

The Association between Forgiveness and Life Satisfaction

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Abstract: This study's objective is to investigate whether there is a relationship between dispositional forgiveness and life satisfaction at working young adulthood in Indonesia. According to Thompson et al. (2005), there are three forms or dimensions of dispositional forgiveness: Self-forgiveness, Other-forgiveness, and Situation-forgiveness. While life satisfaction is the cognitive process of an individual's subjective evaluation of one's entire life, and it is an indicator of one's well-being. Previous studies have shown that both forgiveness and life satisfaction associated with social and cultural factors. The instruments to measure forgiveness and life satisfaction were Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) and SWLS (Satisfaction with Life Scale). Convenient sampling was the sampling technique to collect data from 167 participants. They were males and females who in the young adulthood stage, and live in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi (Jabodetabek region). The result shows a significant positive correlation between forgiveness and life satisfaction. Where Self-forgiveness and Situation-forgiveness highly significant with life satisfaction, while Other-forgiveness moderately significant with life satisfaction.

1 INTRODUCTION

The fast advancement of technology-led human to another industrial revolution, industrial revolution 4.0, where the convergence of cyberspace with the physical world could happen, where mass production systems would no longer produce uniform products, but it could produce customized products. Industrial revolution 4.0 is more than just a change in production and distribution systems. It also would significantly change the process of formation, exchange, and distribution of economic, political, and social values (Philbeck & Davis, 2018). In other words, the world is in a disruptive era, an era that would change the societies' and humans' lifestyle. Efforts to survive and adapt to the changes that occur could cause conflicts between the parties who had previously cooperated. An ironical condition because the goal of technological advancements is to make human life more comfortable and happier.

The Japanese cabinet in 2016 proposed "Society 5.0" or a "Super Smart Society." Technological advancements, in that proposal, were utilized as much as possible for human security and welfare. Humans become the central actors in the development of technology and science. Technology

means to meet the needs of human life sustainably regardless of age, sex, region, and language (Shiroishi, Uchiyama & Suzuki, 2018).

A joint effort or a process carried out by various parties will be needed to create Society 5.0. Unfortunately, there would be the possibility of conflict among people in it. Conflicts can bother the achievement of group or individual goals. Mistakes made by oneself, others, and the situation could cause failure to achieve goals. Therefore, the ability to forgive self, others, and situations where needed. The ability to forgive allows one to keep trying to achieve his goals. Goals achievements will provide a sense of satisfaction in life. This study wants to examine the relationship between forgiveness and life satisfaction at working young adults since they are most affected by this disruptive era.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Forgiveness is a process that has a motivational and emotional component (Sandage & Williamson, 2007; Cheng & Yim, 2008; Swickert, Robertson, & Baird, 2016). The main features of the forgiveness process are the reduction of vengeful and angry thoughts, feelings, and motives, which can be

accompanied by an increase in positive thoughts, feelings, and motives (Wade, et. Al., 2014 in Cerci & Colucci, 2018). The definition of forgiveness in this study is from Thompson et al. (2005) that defined forgiveness as "... *the framing of a perceived transgression such that one's responses to the transgressors, transgression, and sequelae of the transgression are transformed from negative to neutral or positive. The source of a transgression, and therefore the object of forgiveness, maybe oneself, another person or person, or a situation that views one being beyond anyone's control (e.g., an illness, "fate," or a natural disaster)* "

Forgiveness allows one to overcome interpersonal offense through a prosocial process that would have a positive impact on victims and perpetrators, not through denial, justification, or revenge (Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010). Forgiveness allows one to eliminate hurt feelings and hatred when responding to the transgression (Swickert, Robertson, & Baird, 2016). Forgiveness has a positive impact on survivors. Because of the process of forgiveness, factors such as cognition, physiological responses, behavioral intentions, emotions, motivation, and possibly behavior toward the offender become more positive over time (Fernández-Capo et al., 2017).

There are two levels to measure forgiveness in research, dispositional level or offense-specific level (McCullough, Pargament, & Thoresen, 2000 in Cerci & Colucci, 2018). Dispositional forgiveness or trait forgiveness is the forgiving nature of someone that stable in various situations and times. Offense-specific forgiveness is forgiveness that has been done by someone for a specific event in his or her life (Cerci & Colucci, 2018). In this study, the forgiveness level measured was dispositional or trait forgiveness. There are three forms of dispositional forgiveness according to Thompson et al. (2005): Self-forgiveness or ability to forgive oneself; Other-forgiveness or ability to forgive another person or persons; Situation-forgiveness or ability to forgive a situation which is beyond anyone's control, such as an illness or natural disaster.

