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Forgive and forget? Honor-oriented individuals are less forgiving of transgressing peers

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A B S T R A C T

Individual differences research on masculine honor has heavily focused on men's aggressive responses to insults by male strangers, but much less is known whether honor-oriented individuals (men and women) are less forgiving – express more avoidant and vengeful, but less benevolent motivations – towards peers following insults, and their underlying concerns in being less forgiving. Using 200 British participants (dignity group) in Study 1, and 146 British (dignity group) and 178 Turkish (honor group) participants in Study 2, we examined whether (1) masculine honor-oriented individuals are less forgiving of peers after insults, and (2) this association is indirectly explained by concern with *avoiding loss of social respect* or *maintaining personal integrity*. Results showed that masculine honor-oriented individuals were less forgiving of insulting peers, which was indirectly explained by concern with losing respect, but not keeping personal integrity. We also report that the presence of a third-party audience did not have an effect on the observed pattern of relationships. These findings expand our understanding of why, despite the many benefits of forgiveness, some individuals may be less willing to forgive people who have hurt them.

1. Introduction

Imagine being yelled at, lied to, or accused unfairly by a classmate in front of others. Should you forgive them, or should you pay back or simply avoid them? Although forgiveness is often normatively encouraged for its myriad social and psychological benefits (Bono et al., 2008; Karremans et al., 2003), revenge or avoidance can seem an attractive response when the victims perceive the costs associated with forgiveness to loom larger than its benefits (Burnette et al., 2011; Raj & Wiltermuth, 2016). A multitude of situational and interpersonal factors such as transgression severity (McCullough et al., 1998), victim-transgressor relationship closeness/value (Burnette et al., 2011; Tsang et al., 2006), or transgressor apology (Eaton et al., 2006) were shown to influence people's reluctance to forgive others who have done them wrong. Besides these situational factors, we know much less about individual difference factors related to the victims that may be associated with unforgiveness in interpersonal transgressions.

Evidence suggests that one plausible explanation for why individuals may be hesitant to forgive a transgressor is their internalized adherence to masculine honor beliefs (e.g., Brezina et al., 2004; Brown, 2016;

Schumann & Ross, 2010; Shafa et al., 2017). Past research has demonstrated that masculine honor beliefs (both at the cultural and individual-level) encourage vengeful and aggressive responses to insults by strangers in order to create and maintain a tough and 'don't mess with me' reputation (e.g., Barnes, Brown, & Osterman, 2012; Chalman et al., 2021; Günsoy et al., 2015; Foster et al., 2022; O'Dea et al., 2017; Vandello & Cohen, 2003; Saucier & McManus, 2014). Furthermore, while an apology increases forgiveness among both honor-oriented (cultural logic that is based on beliefs that encourage individuals to view self-worth as socially conferred) and dignity-oriented (cultural logic dominant in the Anglo/Western cultures in which individuals are construed as having an equal, stable and internal sense of worth) individuals, honor-oriented (vs. dignity-oriented) individuals are less likely to forgive offensive workplace encounters, even after an apology (Shafa et al., 2017). Expanding on this previous research, we conducted two studies to examine whether honor-oriented individuals are also less forgiving towards transgressions by peers. Because honor-oriented individuals strive to acquire reputation via two different routes – acquiring and maintaining *social respect* (by avoiding acts that imply weakness or shame) and securing *personal integrity* (by demonstrating moral acts) (Bock &

Brown, 2021; Cross et al., 2014), we also examined whether concerns with social respect or personal integrity explain honor-oriented individuals' lower tendency to forgive. In doing so, we attempt to better understand why, despite many benefits of forgiveness, some individuals show reluctance to forgive people who have hurt them.

1.1. Forgiveness and its costs and benefits

Following the most widely used definition of forgiveness in social psychology (Bono et al., 2008; Fincham & Beach, 2002; McCullough et al., 1998, 2007), we defined forgiveness as a prosocial process, whereby victims' intentions to avoid and/or seek revenge against a transgressor are replaced with benevolent intentions. Forgiveness has myriad documented benefits; it helps victims recover from emotional pain (e.g., McCullough et al., 1997), increases positive affect and self-esteem (e.g., Karremans et al., 2003), reduces anger, anxiety, and depression (e.g., Coyle & Enright, 1997), improves physical well-being (e.g., Lawler-Row et al., 2008) and repairs valued relationships (McCullough, 2008). Given its clearly documented benefits, forgiveness (as opposed to reacting with anger or retaliation) is often normatively encouraged after interpersonal conflicts, and promoted by various interventions in therapeutic and medical settings (Harris et al., 2006; Worthington et al., 2007).

Despite its benefits, however, many individuals find forgiveness difficult after being hurt by others. Williamson et al. (2014) identified three general risks or concerns involved in forgiving another person, which make victims of wrongdoing averse to the prospect of forgiveness. These concerns are (1) that the victim feels unready given ongoing emotional pain, (2) uncertainty about how offenders will interpret forgiveness such that the offender may think forgiveness gives him/her permission to offend again, and (3) concern about maintaining a social reputation as to prevent future exploitation by offenders and others (also see Burnette et al., 2011; Raj & Wiltermuth, 2016). These forgiveness-related concerns, and particularly the desire for victims to maintain a reputation as individuals who are strong and unwilling to tolerate assaults to one's self-worth, resemble the primary concern of individuals who endorse masculine honor beliefs. Thus, we suggest that masculine honor-oriented individuals could potentially be more hesitant to forgive peers who have transgressed them, whereby they show higher intentions to seek revenge and avoid, and lower benevolent intentions towards the transgressor.

1.2. Masculine honor beliefs as individual differences

Honor is defined as the value of an individual in his/her own eyes, as well as in the eyes of others (Pitt-Rivers, 1965). In general, individuals who attach high importance to honor strive for protecting and preserving a positive reputation (e.g., Cohen et al., 1996; Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2000). Earning an honorable reputation across all cultures among both men and women goes through being known as someone who acts with moral integrity such as being honest, loyal, and trustworthy (Rodriguez Mosquera, 2016). Besides these prototypical moral acts, individuals can also gain honor by displaying behaviors which align with one's expected gender roles as has been shown in so-called cultures of honor (i.e., societies circum-Mediterranean, Middle East, South Asia, South America and Southern U.S.) (for reviews on honor see Cross & Uskul, 2022; Uskul et al., 2019).

Masculine honor is defined as a set of cultural norms and beliefs which see honor as rooted in a man's ability and willingness to uphold a reputation for toughness, bravery, and aggressive defense in response to insults and affronts (Brown, 2016; Saucier & McManus, 2014). Scholars suggest that masculine honor beliefs have originally evolved as adaptations to the threats intrinsic to ecological conditions characterized by scarce and vulnerable economic resources and weak law enforcement (e. g., Brown & Osterman, 2012; Figueredo et al., 2004; Hayes & Lee, 2005; Imura et al., 2014; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996; Saucier & McManus, 2014;

Uskul & Cross, 2020). Individuals shaped in these ecological conditions, which are common to herding economies, rely on an honor code (instead of a penal code) to protect their families and livestock (cattle, pigs, and sheep) from theft and threats, but also to create a reputation for toughness and aggressive retaliation to deter future transgressions (Brown & Osterman, 2012; Nisbett & Cohen, 1996). Failing to respond to transgressions with aggressive retaliation would not only result in a loss of honor, but could endanger one's livelihood and family.

