

## The development of a scale of self-efficacy to work on forgiveness in counseling

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**Abstract:** It is said that working on forgiveness in psychological counseling will significantly benefit the individual, taking into account the good consequences of forgiving on the individual. This study aimed to develop a measurement tool for determining self-efficacy to work on forgiveness in counseling (SSWOFIC). The most commonly regarded forgiveness process model, Enright's Forgiveness Process Model, served as the foundation for the creation of this measurement tool. 285 counselors provided information for the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and 258 counselors provided information for the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). For the content validity of the scale, eight specialists were contacted. EFA revealed a single factor structure with 41 items that accounted for 61.7% of the overall variation. It was found that all of the SSWOFIC's items were discriminative and had a high level of factor loading value in the pertinent factor. To ascertain if the structure identified by EFA was confirmed or not, CFA was carried out. The one-factor structure was confirmed, as evidenced by the resulting model's fit indices. The computed Cronbach's Alpha and McDonald's Omega reliability coefficients were 0.99, and the Split-Half method's results for the Guttman and Spearman-Brown coefficients were 0.96. The SSWOFIC results demonstrated the validity and reliability of the scale, which consists of a single component and 41 items. The established scale will make it possible to conduct studies to ascertain the level of self-efficacy of psychological counselors with regard to this matter and to examine this feature in terms of other variables.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the idea of "forgiveness" has drawn attention in the study of psychology (Bugay, 2010). It is acknowledged as a significant issue in the field of counseling, particularly with the growth of positive psychology (Bugay & Demir, 2012; Ergüner Tekinalp & Terzi, 2012). Forgiveness is recognized as a human virtue in positive psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). There are several definitions of forgiveness in the world of psychology, but the one provided by Enright (1996) is generally accepted. Enright (1996) described forgiveness as the voluntary renunciation of feelings like wrath, unfavorable

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judgment, and indifference in favor of feelings like love, generosity, and compassion for another person who has wrongfully injured them. The forgiving person renounces the right to be angry with and take revenge on the person who hurt them (Enright & Coyle, 1998). Accepting what happened, letting go of anger, and feeling good are all necessary for forgiveness (Enright, 2001).

There are various things that influence forgiveness. These variables can be classified as personal, interpersonal, and environmental variables (Hoyt & McCullough, 2005). Individual characteristics are cited as influencing factors for forgiveness. According to McCullough and Hoyt (2002), some people are more capable of forgiving others than others (Bellah et al., 2003). Personality traits such as emotional maturity, common sense, resilience, empathy against aggression (Kamat et al., 2006), tolerance, and extraversion (Ross et al., 2004) increase the tendency to forgive. Relational factors affecting forgiveness include characteristics related to the relationship between the harmed person and the harming person. The identity of the harming person (Bugay & Demir, 2012), the closeness of the harming person (Alpay, 2009), the nature of the relationship (Bugay & Demir, 2011), the hierarchical status of the two parties (Aquino et al., 2001), the attitude of the harming person after the mistake and the willingness to apologize (Eaton et al., 2007) affect forgiveness. The traits connected to the fault are the contextual elements influencing forgiveness (the situation or event that requires forgiveness). The factors that affect forgiveness include the mistake's topic, its intentionality, its intention to injure, its severity (magnitude), its result, its compensability, and its repetition (Bugay & Demir, 2011; Mullet & Girard, 2000).

Forgiving the person who harmed them has positive physical, psychological, social, and spiritual effects on individuals. Forgiveness has a positive effect on physical health and people who can forgive others have fewer symptoms of illness (Toussaint et al., 2001). On the contrary, it is stated that people who have difficulty in forgiveness have more negative emotions and experience more physical problems because they have a more stressful life (Witvliet et al., 2001). It is understood that the effect of forgiveness on physical health is indirect. The positive effects of forgiveness on psychological health are quite numerous. Forgiveness increases subjective well-being (Asıcı, 2018; Balcı-Çelik & Öztürk-Serter, 2017), psychological well-being (Lawler-Row & Piferi, 2006; Tse & Yip, 2009) and life satisfaction (Kaleta & Mroz, 2018; Öztörel, 2018) and protects mental health (Göztepe-Gümüş, 2015; Şentepe, 2016). On the other hand, cognitive distortions (Besim, 2017; Gündüz, 2014), anger (Aslan, 2016; Topbaşoğlu, 2016), and rumination (Oral, 2016; Özgür & Eldeleklioğlu, 2017) seem to be more intense in individuals with low forgiveness. Forgiveness helps the person who has been harmed to accept the truth, accept himself/herself and others without prejudice, and develop problem-solving skills (Şener & Çetinkaya, 2015). Thus, negative emotions such as rumination, anger, depression, and anxiety related to the unforgiven event/situation decrease; positive states such as utilizing social support, coping skills, and psychological well-being increase (Gürbüz, 2016). Another benefit of forgiveness emerges in one's social relationships. When the person who has been harmed chooses to forgive, they become psychologically stronger and can express themselves in more positive ways (Tüccar, 2015). Interpersonal relationships of people who prefer forgiveness are more regular (Toussaint & Webb, 2005), and interpersonal harmony increases (Tse & Yip, 2009). For this reason, individuals with high levels of forgiveness are more satisfied with their family and work lives and friendships (Gürbüz, 2016). Forgiveness also has spiritual effects on the individual. In most religions, the importance of being forgiving is emphasized, and people who have been harmed are advised not to hold grudges, give up the desire for revenge and forgive them. When the person who has been harmed is forgiving, he/she may feel peace, thinking that he/she is acting by religious suggestions (Van Tongeren et al., 2015). Considering the physical, psychological, social, and spiritual effects of forgiveness on individuals, the importance of forgiveness is understood.

When the positive effects of forgiveness on individuals are examined, it is seen that it also serves the purposes of the psychological counseling process. Psychological counseling is a psychological assistance process provided by professionals under theories and principles to help individuals to better define themselves, realize their potential, make choices by taking decisions, especially in certain periods of their lives, to develop appropriate solutions by recognizing their problems and to solve their problems (Korkut, 2007). In the psychological counseling process, angry counsees (Murray, 2002) blame themselves or others (Menahem & Love, 2013) and/or experience problems in different areas of life due to many challenging events such as divorce, deception, neglect, abuse, fraud, criticism, obstruction, death of a loved one, illness or disasters are frequently encountered. In such cases, individuals' emotional and cognitive balances may be negatively affected and problems may occur in the social sphere. In the psychological counseling process, counsees' experiencing forgiveness enables them to restructure their impaired emotional and cognitive balances (Gordon et al., 2000) and thus contributes to their psychological healing process (Wade et al., 2005). In this respect, forgiveness is seen as a therapeutic technique that facilitates healing to achieve the counseling's therapeutic goals (Berecz, 2001; Murray, 2002; Wade et al., 2005). When forgiveness is worked on in the psychological counseling process, counsees' awareness of the event, how the event affected them, and their feelings and thoughts increases; counsees can continue their lives more healthily by choosing one of the situations of forgiveness or unforgiveness (Thompson et al., 2005). Considering the relationship between these changes in individuals' lives and the outcomes of the counseling process, it can be said that it would be important and useful to study forgiveness in counseling.

