

Effect of Forgiveness on Life Satisfaction Mediated by Gratitude

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Abstract. Life satisfaction is indicated by the success of resolving conflict and contributing to the society. Some factors that have an important role in life satisfaction are forgiveness and gratitude. This study aims to determine the effect of forgiveness on life satisfaction mediated by gratitude. This study was conducted on 50 students at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang. The forgiveness variable uses the HFS scale from Thomson, for the gratitude variable using the GQ-6 scale from McCullough, and for the life satisfaction variable using the SWLS scale developed by Diener. The data analysis used was a mediation regression test using the Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21.00 and Hayes software. The results of this study indicate that the effect of forgiveness (X) on life satisfaction (Y) when passing gratitude (M) has a probability value of 0.000, which means that $p < 0.05$, there is an effect of forgiveness on life satisfaction mediated by gratitude. Mediation that occurs is partial mediation. From the R^2 value it can be seen that forgiveness influences life satisfaction with the existence of a gratitude mediation of 41.1%.

Keywords: Life Satisfaction, forgiveness, gratitude

Introduction

Life satisfaction is indicated by the success of resolving conflict and contributing to the society (Kaleta & Mróz, 2018). Life satisfaction is a cognitive aspect on subjective well being and usually defined as overall individual evaluation of their life quality in accordance to the criteria they have determined (Eldeleklioglu, 2015). Life satisfaction is associated with some aspects in someone's life, including entertainment, relaxation, love, family, and friendship (Eldeleklioglu, 2015). Struggle for living a worthwhile life to achieve life satisfaction will always exist throughout someone's life (Kaleta & Mróz, 2018). There are some factors affecting life satisfaction, one of them is forgiveness (Szczeniak & Soares, 2011).

Forgiveness is an action to decrease hatred and try to offer virtue while an individual experiencing injustice condition (Kaleta & Mróz, 2018). Forgiveness helps constructing and maintaining connection that bring satisfaction and psychological well being of an individual (Kaleta & Mróz, 2018). Some studies have revealed that *forgiveness* is linked to a close relation (Kaleta & Mróz, 2018). A study done by Szczeniak & Soares (2011) demonstrated that subjects with forgiveness condition show more life satisfaction than subject who are not in forgiveness condition. This suggests that there is a positive correlation between forgiveness and life satisfaction (Szczeniak & Soares, 2011). Forgiveness can help someone to maintain relation and leads to life satisfaction (Kaleta & Mróz, 2018).

Some studies discuss forgiveness and life satisfaction. Studies conducted by Ayten & Ferhan (2016) proposed that there is effect of forgiveness on life satisfaction. Eldeleklioglu (2015) in his study elucidated that forgiveness is one of the aspects affecting life satisfaction. Another study carried out by Kaleta & Mróz (2018) illustrates that there is correlation between forgiveness and life satisfaction.

Among the factors affecting life satisfaction, there is one factor related to forgiveness, that is gratitude. Forgiveness and gratitude is the power among individuals that help someone to generate positive emotion and help creating god relation to achieve well being (Breen, Kashdan, Lenser, & Fincham, 2010). If someone is hard to forgive, then they will feel difficult to feel grateful (Narula, 2015). Forgiveness is a fundamental step to experience gratitude and happiness in life (Narula, 2015).

Therefore, the writer assumes that the presence of gratitude variable will strengthen the relation between forgiveness and life satisfaction. A study done by Sapmaz, Yıldırım, Topçuoğlu, Nalbant, & Sızır (2016) found that there is a correlation between forgiveness and gratitude. Datu (2015)'s study also discovered that there is a relation between forgiveness and gratitude. Some studies shows that gratitude is related to life satisfaction (Salvador-ferrer, 2017). Study conducted by Aricioglu (2016) demonstrated that gratitude mediates the relation between forgiveness and student's life satisfaction. This study aims to see the relation between forgiveness and life satisfaction with the presence of mediating variable, that is gratitude of Muhammadiyah Malang University students. The hypothesis proposed is as follow: there is direct effect of forgiveness on student's life satisfaction, there is effect of forgiveness on student's gratitude, there is effect of gratitude on student's life satisfaction, and there is effect of forgiveness on life satisfaction mediated by gratitude in students.

Literature Review

Forgiveness

Forgiving is a prevention of strong negative emotion, positive, and based on love, to a those who violate or hurt someone (Sastre, Vinsonneau, Neto, Girard, & Mullet, 2003). That love-based positive emotion is empathy, sympathy, friendship love, compassion, or romantic love (Sastre et al., 2003). Rey and Pargament define

forgiveness as releasing negative influences as enmity and negative cognition as vengeance thought in dealing with considerable injustice (Sastre et al., 2003). Forgiving power exists in the reality when a person who is treated unjustly decides to reduce hatred and try to offer kindness to the person who did injustice to him (Kaleta & Mróz, 2018).

