

Forgiveness and Life Satisfaction among Undergraduate Students in Indonesia and China: A Cross-Cultural Study

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Abstract

This study was aimed to determine the relationship between forgiveness and life satisfaction among undergraduate students in Indonesia and China. The subjects of the study were 113 undergraduate students in Indonesia and 193 undergraduate students in China. Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Scale--12-Item Form (TRIM-12) by McCullough ($\alpha=0.928$, $N=12$) for measure forgiveness and Satisfaction with Life Scale by Dinner, et al ($\alpha=0.836$, $N=5$) for measure life satisfaction. Statistical results used the Spearman Rho technique showed that there was a significant negative correlation between forgiveness and life satisfaction among undergraduate students in Indonesia and China ($p = 0,000$, $r = -0.187$). The relationship between the two variables showed that the higher forgiveness shown by undergraduate students in Indonesia and China, the lower the life satisfaction of their life. We also analyze difference of forgiveness and life satisfaction among undergraduate students in Indonesia and China with Mann-Whitney Rank Test. Result showed there was a significant difference between forgiveness of undergraduate students in Indonesia and China ($p=0,000$) and also life satisfaction of undergraduate students in Indonesia and China ($p=0,019$).

Keywords: Forgiveness, life satisfaction, undergraduate students, Indonesia, China

Introduction

Life satisfaction was a part of Subjective well-being in the individual's life became one of the studies that are often discussed in the field of positive psychology. Life satisfaction was synonymous with happiness that was a subjective view of the nature of the whole living individual owned (Bukhari and Khanam, 2015). Some previous studies linked happiness with culture, one of which is the collectivist culture in society in a country (Yetim, 2003; Magnis-Susena, 1984). The countries of Indonesia and China Including Asian countries that were thick with the culture of collectivism (Hidayat, 2014), unity and togetherness were often the main goals of social interaction. The cultural value of collectivism was characterized by individuals who were incorporated and bound by society, prioritizing public interests compared to individual interests, and prioritizing mutual agreements (Suseno,1991).

Indonesia and China are known for their diverse traditional culture and distinctive citizen character, for example, Indonesian citizens are known as a friendly citizen and Chinese citizens known for their persistent and hardworking character. In addition, Indonesia and China were among the top five with the largest population in the world,

China currently called Tiongkok was a country with the largest population in the world. China's population was over 1.38 billion. Indonesia ranks with the largest population in the world. The population of Indonesia estimated at more than 255 million (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2016). Another fact states that the Indonesian population is still not in the happy category. Based on data from the World Happiness Report, the level of happiness of the Indonesian people has decreased from 2015 to 2018. The World Happiness Report (2018) revealed a decline in the ratings of happiness for Indonesians. From the report in 2015, Indonesia was ranked 74.

However, in 2016 Indonesia's ranking dropped to rank 79. Until 2018, Indonesia's ranking has declined and ranked 96. In addition, China ranks 86 countries with a happy population. From the survey above it can be concluded that the population of Indonesia and China cannot be said to be categorized as happy in the world. Happiness identically to the level of life satisfaction that felt by individuals, when individuals feel happy, they tend to feel satisfied with what they have in their lives.

Life satisfaction can be seen also in adolescents, especially late adolescents because they have begun to have an identity and have lived a more stable life, life satisfaction in late adolescents influenced by several aspects, according to Hurlock (1990) aspects of life satisfaction include receiving, affection and achievement. All developmental tasks in late adolescence are focused on overcoming childish attitudes and patterns of behavior and preparing to deal with adulthood, at this stage individuals can see the social system as a whole. Individuals want to be strictly regulated by higher general laws. Teenagers have begun to choose moral principles for life, individuals carry out moral behavior driven by self-responsibility. In this case, forgiveness was one form of acceptance mentioned by Hurlock and hopes that forgiveness can be a solution to achieving high life satisfaction in adolescents. Students who have an age range from 17 to 22 years old can be categorized at the stage of adolescent development so that the developmental tasks were in accordance with those described previously.

McCullough (1999) argues that forgiveness can be used as a set of motivations to change someone not to take revenge and reduce the urge to maintain hatred against those who hurt and increase the urge to conciliate relationships with those who hurt. In fact, not everyone is willing to forgive others, even himself is difficult to forgive. When other people apologize, not necessarily someone willingly forgives.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher will examine the extent of the relationship between life satisfaction and forgiveness among undergraduate students in Indonesia and China who have the same collectivist cultural values in social life.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study to find the relationship between forgiveness and life satisfaction among undergraduate students from Indonesia and China

Research Questions

1. Q1. What is there has a difference in the level of forgiveness between undergraduate students from Indonesia and China?
2. Q2. What is there has a difference in the level of life satisfaction between undergraduate students from Indonesia and China?