In the literature, it is observed that many forgiveness interventions have been carried out and that process-based interventions have the most effective results (Baskin & Enright, 2004). In studies conducted to improve forgiveness, it has been revealed that interventions based on the Forgiveness Process Model (Asıcı, 2018; Bugay & Demir, 2012; Ertürk, 2019; Freedman, 2018; Freedman & Knupp, 2003; Hilbert, 2015; Ji, 2013; Vural-Batik & Afyonkale-Talay, 2021) positively affect feelings, thoughts, and attitudes towards forgiveness and contribute to an increase in the tendency to forgive. In the Forgiveness Process Model, it is emphasized that it is a process for an individual to let go of negative feelings, face past experiences and painful feelings, look at the person who hurt him/her from a different perspective and choose to let go of feelings of revenge and anger. According to Enright's Forgiveness Process Model (see [Table 1](#)), which is one of the forgiveness process models, forgiveness takes place in four phases (uncovering, deciding, working, and deepening) consisting of 20 units in total (Baskin & Enright, 2004; Enright, 2001; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). In the uncovering phase, there are issues related to becoming aware of the defense mechanisms used and the anger experienced, enabling them to face negative emotions, and realizing the harm of the negative emotions. This phase, in which the individual questions the pain experienced, its importance in his/her life, whether it threatens his/her life, and expresses the pain experienced, can be an emotionally painful process for the individual. In the decision phase, it is aimed to accept that the efforts made so far have not worked, to want to forgive at the cognitive level, and to decide to forgive. The individual thinks about forgiveness and develops awareness about what forgiveness is and is not in this phase. Forgiveness is not fully realized, but the individual's desire for revenge decreases. The next phase is the work phase, and there are issues related to accepting the pain, reshaping the negativity experienced, looking at it from a different perspective, and re-evaluating it. The individual begins to feel compassion for the person who harmed them, to develop a different perspective by empathizing with them, and to see them as human beings beyond the mistake they made in this phase. In the last phase which is the deepening phase, the aim is to realize the meaning of pain, and realize the freedom of forgiveness. In this phase of the forgiveness process, the individual consciously gives up emotions such as anger,

resentment, and revenge that may negatively affect the health status of the person with the new perspective he/she has gained; he/she derives positive goals and meanings from the injustice and pain he/she has experienced. The individual makes sense of and internalizes the concept of forgiveness in all aspects (Enright, 1996; Enright, 2001; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2000). The main purpose of these stages is to enable the individual to forgive the person who harmed them and thus help them to strengthen their psychological health and continue their lives with a positive perspective (Satici, 2016).

**Table 1.** *Stages of the forgiveness process.*

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Phase 1: Uncovering
Unit 1: How do you avoid facing anger?
Unit 2: Have you faced your anger?
Unit 3: Are you afraid to admit you are ashamed?
Unit 4: Does your anger affect your health?
Unit 5: Do you keep thinking about the situation/offender you have been hurt by?
Unit 6: Do you compare your situation with that of the offender?
Unit 7: Does this hurt have a lasting impact on your life?
Unit 8: Has this hurt changed your worldview?

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Phase 2: Decision
Unit 9: Accepting that the work done so far has not worked.
Unit 10: Willingness to begin the process of forgiveness.
Unit 11: Deciding to forgive

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Phase 3: Work
Unit 12: Trying to understand.
Unit 13: Compassion and empathy work
Unit 14: Accepting pain.
Unit 15: Giving the offender a moral gift

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Phase 4: Deepen
Unit 16: Recognizing the meaning of pain.
Unit 17: Recognizing the need to forgive oneself.
Unit 18: Realizing that you are not alone.
Unit 19: Realizing the meaning of your life.
Unit 20: Realizing the freedom of forgiveness

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For counselors to work on forgiveness in the counseling process, it is important to know the meaning and importance of forgiveness, the factors affecting forgiveness, and the forgiveness processes (Menahem & Love, 2013). When working on forgiveness, counselors should first help counselees to understand the forgiveness process correctly. If the counselee is willing to forgive, counselors should explain what forgiveness is and is not and provide the necessary information about forgiveness (Rotter, 2001). For example, many counselees may think that forgiveness is synonymous with forgetting and reconciliation, so they may not be willing to forgive. In such cases, counselors need to be capable of providing their counselees with the right information about forgiveness (İkiz et al., 2015). Whether an individual has weak or strong self-efficacy beliefs has an impact on the individual's performance or behavior (Zimmerman, 2000). Albert Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy, which is based on the Social Learning Theory, as the degree of belief that a person has in himself/herself about whether he/she can do a job successfully or not. Strong self-efficacy belief is a behavior that increases the motivation of an individual to cope with a problem when faced with any problem and enables him/her to make an effort (Pamukçu & Demir, 2013). Counselors' belief that they can help their counselees

