

The Relationship Between Forgiveness and Subjective Well-Being Among Adolescents Living in Orphanages

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This study aims to examine the relationship between forgiveness and subjective well-being among adolescents residing in orphanages. It posits the hypothesis of a positive relationship between forgiveness and subjective well-being in this population. The participants comprised 110 adolescents aged 13–18 years. Data were collected using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE), and Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory-18 (TRIM-18). Product-moment correlation was employed for data analysis. Results revealed a correlation coefficient (r_{xy}) of 0.827 with $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.001$), supporting the hypothesis of a positive correlation. The coefficient of determination (R^2) was 0.683, indicating that forgiveness accounts for 68.3% of the variance in subjective well-being, with the remaining 31.7% attributable to other factors.

Keywords: Subjective Well-Being, Forgiveness, Orphanages Adolescents.

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1. Introduction

Adolescence is a period in which individuals face demands for significant changes in attitudes and mindsets to fulfill developmental tasks (Hurlock, 1996). During this process, some adolescents encounter obstacles that prevent them from achieving happiness (Agustina, 2019). This occurs as they face anxiety regarding their perceived inability to resolve developmental challenges typical of the 13–18 age range (Hurlock, 1996). At this stage, the family serves as the most critical environment for supporting growth (Andriyani, 2020).

The family is where an individual grows into a person of character (Surbakti, 2008). It is a foundation where members rely on one another for social, emotional, and financial support (Howe, 2011). A supportive family environment fosters well-being, independence, and the ability to navigate future challenges (Dewi & Widayanti, 2011). Consequently, the family directly enhances the quality of life and well-being of adolescents (Richardson & Gleeson, 2018). However, in reality, not all adolescents have the opportunity to live with their families (Prihastuti, 2014). Those who have lost their parents or come from economically disadvantaged backgrounds are often placed in orphanages (Yusuf, 2016).

According to Arieska and Rinnaldi (2019), many adolescents in orphanages do not receive the same level of affection as their peers. They often feel alienated or even abandoned by their families (Anugrahwati & Wiraswati, 2020). These circumstances can lead to various psychological issues and negative emotions, such as anger, emptiness, sadness, lack of purpose, and feelings of worthlessness (Lubis & Agustini, 2018). Such negative emotions can diminish overall happiness (Damayanti & Sandja, 2012). Issues such as unhappiness, chronic negative affect, and a lack of life purpose indicate low subjective well-being (Ramadhan, 2022).

2. Literature Review and Problem Statement

Subjective well-being is an individual's evaluation of their life, encompassing cognitive judgments encompassing cognitive judgments and affective reactions that indicate a desirable life, characterized by high positive affect and low negative affect (Diener et al., 2015). It consists of two components: the cognitive aspect (overall life satisfaction) and the affective aspect (positive and negative emotions and moods) (Diener, 2009).

Studies indicate low subjective well-being among orphanage adolescents: Rini (2016) found 64.9% (85/131) with low levels. Similarly, Ramadhan (2022) found that 48.8% of 123 respondents had low subjective well-being. High subjective well-being enables effective social functioning and self-confidence (Raninpi & Soegijono, 2019), whereas low levels increase risks of depression and maladaptive behaviors (Park, 2004). Factors influencing subjective well-being include social support, gratitude, forgiveness, personality, self-esteem, and spirituality (Dewi & Nasywa, 2019). Datu (2013) noted that forgiveness contributes to reducing negative affect, thereby predicting higher subjective well-being. This is supported by Allemand and Hill (2012), who identified forgiveness as a significant factor in well-being.

Thompson and Snyder (2002) define forgiveness as a way for individuals to reframe past transgressions, shifting them from negative to neutral or positive. McCullough (1996) characterizes forgiveness by a decrease in the motivation to avoid the transgressor or seek revenge, alongside an increased motivation for conciliation. McCullough (2006) identifies three dimensions: avoidance motivation, revenge motivation, and benevolence motivation.

For orphanage adolescents, forgiveness heals emotional wounds, fostering happiness (Hamim, 2016) and relationship repair (McCullough et al., 1997), thereby elevating subjective well-being through positive affect dominance (Raudah, 2019). This aligns with Septarianda et al. (2020), who found a significant positive correlation. Thus, the research question is: Is there a relationship between forgiveness and subjective well-being among orphanage adolescents?