Gratitude

Gratitude is an appreciation experienced by people when somebody was doing something kind or helpful for them or can be regarded as thankfulness (Froh et al., 2011). Gratitude has been conceptualized as emotional characteristic, mood, or emotion (McCullough et al., 1998). Gratitude promote beneficial exchanges and relationship among people and the welfare of the bigger society (Froh et al., 2011). Gratitude is important for some reason, among them are that gratitude can build positive relationship, and it can give positive effect regarding happiness and life satisfaction (Froh et al., 2011). McCullough (2002) developed GQ-6 that is six items reported scale to measure gratitude level in adult population.

Life Satisfaction

Subjective well-being structure has been conceptualized as comprising two important components, affective and cognitive component (Pavot & Diener, 2009). Cognitive component of subjective welfare is regarded as life satisfaction. Life satisfaction is total sum of eo individuals pereception towards the whole aspects of their lives including family, society, social relationship, and many other (Linsiya, 2015). According to Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin (1985), life satisfaction is a general assessment with respect to somebody's life quality from various criteria. Life satisfaction refers to judgement process, where individuals assess their life quality based on a unique range of criteria they have determined themselves (Pavot & Diener, 2009). The criteria of life satisfaction among individuals is different, depending on how much they give themselves score so they can achieve life satisfaction. Although there are some general agreements concerning the concept of a good life, such as health and successful relationship, an individual tends to decide different weight for each life satisfaction (Athay, 2012).

Method

This study is a quantitative research. Quantitative method is a research method used to test specific population or sample using research instrument and analyzed statistically to test the hypothesis that has been determined. The model used in this study is a mediation regression model to see the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable that is mediated by another variable.

Subjects involved in this study are 50 students who study in Muhammadiyah Malang University. The criteria used to select the subject of this study are that they have

to be an active students that study in Muhammadiyah Malang University. Purposive random sampling is done to choose the sample by setting the specific characteristic that is suitable for the purpose of this study so the research question can be answered (Sugiyono, 2011).

The dependent variable of this research is life satisfaction while the independent variable is forgiveness. Mediating variable used is gratitude. One of the life satisfaction scales is Satisfaction With Life Scale (SWLS) developed by Diener et. al. In 1985. This scale is designed to measure the cognitive assessment in general of someone's life satisfaction (E Diener, Emmons, Larsen, & Griffin, 1985). There are 5 items in general with 7 point scale in each item. The 7 point scale are ranged from strongly agree – scored 7 to strongly disagree – scored 1. The realibility of this scale is 0.80.

Scale to measure gratitude is using Gratitude Questionare 6 (GQ-6) developed by McCullough in 2002 comprising six items. Each item is 7 point scaled ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree – scored 7 and 1, respectively. The reliability value is 0.82. Scale used to measure forgiveness variable is the adaptation of *Heartland Forgiveness Scale* (HFS) developed by Thompson (2005) that consists of 18 items. Those items are classified into three aspects, namely self-forgiveness – ranging from number 1 to 6 of the items, forgiveness to others aspect – number 7 to 12, and forgiveness to situation happened – number 13 to 18 from the items. The reliability value is 0.93.

The beginning of the research is the preparation stage. In this stage, the researcher prepare the scales that were going to be used as the base for measurement. Forgiveness variable was measured using McCullough's GQ-6 scale, life satisfaction variable measurement was using SWLS developed by Diener. Research was done by spreading those scales through Google Form to students of Muhammadiyah Malang University. To analyze the obtained data, mediation regression test was conducted using Statistical Program for Social Sciences (SPSS) software version 21.00 and Hayes software.

Results

From the results of the study showed the number of subjects in the forgiveness variable were 50 subjects and had an average of 51.28 with a standard deviation of 12,76. Subjects on the variable of life satisfaction as much as 50 with an average value of 15.08 and a standard deviation value of 2.35. Subjects on the gratitude variable were 50 subjects with an average value of 17.74 and a standard value of deviation 2,28.

The result shows that coefficient c value is -0.111 and has probability value 0.000, in other word, $p < 0.05$. It indicates that there is an effect of forgiveness (X) on life satisfaction (Y). From R^2 , it can be seen that forgiveness affects life value for 35.9%. β value is in -0.599 with t value as many as -5.186.

The effect of X on M has coefficient a value of -0.068 with probability value of 0.007 ($p < 0.05$). Thus, there is an effect of forgiveness (X) on gratitude (M).

The R^2 value illustrates that forgiveness affects grateful as many as 14.3%. β value is -0.378 while the t value is -2.826.