is an effective factor in determining their performance in the counseling process (Cormier & Nurious, 2003). Studies on counselors' self-efficacy perceptions are mostly related to counseling self-efficacy (Aktaş & Zorbaz, 2018; Akşab & Türk, 2022; Bingöl, 2018; Fırıncı-Kodaz & Vural-Batik, 2018; Pamukçu & Kağnıcı, 2013; Sarıkaya, 2017; Sarpdağ, 2019; Yayla & İkiz, 2017), special education self-efficacy (Aksoy & Diken, 2009; Arşit, 2019; Bayar & Doğan, 2021; Derin-Kılıç & Er, 2021; Vural-Batik & Fırıncı-Kodaz, 2018) and consultation self-efficacy (Bozkur & Kaya, 2021). In studies conducted with counselor candidates, the effects of the courses and supervision taken in undergraduate education on counseling self-efficacy and counseling skills were examined (Atik, 2017; Aydın, 2020; Koçyiğit- Özyiğit, 2019; Pamukçu & Kağnıcı, 2017; Şeker, 2019; Ülker-Tümlü, 2019). In the national and international literature, there is no study on self-efficacy to work on forgiveness in counseling. The most important reason for this may be that there is no measurement tool in the literature to determine the ability to work on forgiveness. There are a limited number of studies that qualitatively examined counselors' attitudes toward forgiveness (İkiz et al., 2015; Konstam et al., 2010). In a study examining the beliefs of counselor candidates about forgiveness, it was determined that counselor candidates had some knowledge about the meaning of forgiveness; however, they did not know what real forgiveness was, and they saw forgiveness not as a personality trait but as a conditional process in interpersonal relationships (İkiz et al., 2015). Konstam et al. (2010), in their study to determine the attitudes of mental health professionals towards forgiveness and their practices related to forgiveness in the counseling process, found that counselors with more positive attitudes towards forgiveness were more likely to encourage their counselees to talk about forgiveness. The lack of a measurement tool to determine the self-efficacy to work on forgiveness in counseling in the literature limits the research on this subject. This study aimed to develop a measurement tool to determine self-efficacy to practice forgiveness in counseling. Enright's Forgiveness Process Model, which is the most widely accepted forgiveness process model, was taken as the basis for the development of this measurement tool. It is thought that the development of this measurement tool will enable studies to be conducted to determine the self-efficacy to work on forgiveness in counseling. In addition, it is hoped that it will contribute to the literature by enabling the development of training programs to increase counselors' self-efficacy to work on forgiveness in counseling, determining the effectiveness of these programs, and using them in counselor training.

## 2. METHOD

This study aimed to develop a scale to determine the level of self-efficacy to work on forgiveness in counseling and to conduct validity and reliability analyses. In this context, the research is a scale development study. Information about the study groups and the steps followed in the development process of the scale are given below.

### 2.1. Study Groups

In the process of developing the self-efficacy scale for working on forgiveness in counseling, data were collected from two different study groups to conduct exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

The data were collected online from counselors working in various institutions in the 2022-2023 academic year. In scale development studies, the study group should be as heterogeneous as possible in terms of the trait to be measured (Erkuş, 2012). In this way, the scale can be examined in terms of its ability to measure individuals at different levels in terms of the measured trait. For this purpose, care was taken to ensure that the data collected through convenience sampling consisted of psychological counselors with different working years, working in different school types/institutions and at different levels. Firstly, EFA was conducted with the data obtained from psychological counselors. In the second stage, the data collected from psychological counselors were used for CFA. Data were collected from 285

people for AFA and as a result of the examination of the assumptions, some data were excluded from the analysis and analyzes were made on the data set of 258 people. Data were collected from a separate group of 258 people for DFA and as a result of the examination of the assumptions, some data were excluded from the analysis and analyzes were performed on a data set of 234 people. Information about the study groups in which the analyzes were conducted is presented in [Table 2](#).

**Table 2.** *Distribution of the study group according to demographic variables*

Data from the sample for EFA N <sub>1</sub> = 258			Data from the sample for CFA N <sub>2</sub> =234		
Gender	<i>f</i>	%	Gender	<i>f</i>	%
Female	216	83.7	Female	188	80.3
Male	42	16.3	Male	46	19.7
Age	<i>f</i>	%	Age	<i>f</i>	%
21-30	101	39.2	21-30	104	44.4
31-40	102	39.5	31-40	86	36.8
41+ Age	55	21.3	41+ Age	44	18.8
Seniority	<i>f</i>	%		<i>f</i>	%
1 – 5 Year	65	25.2	1 – 5 Year	83	35.5
6 – 10 Year	76	29.5	6 – 10 Year	56	23.9
11 – 15 Year	43	16.7	11 – 15 Year	39	16.7
16 – 20 Year	30	11.6	16 – 20 Year	24	10.2
21+ Year	44	17.0	21+ Year	32	13.7
Institution of Duty	<i>f</i>	%	Institution of Duty	<i>f</i>	%
Preschool	16	6.2	Preschool	11	4.7
Primary School	60	23.3	Primary School	39	16.7
Middle School	81	31.4	Middle School	90	38.5
High School	61	23.6	High School	48	20.5
Special Education School	11	4.3	Special Education School	5	2.1
Guidance Research Center	15	5.8	Guidance Research Center	29	12.4
Other (ASP, BİLSEM, Hos- pital, etc.)	14	5.4	Other (ASP, BİLSEM, Hospi- tal, etc.)	12	5.1
Education Status	<i>f</i>	%	Education Status	<i>f</i>	%
Undergraduate	194	75.2	Undergraduate	165	70.5
Master's Degree	61	23.6	Master's Degree	65	27.8
PhD	3	1.2	PhD	4	1.7
Receiving Forgiveness Edu- cation	<i>f</i>	%	Receiving Forgiveness Educa- tion	<i>f</i>	%
Yes	12	4.7	Yes	15	6.4
No	246	95.3	No	219	93.6
Reading Resources on For- giveness	<i>f</i>	%	Reading Resources on For- giveness	<i>f</i>	%
Yes	114	44.2	Yes	97	41.5
No	144	55.8	No	137	58.5

When Table 2 is examined, it is seen that the majority of the individuals in both study groups are women and counselors with undergraduate education. It can be said that the study groups have a heterogeneous structure in terms of age, the institution of duty, and different years of employment variables. It is seen that more than 90% of the individuals in both study groups have not received any training on working with forgiveness in counseling and more than 50% of them have not read any resources on this subject.

## 2.2. Scale Development Process

In this scale development study to determine the self-efficacy of counselors to work on forgiveness in counseling, a literature review was conducted and no measurement tool developed for this purpose was found. To determine the items of the measurement tool, theories/models related to forgiveness in the literature (Enright, 2001; Hargrave & Sells, 1997; Worthington, 2001) and Bandura's (2006) guide for developing self-efficacy scales were examined. In line with the examinations, a pool of 44 items was created to cover these stages by taking into account the four stages in "Enright's Forgiveness Process Model" (Enright, 2001), one of the forgiveness process models, in writing the items of the measurement tool. Before the items were submitted to the expert opinion, a meeting was held by the researchers to examine whether the items were appropriate in terms of language and expression, comprehensibility, and scientific suitability, necessary corrections were made and a draft form of 41 items was created.