3. Method

The subjects of this study were 110 adolescents aged 13-18 years living in orphanages located in Bandung Regency, West Java, Indonesia. The study employed a non-probability purposive sampling technique to ensure participants met the specific inclusion criteria aligned with the research objectives. This sampling method was selected because the researcher established particular criteria relevant to the study's purpose, enabling effective addressing of the research problem (Sugiyono, 2018).

Table 1. Respondent Characteristic by Age

No.	Age	Frequency
1.	13 years	22
2.	14 years	16
3.	15 years	20
4.	16 years	22
5.	17 years	16
6.	18 years	14
	Total	110

Data collection involved three instruments: the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) (Diener et al., 1985) and the Scale of Positive and Negative Experience (SPANE) (Diener, 2009) to measure subjective well-being, both scales were modified by Febrianingsih (2023) for cultural and contextual adaptation. In addition, Forgiveness was measured using the Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivation Inventory (TRIM-18)

(McCullough et al., 2006), The researcher modified this scale based on forgiveness dimensions outlined by McCullough and Hoyt (2002) and McCullough (2006), specifically measuring avoidance motivation, revenge motivation, and benevolence motivation. The reliability coefficients were 0.818 for SWLS, 0.656 for SPANE-Positive, 0.746 for SPANE-Negative, and 0.952 for TRIM-18. The data analysis method in this study used Karl Pearson's product-moment correlation analysis to test the relationship between the two variables. Data analysis in this study was conducted using SPSS (Statistical Program for Social Sciences) version 23.0 for Windows.

4. Results and Discussion

The assumption tests or prerequisites that must be conducted before hypothesis testing are the normality test and the linearity test. The results of the normality and linearity tests are as follows.

Table 2. Results of the Normality Test

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a		
	Statistic	df	Sig.
Tolerance	,109	110	,003
Subjective Well-Being	,156	110	,000

Based on the results of the *Kolmogorov-Smirnov* test for the subjective well-being variable, K-S Z = 0.000 ($p < 0.050$) was obtained, meaning that the distribution of the subjective well-being variable data does not follow a normal distribution. Furthermore, the results of the *Kolmogorov-Smirnov* test for the forgiveness variable yielded a K-S Z value of 0.003 ($p < 0.050$), indicating that the distribution of the forgiveness variable data also does not follow a normal distribution.

Table 3. Linearity Test Results

			Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Subjective Well-Being * Forgiveness	Between Groups	(Combined)	23,031.308	49	470,027	8,002	,000
		Linearity	18,142.139	1	18,142.139	308,874	,000
	Deviation from Linearity	4,889.168	48	101,858	1,734	,022	
Within Groups			3,524,183	60	58,736		
Total			26,555,491	109			

Based on the results of the linearity test on the variables of forgiveness and subjective well-being, a linear coefficient of $F = 308.874$ was obtained with $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.050$), indicating a linear relationship between forgiveness (independent variable) and subjective well-being (dependent variable).

The results of the hypothesis test using *product-moment* correlation analysis, the correlation coefficient (r_{xy}) = 0.827 with $p = 0.000$ ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the hypothesis proposed in this study is accepted, namely that there is a positive relationship between forgiveness and subjective well-being among adolescents in orphanages. This positive relationship is demonstrated by the fact that the higher the level of forgiveness among adolescents in orphanages, the higher their subjective well-being; conversely, the lower the level of forgiveness among adolescents in orphanages, the lower their subjective well-being. The accepted hypothesis in this study indicates that forgiveness contributes as one of the factors determining the level of subjective well-being among adolescents in orphanages.

Previous studies have reinforced the findings of this research. The results of a study conducted by Datu (2013) indicate that forgiveness is significantly and positively associated with subjective well-being among adolescents. This is also consistent with the results of a study conducted by Septarianda (2020), which showed a positive relationship between forgiveness and subjective well-being among adolescents in orphanages; that is, the higher the level of forgiveness, the higher the subjective well-being among adolescents in orphanages.

Forgiveness is demonstrated by how a person is able to behave kindly toward someone who has hurt them, does not avoid them, and harbors no desire for revenge against the person who has caused the harm (the transgressor) (McCullough, 2000). In the study by Yao et al. (2017), it is explained that an unforgiving attitude can trigger negative feelings and psychological stress in individuals. Furthermore, the form of forgiveness that contributes to the subjective well-being of respondents lies in its ability to reduce the negative effects experienced by the individual.