The effect of M on Y has coefficient b value of -0,254 with probability value of 0.047 ($p < 0.05$). Thus, there is an effect of gratitude (M) on life satisfaction (Y). β value is -0.246 while the t value is -5,726. For effect of X on Y through M , the result shows that coefficient c' value is -0.128 ($\beta c' = -0.692$). The probability value of coefficient c' is 0.000 or $p < 0.05$ which means that it is significant. The R^2 value illustrates that forgiveness affect life satisfaction mediated by gratitude as many as 41.1%.

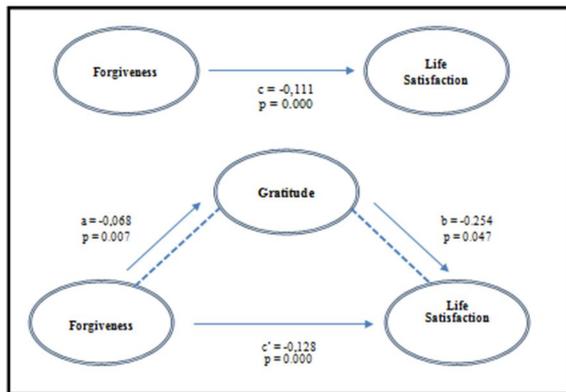


Figure 1. Total Effect, Direct Effect, and Indirect Effect.

The result shows that the value of total effect is -0.111 with $p < 0.05$ which indicates that there is an effect of variable X that is forgiveness on variable Y or life satisfaction. The direct effect value is -0.128 with $p < 0.05$ suggesting that there is a direct effect of forgiveness on life satisfaction without passing gratitude. The value of indirect effect is 0.0172 with $p < 0.05$ telling that there is an effect of forgiveness on life satisfaction mediated by gratitude. Because the indirect effect value is significant, mediation occurs. Mediation that occurs is partial mediation.

Discussion

From those values mentioned before, it can be seen that the effect of forgiveness (X) on life satisfaction (Y) while passing gratitude (M) has probability value of 0.000 or $p < 0.05$ suggesting that there is effect of forgiveness on life satisfaction that is mediated by gratitude. Mediation occurred is partial mediation. R^2 value shows that forgiveness affects life satisfaction as many as 41.1%. The β value is -0.128 and t value is -5.726.

Total effect value is -0.111 indicating that there is effect on variable X that is forgiveness on variable Y that is life satisfaction. The direct effect value is -0.128 suggesting that there is direct effect of forgiveness on life satisfaction without being mediated by gratitude. However, the indirect effect value shows figure of 0.0172 implying that there is an effect of forgiveness on life satisfaction mediated by gratitude. This result is in

line with study done by Arıcıoğlu (2016) that proposed that gratitude can mediate the relation between forgiveness and life satisfaction.

Individuals who have high level of forgiveness and gratitude will be more easy achieving life satisfaction. On the other way around, when an individual has low level of forgiveness and gratitude, then he tends to achieve live satisfaction harder. From the calculation t score table of forgiveness variable, it is showed that 25 out of 50 subjects has high level of forgiveness while the 25 other subjects' forgiveness level are low. On the life satisfaction variable, 21 out of 50 subjects show high level of life satisfaction, the remaining subjects are having low level of life satisfaction. The level of gratitude of 23 out of 50 subject are high while the other 27 subjects' level of gratitude are low. It is deducible that students of Muhammadiyah Malang University has low score on those three variables – forgiveness, gratitude and life satisfaction. This result is in accordance with Sastre (2003)'s statement that in this era, individuals are more feeling hatred rather than giving forgiveness when they get hurt or treated unjustly by others.

Forgiveness is an important factor to support life satisfaction (Tiwari, 2015). If individuals are involved in a conflict but difficult to give forgiveness, then they will not achieve life satisfaction. Similar thing apply to gratitude. Individuals with high gratitude, will achieve life satisfaction more easily (Salvador-ferrer, 2017). It is also supported by another study done by Robustelli & Whisman (2016) on subjects belong to middle and late adulthood stage in Japan and the US which proposed that gratitude could support life satisfaction achievement.

Conclusion

From those values mentioned before, it can be seen that the effect of forgiveness (X) on life satisfaction (Y) while passing gratitude (M) has probability value of 0.000 or $p < 0.05$ suggesting that there is effect of forgiveness on life satisfaction that is mediated by gratitude. Nevertheless, this study is weak on the quantity of subject involved so that it could not represent the population.

Therefore, the future research is suggested to increase the number of subjects involved and to examine students on the wider context such as in Malang, in the Central Java, etc. In addition, further research can also replace independent variables into other variables such as psychological well-being, subjective well-being, or happiness.

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