Literature Review

Life Satisfaction

According to Diener, et al (1985) states that life satisfaction is an individual cognitive evaluation that is subjective to his life as a whole. Because life satisfaction is

subjective, then the standard used by each individual to evaluate his life satisfaction depends on the individual judgment, not determined by external criteria which is considered important by Hurlock (1990) explaining that life satisfaction is a state of prosperity or satisfaction which is pleasant conditions and arise when needs and expectations are met. Pavot and Diener (1993) state that life satisfaction is a cognitive assessment by an individual consciously of his life. In addition, according to Ardel (1997), life satisfaction is operationalized as feelings of satisfaction and lack of dissatisfaction in all areas of an individual's life.

Forgiveness

Thompson, et al. (2005) defined forgiveness as an improvement in interpersonal and intrapersonal (in self) so that victims can totally forgive. Besides forgiveness for someone is a response process to the mistakes made, so that the response can change from negative to neutral than positive. Nashori (2012) forgiveness is the ability to leave unpleasant events that come from interpersonal relationships with others, foster good feelings, thoughts and interpersonal relationships with others who have hurt. In addition, according to McCullough, et al. (1999) forgiveness is a set of motivations to change someone not to fight, take revenge, and maintain hostility with others. However, it seeks to increase motivation in conciliation and good intentions to improve relations despite the presence or absence of actions by the offender who hurt him.

Forgiveness and Life Satisfaction

Individuals who have forgiveness will have better mental health because they are able to be more positive about a problem (Freedman & Enright, 2015). Because they need forgiveness to increase individual life satisfaction. Knutson, et al (2008) explained that forgiveness is an individual process of not taking revenge on the offender who has hurt him and can return to accept and relate well to the person who has hurt the individual. Someone who has forgiveness in him can control negative feelings that appear to be more positive feelings towards other people or people who have hurt him (Akhtar, Dolan & Barlow, 2017). The forgiveness in an individual can determine the purpose of life that he needs to do. People who forgive are also able to identify negative impulses or disappointments in themselves or others and replace them with things that can make them comfortable again (Akhtar, Dolan & Barlow, 2017). This will make individuals become more positive in developing themselves, establish good relationships with others, and have a purpose in life to continue their lives in the future. When a person has been able to play a better role in his life, it will make individual life satisfaction more increased.

Methodology

Sample

The subjects of the study were 113 undergraduate students in Indonesia and 193 undergraduate students in China. Sampling in this study used a non-probability sampling technique that is purposive sampling to determine the research subject. Purposive sampling is a technique of determining the sample with certain criteria. The researcher uses purposive sampling technique because not all samples have criteria that are in accordance with the phenomenon under study so that in the implementation of data collection researchers use subjects that are in accordance with predetermined criteria.

Instruments:

1. Forgiveness: The measuring instrument used is Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivation (TRIM 12) which was adapted from the research of

McCollough, et al (2001). This measuring instrument provides 12 items with four alternative answers, for items that strongly agree (SA) gets a value of 4, agrees (A) gets a value of 3, disagrees (D) gets a value of 2 and strongly disagrees (SD) gets a value of 1. The aspects used are avoidance motivation, motivation to respond (Revenge Motivation), and motivation to do good intentions (Benevolence Motivation)

2. Life Satisfaction: The scale of life satisfaction (life satisfaction) prepared by adopting from The Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS), made by Diener et al. (1985). The overall items for the life satisfaction scale have 5 items that are favorable. This life satisfaction scale uses 7 alternative answers, namely "Very Inappropriate (VI)", "Inappropriate (I)", "Somewhat Inappropriate (SI)", "Neutral (N)", "Somewhat Appropriate (SA)", "Appropriate (A)" and "Very Appropriate (VA)".

Statistical Analysis

This study used statistical methods of correlation techniques. The analysis technique used non-parametric correlation statistical analysis from Spearman Correlation. And we also analyze the difference between forgiveness and life satisfaction among undergraduate students in Indonesia and China with Mann-Whitney Rank Test.

Findings

Table 1

Correlation Result

Variabel	r	p
Forgiveness* Life Satisfaction	-0.187	0.000

Based on the results above, found that forgiveness has a very significant correlation with life satisfaction. This is shown from the value of $r = -0,187$ with a significance of $p = 0,000, p < 0,005$. Although it has a very significant correlation.

Table 2

Correlation between Dimension of Forgiveness and Life Satisfaction

	Revenge	Avoidance
Life Satisfaction	-.159**	-.212**

Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

Based on the table above, there is a relationship between revenge and forgiveness ($r = -0.159, p = 0.003$), and there is a relationship between avoidance and forgiveness ($r = -0.212, p = 0.000$). Although avoidance has a higher level of correlation than revenge, the two dimensions of forgiveness are still equally at a low level of correlation with life satisfaction.