The 41-item draft form was e-mailed in excel format to three faculty members with a PhD in counseling and guidance counseling, two faculty members with a PhD in psychology, and three faculty members with a PhD in measurement and evaluation. While creating the item evaluation excel form for the experts, firstly, explanations about the purpose of the scale were given; then the experts were asked to evaluate the items in terms of suitability for the purpose, suitability in terms of language and expression, comprehensibility and suitability for the sub-dimension they wanted to measure. The experts were asked to give their opinions on the appropriateness of each item by using a triple rating as "appropriate", "should be improved", or "unnecessary"; they were asked to explain the items that were deemed unnecessary or should be improved and to write a suggestion for correction, if any. In line with the opinions of the experts, the content validity ratio (CVR) for each item and content validity index (CVI) for the scale were calculated using excel, taking into account Lawshe's (1975) analysis method. Table 3 shows the CVR values calculated for each item and the CVI value obtained from the whole scale.

**Table 3.** Lawshe's analysis results.

Items	CVR	Items	CVR	Items	CVR	Items	CVR
1	1.00	12	1.00	23	1.00	34	1.00
2	1.00	13	1.00	24	0.75	35	0.75
3	1.00	14	1.00	25	1.00	36	1.00
4	1.00	15	1.00	26	1.00	37	1.00
5	1.00	16	1.00	27	1.00	38	1.00
6	0.75	17	1.00	28	0.75	39	0.75
7	1.00	18	0.75	29	1.00	40	1.00
8	1.00	19	1.00	30	1.00	41	1.00
9	1.00	20	1.00	31	1.00		
10	1.00	21	1.00	32	1.00		
11	1.00	22	1.00	33	1.00		

Content Validity Index (CVI): .92

In **Table 3**, it is seen that the CVR values calculated based on the opinions of eight experts on the items are 0.75 and above. In this study, the CVR critical values in Ayre and Scally's (2014) study were taken into consideration for the acceptable critical value for an item to be included in the scale. In that study, it was determined that the CVR critical value was 0.75 at  $\alpha=0.05$  significance level for eight experts. As a result of the analysis, 41 items were decided to be included in the scale and the CVI value of these items was calculated as 0.92. In the expert opinions, adjustments were made on the relevant items in line with the suggestions of the experts who marked the items as necessary and wrote suggestions, and the final form was given to the measurement tool. For example, the meanings of terms that are unlikely to be known, such as rumination and regulation, are given in parentheses. Sentences containing more than one statement have been changed, and spelling errors in items have been corrected.

The items that were decided to be included in the scale were examined for the last time by a faculty member who is an expert in the field of Turkish teaching in terms of item comprehensibility and compliance with Turkish grammar rules. So, the 41-item draft form was made ready for the pre-test application. The counselors were asked to rate the extent to which the items in the scale reflected themselves on a scale of 1-5, and the response categories of the items were formed as "1-Not at all", "2-Little reflects", "3-Moderately reflects", "4-Very much reflects", "5-Totally reflects".

To check whether the items were comprehensible, clear, and explicit for the target group, a face-to-face pretest was conducted with 14 counselors. The counselors found the trial form mostly clear and understandable. However, four participants stated that they needed to read three items several times to understand them. These items were transformed into a more simplified structure before the actual implementation. After obtaining ethical approval from Ondokuz Mayıs University Social Sciences and Humanities Research and Publication Ethics Committee (Decision number: 2022-1080), data were first collected from 285 counselors for EFA in December 2022, and then CFA was conducted on the data collected from 258 counselors in February 2023 to test the accuracy of the construct obtained. The data were obtained through Google Forms, which provided the consent of the psychological counselors.

### **2.3. Data Analysis**

EFA was first performed using the data gathered from the initial study group of 285 participants. To determine whether the data were appropriate for factor analysis, the assumptions of univariate and multivariate outliers, missing values, univariate and multivariate normalcy, multicollinearity, and enough sample size were examined. There were no missing values in the data set. All individuals' z scores were calculated and values between -2.88 and +2.59 were obtained in order to find outliers. No data were discovered to be outside of the -3 and +3 range (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2009). The P-P graph, skewness, and kurtosis coefficients, as well as the assumption of normality in each item score (univariate), were used to assess the results. The item scores in the data set were found to have kurtosis and skewness values between -1.00 and +1.00. This demonstrates that the item scores comply with the characteristic of normal distribution. The collinearity problem was examined by Pearson Product Moment Correlation between the items and it was determined that there was no multicollinearity problem ( $r<0.90$ ).

The multivariate outliers and multivariate normalcy were investigated using the program created by Aybek (2021) in R Shiny. 27 multivariate outliers were discovered throughout the application's examination, and those data were eliminated. The data set did not meet the multivariate normality assumption, according to the Henze-Zirkler multivariate normality test results in R Shiny (p.001). The analysis was done on the 258 person data set that was downloaded from the program and was free of multivariate outliers. Also, the Bartlett Sphericity Test and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) tests were employed to determine whether the



sample size and data were appropriate for factor analysis. The data are eligible for factor analysis because the Barlett Sphericity Test is significant and the KMO value is close to 1.

In Likert scales, if the assumption of multiple normalities is violated, the Principal Axis Factors (PAF) calculation method should be preferred among the factor extraction methods. It is stated that the PAF method is a powerful enough method for factor extraction and is widely used in many cases (Costello & Osborne, 2005; Phakiti, Costa, Plonsky, & Starfield, 2018; as cited in Şencan & Fidan, 2020). In this study, since the multivariate normality assumption was not met in the data set, the Principal Axis Factoring extraction technique was selected from the factor extraction methods. In deciding the number of factors of the scale, the parallel analysis method was taken as a basis, and the slope accumulation graph, eigenvalues, and explained variance ratios were taken into consideration. Since a single-factor structure was determined, no rotation technique was used.

To determine whether the single-factor structure of the scale determined as a result of EFA was confirmed or not, CFA was performed on the data collected from 258 participants. As in EFA, assumptions were first tested to determine the suitability of the data for factor analysis. There were no missing values in the data set. It was determined that the z scores of all individuals were between -3 and +3, the kurtosis and skewness values of the item scores were between -1.00 and +1.00, and the Pearson Product Moment Correlation calculated between the items was less than 0.90. Therefore, it can be stated that univariate outlier, normality, and multicollinearity assumptions are met in the data set. As a result of the multivariate normality and multivariate outlier analysis in R Shiny, 24 multivariate outliers were found and these data were deleted. Subsequent analyses were conducted on a data set of 234 participants. The Henze-Zirkler multivariate normality test result showed that the assumption of multivariate normality was not met in the data set ( $p < .001$ ). Different methods can be used for parameter estimation of the CFA model. In the software used for CFA, unless a different method is specified, estimations are made according to the maximum likelihood (ML) method. However, to use the ML method, the data must meet the assumption of multivariate normality (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2009). Koğar and Yılmaz Koğar (2015), in their research comparing different estimation methods, stated that the Unweighted Least Squares (ULS) method gives more effective results than other methods when the multivariate normality assumption is not met. Therefore, ULS, one of the estimation methods, was used in this study.

