

The Relationship Between Forgiveness and Happiness in Late Adolescents with Divorced Parents: A Correlational Study in Indonesia

Eunike Lisi Cintani Putri¹, Dewita Karema Sarajar².

Psychology Study Program, Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Indonesia¹

Psychology Study Program, Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana, Indonesia²

E-mail: lisieunike@gmail.com¹, dewita.sarajar@uksw.edu²

Correspondent Author: Eunike Lisi Cintani Putri, lisieunike@gmail.com

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Abstrack

This research explores the relationship between forgiveness and happiness in late adolescents from divorced families. With the increasing divorce rate in Indonesia, the psychological impact on children is a concern. The purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between forgiveness and happiness of late adolescents who have a divorced parent background. A quantitative correlational approach with measuring instruments used for forgiveness is the Transgression Interpersonal Motivation Inventory (TRIM-18) and happiness using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ involving 200 late adolescents aged 18-22 years across Indonesia. Data was collected through an online questionnaire measuring the level of forgiveness and happiness. Results showed a significant positive correlation ($r = 0.492$, $p < 0.01$), indicating that higher levels of forgiveness were related to greater happiness. This highlights forgiveness as an important psychological mechanism that helps adolescents turn negative experiences into personal strengths, improving their emotional well-being.

Keywords: forgiveness, happiness, late adolescents, parent, divorce

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi hubungan antara pemaafan dan kebahagiaan pada remaja akhir dari keluarga yang bercerai. Dengan meningkatnya angka perceraian di Indonesia, dampak psikologis pada anak-anak menjadi perhatian. Tujuan penelitian ini mengetahui hubungan antara forgiveness dan happiness remaja akhir yang memiliki latar belakang orang tua yang bercerai. Pendekatan kuantitatif korelasional dengan alat ukur yang digunakan untuk pemaafan ialah Transgression Interpersonal Motivation Inventory (TRIM-18) serta kebahagiaan menggunakan Oxford Happiness Questionnaire (OHQ yang melibatkan 200 remaja akhir berusia 18-22 tahun di seluruh Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner online yang mengukur tingkat pemaafan dan kebahagiaan. Hasil menunjukkan korelasi positif signifikan ($r = 0,492$, $p < 0,01$), yang menunjukkan bahwa tingkat pemaafan yang lebih tinggi terkait dengan kebahagiaan yang lebih besar. Ini menyoroti pemaafan sebagai mekanisme psikologis penting yang membantu remaja mengubah pengalaman negatif menjadi kekuatan pribadi, meningkatkan kesejahteraan emosional mereka.

Keywords: pemaafan, kebahagiaan, remaja akhir, orangtua, bercerai

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INTRODUCTION

Increasing divorce rates are now occurring in Indonesia from 2020 to 2023, as reported by the Statistical Yearbook of Indonesia 2023 report published by the Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS) in 2020, stating that there were 291,677 divorce cases in Indonesia. This number then increased by 53.5% in 2021. The upward trend in divorce cases continued until 2022, with a percentage increase of 15.31%. In 2022, divorce cases reached 516,334, the highest number in Indonesia in the last six years, based on data from the Badan Pusat Statistik 2023.

Parental divorce for children is the destruction of the family structure they have, as well as being one of the hardest blows that can shake the child's mental condition, so that the sense of protection and tranquility that children should feel can be lost (Nuroniayah, 2023). According to Aristawati et al. (2023), the yearly increase in the divorce rate broadly impacts various parties. The divorced couple/parents and the wider family, including children, are affected. The impact of divorce can have significant negative effects on children's academic, health, and psychological aspects. Impacts that can arise from parental divorce include shyness, easily showing anger, difficulty focusing attention, losing a sense of respect for parents, being less sensitive to the surrounding environment, losing life goals, and feeling no security in living life, and they tend to blame parents for the divorce that occurred.

According to Susanto & Hartini (2022), parental divorce can have various negative impacts on children entering adolescence, such as anxiety, feelings of unwantedness, sadness, loneliness, anger, guilt, problems in coping skills and self-adjustment, and the risk of mental health problems such as stress, depression, and trauma. This needs attention because parents' separation puts children in difficult conditions, such as growth and development, love, attention, and a lack of parental guidance (Hidayati, 2021).