Table 3
Mann-Whitney Rank Test

Variable	Country	n	Mean Rank	p
Forgiveness	Indonesia	112	108,48	0.000
	China	194	179,49	
Life Satisfaction	Indonesia	112	169,42	0.017
	China	194	144,31	

Based on the table above, there were differences between forgiveness on undergraduate student from Indonesia and China ($p = 0.000$, $p < 0.05$). The students from China (mean rank = 179,49) have forgiveness higher than undergraduate students from Indonesia (mean rank = 108,48). Likewise, the undergraduate students from Indonesia (mean rank = 169,42) have life satisfaction higher than undergraduate students from China (mean rank = 144,31, $p < 0.05$).

Discussion

The result of this study found that forgiveness is known to have a negative correlation with life satisfaction among undergraduate student in Indonesia and China. And the result showed that both of forgiveness aspects namely avoidance, and revenge, have a negative relationship to life satisfaction. This result is in line with the research conducted by McCullough et al (2001) which explains that forgiveness has a negative relationship with life satisfaction. According to Sastre et al (2003) the low relationship between forgiveness and life satisfaction is due to the possibility of differences in scope between the two measurements used. The TRIM scale is explicitly intended to measure changes in the level of forgiveness of certain actors for certain violations. Otherwise, SWLS is clearly intended to measure overall satisfaction with life. That is a global assessment; it does not refer to any event or moment. Forgiving certain people for certain offenses at one particular time may not have much impact on the overall level of satisfaction with life experiences.

Research conducted by Szczecin (2011) also revealed that motivation possessed by someone who has low motivation to avoid and avenge will increase his life satisfaction. Based on observations made by Ashford and LeCroy (Szczecin, 2011), bringing things related to the desire to reciprocate or the need to avoid someone who behaves wrongly towards us, it is not profitable, because hostility and aggression are related to various problems health.

Other results show that Chinese students have higher forgiveness than Indonesian students. This shows that Chinese students prefer to avoid conflict. This is consistent with the research conducted by Ting-Toomey (Fu, Watkins, & Hui, 2004) which states that most Chinese people prefer to compromise and avoid conflict in order to create social harmony. The values adopted by the Chinese community are relationship-oriented, avoiding conflict is considered very prevalent and appropriate in collectivist societies such as China (Tjosvold & Sun, 2002).

Collectivistic culture presents people as interdependent. In collectivistic cultures such as Taiwan, peoples are very integrated into groups and are encouraged to care for their extended families (Lennon, 2013). Collectivists emphasize their connection with other group members, and they make many group decisions that have the goal of achieving harmony. The stereotypical view of collective forgiveness shows that

collectivists may highly value forgiveness as a relational improvement strategy (Hook, Worthington, & Utsey, 2009).

Same as China, Indonesia also adheres to the collectivity culture (Surwanto et al, 2007). But the difference in forgiveness scores in Indonesian and Chinese students shows that there are differences in the views of the people of Indonesia and China regarding forgiveness. Based on existing research conducted by Rohmah (2017) shows that new students at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang have a moderate level of forgiveness. That mean they cannot always forgive others easily but that does not mean that they are always difficult to forgive others. In certain cases students are able to forgive others easily, but in other cases it can be the opposite, depending on the influence factors that affect forgiveness such as feelings of empathy, assessment of the offender and his mistakes, perceived level of hurt, personality characteristics and quality relationship with the perpetrator.

Not only on forgiveness, Indonesian students and Chinese students also have differences in the level of life satisfaction, where Indonesian students have higher life satisfaction than Chinese students. This is supported by a survey conducted by the New Economics Foundation (2012) which placed Indonesia in 14th position out of 151 countries, and China ranked 60th.

According to social reference theory, the life satisfaction of Chinese students are influenced by their previous life situation and socioeconomic status which serves as a reference when evaluating current quality of life and satisfaction (Zhang et al, 2013). Beside that Indonesia have more various traditional tradition in social groups, everyone have a good chance to join the group. The results show that participation in community groups is better for individual wellbeing (Sujarwoto et al, 2017). Sujarwoto et al (2017) also explained that Indonesia is one of the most religious countries. Religion and activities related to religion have an important role in the daily lives of individuals and society. The results of the study conducted by Sujarwoto et al (2017) found that all of these religious activities are beneficial to individual wellbeing. In all condition, it shows that religious individuals are happier and satisfied with their lives than non-religious individuals.

Limitations

The researcher still used a purposive sampling method that makes the subject as sample can't be a representative of the population that the researcher wants to study.

Recommendation

For the researcher who interested in conducting research on the same topic, that can pay more attention to the scale of items used in this study. It will be better to add a social desirability scale. This was to obtain data based on the real condition of the subject.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study shows that there is a negative correlation between forgiveness and life satisfaction among undergraduate students in Indonesia and China. The more maintained forgiveness among undergraduate students so life satisfaction is low.

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