Individuals in most honor cultures (e.g., Southern U.S., Turkey) today no longer rely primarily on herding or live detached from law enforcement, but several social mechanisms such as institutional policies that sanction sudden bursts of aggression in response to insults (e. g., Cohen et al., 1996), socialization processes whereby boys from an early age learn traditional forms of masculinity (O'Dea, Rapp, Brand, & Greco-Henderson, 2022; Vandello & Cohen, 2008), and the rapid exchanging of ideas online, travel, and globalization (Saucier et al., 2016) have helped keep masculine honor beliefs alive within these cultures, and allowed their transmission to individuals outside of honor cultures who may also learn, adopt and adhere to these beliefs (Saucier et al., 2016; Saucier & McManus, 2014). Noting these dynamics, recent studies have conceptualized and measured masculine honor beliefs as an individual difference variable (e.g., Imura et al., 2014; Saucier et al., 2016; Barnes, Brown, & Osterman, 2012), and used samples of men and women from honor (e.g., Southern U.S., Turkey) and non-honor cultures (e.g., UK, Northern U.S.) to demonstrate that higher endorsement of masculine honor beliefs correlate with greater support for men's vengeful and aggressive responses to threats (e.g., Saucier et al., 2015, 2016; Vandello & Cohen, 2008; van Osch et al., 2013), and perceiving men who choose to walk away from insults and fights as less manly and honorable (weak, wimpy, and embarrassing) and those who choose to confront and respond aggressively as more manly and honorable (strong, respectable, and loyal) (O'Dea, Bueno, & Saucier, 2017; O'Dea, Chalman, Castro Bueno, & Saucier, 2018; O'Dea, Rapp, Brand, & Greco-Henderson, 2022). Masculine honor beliefs may also warrant women's aggressive responses; for example women who engage in reactive physical aggression in response to insults are perceived more positively by masculine honor-endorsing men and women (Chalman et al., 2021). Beyond perceptions of men's and women's aggressive responses, there is also evidence that masculine honor beliefs are associated with one's tendency to respond with vengeful and aggressive responses to threats for both men (physical aggression; e.g., Cohen et al., 1996; Saucier et al., 2016) and women (relational aggression; e.g., Foster et al., 2022) as a way to restore their damaged reputations.

Building on these past findings, we predicted that individuals with strong adherence to masculine honor beliefs might also be less likely to forgive transgressing peers because of their concerns about reputation damage. The only existing evidence for the honor-unforgiveness link comes from a culture-comparative study which found that, even after an apology, members of a cultural group where honor is a driving source of social behavior (Turkey) were less likely to forgive and more likely to retaliate a workplace transgressor than were members of a cultural group where honor plays a less strong role (the Netherlands) (Shafa et al., 2017), but this research did not directly assess masculine honor beliefs or reputation concerns. Moreover, considering our conceptualization of forgiveness (as decreased intentions of revenge and avoidance and increased benevolence), to our knowledge, no studies have directly examined these forgiveness-related motivational states simultaneously in response to interpersonal transgressions. We aimed to fill these gaps in the literature by providing an explicit test of the role of individual differences in masculine honor beliefs and reputation concerns in reluctance to forgive transgressors.

1.3. Reputation via personal integrity or social respect?

If masculine honor-oriented individuals would be more resistant to forgiving transgressing peers due to concerns with risking reputation

damage, does this concern reflect a desire to be seen as someone who has personal integrity or does it reflect concerns with avoiding acts that imply loss of interpersonal strength, respect and status? The two primary concerns of honor-oriented individuals are (1) concern for personal integrity which reflects a preoccupation with being seen as a moral, trustworthy person who is loyal to one's principles and (2) concern for social respect which reflects a desire to avoid loss of interpersonal power, respect, and status (Cross et al., 2014; Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2002). These concerns show similarity to the suggestion by forgiveness scholars that one of the perceived risks of forgiveness is victims' concern for their reputation, which could signify that one lacks moral conviction (similar to honor-oriented individuals' personal integrity concerns) and/or one lacks interpersonal strength, power and influence (similar to honor-oriented individuals' social respect concerns) (Raj & Wiltermuth, 2016; Williamson et al., 2014). Accordingly, we examined whether the relationship between masculine honor beliefs and (un)forgiveness would be indirectly explained by concerns with personal integrity and social respect.

1.4. The present research

Across two studies, we tested d our main hypotheses that higher masculine honor beliefs would be associated with more reluctance to forgive peers who transgressed, as expressed by higher intention to seek revenge and avoid and lower intention to act benevolent. We also explored the hypothesis that the relationship from masculine honor beliefs to forgiveness variables would be indirectly explained by concerns with maintaining personal integrity and avoiding loss of social respect. Regarding our second hypothesis, more specifically, we explored whether masculine honor is positively linked to both or either of the reputation concern variables, which subsequently leads to greater revenge and avoidance intentions, and lower benevolence intentions (we did not have specific predictions with regards to the strengths of the distinct indirect effects through the two reputation concern variables).

Using a sample from the UK, in Study 1 we asked participants to imagine themselves in a situation where they were insulted by a classmate, and measured their intentions to respond to the transgressor with revenge, avoidance, and benevolence. In Study 2, to establish conceptual replication, we examined whether our findings generalized to individuals from another cultural group (Turkey) where honor concerns are considered to be stronger drivers of social behavior (e.g., Uskul & Cross, 2019), and adopted a stronger interpersonal transgression situation and a different measure of masculine honor beliefs.

An additional question we asked was whether the existence of bystanders at the time of interpersonal transgressions enhances the effects in the predicted relationships. Thus, we designed our studies to examine whether the presence (vs. absence) of bystanders enhance honor-oriented individuals' reputation concerns and in turn their reluctance to forgive (we reported these results in the Online supplementary materials).

The full text of all measures, scenarios and additional results are reported in the Online supplementary materials, and data are publicly available on Open Science Framework (Anonymous Link). This research was approved by the ethics committees at the first and second authors' institutions.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 200[1] participants (100 women; M_{age} = 22.05, SD_{age} = 4.42) with 83 recruited from a participant pool at a British University and 117 from Prolific Academic (https://www.prolific.co). Over half of the participants identified as White-British (56.3 %), and remaining as White non-British (e.g., French, German; 16.6 %), and non-White British (e.g., Black, Asian; 27.1 %).