Through a survey conducted by the researcher of 11 late adolescents aged 18-22 who came from divorced families, it was found that 7 out of 11 late adolescents expressed sadness because they could not find harmony between their parents when they needed it. They felt that divorce was the best decision for their parents. In addition, 5 out of 11 late adolescents faced motivational issues in carrying out daily activities and had difficulty maintaining focus, negatively impacting their productivity. In addition, 9 out of 11 late adolescents also revealed that they tend to seek happiness from others due to the lack of support from their parents, which makes it difficult for them to feel the happiness that comes from their parents.

According to Maksutaj (2021), happiness is one of human life's primary goals: having the best quality of life and well-being. This is why it is so important to pay special attention to children's happiness; if we raise and educate children, we will have a better and healthier life in the future. However, children cannot do it alone without the help of their parents. According to Rayani (2018), a person's happiness is disturbed. For a child who is a victim of his parents' divorce, the child will experience a downturn and disappointment over the conditions that occur. A child also experiences despair, anger, and disappointment with his parents, causing negative affect. According to Vincent (2021), when parents experience divorce, families who care for children will usually experience a decrease in living standards. This will eventually lead to greater difficulties in the family, and children who experience divorce will face challenges in adjusting. Children who live in such an environment tend to feel depressed and more emotional than children who come from families that do not experience conflict (divorce), which greatly affects the happiness of the child.



Happiness expected by children of divorce victims includes still having a harmonious family and self-achievement, the process of recovering from negative to positive emotions, social support from friends, and supporting factors such as gratitude, religiosity, ability to overcome problems, and life lessons from experience (Putri & Adri, 2024). The effects of parental divorce will continue until the child enters the developmental period towards adulthood (Liana & Suryadi, 2018).

Growing up in a divorced family can cause emotional wounds, which can affect commitment, trust, and satisfaction in relationships. Therefore, it is essential for a child who comes from a divorced family to overcome these emotional wounds to build good relationships with others and reorganize good relationships with parents. One of the steps that can be taken is the forgiveness method (Harefa & Savira, 2021). Forgiveness is an effective way to overcome stress and related behavioral problems by encouraging children to reconcile with the party that caused the problem, such as a divorce. Forgiveness is the ability to let go of the right to revenge and blame and develop compassion and love for the perpetrator who committed the wrongful act. Although forgiveness cannot change the event, it can change perceptions, emotions, mental associations, and understanding of its meaning. Forgiveness can help heal wounds within a person and improve interpersonal relationships that were previously hostile and hurtful (Siburian et al., 2023).

According to Shekhar et al. (2016), forgiveness is a form of behavior that releases negative emotions towards someone who has hurt our feelings and treats them with empathy. Recent research shows that individuals who can forgive tend to feel happier, have lower levels of worry, and have better and positive feelings towards themselves and the person who has hurt them than those who do not forgive. In addition, people who apply forgiveness more readily also show lower bodily responses to stress. One should be able to increase the ability to forgive others, even though it is excruciating; forgiveness can bring feelings of calmness and happiness to the individual. In other words, forgiveness is one of the factors that can increase or support a person's happiness (Safaria et al., 2017). According to Click or tap here to enter text., individuals with a high level of forgiveness will feel happier, worry less, and have more positive thoughts than people who do not forgive easily.

According to the results of previous research on adolescents conducted by Susanto & Hartini (2022), the ability to forgive situations of parental divorce has a vital role in increasing happiness in adolescents who come from families with divorced parents. This research was also conducted by Permana (2017), on high school students, where his study concluded that most students whose parents divorced had a level of gratitude and happiness, which showed that these students could rise from a difficult time after their parents divorced. Age and duration of divorce can affect an individual's ability to forgive and achieve happiness after divorce. Understanding these factors can help individuals better manage the recovery and transition process.