Forgiveness is related to age, gender, beliefs, social-cultural, and religious practice. Older adults are more willing to forgive than people who are in the stage of middle-aged and young adults (Mullet et al., 1998; Cheng & Yim, 2008). Allemand's study (2008) showed that there was a difference between forgiveness that has been done by older people compared to forgiveness that has been done by younger people. Older people would forgive their acquaintances and their friends as well. On the other

hand, younger people would prefer to forgive their friends than their acquaintances.

There were also small to moderate yet significant differences between gender and forgiveness, according to a study by Miller, Worthington Jr. & McDaniel (2008). Swickert, Robertson, & Baird (2016) found that women were more forgiving than men. Younger women were more likely to empathize with transgressors compared to younger men. However, Swickert, Robertson, & Baird (2016) stated that there was still a lack of clarity in the existing literature on the relationship between gender and forgiveness.

Social-cultural factors also related to forgiveness (Ho & Fung, 2011; Sandage & Williamson, 2007). Forgiveness is an interpersonal construct since it is a process that involves changes in cognition, emotion, motivation, and behavior of someone against the transgressor (Ho & Fung, 2011). People who live in individualistic cultures have a different focus than people who live in collectivistic cultures. Those who live in individualistic cultures focus more on distinguishing themselves from others and striving to achieve personal goals, while people who live in collectivistic cultures emphasize more on the norms of togetherness and relationships with others to be able to live in harmony with others (Ho & Worthington, 2018).

People who have a lower level of forgiveness would have lower levels of distress tolerance and tend to be more hostile (Matheny et al., (2017). Longitudinal research conducted by Toussaint, et al. (2018) concluded that there is a more significant association of hostility with cognitive impairment that occurs more than ten years, and the effects associated with hostility on this cognition lessened with being more forgiving. Lack of forgiveness is also associated with hyper-competitiveness, while personal development competitiveness is positively associated with forgiveness (Collier et al., 2010).

The level of forgiveness is also related to scores related to PTSD symptoms. However, it also needs to consider other variables such as demographics, the relationship between transgressors and survivors of trauma, type, and severity of the trauma, and other relevant variables (Cerci & Colucci, 2018). Research conducted by Bryan, Theriault, and Bryan (2015) on military and veteran personnel indicated that self-forgiveness significantly distinguishes participants who attempt suicide and those who only think of committing suicide. Besides being mentally healthier, forgiveness is also related to one's physical health and the longevity of Toussaint, Owen, & Cheadle (2012).

A forgiving person would have a low level of distress and a lower level of distress associated with a higher level of happiness (Toussaint et al., 2016). In other words, there is a positive correlation between forgiveness and well-being (Toussaint & Friedman, 2009; Toussaint et al., 2016). One of the constructs of well-being is subjective well-being from Diener (1984), and life satisfaction is a component of subjective well-being. Life satisfaction is the cognitive process of an individual's subjective evaluation of his entire life (Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999). The evaluation is based on a comparison of the life experienced by a person with subjective standards (Diener et al., 1985).

According to Diener, Lucas, Schimmack, and Helliwell (2009), life satisfaction is an indicator of individual well-being and social well-being. Individuals who have a high level of life satisfaction are those who are successful in developing relationships with others, at work, and in their physical functions. They also have made more money and have been better at dealing with the diseases they experience (Lewis, 2010 in Dogan & Celik, 2014).

Life satisfaction also has related to age. Buettel et al. (2009) found that there was a relationship between age and life satisfaction on female respondents from adolescent to late adulthood stage. Another research conducted by Beutel et al. (2010) on male respondents at the same developmental stage (adolescence to late adulthood) showed no significant difference in life satisfaction that related to age. While Baird, Lucas, & Donnellan's (2010) research finding concluded that life satisfaction does not decrease too much throughout adulthood. However, there is a sharp decline in respondents aged over 70 years (Baird, Lucas, & Donnellan, 2010). A study conducted by Jovanović (2017) showed that there was different life satisfaction between adolescents and adults. Adolescents' life satisfaction was higher than in adults' life satisfaction. Siedlecki, Tucker-Drob, Oishi, & Salthouse (2008) research also obtained similar results. They also found that the level of education was related to the satisfaction of one's life.

Several studies have found that there are differences in the level of life satisfaction between men and women. Women reported higher levels of life satisfaction than men (Jovanović, 2017). Research conducted by Beutel, et al., (2009) revealed that factors related to life satisfaction in general in women are the level of resilience, good household income, the presence of partners, the absence of anxiety and depression, not unemployed,

positive self-esteem, religious affiliation, and age. General life satisfaction in men is related to the level of resilience, previous unemployment conditions, the presence of partners, high self-esteem, household income, the absence of generalized anxiety disorder, and depression (Beutel et al., 2010).