2.2. Procedure and measures

Participants first read the scenario and reported their forgiveness-related intentions towards the transgressor. Next, they proceeded to complete the scales measuring masculine honor beliefs and reputation (social respect and personal integrity) concerns (the order of all measures was randomized),[2] and answered demographic questions (age, sex, ethnicity). Finally, they were debriefed, and received compensation (course credit or payment).

2.2.1. Masculine honor beliefs

Masculine honor beliefs were assessed using the 16-item Honor Ideology for Manhood (HIM) scale (Barnes, Brown, & Osterman, 2012). The items tap into the idea that male aggression is justifiable for defending oneself and one's reputation and that 'real men' have defining qualities such as self-sufficiency and physical toughness, and allow both men and women[3] to indicate their (dis)agreement (see e.g., Barnes, Brown, & Tamborski, 2012; Osterman & Brown, 2011) ("A real man doesn't let other people push him around", "A man has the right to act with physical aggression toward another man who calls him an insulting name", 1 = strongly disagree to 9 = strongly agree; α = 0.93).

2.2.2. Social respect and personal integrity concerns

We assessed participants' *social respect concerns* (5 items; "My honor depends on the appreciation and respect that I get from others", α = 0.79) and *personal integrity concerns* (5 items, e.g., "Not keeping my word would impair my honor", α = 0.83) (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) using the two subscales of the Honor Concerns Scale (Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2000).

2.2.3. Scenarios

Participants were randomly assigned to read one of two scenarios which differed based on the presence and absence of an audience. In both conditions, participants read the following scenario which portrayed an undeserved insult situation: "*Imagine that you are walking to a lecture with a classmate, he trips over and then turns to say 'you idiot' for tripping him. From your viewpoint, it was unclear who was at fault for him tripping*". By introducing an ambiguity in deservingness, we aimed to have participants rely on their own attributions and accentuate the

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[1] In this study, sample size was not determined a priori. A post-hoc power analysis using the Monte Carlo Power Analysis for indirect effects app developed by Schoemann et al. (2017). Selecting the two parallel mediators model, entering the sample size from Study 1 (N = 200) and the effect sizes between the IV (HIM), mediators (social respect and personal integrity concerns) and DV (revenge motives) (obtained from Table 1) revealed 100 % power to detect a significant indirect effect via SRC.

[2] This study also included the Tendency to Forgive Scale and Attitudes towards Forgiveness Scale as trait forgiveness measures to explore the association between trait forgiveness and masculine honor beliefs. We report these exploratory analyses in the online supplementary materials.

[3] The HIM scale showed a similar factor structure among our women samples to the factor structure Barnes, Brown, & Osterman (2012) obtained when they validated HIM in a male sample, indicated the use of HIM is valid for women too. We report these results also in the Online supplementary materials.

potential role of individual differences in masculine honor beliefs. In the *public condition*, the scenario ended with "*A queue of 10 other classmates witnessed the event*", whereas in the *private condition*, it ended with "*The two of you were alone at the time, so nobody witnessed the event.*"

2.2.4. Forgiveness

Participants reported their forgiveness-related intentions towards the transgressor using the 18-item Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory (TRIM-18; McCullough et al., 2006) which measures forgiveness (or a lack thereof) in the presence of a specific incident (not as a permanent trait) across three forgiveness indicators: revenge ($\alpha = 0.80$; "I'd make him/her pay"), avoidance ($\alpha = 0.86$; "I'd live as if he/she doesn't exist, isn't around"), and benevolence ($\alpha = 0.82$; "Even though his/her actions hurt me, I'd have goodwill for him/her") intentions (1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*). Participants responded to each statement keeping in mind the peer-insult scenario they read.

2.3. Analysis plan

To test our main hypothesis that higher masculine honor beliefs would be associated with higher revenge and avoidance, but lower benevolence intentions, we investigated bivariate correlations. We interpreted the strength of the correlations, based on Cohen's (1988) criteria for small (0.10), medium/moderate (0.30) and large (0.50) effect size. To test our exploratory hypothesis regarding the indirect effects of masculine honor on forgiveness through the two reputation concern variables (personal integrity and social respect), we conducted a parallel mediation analysis[4] using the PROCESS macro in SPSS (Model 4; Preacher & Hayes, 2008) on forgiveness variables which revealed significant correlations with masculine honor beliefs.

2.4. Results

Bivariate correlations, means, and standard deviations are reported in Table 1. Partly supporting our hypothesis, masculine honor beliefs were positively related to revenge (large *r*) and avoidance intentions (moderate *r*). Furthermore, masculine honor beliefs did not relate to benevolence intentions. Masculine honor beliefs were positively related to social respect concerns (large *r*), but did not relate to personal integrity concerns. Social respect concerns were positively related to revenge and avoidance intentions (moderate *r*), but not related to benevolence intentions. Personal integrity concerns were negatively related to revenge and avoidance and positively related to benevolence intentions (moderate *r*'s).

Next, we explored the indirect effects of masculine honor ideologies on revenge and avoidance intentions through social respect and personal integrity concerns. The overall model was significant for the revenge intentions, $R^2 = 0.29$, $F(3, 196) = 27.76$, $p < .001$; and for the avoidance intentions, $R^2 = 0.11$, $F(3, 196) = 8.42$, $p < .001$. Parallel mediation models (see Figs. 1 and 2 and Table 2) showed that the indirect effect from masculine honor to revenge and avoidance intentions through social respect concerns were significant, but the indirect effects through

personal integrity concerns were not significant. Masculine honor beliefs exerted significant direct and total effects on revenge intentions, and significant total (but non-significant direct) effects on avoidance intentions.[5]

2.5. Discussion

Study 1 results demonstrated that individuals with strong masculine honor orientation showed higher revenge and avoidance intentions, but not lower benevolence intentions after imagining themselves in an undeserved insult situation, thus, overall, they were less likely to forgive the transgressing peer. These results are in line with previous studies on masculine honor and desire to take revenge (e.g., Cohen et al., 1996; Saucier et al., 2015, 2016), and demonstrate that individuals endorsing a strong honor orientation may also reciprocate insults by avoiding the offender. Furthermore, our findings showed that high masculine-honor-oriented individuals' revenge and avoidance intentions were indirectly explained by their concerns for social respect, but not by their concern for personal integrity. These findings provide initial insight into the link between masculine honor and lower forgiveness, and the particular reputation concerns (desire to avoid loss of social respect and humiliation) that underpin this relationship.

Our study had several limitations. First, the insult used in the ambiguous transgression scenario could be considered a mild one, which might have led to low endorsement of revenge intentions. Second, the scale we used to measure masculine honor beliefs (HIM scale) included revenge-related items (e.g., "A man has the right to act with physical aggression toward another man who calls him an insulting name."), which might have inflated the associations observed between masculine honor beliefs and revenge intentions. Finally, our data originated from one cultural group where honor does not to occupy as strong a presence as in other societies around the world and thus it remains to be seen if the observed pattern of relationships would replicate in a cultural group where honor plays a more salient role. We conducted Study 2 to address these limitations.