In this study, forgiveness refers to changes in individual behavior characterized by reducing the desire for revenge, avoidance, and fostering the intention to reconcile with the perpetrator (McCullough, 2000). In addition, forgiveness is also understood as a conscious choice to respond to injustice with compassion and moral principles. Researchers focus on McCullough's theory because it emphasizes the aspect of behavioral change in rebuilding tenuous relationships. Meanwhile, happiness is understood as a positive mood and emotional well-being obtained through meaningful activities without harmful elements. Argyle and Hills' theory was chosen because it



provides a comprehensive definition that includes emotional and psychological aspects of happiness. In late adolescence (aged 18-22 years), individuals are in the identity formation phase (Erikson, 1968), and the experience of parental divorce can hinder this developmental process. However, forgiving is essential in helping adolescents accept their circumstances and build a more positive identity.

With the background that has been written, the researcher will research the relationship between forgiveness and happiness in late adolescents who have a background of divorce of their parents. This study aims to understand whether the ability to forgive divorced parents can relate to the level of happiness of children entering late adolescence. The difference in the previous research is that it has the novelty of the newest subject, namely, examining that occurs in late adolescents aged 18-22. According to Santrock (2007), late adolescence or adolescence is a transitional period in a person's development that bridges the childhood phase to the adult phase, starting from the age of 18 to 22 years. Thus, this study will provide insight into how the forgiveness process can correlate with the happiness of a late adolescent child who experiences parental divorce.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational design that aims to find the relationship between forgiveness and happiness in late adolescents with divorced parents. This study's population is late adolescents from a divorced parent background. In this study, the population cannot be determined with certainty, the number to be sampled; this states that the population is categorized as infinite (Churiyah and Hagayuna, 2017). The sample used by researchers in this study used an accidental sampling technique, which is random, where anyone who is accidentally encountered and meets the required characteristics can be used as a respondent or research subject. Therefore, the sample selection is not based on prior planning but on coincidence or accident during the data collection (Sugiyono, 2013).

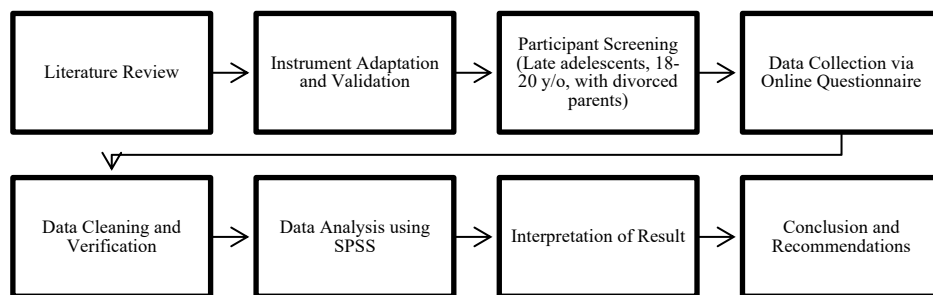
Forgiveness was measured using the TRIMS 18 (Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivation) scale by McCullough et al. (2006), which the researcher adapted. The dimensions used are Avoidance motivation, Revenge motivation, and Benevolence motivation. The item trial has been carried out and obtained a reliability of 0.910; no an item is declared cancelled because it does not have low discrimination power (<0.3). Therefore, the scale consists of 18 items: five favourable items and 13 unfavourable items. Alternative answers are based on a Likert scale with four answer options, namely SS (Strongly Agree), S (Agree), Neutral, TS (Disagree), and STS (Strongly Disagree). Happiness is measured using the Oxford Happiness Questionnaire scale proposed by Argyle and Hills (2002), which measures instruments translated and developed by researchers. With dimensions of Satisfaction with life, Efficacy, Positive outlook, Cheerfulness, Self-esteem, empathy, and well-being. Based on the theory proposed by Argyle and Hills (2002). The process of validating the measurement of the adapted scale has gone through a review with the supervisor and testing the measuring instrument by distributing 50 participants to ensure suitability for the conditions they experience; Participants are screened to confirm the status of parental divorce, and participants are only late adolescents who have experienced divorce in life. Based on the results of the reliability test and item discrimination, no items were cancelled and obtained a reliability of 0.946. Alternative answers are based on a Likert scale with four answer options, namely SS (Strongly Agree), S (Agree), TS (Disagree), and STS (Strongly Disagree).