Cultural factors also affect one's life satisfaction. Previous studies have shown differences in life satisfaction levels in different countries. Communities in Pacific Rim countries do not have a strong tendency to evaluate abstract things positively, while people in Latin American countries have a strong tendency to value global domains positively (Diener et al. 2000). Diener, Inglehart, and Tay (2013) said that life satisfaction level based on earned income in Latin American society is higher than in Asian societies, which have a Confucian culture. The ability of individuals to meet the cultural demands that exist in a collectivistic society affects the satisfaction of life, while this does not apply to ones that live in an individualistic society. Since in an individualistic society, independence, uniqueness, and autonomy are considered culturally relevant (Li & Hamamura, 2010).

This study investigated whether there was a significant relationship between forgiveness and life satisfaction at working young people who live in Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi (Jabodetabek region). Although previous researches indicate that there has been a significant relationship between forgiveness and well-being, this study still needed to be done because both forgiveness and life-satisfaction variables have associated with demographic variables such as age, gender, social, and cultural.

3 RESEARCH METHOD

The respondents of this study were working young adults who live in the Greater Jakarta area (Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi) or Jabodetabek region. The sampling technique to obtain cross-sectional data in this non-experimental study was convenience sampling. There were a total of 167 people who participated in this study, 118 females and 49 males. Each participant was asked to fill a self-report instrument (questionnaire) which distributed online.

The Bahasa Indonesia version of the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS), which originally developed by Thompson et al. (2005), used to measure dispositional forgiveness. There were three

dimensions in HFS: self-forgiveness, other-forgiveness, and situation-forgiveness. Each dimension consisted of 6 items, and each item consisted of six Likert-like scales; scale: 1 = Strongly disagree to 6 = Strongly agree. The minimum score was 18, and the maximum score was 108. The reliability value of HFS on the self-forgiveness dimension $\alpha = 0.673$, the other-forgiveness dimension $\alpha = 0.773$, and the situation-forgiveness dimension $\alpha = 0.712$. HFS reliability scores for measuring forgiveness constructs are $\alpha = 0.814$ and $\omega = 0.822$.

Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) was a unidimensional measurement tool which initially developed by Diener et al. (1985) to measure life satisfaction. This research used the Bahasa Indonesia version of SWLS, which consists of 5 (five) items with 6 Likert scale likes; scale 1 = Strongly disagree to 6 = Strongly agree. Thus, the minimum score for the variable life satisfaction was 5, and the maximum score was 30. There were no unfavorable (reversed) items in this measuring instrument. The SWLS reliability value of the sample data in this study is $\alpha = 0.788$.

Demographic data and distribution scores of the research variables were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The statistical technique for testing the hypothesis of this research is the correlational technique. This study used Jamovi statistical software version 1.0.0 (Jamovi, 2019) to analyze research data.

4 RESULT

Table 1: Demographic Data.

Demographic Data		
	Mean	Std Dev
Age	28.6	4.50
	Frequency	Percentage
Sex		
Male	49	29.3
Female	118	70.7
Education		
Senior High School	3	1.8
Diploma/Academy	7	4.2
Undergraduate	115	68.9
Graduate	42	25.1
Marital Status		

Not Married	107	64.1
Married	60	35.9
Religion		
Islam	107	64.1
Christian	22	13.2
Catholic	32	19.2
Hindu	1	0.6
Buddha	2	1.2
Others	3	1.8

Demographic data on respondents' age reveals that most of the respondents are younger than 33 years old of age (M = 28.5, SD = 4.48). Most of the respondent's gender are women (70.7%), and less than a third of them are men (29.3%). The education level of the respondents is mostly Bachelor (68.9%), followed by Masters (25.1%), Diploma/Academy (4.2%), and Senior High School level (1.8%). The proportion of unmarried respondents are nearly doubled (64.1%) than the proportion of married respondents (35.9%). Most respondents' religions are Muslim (64.1%), then Catholic (19.2%), Protestant (13.2%) and Buddhists, Hindus, and Others (3.6%).

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics.

	Forgiveness	Self-forgiveness	Other-forgiveness	Situati on-forgiveness	Life-Satisfaction
N	167	167	167	167	167
Mean	4.05	3.86	4.10	4.17	4.04
Standard deviation	0.559	0.742	0.782	0.687	0.808
Skewness	-0.351	-0.134	-0.580	-0.110	-0.367
Std. error skewness	0.188	0.188	0.188	0.188	0.188
Kurtosis	0.573	0.215	0.341	0.416	-0.393
Std. error kurtosis	0.374	0.374	0.374	0.374	0.374
Shapiro-Wilk p	0.281	0.447	0.002	0.195	0.004

The mean score of self-forgiveness (Mean = 3.86, SD = 0.742) is lower than other-forgiveness (M = 4.10, SD = 0.782) and situation-forgiveness (M = 4.17, SD = 0.687). One of the possible explanations for that condition is because the reliability of the self-forgiveness dimension was modest ($\alpha = 0.673$). Another explanation is because it is harder to determine self-forgiveness since there was no feedback from other people that one's could use as a reference. However, unlike self-forgiveness, for the two other dimensions, which are other-forgiveness and situation-forgiveness, respondents can get feedback or comparison that can be used to determine the level of forgiveness. Therefore, it needs further researches on self-forgiveness in collectivistic culture societies.