3. Study 2

In Study 2, we introduced several modifications to Study 1 to address the several limitations mentioned above. First, we used a more severe interpersonal transgression scenario which included falsely accusing someone of theft and dishonesty, following previous research which showed that false accusations of immorality are viewed as strong honor threats across different cultural groups (Cross et al., 2013; Günsoy et al., 2020). Second, we recruited participants from Turkey (exemplifying an honor culture, for a review see Uskul & Cross, 2019) in addition to participants from the UK to examine whether our findings generalized to individuals from an honor culture. Finally, in addition to the HIM scale, we included a second scale (i.e., masculine honor subscale of the Honor Concerns Scale; Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2002) to measure masculine honor beliefs that does not include items with reference to revenge.

3.1. Method

3.1.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 146 participants (133 women; $M_{\text{age}} = 19.64$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 3.06$) recruited at a university in the UK and 178 participants (118 women; $M_{\text{age}} = 21.08$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 2.06$) recruited at a Turkish (TR)

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[4] We conducted the mediation analyses controlling for age and gender (because there were few significant correlations with these demographic variables). The direct, total and indirect effects we obtained with or without adding age and gender as covariates remained the same. Therefore, we decided to report the mediation results without these covariates.

[5] We tested the moderating role of a third-party audience in the relationships between masculine honor beliefs and participants' revenge and avoidance intentions. Simple moderation models conducted using PROCESS macro in SPSS (Model 1; Preacher & Hayes, 2008) revealed that the third-party audience did not moderate honor-oriented participants' revenge and avoidance intentions. See online supplementary materials for the full results.

Table 1
Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations between variables (Study 1).

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	–	–	–	−0.07	0.15*	0.03	−0.07	0.12	0.01	0.05
2. Age	22.05	4.42		–	−0.19*	−0.14*	0.08	0.10	−0.03	−0.03
3. HIM	4.14	1.68			–	0.54**	−0.01	0.20**	0.37**	−0.12
4. SRC	3.78	1.22				–	−0.01	0.26**	0.45**	−0.13
5. PIC	5.59	0.92					–	−0.20**	−0.28**	0.23**
6. Avoidance	2.41	0.89						–	0.64**	−0.46**
7. Revenge	1.92	0.90							–	−0.35**
8. Benevolence	3.43	0.63								–

Note. Gender = 0: women, 1: men; HIM = Honor Ideology for Manhood; SRC = social respect concern; PIC = personal integrity concern.
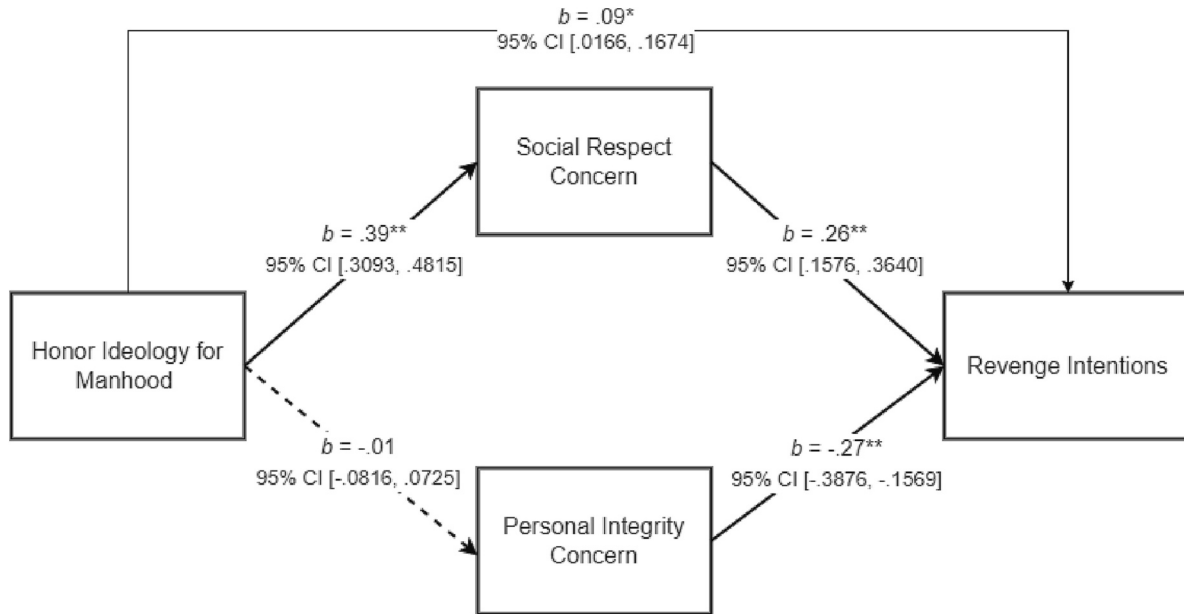
* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Fig. 1. Study 1: Indirect effects analysis examining the association between masculine honor beliefs and revenge intentions via social respect and personal integrity concerns. The regression coefficients (*b*s) present direct effects. CI = Confidence Interval; Dashed lines indicate non-significant links; *$p < .05$, **$p < .001$.

University located in Central Anatolia. Sample sizes were adequate to test our mediation hypotheses, given that they were higher than the lowest adequate sample size revealed by the indirect effects power analysis conducted in Study 2 ($N = 66$). The majority of participants in the British sample identified as White-British (89.0 %, 3.4 % non-British White [e.g., French], 5.8 % Black-British, 2.1 % mixed-race) and the majority of participants in the TR sample identifies as Turkish (92.1 %, 2.2 % Kurdish, 0.6 % Arab).

3.1.2. Design and procedure

The study used the same order of procedures as in Study 1. Participants were first randomly assigned to read one of two scenarios which differed based on the presence and absence of an audience:

"Imagine that you are on a school trip to London (Abant Lake in the Turkish version) with students from your course. You all get on the coach together. An hour passes, and people are starting to get hungry. The coach driver stops at a service station. Everybody gets off the coach, leaving all their belongings behind. You realize you forget something you need, and you walk back to the bus to get it. After eating, you all continue the journey to London. When you arrive, one of your classmates says that some money is missing from his bag, and he thinks that it has been stolen. You did not take his money, but since you were the only one to go back to the bus, he thinks that it was you".

Depending on the audience condition, the scenario ended with: *"At a*

later time during the day, he catches you while you are walking [alone] to the bus [with your close friends] and accuses you of stealing his money. Although you tell him that you did not steal his money, he does not believe you. He tells you 'you're a thief and a liar'. [Nobody hears or knows this conversation between the two of you / Your close friends and other classmates also witness this conversation between the two of you]."