Data analysis techniques were carried out with the help of SPSS 26.0 for Windows to test the correlation between forgiveness and happiness in late adolescents with divorced parents. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov method can be used to test the normality of the data. A data distribution follows a normal distribution if the significance value obtained from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). In other words, if the p-value resulting from the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test exceeds 0.05, it can be concluded that the data is not usually distributed. The linearity test between two variables can be done through the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) test. A linear relationship between the two variables can occur if the significance value obtained from the F test is greater than 0.05 ($p > 0.05$). In other words, if the p-value from the ANOVA test exceeds 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a significant linear relationship between the two variables tested. Hypothesis testing is conducted to test the correlation or relationship between two variables, namely forgiveness and happiness. If the data shows a normal distribution, then the correlation test used is Pearson's product-moment correlation. Two variables will be considered to have a significant relationship if the significance level (p-value) obtained from the correlation test is less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). That is, if the p-value resulting from the Pearson or Spearman correlation test is less than 0.05, it can be concluded that there is a significant relationship between forgiveness and happiness.

Diagram 1.

Flow Chart of the Research Implementation



RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Scene Orientation and Research Data Collection

The research was conducted with the criteria of late adolescent participants aged 18-22 years who experienced the condition of their parents having divorced, using a national research scale. Researchers also asked for help from 1 Instagram community @behome.id and 1 TikTok content creator @atapurmah, because a lot of content and audience come from children who experience parental divorce. In addition, researchers also distributed to several WhatsApp groups of church youth, broken home communities.

Research Participants

The total number of respondents obtained was 200 child respondents from divorced parents who were distributed across social media.



Table 1.
 Research Participant Demographics

Age	Number of Fillers	Percentage
18 years old	50	25%
19 years old	37	18,5%
20 years old	28	14%
21 years old	24	12%
22 years old	61	30,5%
Total	200	100%

Based on the data collection that has been carried out, the age range of respondents is from 18-22 years old with a distribution of 18-year-olds as many as 50 people, 19-year-olds as many as 37 people, 20-year-olds as many as 28 people, 21-year-olds as many as 24 people, and 22-year-olds as many as 61 people.

Descriptive Analysis Results

Table 2.
 Descriptive Statistical Results of the Relationship Between Forgiveness
 and Happiness

Variables	N	Min.	Max	Mean	Std. Deviation
Forgiveness (X)	200	18	72	45	9
Happiness (Y)	200	29	116	72.5	14.5

Based on descriptive analysis of the forgiveness variable, it shows a score with a minimum range of 18 and a maximum of 72, with an average of 45, and has a standard deviation of 9. Based on a descriptive analysis of the happiness variable, research respondents showed a score with a minimum range of 29 and a maximum of 116, with an average of 72.5 and a standard deviation of 14.5.



Table 3.
 Categorization of Forgiveness

	Category	Total	Percentage
58,5 < X	Very High	52	26%
49,5 < X ≤ 58,5	High	57	28.5%
40,5 < X ≤ 49,5	Medium	65	32.5%
31,5 < X ≤ 40,5	Low	22	11%
X ≤ 31,5	Very Low	4	2%
	Total	200	100%

Through the data presented, it can be concluded that the forgiveness possessed by most late adolescent children from divorced parents is in the moderate category, with a percentage of 32.5%.

Table 4.
 Categorization of Happiness

Interval	Category	Total	Percentage
94,25 < X	Very High	12	6%
79,75 < X ≤ 94,25	High	41	20.5%
65,25 < X ≤ 79,75	Medium	79	39.5%
50,75 < X ≤ 65,25	Low	52	26%
X ≤ 50,75	Very Low	16	8%
	Total	200	100%

The data shows that the happiness possessed by most late adolescent children from divorced parents is in the moderate category, with a percentage of 39.5%.



Assumption Test Result Results

Table 5.
 Normality Test Results

<i>Kolmogorov-Smirnov</i>			
	Statistic	df	Sig.
<i>X Forgiveness</i>	.063	200	.055
<i>Y Happiness</i>	.055	200	.200*

The normality test results above use the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test; based on the results shown in table 5, the significance value on the forgiveness variable is 0.055, and the happiness variable is 0.200. So, the normality test results indicate that the two variables are normally distributed when the Kolmogorov-Smirnov significance value is > 0.05 .