To determine the discrimination level of the items between those who have and those who do not have the characteristics they want to measure, item discriminations were examined with corrected item-total test correlation and t-test comparisons of 27% lower and upper groups. In addition, to provide evidence for construct validity, the difference between the scores obtained from the scale by individuals who had and had not read resources on forgiveness was examined with an unrelated samples t-test. For the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's Alpha and McDonald's Omega coefficients and the coefficients obtained from the Split-half method were calculated. Jamovi 2.3.21, IBM SPSS Statistic 22, LISREL.8.51 package programs were used in data analysis and the R Shiny application was used. The significance level was set as .05 in the statistical analysis.

### 3. FINDINGS

In this section, EFA and CFA results of the developed scale, followed by reliability analyses and item statistics are presented respectively.

#### 3.1. EFA Results

On the data obtained from EFA firstly, item-total test correlations and the difference between the item mean scores of the 27% lower and upper groups was examined. High item-total test correlations indicate that the items in the measurement tool measure a similar feature and that

the internal consistency of the test is high. The findings obtained as a result of item analysis are given in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Results of the item analysis of the EFA study group.

Item No	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Upper and lower 27% <i>t</i> value	Item No	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Upper and lower 27% <i>t</i> value
M1	0.55	8.35	M22	0.85	17.09
M2	0.65	10.58	M23	0.85	17.22
M3	0.65	10.99	M24	0.86	17.48
M4	0.60	10.70	M25	0.70	12.83
M5	0.77	14.77	M26	0.83	15.71
M6	0.72	13.26	M27	0.87	19.19
M7	0.78	13.10	M28	0.88	19.85
M8	0.75	14.36	M29	0.76	14.26
M9	0.81	15.58	M30	0.82	15.49
M10	0.81	16.49	M31	0.82	15.73
M11	0.78	14.44	M32	0.85	16.38
M12	0.83	17.11	M33	0.86	17.80
M13	0.88	20.75	M34	0.84	17.38
M14	0.84	17.58	M35	0.83	16.77
M15	0.82	17.60	M36	0.73	12.58
M16	0.85	17.28	M37	0.81	15.35
M17	0.84	16.65	M38	0.85	16.41
M18	0.79	14.04	M39	0.78	16.22
M19	0.79	15.35	M40	0.85	17.02
M20	0.88	18.53	M41	0.87	17.37
M21	0.85	16.85			

According to Table 4, the corrected item-total test correlation values ranged between 0.55 and 0.88. The fact that the corrected item-total correlations are greater than the threshold value of 0.30 indicates that the items adequately measure the desired construct and that the items are sufficient in terms of distinguishing the feature to be measured. High item-total test correlation indicates that the scale may be unidimensional. When the difference between the item mean scores of the 27% lower and upper groups was examined, it was revealed that the difference between the mean scores of the lower and upper groups was significant at the 0.001 level in all items. Significant *t* values for the differences between the lower and upper groups are considered evidence for the discrimination of the item (Erkuş, 2012). Accordingly, it can be said that all of the items in the scale are discriminative.

After it was examined that the corrected item-total correlations, the results of Barlett and Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) analyses conducted to check the suitability of the data for factor analysis are given in Table 5 below.

**Table 5.** Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's sphericity test results.

Statistic		Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO)		.97
Bartlett's sphericity	$\chi^2$	12746
	<i>df</i>	820
	<i>p</i>	<.001

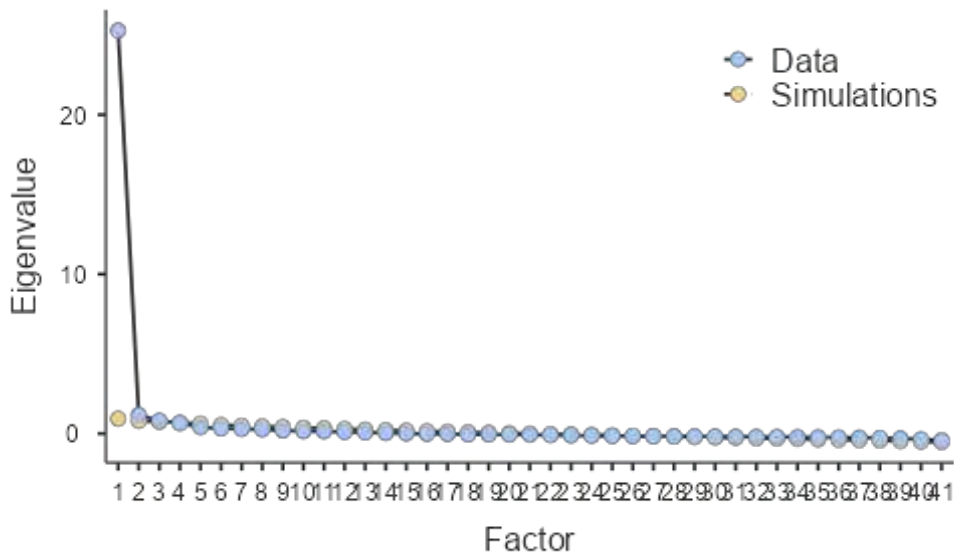
When the suitability of the data for EFA was examined, it was determined that the KMO value was 0.97 and the Barlett Sphericity test result ( $\chi^2= 12746$ ,  $df=820$ ,  $p<.001$ ) was significant. Thus, the data were found to be suitable for factor analysis. As a result of the EFA conducted without limiting the dimension to explore the factor structure of the scale, it was seen that there were two factors with eigenvalues above 1. The factor eigenvalues obtained as a result of the analysis and the explained variance rates are given in [Table 6](#).

**Table 6.** Factor eigenvalues and explained variance.

Factor	SS Loadings	% of Variance
1	26.73	65.19
2	1.24	3.03

The slope accumulation graph and explained variance ratios indicate that the scale exhibits a single-factor structure. The slope accumulation graph obtained according to the parallel analysis method is given in [Figure 1](#). The parallel analysis method also reveals that the scale shows a single-factor structure.

**Figure 1.** Scree plot.



As a result of the EFA, which was limited to a single factor, the variance explained was 65.2% of the total variance. After it was decided that the scale showed a single-factor structure, the factor loadings of the items were analyzed. [Table 7](#) shows the factor loadings of the 41 items in the scale.