Then, participants indicated whether they were alone or with their friends in the scenario they just read to serve as a manipulation check. This was followed by participants reporting their forgiveness intentions towards the transgressor using the TRIM-18 as in Study 1 (UK/TR sample: revenge: $\alpha = 0.82/0.80$, avoidance: $\alpha = 0.83/0.80$, benevolence: $\alpha = 0.74/0.88$). Next, to measure masculine honor beliefs, participants completed[6] in random order the Honor Ideology for Manhood scale (HIM: for the UK, $\alpha = 0.93$; for Turkey, $\alpha = 0.94$), Honor Concern scales (for the UK, PIC: $\alpha = 0.78$, and SRC: $\alpha = 0.79$; for Turkey PIC: $\alpha = 0.67$, and SRC: $\alpha = 0.66$), and the 7-item masculine honor subscale (MHS) of the Honor Scale (Rodriguez Mosquera, 2016; Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2002), where participants answered the question of "How bad would you feel about yourself if…" A sample item continues

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[6] This study also included emotional responses to the situation involving a false accusation situation while continuing to imagine themselves as vividly as possible in the given scenario, which we report in the online supplementary material.
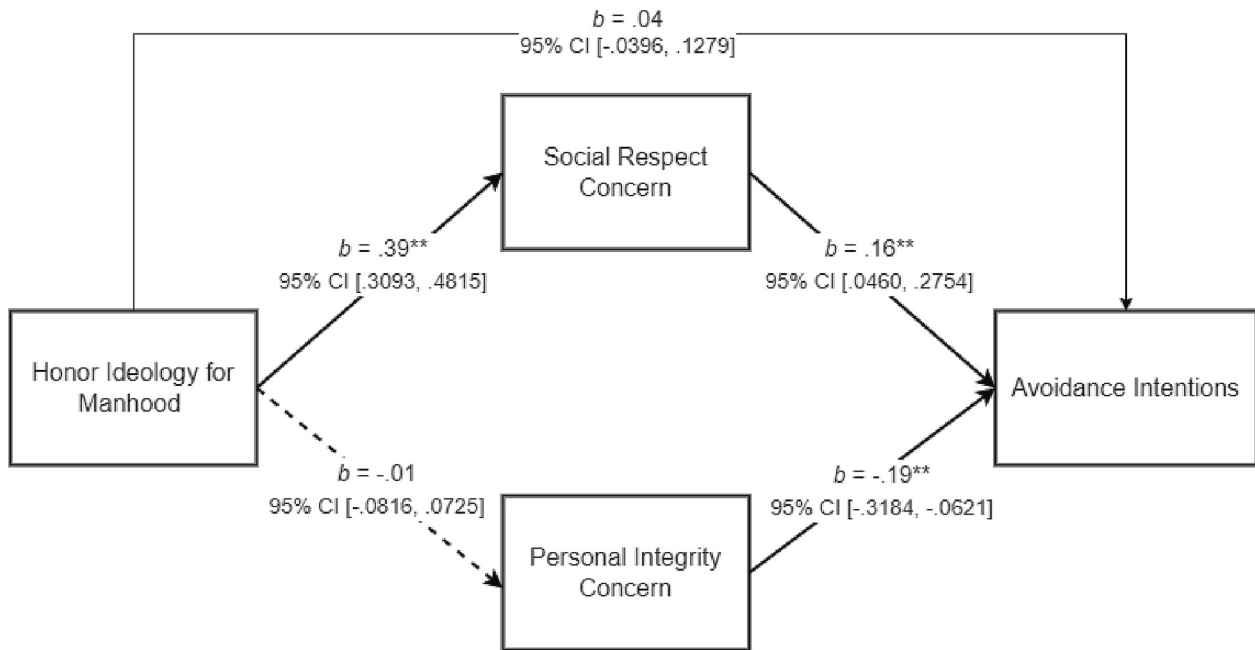
Fig. 2. Study 1: Indirect effects analysis examining the association between masculine honor beliefs and avoidance intentions via social respect and personal integrity concerns. The regression coefficients (*bs*) present direct effects. CI = Confidence Interval; Dashed lines indicate non-significant links; *$p < .05$, **$p < .001$.

Table 2

Study 1: Tests of total and indirect effects of the mediated model presented in Figs. 1 and 2.

	Coeff.	SE	95 % CI
Total effects			
Outcome: Revenge intentions			
HIM ⇒ Revenge intentions	0.20**	0.03	0.13, 0.27
Outcome: Avoidance intentions			
HIM ⇒ Avoidance intentions	0.11*	0.04	0.04, 0.18
Indirect effects			
Outcome: Revenge intentions			
HIM ⇒ Revenge intentions via social respect concerns	0.10*	0.02	0.06, 0.15
HIM ⇒ Revenge intentions via personal integrity concerns	0.01	0.01	−0.02, 0.02
Outcome: Avoidance intentions			
HIM ⇒ Avoidance intentions via social respect concerns	0.06*	0.02	0.01, 0.11
HIM ⇒ Avoidance intentions via personal integrity concerns	0.01	0.01	−0.01, 0.02

Note. HIM = masculine honor beliefs.

  * $p < .05$.

  ** $p < .01$.

as "…you were unable to support your own family economically?" (1 = *not at all bad* to 7 = *very bad*) ($\alpha_{UK} = 0.73$, men vs. women, $p = .649$; $\alpha_{TR} = 0.73$, men vs. women, $p = .148$). Finally, participants completed demographic questions and were debriefed and compensated by course credit.

3.2. Analysis plan

As preliminary analysis, we first explored cultural differences/similarities in forgiveness variables using a 2 × 3 mixed-design ANOVA with cultural group (UK vs. TR) as a between-subjects factor, and TRIM (avoidance, benevolence, revenge) as a within-subjects factor. Next, to test our main hypothesis that higher masculine honor beliefs would be associated with higher revenge and avoidance but lower benevolence intentions, we conducted bivariate correlations and interpreted the

strength of the correlations based on the same criteria as in Study 1. Last, we conducted a moderated mediation analysis[7] by entering the reputation variables in parallel using the PROCESS macro (Model 59; Preacher & Hayes, 2008) in SPSS to examine the indirect effects from masculine honor beliefs to forgiveness variables through social respect and personal integrity concerns, and to examine whether these relationships were moderated by cultural group (the UK vs. TR). The moderated mediation models were conducted only on forgiveness variables which revealed significant correlations with the other model variables.

3.3. Results

3.3.1. Preliminary results on cultural differences/similarities

ANOVA results showed that the two-way interaction between TRIM and cultural group was significant, $F(2, 644) = 97.36$, $p < .001$, $\eta2 = 0.23$. Unfolding the TRIM and cultural group interaction revealed that Turkish participants reported significantly higher avoidance ($M = 3.80$, $SD = 0.73$ vs. $M = 3.24$, $SD = 0.72$; $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = 0.77$, large effect size) and revenge ($M = 2.32$, $SD = 0.95$ vs. $M = 1.66$, $SD = 0.63$; $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = 0.82$, large effect size) intentions compared with British participants; whereas British participants ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 0.60$) reported significantly higher benevolence intentions compared with Turkish participants ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 0.80$; $p < .001$; Cohen's $d = 1.38$; large effect size).

