctuality, and work discipline. Men were less sensitive than women to these criticisms.

A correlational study was also used to examine the relationship between age and negative criticisms of specific attributes. The results showed that in none of the cases was the relationship significant, so age did not influence how we process these negative comments.

Furthermore, the results showed that we take negative criticism better from our bosses who are friends than from those with whom we do not have a good relationship. The impact of criticism does not depend on age, education level or the position in which the individual is employed. However, women tend to have a harder time with criticism than men, regardless of their relationship with the boss who made the criticism. Based on the results, the first hypothesis was accepted.

For further analysis, we grouped negative criticism into factors depending on whether the criticism came from a friend or non-friend leader. The sample size and sample homogeneity corresponded to the factor design. Multicollinearity between variables was met. In the case of well-connected supervisors, three variables were not suitable for factorization: the impact of criticism on critical perspective, analytical skills, and professional knowledge. When examining the effect of unsupportive comments from a supervisor who was not in a good relationship, the effects of negative reviews on critical thinking, assertiveness, learning skills, and problem-solving skills were not included in the factor training.

The effects of comments from both types of leaders were grouped into four factors. The factor names and the rotated component matrix with Cronbach's alpha values are summarized in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5 Rotated component matrix, factor names, with Cronbach's Alpha
(for criticisms from non-friend bosses), n = 196

Factors	Criticisms of features	Component			
		1	2	3	4
Professionalism	Dedication	0.776			
	Accuracy	0.773			
	Versatility	0.766			
	Work discipline	0.675			
	Professional knowledge	0.580			
	Cronbach Alpha	0.926			
Team member	Leadership ability		0.763		
	Responsibility		0.736		
	Ability to act		0.731		
	Ability to work in a team and to cooperate for common goals		0.648		
	Cronbach Alpha	0.889			
Intellectuality	Creativity			0.850	
	Foreign language skills			0.747	
	Cronbach Alpha	0.791			
Success	Effective communication skills				0.809
	Analytical skills				0.644
	Cronbach Alpha	0,822			
	KMO Bartlett test: .930 Chi-square test: 2034.808 df: 78, sig: 0.000 Explained fraction: 79.541%				

Source: Own table

Table 6 Rotated component matrix, factor labels, with Cronbach's Alpha
(for reviews from friend bosses), n = 196

Factors	Dedication Accuracy	Component			
		1	2	3	4
Professionalism	Versatility	0.805			
	Work discipline	0.758			
	Cronbach's alpha	0.755			
	Leadership ability	0.710			
	Ability to learn	0.927			
Leader	Problem solving ability		0.786		
	Effective communication skills		0.701		
	Cronbach's alpha		0.666		
	Foreign language skills		0.607		
	Creativity	0.923			
Intellectuality	Confidence			0.824	
	Cronbach's alpha			0.783	
	Ability to act			0.631	
	Responsibility	0.889			
Team member	Ability to work in a team and to cooperate towards common goals				0.784
	Dedication				0.748
	Accuracy				0.616
	Versatility	0.888			
KMO Bartlett test: .941 Chi-squared test: 2620.780 df: 91, sig: 0.000 Explained fraction: 82.727%					

Source: Own table based on questionnaire research

It can therefore be confirmed that the Cronbach's alpha values for the resulting factors are extremely high, i.e., the variables are well matched. In both cases, both the KMO values and the explained proportions were also appropriate.

We asked the respondents whether they should always forgive a non-friend or a friend boss if they hurt someone at work. In the case of a friend, 2% of respondents said never, 18.4% said sometimes, 50.5% said often, and 29.1% said always.

In the case of non-friend bosses, 4.1% of respondents never forgive, 41.3% sometimes do so, 38.8% often do so, and 15.8% always believe in forgiveness. We are more forgiving with our friend superiors than with those who are not close to our hearts.

We also examined whether there were differences in the two questions based on gender, job title, education, and age. Based on gender, women were more forgiving of non-friend bosses, and a significant difference was confirmed (Khi-square test:9.431 df: 3 sig.:0.024 $p < 0.05$). For forgiveness of friend bosses, the Khi-square test was not reliable in light of gender

When analysed by job title and education, no significant difference was found in either case. Similarly, there were no significant differences by age. Finally, we investigated whether there is any relationship between forgiveness and the critical effects previously factorised. Here again, the effects of criticisms from friend and non-friend bosses were analysed separately, as well as forgiveness towards friend and non-friend bosses, which, as we have seen before, had the following values: never, sometimes, often, and always. The homogeneity of variance was good for all significant ANOVA tests.

