

Improving Friendship Quality Through Forgiveness Among Adolescents with Conflict

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Abstract: *Adolescents need a good quality of friendship because it can build a positive effect on them. However, conflict or problem will always appear; thus, forgiveness is necessary to cope with the conflicts. With forgiveness, someone will see conflict differently, as forgiveness can increase the quality of friendship. This study aims to determine the correlation between forgiveness and friendship quality in adolescents. The method used in this research is a quantitative correlation involving 288 students of senior high school as participants. This study used two kinds of scales to collect the data: TRIM-18 and FQS. These scales have been adapted in Bahasa Indonesia and tested for validity and reliability. The result showed that the first hypothesis was rejected, which means that a high level of forgiveness is not comparable to the level of friendship quality ($r = -0.224$).*

Keywords: *conflict, forgiveness, friendship quality*

Introduction

Friendship is a relationship where two people spend time together, interacting in various situations, and providing emotional support (Baron & Byrne, 2004). Friendship is a place for adolescents to express their feelings when it seems impossible to express them to the family. Friendship is related to happiness and satisfaction, but building a good friendship is not only about good things. Adolescents in friendship will often spend time together, so it does not rule out the possibility of conflict. Therefore, friendship quality is determined by both good and bad dimensions together (Fai & Phebe, 2007).

Literature shows the importance of friendship quality in children as a diversion of the family and a means to be active in the social environment (Heiman, 2014; Zucchetti et al., 2015). However, friendship quality becomes important in life-span development. In adolescents, the friendship will be established along with the activities carried out by peers and influences their involvement in school, good self-acceptance, and good self-esteem (Berndt, 2002). High quality of friendship can build self-esteem and support social adjustment and stress management (Berndt, 2002). The friendship quality is seen from the overall dimensions that exist, good and bad behavior, intimacy, and some other positive things as well as low levels of conflict, competition, and other negative things (Berndt, 2002; Fai & Phebe, 2007).

Conflict happens in social interactions where couples have different goals, interests, desires, expectations, or opinions. In some cases, it can come in verbal and physical fights (Palari et al., 2009). A high level of friendship quality is marked by a high level of positive activity (helping behavior and closeness) and

low level of negative activity (conflict and competition) (Berndt, 2002). So, to improve the quality of friendship, it is necessary to reduce conflicts. This is one of the qualitative aspects of friendship quality, namely conflict resolution. With a proper conflict resolution, conflicts can be resolved efficiently and fairly (Parker & Asher, 1993)

Forgiveness can help individuals to understand and solve the interpersonal conflict, develop and maintain a relationship (Palari et al., 2009; Utami, 2015). The way each individual shows his inconvenience toward the conflict can be different. Some immediately say it, but some others may be silent and wait for the problem to solve itself. It all depends on the level of pain they feel.

One of the stages in forgiveness is the decision phase that occurs when someone starts to reason and about the possibility to forgive (APA, 2006). There are several factors that influence a person in forgiving, such as closeness, commitment, and satisfaction (McCullough, 2000). So when someone commits to maintain his relationship, the forgiveness process will be faster.

Previous research in Nebraska with subjects aged 12-18 years showed that relationship quality affects forgiveness. Commitment to friendship significantly influences forgiveness regardless of how severe a person hurts (Wernli, 2001). However, another research found that there is a strong relationship between forgiveness and the satisfaction of a relationship (Poole, 2011).

Someone who decides to forgive will consider several things because it is a difficult thing to do, especially if his closest person hurts. Even before someone can forgive, there are some processes that he must go through. After someone feels hurt and revenge, he will begin to reason and think of the possibility to forgive. Therefore, avoidance is a natural thing that

someone does when involved in a conflict with a friend. Similarly, there is a strong reason why someone is finally able to forgive his friend's mistakes. There are several factors that affect a person's ability to forgive, one of which is a commitment to a relationship (McCullough, 2000). The higher a person values a relationship, the more empathy he shows. Empathy has the capacity as an essential element in forgiveness (McCullough, 2000). For adolescents, friendship quality can affect their wellbeing in various aspects of life. For instance, a study by Ashwin found that the quality of friendship is a predictor of adjustments in college and academic achievement (Gleckel, 2015).

There are two levels of friendship quality: high and low level. Conflict is one of the aspects that affect the level of friendship quality. Conflict is also an inseparable part of a human relationship because the conflict itself is a social process. Things that need to be considered are not only the conflict and the causes but also how the conflict is responded and resolved efficiently and fairly. Forgiveness is a meaningful way to resolve conflicts because conceptually, forgiveness reduces the desire to hurt or get revenge against other people.

This study aims to determine the relationship between forgiveness and friendship quality among adolescents. This study hypothesized that there is a positive relationship between forgiveness and friendship quality.

Method

This study used a quantitative approach to determine the relationship between forgiveness and friendship quality among adolescents. The participants were 288 Indonesian students ($SD = 0.9149$). This study used two kinds of instruments to collect the data: TRIM-18 (Transgression-Related Inventory of Motivation Scale) and FQS (Friendship Quality Scale). There were 15 of 18 items of TRIM-18 scale with Cronbach's Alpha 0.816. The TRIM-18 is based on McCullough's theory of forgiveness about three dimensions of forgiveness (avoidance motivation, revenge motivation, and benevolence motivation) (McCullough, Root, & Cohen, 2006). This study also used 20 of 22 items of FQS with Cronbach's Alpha 0.878. FQS was formed by Bukowski and based on Berndt and Perry's theory of friendship quality about five dimensions of friendship quality (companionship, conflict, help, security, and closeness) (Ponti et al., 2010).