3.3.2. Correlational results testing the main hypothesis

Bivariate correlations, means, and standard deviations are reported in Table 3. In the UK sample, replicating Study 1 findings, masculine honor beliefs (measured with HIM scale) were positively and moderately related to revenge intentions, but not with benevolence intentions. Masculine honor beliefs measured by MHS showed the same patterns.

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  [7] We conducted the moderated mediation analyses controlling for age and gender (because there were few significant correlations with these demographic variables). The direct, total and indirect effects we obtained with or without adding age and gender as covariates remained the same. Therefore, we decided to report the results without these covariates.

Table 3
Study 2: Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations between variables.

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	–	0.01	0.24**	0.04	0.13	0.12	−0.20*	0.07	0.14
2. Age	0.04	–	−0.12	−0.02	−0.01	−0.07	−0.05	0.02	0.12
3. HIM	0.38**	0.14	–	0.37**	0.35**	0.09	0.05	0.23**	−0.07
4. MHS	0.11	0.03	0.32**	–	0.46**	0.09	0.20*	0.17*	−0.15
5. SRC	0.08	0.06	0.41**	0.47**	–	0.33**	0.27**	0.22**	−0.12
6. PIC	0.13	0.13	0.28**	0.20**	0.33**	–	0.08	−0.17*	0.02
7. Avoidance	−0.17*	−0.03	0.05	0.10	0.11	0.05	–	0.39**	−0.58**
8. Revenge	0.04	−0.10	0.22**	0.23**	0.27**	−0.10	0.37**	–	−0.41**
9. Benevolence	0.10	−0.14	−0.07	−0.07	−0.13	−0.04	−0.63**	−0.42**	–
British sample	Mean	19.64	3.83	4.17	4.21	5.69	3.24	1.66	3.17
	SD	3.07	1.46	0.94	0.88	0.69	0.72	0.33	0.60
Turkish sample	Mean	21.08	3.04	4.33	3.48	5.63	3.80	2.31	2.19
	SD	2.06	1.35	1.03	1.06	1.14	0.73	0.95	0.80

Note. Correlations for the British sample are above the diagonal and correlations for the Turkish sample are below the diagonal. Gender = 0: women, 1: men; HIM = Honor Ideology for Manhood; MHS = Masculine Honor Scale; SRC = social respect concern; PIC = personal integrity concern.
* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.

However, unlike in Study 1, no correlation was observed between HIM and avoidance intentions. But, interestingly, MHS was positively and moderately associated with avoidance intentions in the UK sample.

When it comes to the TR sample, replicating the findings from the UK sample in both Studies 1 and 2, masculine honor beliefs (measured with HIM scale) were positively and moderately related to revenge intentions, but not with benevolence intentions. Similar to the Study 2 UK sample (but unlike the UK sample of Study 1), masculine honor beliefs did not relate to avoidance intentions. Correlations with MHS showed the same patterns.

Furthermore, similar to Study 1, in the UK sample, HIM was positively and moderately related to social respect concerns, but HIM did not relate to personal integrity concerns. (MHS showed the same patterns.) Social respect concern was positively and moderately related to revenge and avoidance intentions (but not to benevolence intentions), and personal integrity concerns were negatively and moderately correlated with revenge intentions. These correlations replicated the Study 1 findings, except no correlations appeared between personal integrity concerns and avoidance and benevolence intentions.

In the TR sample, both HIM and MHS positively and moderately correlated with both social respect concerns and personal integrity concerns. Social respect concern was positively and moderately related to revenge intentions, but it did not relate to avoidance and benevolence intentions. Personal integrity concerns were not related to any of the forgiveness variables.

3.3.3. Moderated mediation results: indirect effects through reputation concerns

We examined the indirect effects of masculine honor ideologies (using the HIM scale[8]) on revenge and avoidance intentions through social respect and personal integrity concerns, and whether these relationships were moderated by the cultural group (the U.K. vs. Turkey) (see Fig. 3). For the revenge intentions, the overall model was significant, $R^2 = 0.25$, $F (7, 316) = 15.10$, $p < .001$. The moderated mediation results (see Table 4) showed that in the UK sample, as in Study 1, the conditional indirect effect from masculine honor to revenge intentions through social respect concerns was significant, but the conditional

indirect effect through personal integrity concerns was not significant. However, unlike in Study 1, masculine honor beliefs did not exert significant direct effect on revenge intentions. In the TR sample, the conditional indirect effects from masculine honor beliefs to revenge intentions were significant both through social respect and personal integrity concerns, yet the indirect effects were of opposite signs (positive for social respect and negative for personal integrity). Masculine honor beliefs exerted significant direct effect on revenge intentions.

Because avoidance intentions were unrelated to all other model variables in the TR sample, the indirect effects analysis on the avoidance intentions was conducted on the British sample only. The overall model was significant, $R^2 = 0.16$, $F (7, 316) = 8.70$, $p < .001$. As shown in Table 4, as in Study 1, the conditional indirect effect from masculine honor to avoidance intentions through social respect concerns was significant, but the conditional indirect effect through personal integrity concerns was not significant. Masculine honor beliefs did not exert significant direct effect on avoidance intentions.

3.4. Discussion

Study 2 examined the relationship between masculine honor beliefs and forgiveness intentions in two cultural groups that have been identified as exemplifying an honor (Turkey) and a non-honor/dignity (UK) cultural group. We largely replicated the findings from Study 1 obtained from the UK sample, which also mostly held among the Turkish sample: Results revealed a positive association between masculine honor (measured using two different scales), social respect concerns, and revenge intentions in both cultural groups and that the relationship between masculine honor beliefs and revenge intentions were indirectly explained by social respect concerns. These findings suggest that, in both cultural groups, masculine honor-oriented individuals' concerns with avoiding loss of social respect and humiliation led to their intentions to seek revenge against a transgressing peer. A difference we found in the Turkish sample was that the relationship between masculine honor beliefs and revenge intentions were indirectly explained also by personal integrity concerns, but looking at the sign of the associations, masculine honor-oriented individuals' concerns with maintaining personal integrity and moral conviction actually led to reduced intentions to seek revenge among Turkish people.