McCullough (2000) explains that avoidance motivation is one aspect of forgiveness, whereby individuals who have been able to forgive will adopt an attitude of not avoiding personal contact with the person who has hurt them. Research conducted by Allemand, Hill, Ghaemmaghami, and Martin (2012) revealed that forgiveness can have a positive impact on an individual's life. Through forgiveness, individuals experience life satisfaction and an optimistic attitude in building interpersonal or social relationships with their surroundings (Mantovani, 2021).

In his research, McCullough (2000) revealed that revenge motivation is an individual's hope to not harbor hatred and not seek revenge against those who have hurt them. This is supported by Neil's (2007) assertion that an individual who chooses to forgive is, in effect, striving to suppress their desire for revenge. Therefore, forgiveness can reflect an individual's effort to maintain well-being through the enhancement of positive emotions and the reduction of negative emotions (Worthington, 2005).

Benevolence motivation is an individual's disposition to desire a positive relationship with someone who has caused them harm (McCullough, 2006). This is supported by research by Fincham et al. (2004), which found that one indicator of forgiveness is the reconciliation of the relationship with the person who caused the harm. This aligns with the research by Karemans et al. (2003), which found that forgiveness can enhance an individual's subjective well-being. Additionally, forgiveness can restore relationships with others and foster a sense of peace.

Table 4. Categorization of Subjective Well-being

Category	Guidelines	Score	N	Percentage
High	$X \geq (\mu + 0.75\sigma)$	$X \geq 30$	47	42.70%
Medium	$(\mu - 0.75\sigma) \leq X < (\mu + 0.75\sigma)$	$10 \leq X < 30$	22	20.00%
Low	$X < (\mu - 0.75\sigma)$	$X < 10$	41	37.30%
Total			110	100%

Notes:

μ : Hypothetical mean

σ : Hypothetical standard deviation

X : X – Subject score

From the categorization of the subjective well-being variable, it was found that 47 subjects (42.7%) had a high level of subjective well-being, 22 subjects (20%) had a moderate level of subjective well-being, and 41 subjects (37.3%) had a low level of subjective well-being. The foster care adolescents who were the subjects of this study had subjective well-being levels ranging from high to low.

Table 5. Categorization of Forgiveness

Category	Guidelines	Score	N	Percentage
High	$X \geq (\mu + 0.75\sigma)$	$X \geq 63$	63	57.30%
Medium	$(\mu - 0.75\sigma) \leq X < (\mu + 0.75\sigma)$	$45 \leq X < 63$	31	28.20%
Low	$X < (\mu - 0.75\sigma)$	$X < 45$	16	14.50%
		Total	100	100%

Notes:

μ : Hypothetical mean

σ : Hypothetical standard deviation

X : X – Subject score

Based on the categorization of the forgiveness variable, 63 subjects (57.3%) were found to have a high level of forgiveness, 31 subjects (28.2%) had a moderate level of forgiveness, and 16 subjects (14.5%) had a low level of forgiveness. Thus, it can be concluded that the majority of the orphanage adolescents who were the subjects of this study have a high level of forgiveness.

Overall, this study indicates that there is a positive relationship between forgiveness and subjective well-being among adolescents in orphanages. Furthermore, the results of the correlation analysis show a coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.683, indicating that the forgiveness variable contributes 68.3% to subjective well-being, while the remaining 31.7% is influenced by other factors not examined in this study. According to Diener (as cited in Dewi & Nasywa, 2019), it is stated that in addition to the forgiveness factor, subjective well-being can also be influenced by other factors such as social support, gratitude, personality, self-esteem, and spirituality.

5. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that the research hypothesis is accepted; therefore, it can be concluded that there is a significant positive relationship between forgiveness and subjective well-being among adolescents living in orphanages. This finding interprets that the higher the level of forgiveness exhibited by adolescents in orphanages, the higher their subjective well-being will be. Conversely, a lower level of forgiveness in these adolescents is associated with lower subjective well-being. Furthermore, based on the categorization results, it can be concluded that the majority of adolescents in the orphanage who participated as research subjects possess a high level of forgiveness, with subjective well-being levels ranging from high to low.

Based on these findings, the researcher offers several suggestions. For the research subjects, specifically adolescents in orphanages who fall into the low category of forgiveness, it is hoped that subjects can enhance their capacity for forgiveness as an effort to build better interpersonal relationships and avoid harboring grudges, which will ultimately allow them to achieve higher subjective well-being. Additionally, for future researchers who have an interest in investigating similar issues or wish to develop this research further, it is recommended to consider conducting follow-up studies on other influencing factors or by adding different variables. Future researchers should also consider investigating the "effect" or "influence" of these variables to better understand the causal patterns between them.

6. Reference

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