In general, this study had five steps. The first step was the preparation, in which the researcher prepared the research design. The second step was trying out the instruments to ensure their validity and reliability. The third step was collecting the data after all of the instruments' items were valid and reliable. The fourth step was data analysis to find the compatibility of the

data and hypotheses. The data analysis used was product-moment Pearson correlation analysis in SPSS 21. The last step was writing the discussion and conclusion that contained the scientific reason why the hypothesis was approved or rejected.

Results

Table 1: Correlation Analysis between Forgiveness and Friendship Quality

	Index of Analysis
Correlation Coefficient (r)	-0.224
Determination Coefficient (r ²)	0.05
Standard of Significant	0.01 (1%)
Significant Score (p)	0.000

The data analysis shows that the data is significant with a score of $r = -0.224$, which suggests that the direction of the relationship between variables is negative. The results mean that when the level of forgiveness is high, then the level of friendship quality is low. In contrast, when the level of friendship quality is low, then the level of forgiveness is high. The coefficient value of the determination shows how much the contribution of forgiveness to friendship quality (0.05 or 5%). It means that only 5% of adolescent friendships quality is affected by forgiveness, while the rest is influenced by other factors. In other words, the hypothesis is rejected because forgiveness has a negative correlation with friendship quality.

Discussion

Based on the results of the data analysis, even though the negative direction appears, these two variables still have a significant relationship, so forgiveness still contributes to the level of friendship quality. It is because friendship cannot be separated from conflicts, which can hurt or be considered a painful event for the persons involved.

For adolescents, peer groups are fundamental because they spend most of their time outside the house with peers. School, extracurricular activities, and tutoring are the main reasons a teenager gets used to interactions with peers. One of the essential types of peer groups is friendship (Wernli, 2001). However, through togetherness, closeness, help, and mutual care, teen friendship may be disrupted. As more and more teenagers spend time together, the possibility of heartbreak will open up. In a friendship, an individual will be engaged in another person's world based on deep trust and by sharing things with each other (Mussen et al. in Wardani, 2015). Someone who has high trust in a friend tends to forgive the mistakes of his friend. Trust can be earned through one's ability to keep promises, be a good listener, and do something that makes other people happy. In pursuit of trust and quality friendship, mistakes made by the people involved can cause

heartbreak and even a prolonged conflict.

Then why does the data result show a negative correlation? Although the hypothesis in this study was not accepted, there are several things that affect the results.

Forgiveness is essential and sensitive if someone wants to continue a relationship, but there are other possibilities why forgiveness can actually reduce the quality of friendship. There are two types of culture, namely individualistic culture and collectivistic culture (Barrera, n.d). In an individualistic culture, people tend to live independently. In contrast, people in collectivistic cultures see themselves as part of a group. Based on the data, on average, participants have ten people whom they call friends, which means they tend to be part of a collectivistic culture. Indonesians indeed tend to be collectivistic, especially Javanese. Javanese culture always maintains a balance, never putting something in a position that can cause chaos (Ghuzairoh, 2015). So the reason someone gives forgiveness is that he avoids more severe conflicts. They forgive others without thinking about the mistakes and focuses more on their responsibilities to the group. Forgiveness in a collectivistic culture is a social obligation because of the responsibility for a relationship, whereas in an individualistic culture, forgiveness is given personally and consciously (Barrera, n.d). Culture has been taught since childhood and applied in the child's future life. Indeed, there is a difference in forgiving between Indonesian and people in other countries. This could be the reason why the results of this study are not following the initial hypothesis.

Kelley states that there are three ways to forgive. First is direct forgiveness, where the person clearly says that he has forgiven the other person. The second way is indirect forgiveness, which uses other forms of speech, such as humor, hugs, and eye contact. The last one is conditional forgiveness, in which a condition is given (Merolla, 2008). The research shows that direct forgiveness is the most common way. However, the best way to forgive is by conditional forgiveness. A condition is given to build a better relationship; therefore, this method is mostly used in a romantic relationship than in a friendship (Merolla, 2008). This method is carried out by discussing all errors or conflicts that occur and gives conditions for not tolerating the next mistake. However, this method indeed allows the emergence of a worse risk. For example, people who make mistakes feel no longer trusted by their friends or cannot build a stronger commitment after the conflict.

Javanese adolescents tend to choose indirect forgiveness to avoid discussion about the problem and some painful things that might happen. Humor or hugs can be an appropriate diversion for them. However, the disadvantage of indirect forgiveness is that there is no commitment, and the conflict is not solved, and there is a

possibility of neglect. It leads to another conflict. Some participants revealed that the conflict experienced was just misunderstanding when doing the school assignment, but it continued to the daily attitude between them. However, it can be solved when one of them decides to speak up, and forgiveness happens over time. Other participants revealed more serious conflicts involving their parents. These statements indicate that there are differences in forgiving and that it can be influenced by the type of conflict and the level of the pain. The research found that forgiveness could significantly influence the quality of friendship only at the level of violation or small heartbreak (Wernli, 2001).

Conclusion

Indonesian adolescents need to know the whole meaning of forgiveness and how to forgive because making a quality friendship after conflicts is not easy. In conditional forgiveness, preventing worse conflicts is required. Meanwhile, a good quality of friendship is an important part of life, especially for the self-improvement of adolescents.

Limitation

The background of this study is Indonesian adolescents who have a conflict with friends. The limitation is the different perceptions of the conflict of the participants. These differences can affect the data collected.

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