[Table 7](#) shows that the factor loadings of the items vary between .515-.871. Factor loadings of .60 and above are considered to be high (Kline, 2005). Therefore, no item was removed from the scale.

**Table 7.** *Factor loadings of the items on the dimension.*

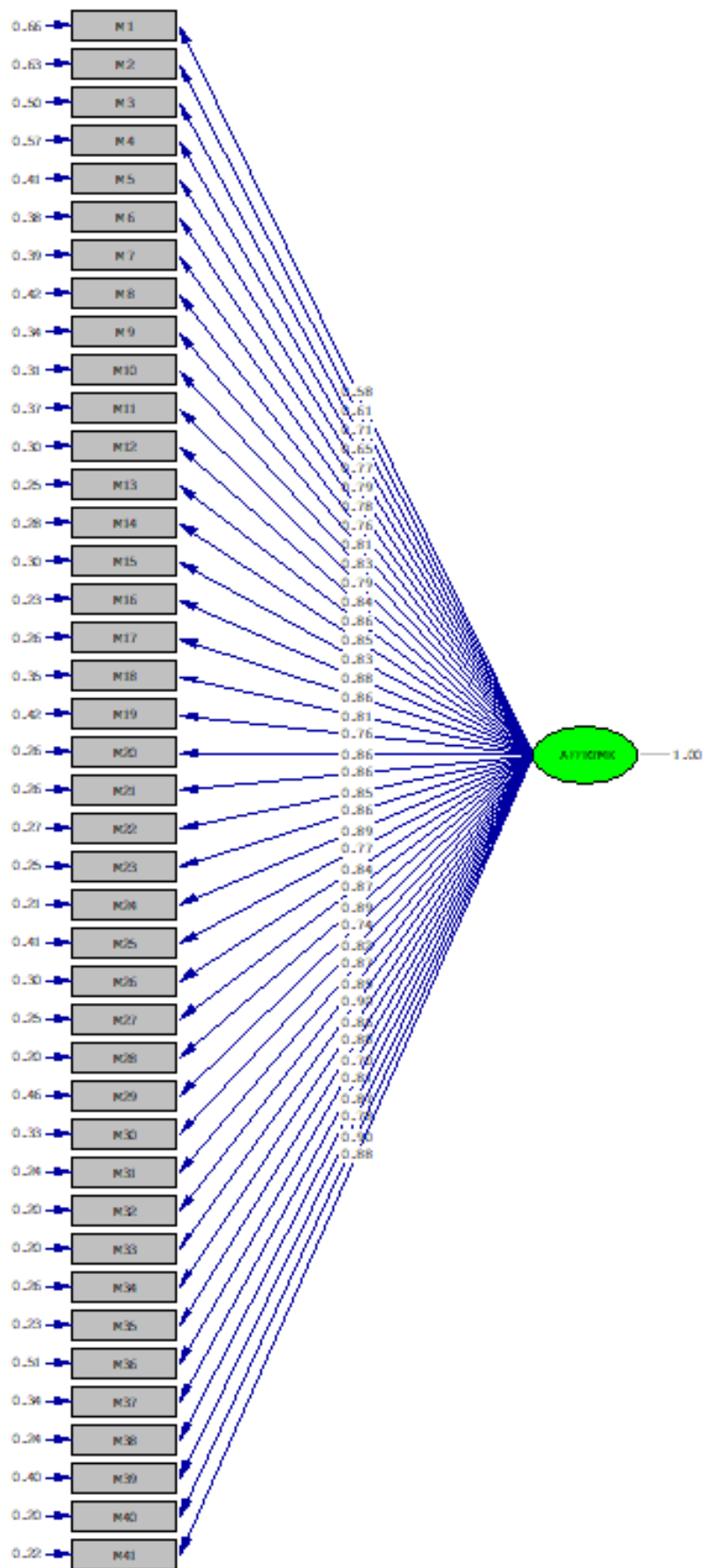
Items		Factor Loadings
M1	I can define the concept of forgiveness within the framework of the literature.	0.515
M2	I can explain to the counselee the difference of forgiveness from concepts such as forgetting, excusing, and turning a blind eye.	0.669
M3	I can enable the counselee to open up about unforgiven experiences.	0.649
M4	I can explain the stages of the forgiveness process within the framework of the literature.	0.579
M5	I can explain the stages of the forgiveness process within the framework of the literature.	0.746
M6	I can make the counselee feel the desire to try forgiveness.	0.729
M7	I can enable the counselee to make a self-assessment of the level of forgiveness at the beginning of counseling.	0.769
M8	I can recognize the defense mechanisms used by the counselee in case of unforgiveness.	0.761
M9	I can work with the counselee about the defense mechanisms used in case of unforgiveness.	0.804
M10	I can help the counselee to realize his/her feelings about unforgiven experiences.	0.805
M11	I can explain to the counselee the possible negative effects of anger related to unforgiven experiences on health.	0.794
M12	I can ensure that anger related to unforgiven experiences is revealed in the therapeutic process.	0.817
M13	I can make the counselee aware of the effects of unforgiveness in his/her life.	0.836
M14	I can bring awareness to the counselee about rumination (repetitive negative internal conversations) related to unforgiven experiences.	0.826
M15	I can help the counselee cope with rumination about unforgiven experiences.	0.805
M16	I can make the counselee realize the dysfunctional thoughts about comparing his/her situation with the person he/she has not forgiven.	0.836
M17	I can make the counselee aware of how unforgiven experiences affect his/her philosophy of life.	0.801
M18	I can realize that the counselee cannot regulate (regulate) his/her emotions.	0.763
M19	I can use various interventions for the counselee to achieve emotional regulation.	0.762
M20	I can help the counselee to make a self-assessment of their readiness to decide to forgive.	0.871
M21	I can help the counselee to recognize their dysfunctional strategies for the experiences they cannot forgive.	0.826
M22	I can encourage the counselee to want to start the forgiveness process.	0.842
M23	I can work with the counselee to decide to forgive.	0.819
M24	I can make the counselee aware of his/her thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to the experiences he/she cannot forgive.	0.831
M25	I can explain the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors related to forgiveness to the counselee within the framework of the Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy approach.	0.706