In the UK sample (but not in the Turkish sample), masculine honor-oriented individuals' concerns with avoiding loss of social respect and humiliation also led to their intentions to avoid a transgressing peer. This finding replicates results from Study 1 and suggests that honor-oriented British individuals' social respect concerns motivate them to both seek revenge and avoid the transgressor as a way of not forgiving, whereas among Turkish honor-oriented individuals, strong social

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[8] HIM and MHS positively correlated (moderate correlations: $r = 0.37$, $p < .001$ for UK; $r = 0.32$, $p < .001$ for TR) and showed similar patterns in the analyses. To keep the results consistently with Study 1, we reported the moderated mediation results in Study 2 based on HIM only. The same analysis using MHS are provided in supplementary. This similarity in the patterns helps rule out the possibility that findings in the Study 1 were unlikely to have been obtained due to conceptual overlap between revenge items in TRIM and the HIM items.
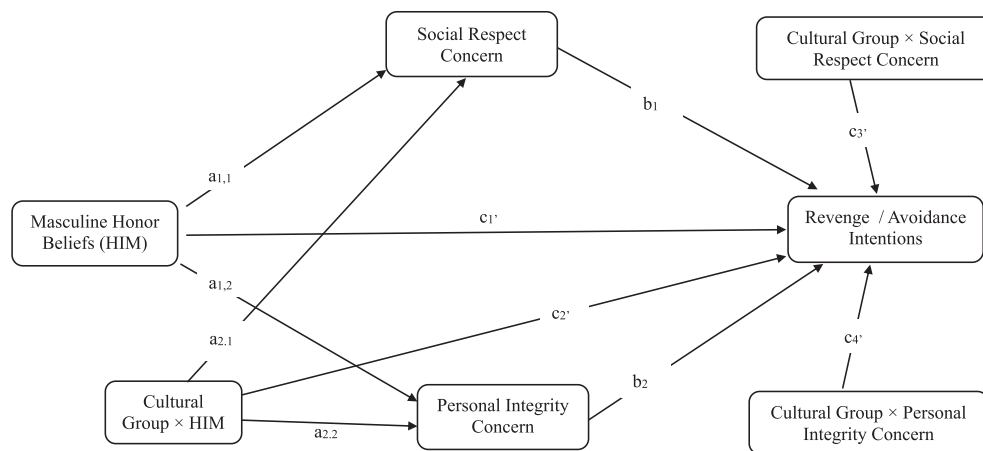
Fig. 3. Study 2: Conceptual statistical diagram of the moderated mediation analysis examining the effects of masculine honor beliefs (HIM), and cultural group × HIM interaction on revenge/avoidance intentions mediated by social respect and personal integrity concerns.

respect concerns motivate them to prefer getting even with the wrong-doer rather than avoiding them.

4. General discussion

In the current research, we examined (a) the association between masculine honor beliefs and responses to interpersonal transgressions that reflect forgiveness (benevolence) or a lack thereof (revenge and avoidance), and (b) two potential underlying concerns – social respect concerns and personal integrity concerns – in these associations. In two studies, participants reported the likelihood with which they would take revenge, avoid or act benevolently when insulted by a peer. In both studies, using two distinct samples (British and Turkish) we found a positive association between masculine honor beliefs and revenge intentions, and a positive association with avoidance intentions among the British sample as well (in Study 1, there was a direct association, and in Study 2, masculine honor beliefs and avoidance were indirectly associated). The positive association between masculine honor beliefs and revenge is consistent with previous research demonstrating that individuals with greater honor endorsement engage in more retaliatory behaviors against honor threats (e.g., Cohen et al., 1996; Saucier et al., 2015, 2016; Uskul et al., 2015). As a novel contribution, the association between masculine honor beliefs and avoidance intentions shows that honor endorsement is not only related to hostile forms of negative reciprocity such as revenge, but also to more subtle indirect forms for negative reciprocity, such as avoidance. In fact, revenge and aggressive responding can be costly, as they may lead to escalation of conflicts, violence, and even death. Avoidance, however, may be a more effective and less costly way to restore one's reputation, especially if the transgressor belongs to the social network of the honor-oriented individuals rather than a stranger. Yet, this association was observed only in the British sample in both studies and not in the Turkish sample in Study 2, potentially suggesting that masculine honor beliefs in the Turkish context are more likely to encourage approach-oriented behavior (i.e., revenge), but not avoidance-oriented behavior.

An additional finding observed consistently across the studies was that the association between stronger endorsement of masculine honor beliefs and lower tendency to forgive an offender (i.e., higher revenge and avoidance intentions) was explained by participants' social respect concerns, but not by personal integrity concerns. Individuals with stronger masculine honor beliefs may view forgiveness as signaling weakness, potentially causing damage to social respect, which could increase the risk of facing future transgressions. This observation is in line with the concept of forgiveness aversion (Williamson et al., 2014); people might be unwilling to forgive the offender due to potentially

risky social outcomes of forgiving (Exline et al., 2003). In addition, in the Turkish sample we also found that the association between stronger endorsement of masculine honor beliefs and stronger tendency to forgive an offender (i.e., weaker revenge intentions) was indirectly explained by personal integrity concerns, suggesting that personal integrity concerns may encourage positive responses (or discourage negative responses) in honor cultures. This finding is in line with other research conducted with Turkish participants which has demonstrated that integrity honor negatively associated with tolerance to abusive men (Ceylan-Batur & Uskul, 2021). These findings point to the importance of treating the multifaceted nature of honor carefully in research on honor to make sense of the cultural differences in the driving factors that link adherence to honor norms to social psychological outcome variables.

These findings are potentially helpful in understanding the impenitence of individuals imprisoned as a result of crimes committed in the name of honor whose actions may be respected by not only members of their inner circles but also other convicts and prison personnel (Bagli & Ozensel, 2011). A study by Bagli (2008) revealed that almost half of the individuals who committed an honor crime interviewed by the researchers reported that their crime was appreciated by individuals in their social circle, and that they would do the same if they faced with the same situation again. In these cases, forgiving the person who threatened their honor (e.g., an unfaithful wife or reputational threats in the form of insults) would have likely brought cost to their social status, whereas unforgiving and acting revengefully may have been perceived as a tool that helps keep their social respect intact and prevent possible future transgressions both from the same transgressor and others.

4.1. Limitations and future research

Several limitations of the current research and future research questions are worth noting. First, we examined the relationship between masculine honor beliefs and forgiveness-related intentions only in samples drawn within the UK and Turkey; it would be interesting to examine if the current associations hold in different honor and non-honor cultures and investigate negative reciprocity-related emotions (e.g., holding a grudge) and different types of actual forgiveness-related behaviors (e.g., benevolent acts).

Second, although we modified transgression scenarios in Study 2 to include a stronger insult, the content of the scenarios we used in this research might have been perceived to be relatively mild across both studies (especially given that they were construed as hypothetical situations). Participants might have reacted differently if we had asked them to imagine being offended in more serious and emotionally intense situations such as romantic partner infidelity or betrayal by a family

Table 4

Study 2: Tests of total, direct, and indirect effects of the moderated mediation model presented in Fig. 3.