The distribution scores of other-forgiveness (M = 4.10, SD = 0.782) and life satisfaction (M = 4.04, SD = 0.808) are not normal (Shapiro-Wilk < 0.01). Whereas the distribution of the other scores is considered normal. The alternative statistical technique to calculate the correlations among those variables was Spearman's Rho correlation. Spearman's Rho is a correlation technique which categorized as a non-parametric statistic. Consequently, the result of this study could not be generalized to the population.

Table 3: Correlations

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Life Satisfac tion	-	0.382***	0.299***	0.178*	0.326***
2. Forgive ness		-	0.730***	0.711***	0.810***
3. Self-forgive ness			-	0.224**	0.488***
4. Other-forgive ness				-	0.401***
5. Situatio n-forgive ness					-

Note. * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Forgiveness and life-satisfaction have a significant positive correlation $\rho(165) = 0.382, p >$

0.001, $r^2 = 0.146$. This means, the higher one's level of forgiveness, his or her level of life-satisfaction is also higher. All dimensions of forgiveness have significant positive correlation with life-satisfaction. The dimension of forgiveness which has the highest correlation with life-satisfaction is Situation-forgiveness $\rho(165) = 0.326, p > 0.001, r^2 = 0.106$, then the correlation level between the dimensions of Self-forgiveness and life-satisfaction $\rho(165) = 0.299, p > 0.001, r^2 = 0.089$, while the dimension with the lowest level of correlation with life-satisfaction is the Other-forgiveness dimension $\rho(165) = 0.178, p = 0.011, r^2 = 0.032$.

5 DISCUSSION

The result of this study shows that there is a significant positive relationship between life-satisfaction and dispositional forgiveness. All its dimensions, namely self-forgiveness, other-forgiveness, and situational-forgiveness, also have significant positive correlations with life-satisfaction. These results are similar to the results of studies that were conducted by Toussaint & Friedman (2009), who also used self-report methods (HFS & SWLS questionnaires), and cross-sectional design. The coefficient correlations in their study were slightly higher than the coefficient correlations in this study. It might due to their participants were relatively homogeneous respondents (outpatient psychotherapy).

The measurement of forgiveness in this study is general forgiveness or dispositional level forgiveness (Thompson et al., 2005), not case-specific forgiveness. Therefore, a study on the relationship between case-specific forgiveness and life satisfaction needs to do. Because in specific cases, several things could affect one's forgiveness, such as the relationship between transgressors and survivors of trauma, type, and severity of the trauma (Cerci & Colucci, 2018). The results of that study would figure out the consistency of the association between forgiveness and life satisfaction.

Forgiveness construct in this study has a similar meaning with forgivingness construct (Suwartono, Prawasti, & Mullet, 2007); both of those constructs refer to dispositional forgiveness. Several studies have revealed that dispositional forgiveness associated with culture. A study about forgivingness conducted by Suwartono, Prawasti, & Mullet (2007) has shown the influence of individualistic culture and collectivistic culture on forgiveness. However, research conducted by Paz, Neto, & Mullet (2008)

shows that there were no differences caused by cultural factors. According to Paz et al (2008), there may be other factors in the culture that can influence forgiveness; one of them is religion. That opinion referred to Paz, R., Neto, F., & Mullet, E. (2007) study result, which showed that there was different forgivingness in Buddhists and Christians who live in China.

Other than those things above, since this study only controlled the developmental stage (young adulthood) or respondents. Consequently, it cannot provide a picture or comparison of forgiveness and life satisfaction with other developmental stages. Other demographic factors, such as gender, occupation, income, and ethnicity, were not controlled, and since the distribution of respondents in those demographic factors equivalently distributed, then statistical calculations to make the comparison.

Another limitation of this study is convenient sampling (non-random sampling), self-administered data collection, and cross-sectional design. The convenience sampling method only could reach people that can be met or contacted and who have had the willingness to participate in data collection. Usually, in this method, people in negative affect would not want to participate in data collection. A self-administered method is also vulnerable to faking-good or faking-bad responses, and the cross-sectional method could only measure forgiveness and life-satisfaction at a time.

6 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, Forgiveness had a highly significant positive correlation with life satisfaction. Where Self-forgiveness and Situation-forgiveness were highly significant with life satisfaction, while Other-forgiveness was moderately significant with life satisfaction.

These study results imply that further research about factors that relate to forgiveness in Indonesia will be needed since Indonesia is a plural country. A country which consists of multi-cultures and multi-religions country. Both forgiveness and life-satisfaction constructs are related to the culture where someone lives and religion that one's belief.

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