M26	I can bring awareness to the counselee's automatic thoughts about the experiences that the counselee cannot forgive.	0.832
M27	I can enable the counselee to develop a perspective that will facilitate forgiveness regarding unforgivable experiences.	0.866
M28	I can work with the counselee to generate new/alternative thoughts that will facilitate the forgiveness process.	0.860
M29	I can define the concept of compassion within the framework of literature.	0.704
M30	I can work with the counselee to feel compassion for the person they cannot forgive.	0.822
M31	I can work with the counselee to empathize with the person they cannot forgive.	0.827
M32	I can work with the counselee to accept the pain related to unforgiveness.	0.841
M33	I can work with the counselee to discover the meaning of the pain felt related to the experiences they cannot forgive.	0.852
M34	I can help the counselee discover that he/she is not the only one who has experienced situations that require forgiveness.	0.827
M35	I can help the counselee to realize that he/she also needs forgiveness.	0.822
M36	I can define the concept of reconciliation within the framework of the literature.	0.648
M37	I can explain the reconciliation process to the counselee.	0.751
M38	I can enable the counselee to express forgiveness clearly.	0.829
M39	I can enable the counselee to express forgiveness indirectly such as imagination and artistic activities.	0.759
M40	I can make the counselee aware of the positive emotions felt as a result of forgiveness.	0.827
M41	I can enable the counselee to self-evaluate the results of the forgiveness experience.	0.813

### 3.2. CFA Results

The findings of the CFA conducted to confirm the structure of the single-factor scale that emerged as a result of EFA are presented in Figure 2 and Table 8 below. Accordingly, the standardized factor loadings of the items in the relevant factor and the error variances of the items are shown. After obtaining the path diagram, the significance of the standardized factor loading values of the items under the factors should be checked first. It was observed that the  $t$  values of 11 items (M13, M16, M24, M27, M28, M32, M33, M35, M38, M40, M41) were less than 1.96, that is, they were not significant at a .05 significance level. Although it is recommended to exclude items with insignificant  $t$  values from the analysis within the framework of the structural equation, it is stated that the error variances and factor loading values of the items should be checked before making this decision (Çokluk et al., 2021). When the factor loading values obtained as a result of the analysis are examined, it is observed that the standardized factor loading values of all items are between 0.58 and 0.90. An error variance above 0.90 weakens the fit of the model to the data and it is stated that observed variables with very high error variance can be removed from the model (Çokluk et al., 2021; Kline, 2011). It is seen that the error variances of all items are considerably smaller than 0.90. Since 41 items in the scale had high factor loading values both as a result of EFA and CFA and the error variances were low as a result of CFA, it was decided that no item should be excluded from the analysis.

Figure 2. Factor loadings of the items revealed by CFA results.



**Table 8.** Standardized Factor loadings and SH of the items.

Item No	Standardized Factor Loadings		Item No	Standardized Factor Loadings	
	ings	SH		ings	SH
M1	0.58	0.66	M22	0.85	0.27
M2	0.61	0.63	M23	0.86	0.25
M3	0.71	0.50	M24	0.89	0.21
M4	0.65	0.57	M25	0.77	0.41
M5	0.77	0.41	M26	0.84	0.30
M6	0.79	0.38	M27	0.87	0.25
M7	0.78	0.39	M28	0.89	0.20
M8	0.76	0.42	M29	0.74	0.46
M9	0.81	0.34	M30	0.82	0.33
M10	0.83	0.31	M31	0.87	0.24
M11	0.79	0.37	M32	0.89	0.20
M12	0.84	0.30	M33	0.90	0.20
M13	0.86	0.25	M34	0.86	0.26
M14	0.85	0.28	M35	0.88	0.23
M15	0.83	0.30	M36	0.70	0.51
M16	0.88	0.23	M37	0.81	0.34
M17	0.86	0.26	M38	0.87	0.24
M18	0.81	0.35	M39	0.78	0.40
M19	0.76	0.42	M40	0.90	0.20
M20	0.86	0.26	M41	0.88	0.22
M21	0.86	0.26			

After examining the coefficients obtained as a result of CFA, the goodness-of-fit indices produced to evaluate the model as a whole were examined. Goodness-of-fit index values for model-data fit are given in Table 9.

**Table 9.** The goodness of Fit Index Values for the Model.

$\chi^2$	sd	$\chi^2/sd$	AGFI	GFI	CFI	NFI	NNFI	RMSEA	SRMR
3242.55	779	4.16	0.99	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	0.12	0.045

When Table 9 is examined, it is seen that the  $\chi^2$  value is 3242.55 and the value obtained by dividing the  $\chi^2$  value by the degrees of freedom is 4.16. A value of 5 or below indicates an acceptable fit (Kline, 2011). In addition, it is suggested that the evaluation of the model in confirmatory factor analysis should not be based on a single value (especially  $\chi^2$ ) but on multiple fit indices. Accordingly, when the fit indices of the scale are examined, AGFI, GFI, CFI, NFI, and NNFI values above 0.95 are indicative of an excellent fit. RMSEA and SRMR values between 0.05 and 0.08 indicate good fit, and values between 0.80 and 0.10 indicate acceptable fit. It is seen that the RMSEA value obtained is close to 0.10 acceptable fit and the SRMR value is below 0.05. When all the analysis results and goodness of fit values obtained with CFA are evaluated together, it may be said that the one-factor structure of the scale consisting of 41 items generally fits the data well and the scale structure is confirmed.

### 3.3. Item Analysis and Validity Analysis Based on Group Differences

To determine the discrimination levels of the items in the SSWOFIC, the total scores obtained from the scale were determined and 27% lower-upper group (N<sub>lower</sub>: 64 and N<sub>upper</sub>: 62) comparisons were made. Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used to calculate the corrected item sub-dimension total correlation, and an unrelated sample *t*-test was used for 27% lower-upper group comparisons. The findings obtained as a result of item analysis are given in [Table 10](#).

According to [Table 10](#), the corrected item-total test correlation values ranged between 0.59 and 0.89. The fact that the corrected item-total correlations are greater than the threshold value of 0.30 indicates that the items adequately measure the desired construct and that the items are sufficient in terms of distinguishing the feature to be measured. When the difference between the item mean scores of the 27% lower and upper groups was examined, it was revealed that the difference between the mean scores of the lower and upper groups was significant at the 0.001 level in all items. Significant *t* values for the differences between the lower and upper groups are considered evidence for the discrimination of the item (Erkuş, 2012). Accordingly, it can be said that all of the items in the scale are discriminative.