	Path	Coeff.	SE	95 % CI
Direct effects/paths				
HIM ⇒ Social respect concerns	$a_{1,1}$	0.21**	0.05	0.11, 0.31
HIM × Cultural group ⇒ Social respect concerns	$a_{2,1}$	0.11	0.07	−0.03, 0.25
HIM ⇒ Social respect concerns (UK)	$a_{1,1}$	0.21**	0.04	0.12, 0.30
HIM ⇒ Social respect concerns (Turkey)	$a_{1,1}$	0.32**	0.05	0.21, 0.43
HIM × Cultural group ⇒ Personal integrity concerns	$a_{2,2}$	0.19*	0.07	0.04, 0.33
HIM ⇒ Personal integrity concerns (UK)	$a_{1,2}$	0.04	0.03	−0.03, 0.12
HIM ⇒ Personal integrity concerns (Turkey)	$a_{1,2}$	0.23**	0.06	0.11, 0.35
Outcome: Revenge intentions				
Social respect concern ⇒ Revenge intentions	b_1	0.16*	0.08	0.01, 0.31
Social respect concern × Cultural group ⇒ Revenge intentions	$c_{3'}$	0.09	0.10	−0.11, 0.29
Social respect concern ⇒ Revenge intentions (UK)	b_1	0.16*	0.06	0.04, 0.28
Social respect concern ⇒ Revenge intentions (Turkey)	b_1	0.25**	0.07	0.11, 0.39
Personal integrity concern ⇒ Revenge intentions	b_2	−0.22*	0.10	−0.41, −0.03
Personal integrity concern × Cultural group ⇒ Revenge intentions	$c_{4'}$	0.03	0.11	−0.19, 0.24
Personal integrity concern ⇒ Revenge intentions (UK)	b_2	−0.22*	0.07	−0.37, −0.08
Personal integrity concern ⇒ Revenge intentions (Turkey)	b_2	−0.20*	0.06	−0.32, −0.07
HIM ⇒ Revenge intentions	$c_{1'}$	0.07	0.04	−0.02, 0.17
HIM × Cultural group ⇒ Revenge intentions	$c_{2'}$	0.04	0.06	−0.09, 0.17
HIM ⇒ Revenge intentions (UK)	$c_{1'}$	0.07*	0.03	0.01, 0.15
HIM ⇒ Revenge intentions (Turkey)	$c_{1'}$	0.12*	0.05	0.01, 0.22
Outcome: Avoidance intentions				
Social respect concern ⇒ Avoidance intentions (UK)	b_1	0.24**	0.07	0.09, 0.38
Personal integrity concern ⇒ Avoidance intentions (UK)	b_2	0.01	0.09	−0.16, 0.19
HIM ⇒ Avoidance intentions (UK)	$c_{1'}$	−0.03	0.04	−0.11, 0.06
Indirect effects				
Outcome: Revenge intentions				
HIM ⇒ Revenge intentions via social respect concerns (UK)	$a_{1,1} * b_1$	0.03*	0.01	0.01, 0.07
HIM ⇒ Revenge intentions via social respect concerns (Turkey)	$a_{1,1} * b_1$	0.08*	0.02	0.03, 0.13
HIM ⇒ Revenge intentions via personal integrity concerns (UK)	$a_{1,2} * b_2$	−0.01	0.01	−0.03, 0.01
HIM ⇒ Revenge intentions via personal integrity concerns (Turkey)	$a_{1,2} * b_2$	−0.05*	0.02	−0.09, −0.01
Outcome: Avoidance intentions				
HIM ⇒ Avoidance intentions via social respect concerns (UK)	$a_{1,1} * b_1$	0.05*	0.02	0.01, 0.09
HIM ⇒ Avoidance intentions via personal integrity concerns (UK)	$a_{1,2} * b_2$	0.01	0.01	−0.01, 0.01

Note. HIM = masculine honor beliefs.
 * $p < .05$.
 ** $p < .01$.

member (e.g., Stratmoen et al., 2018). Future studies would benefit from investigating the association between masculine honor beliefs and (un) forgiveness in diverse types of interpersonal transgressions that vary in intensity. Nevertheless, our findings show that even in such relatively mild situations, honor beliefs play a significant role in different indicators of forgiveness.

Third, we measured masculine honor beliefs as both endorsement of ideological norms (using the Honor Ideology for Manhood scale, Barnes,

Brown, & Osterman, 2012 in Studies 1 and 2) and as endorsement of personal beliefs (using the masculine honor subscale of the Honor Scale, Rodriguez Mosquera et al., 2002 in Study 2). We opted for this approach based on previous work which demonstrated that the endorsement of masculine honor ideology by both men and women has the potential to be associated with important individual-level outcomes such as depression (Osterman & Brown, 2011), and responses to national threats and terrorism (Barnes, Brown, & Osterman, 2012). We also believed that the masculine aspect of honor is theoretically the most relevant part of the construct to examine in the context of forgiveness. Yet recent research has shown that the obligations placed on men versus women to respond to insults with revenge have not been uniform (Chalman et al., 2021). With these new findings in mind, future research should examine gender differences in more gender-balanced samples to flesh out any potential gender differences in the role of honor in the willingness to forgive and the underlying mechanisms. Yet, in our studies with majority women samples, we still observed significant associations between endorsement of masculine honor and revenge, which could indicate that the associations may even be stronger in men only or more gender-balanced samples.

Fourth, we focused on reputation loss as a costly result of forgiveness. Future research is needed to explore the benefits of unwillingness to forgive. For example, McCullough et al. (2006) found that participants who thought over and reported the benefits of a transgression were more likely to forgive, compared with those who did not write about the benefits. Researchers explained that thinking about the benefits increased cognitive processing of the conflict (e.g., greater insight), which encouraged people to forgive. In other words, when people were aware of the benefits of forgiving, they were more likely to forgive. But in a context where honor values are salient and forgiving is seen as a threat to social respect, being unforgiving might be regarded as the beneficial position, therefore the same cognitive processes explained in McCullough et al. (2006) might play a facilitating role for unforgiveness (not forgiveness). Finally, our conclusions concerning honor and forgiveness relationship are based on findings obtained using correlational designs and can therefore not speak to causal relationships between the study variables. Future studies would benefit from temporarily inducing honor-related concerns to examine their effect on forgiveness to shed light on their causal link.

5. Conclusion

Across two studies we examined the association between masculine honor beliefs and forgiveness-related intentions (revenge, avoidance, benevolence) and the indirect role that social respect and personal integrity concerns play in these associations. We found that individuals who endorse higher masculine honor beliefs were less likely to forgive an offender, as manifested by their stronger motivation to avoid the offender and take revenge. High masculine honor-oriented individuals' higher avoidance and revenge intentions were explained by their concern with avoiding loss of social respect and humiliation, rather than a concern with maintaining personal integrity and ethical behavior (except for TR sample in Study 2). These findings extend the literature on masculine honor using an individual difference perspective by demonstrating that masculine honor beliefs are not only related to direct and hostile forms of negative reciprocity such as revenge, but also to more subtle forms of negative reciprocity such as avoidance when the transgressor belongs to the social network of the actor. They also highlight the need to differentiate between different components of honor when researching its interpersonal outcomes.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

All authors have contributed equally.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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