Table 7 ANOVA table on forgiveness for criticism from non-friend and friend bosses
($p=0.05$), $n=196$

Impact of non-friend boss comments		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Professionalism	Between Groups	1.753	3	0.584	0.581	0.628
	Within Groups	193.247	192	1.006		
	Total	195	195			
Team player	Between Groups	2.752	3	0.917	0.916	0.434
	Within Groups	192.248	192	1.001		
	Total	195	195			
Intellectuality	Between Groups	2.767	3	0.922	0.921	0.432
	Within Groups	192.233	192	1.001		
	Total	195	195			
Success	Between Groups	7.344	3	2.448	2.505	0.06
	Within Groups	187.656	192	0.977		
	Total	195	195			
Friend boss		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Impact of comments Professionalism	Between Groups	7.925	3	2.642	2.711	0.046
	Within Groups	187.075	192	0.974		
	Total	195.000	195			
Leader role	Between Groups	1.024	3	0.341	0.338	0.798
	Within Groups	193.976	192	1.010		
	Total	195.000	195			

Intellectuality	Between Groups	5.559	3	1.853	1.878	0.135
	Within Groups	189.441	192	0.987		
	Total	195.000	195			
	Between Groups	2.930	3	0.977	0.976	0.405
	Within Groups	192.070	192	1.000		
	Total	195.000	195			

Source: Own table based on questionnaire research

The data in the table show that only for criticisms of our professionalism coming from friend bosses show a correlation with how we forgive. The more these qualities are affected, the less likely we are to forgive our boss, even if we are on friendly terms with him or her. Overall, it can therefore be concluded that the likelihood of forgiveness depends more on the relationship we have with our boss rather than on which of our traits we are criticised for and how we tolerate it, and so our second hypothesis was accepted.

4. SUMMARY

The aim of the study was to find out how negative criticism of employees in the workplace is perceived by employees. To analyse this question, a quantitative study was conducted. Everyone has been hurt in their lives and no human being is an exception. Forgiveness is an emotion-focused coping strategy (Worthington, 2020), as the literature has pointed out. However, the process of regret and forgiveness depends on several factors (Worthington, 2005).

The paper analysed the process of regret and forgiveness in the workplace, and the type of subordinate-boss relationship when an individual receives criticism from the superior. We face criticism from our bosses every day, but it matters how we experience the situation and how we feel about the criticism. The results of this research can be used, among other things, to show that it is not easy for others to experience critical situations and that we are not necessarily unique in the way we deal with them.

The results showed, among other things, that the strength of the emotional attachment is particularly important in this emotional process, much more important than the respondent's education, age, or position. In terms of gender, it was shown that women experience regret more intensely emotionally, as well as in the process of forgiveness. In the latter case, the intensity of the relationship of the actors has more influence on the alleviation of an unpleasant feeling of regret than on age, education, or position in an organisation. For us, one of the most interesting lessons of the study was that the topic of the research was very deeply felt by the respondents, which is why they were reluctant to participate in the research. It raises the question of whether the painful process of regret can really be resolved by the individual's own process of forgiveness and choice, i.e., whether one can really move beyond the negative, bad feelings caused by criticism.

A further focus of the research is how we react and how we receive a particular piece of advice, not from the boss, but from colleagues working at the same level as us. What factors influence these situations and whether we can distinguish between criticism from a superior and from a subordinate. A further aim of this article is to lay the groundwork for future research on how to make workplace communication even more effective, so that assertiveness in the workplace environment becomes even more widespread.

However, it is important to think about how much a regret weakens the relationship between the actors in the process and how this may affect the effectiveness of subsequent common work. Another important question is how forgiveness can be embedded in corporate culture. Similarly, a pre-forgiveness apology should be an important element of the corporate value system.

The main limitation of the research was the sample size, which the researchers would like to increase in the future. An important future research direction could be to compare samples collected in other countries. Here, both cultural differences and characteristics of the respondents could be used to identify new lines of investigation.

The hypotheses formulated in the study were accepted, i.e., the research participants differentiate between negative criticism of their trait according to whether the negative comment or action came from a friend or a non-friend superior. Furthermore, the ability to forgive criticism depends on whether the criticism was previously given by a friend or a non-friend superior.

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