**Table 10.** *Results of the item analysis of the SSWOFIC.*

Item No	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Upper and lower 27% <i>t</i> value	Item No	Corrected Item- Total Correlation	Upper and lower 27% <i>t</i> value
M1	0.59	8.94	M22	0.85	17.31
M2	0.62	9.99	M23	0.86	19.06
M3	0.71	11.62	M24	0.88	19.21
M4	0.65	10.72	M25	0.76	16.00
M5	0.77	15.56	M26	0.83	17.60
M6	0.79	14.56	M27	0.86	18.04
M7	0.78	15.05	M28	0.89	20.21
M8	0.76	13.76	M29	0.74	13.92
M9	0.81	16.29	M30	0.81	16.98
M10	0.83	16.63	M31	0.87	19.33
M11	0.79	14.34	M32	0.89	20.58
M12	0.83	16.87	M33	0.89	20.91
M13	0.86	16.42	M34	0.86	18.91
M14	0.84	19.93	M35	0.87	18.41
M15	0.83	18.49	M36	0.70	12.35
M16	0.87	24.99	M37	0.81	17.30
M17	0.86	20.78	M38	0.86	18.27
M18	0.80	16.24	M39	0.77	15.17
M19	0.76	14.03	M40	0.89	19.18
M20	0.85	19.25	M41	0.88	20.47
M21	0.86	18.55			

Unrelated samples *t*-test was used to determine whether the self-efficacy levels of psychological counselors to study forgiveness differed according to whether they read a source about forgiveness. The findings obtained as a result of the analysis are presented in [Table 11](#).



**Table 11.** *The independent t-test results.*

Group	N	Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Reading resources on forgiveness	97	136.45	26.14	3.18	0.002
Not reading resources on forgiveness	137	124.28	30.62		

Table 11 shows that the self-efficacy levels of teachers who read resources on forgiveness were statistically higher than those who did not ( $p < 0.05$ ). Considering that this finding is expected, it can be said that the scale accurately measures the related construct.

### 3.4. Reliability Analysis Results

Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega coefficients were calculated for the reliability of the SSWOFIC. The Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega coefficients of the single-factor 41-item scale were 0.99. After the reliability coefficients of the whole scale were calculated, the internal consistency reliability of the scale was also calculated with the Split-half method. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 21 items in the first half was 0.97 and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 20 items in the second half was 0.98. It can be said that the internal consistency coefficient values of the two groups formed with the Split-Half method are close to each other and very good. With this method, Guttman and Spearman-Brown coefficients were found to be 0.96. These findings show that the scale as a whole has a high level of reliability.

## 4. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

It is clear that forgiveness serves the purposes of counseling when taking into account its beneficial impacts on the individual. In order to accomplish the objectives of counseling, forgiveness is viewed as a therapeutic technique that promotes healing (Berecz, 2001; Murray, 2002; Wade et al., 2005). Counselors must understand what forgiveness is and how it works in order to work on it during counseling sessions (Menahem & Love, 2013). The performance of counselors in the counseling process is significantly influenced by their confidence in their ability to assist their counsees (Cormier & Nurious, 2003). Yet, one significant gap in the literature was the absence of a measurement method to assess one's capacity to work on forgiveness in counseling. A useful scale with good validity and reliability was sought to measure self-efficacy to practice forgiveness in counseling in light of this deficit.

The majority of scales employed in studies on the self-efficacy of psychological counselors relate to counseling skills (Aktaş & Zorbaz, 2018; Akşab & Türk, 2022; Bingöl, 2018; Fırınıcı-Kodaz & Vural-Batik, 2018; Pamukçu & Kağnıcı, 2013; Sarıkaya, 2017; Sarpdağ, 2019; Yayla & İkiz, 2017). Also, there are scales to measure counselors' self-efficacy in consultations and special education (Aksoy & Diken, 2009; Arşit, 2019; Bayar & Doğan, 2021; Derin-Kılıç & Er, 2021; Vural-Batik & Fırınıcı-Kodaz, 2018). (Bozkur & Kaya, 2021). The statements on these scales that refer to counseling abilities were a key source for the scale created for the current investigation.

The construction of the SSWOFIC took into account both Bandura's (2006) self-efficacy scale development guide and Enright's Forgiveness Process Model (Enright, 2001). An item pool with comments regarding approaches and counseling abilities to assist the counselee in the four-phase forgiveness process was created. Eight experts reviewed the 44 items for content validity. According to the experts' suggestions, a 41-item draft form was created.

Data were collected from two different study groups for the validity and reliability analysis of the scale. As a result of the EFA conducted in the first study group, a single-factor structure with 41 items was obtained. This single-factor structure explained 65.2% of the total variance. The factor loadings of all items were high, so no item was removed from the scale. CFA was conducted in the second study group to determine whether this structure was confirmed or not.

The fit indices obtained as a result of the analysis were found to be high. To determine the discrimination of the items in the scale, 27% lower and upper groups were analyzed. As a result of the 27% lower and upper groups analysis of all items, the t value was found to be significant and the discrimination values were high. The corrected item-total test correlation values of the items indicate that the scale has high item discrimination and high validity. To provide evidence for the construct validity of the scale, the difference between the scores of the groups who read and did not read resources on forgiveness was examined and a statistically significant difference was found. To determine the reliability of the scale, reliability coefficients were calculated using Cronbach's Alpha, McDonald's Omega and Split-Half methods. It was determined that the reliability of the scale was high. The final version of the developed scale is given in the Appendix. As a result, a scale with high validity and reliability was introduced to the literature.

The SSWOFIC, whose validity and reliability have been established, can be used by practitioners and researchers for a variety of applications. To find out if a counselee has the self-efficacy to work on forgiveness in counseling, research can be done. With the use of a scale, studies can be used to identify counselors who have a low opinion of their own efficacy in working with forgiveness. Training programs can then be developed to raise this perspective, and the success of these programs can be assessed. The fact that only psychological counselors were included in the study is one of its shortcomings. If this scale, which was created by gathering information from psychological counselors, is validated for psychologists, a study can be done to find out. Studies on the scale's validity and reliability can also be done on psychologists. In addition, the small number of male participants in the study group is one of the limitations of this study. For this reason, it may be recommended to carry out validity and reliability studies on different study groups of the research and to perform multiple group analyzes.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest. This research study complies with research publishing ethics. The scientific and legal responsibility for manuscripts published in IJATE belongs to the authors. **Ethics Committee Number:** Ondokuz Mayıs University Social Sciences and Humanities Research and Publication Ethics Committee - Document numbered: 2022-1080.

### Authorship Contribution Statement

**Meryem Vural-Batik:** Conception, Design, Materials, Data Collection and Processing, Interpretation, Literature Review, Writing- original draft, Critical Review. **Selda Örs-Özdil:** Conception, Design, Supervision, Materials, Methodology, Analysis, Writing- original draft, Critical Review. **Necla Afyonkale-Talay:** Conception, Design, Supervision, Materials, Data Collection, Literature Review, Writing- original draft.

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