Table 6.
 Linearity Test Results

		Sum of	df	Mean	F	Sig.
		Squares		Square		
<i>Happiness*</i> <i>forgiveness</i>	(combined	17725.44	42	422.034	2.446	.000
)	3				
	Between					
Group	Linearity	10848.52	1	10848.52	62.87	.000
		0		0	4	
	Deviation	6876.923	41	167.730	.972	.526
	from					
	Linearity					
Within		27089.55	15	172.545		
Groups		2	7			
Total		44814.99	19			
		5	9			

The linearity test in this study was conducted to determine whether the two research variables had a linear and significant relationship. Through the test conducted, it can be seen from the table above that Linearity shows Fcount of 62,874 and has a significance of 0.000 ($p < 0.05$). So, it can be concluded that the relationship between forgiveness and happiness in late adolescents with divorced parents is linear.



Hypothesis Test Result

Table 7.
 Correlation Test

		Forgiveness	Happiness
Forgiveness	Pearson Correlation	1	.492**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	200	200
Happiness	Pearson Correlation	.492**	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	
	N	200	200

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The correlation test was carried out in this study using Pearson’s Product-Moment. Based on the results of hypothesis testing, which can be seen from Table 8, the Pearson correlation or r has a value of 0.492 and a significance of 0.000 ($p < 0.01$). So, it can be said that there is a positive and significant relationship between *forgiveness* and *happiness* in late adolescents who have divorced parents.

Table 8.
 Measures of Association

	R	R Squared	Eta	Eta Squared
Happiness-forgiveness	.492	.242	.629	.396

The effective contribution of the forgiveness variable to the happiness variable is 24.2%. This explains that forgiveness is one of the factors that can increase happiness in late adolescents with divorced parents.

Based on all the research processes that have been carried out, the results of this study indicate that the hypothesis proposed in this study is accepted, namely that there is a significant positive relationship between forgiveness and happiness in late adolescents with divorced parents with a correlation coefficient or r of 0.492 and a significance of 0.000 ($p < 0.01$). Through this data, it is explained that the higher the level of forgiveness of late adolescents with divorced parents, the higher the level of happiness they have, and vice versa, the lower the level of forgiveness in late adolescents who have a divorced parent background, the lower their happiness level will be. The novelty of this study lies in its specific focus on 18-22-year-old late adolescents with a background of parental divorce, an important transitional age group into adulthood that has previously been under-explored in the context of the relationship between forgiveness and happiness. By



examining this age group, this study provides new insights into how forgiveness correlates with happiness during a crucial developmental period in forming a child's identity and selfhood.

In line with research conducted by Susanto & Hartini (2022), the results of the study state that there is also a significant positive relationship between forgiveness and happiness in adolescents who have divorced parents. In addition, it is supported by research Permana (2017), which examines the relationship between forgiveness and happiness of adolescents from divorced parents with challenging personalities, with the results showing that forgiveness has a positive effect on happiness.

In addition, the level of happiness of late adolescents with divorced parents is at a moderate level, namely 79 people or 39.5%, which indicates that most respondents have a sufficient level of happiness. According to Nurhikmah et al (2023), individuals with high levels of happiness are able to accept and let go of the divorce experience without harboring anger, understand that their parents have reasons to separate, and accept the conditions of their parents. Conversely, individuals with low levels of happiness still do not fully accept the reality of divorce, so they still harbor feelings of resentment, anger, and have difficulty achieving happiness. This difference in acceptance levels significantly affects adolescents' ability to recover and achieve emotional well-being after experiencing parental divorce.

Based on the research that has been conducted, most research respondents experienced parental divorce since childhood (ages 1-12 years), the largest group experienced since they were 5-7 years old, some respondents experienced divorce even before birth or as babies, a small proportion experienced divorce in late adolescence (17-20 years). According to Tasaufi et al. (2017), divorce has a complex impact on children at different stages of development. In toddlerhood, children experience anxiety that leads to maladaptive behaviors such as irritability and unbalanced attachment. In preschool, they begin to face gender identity and separation issues. School age is characterized by children's attempts to feel loved and accepted, often by hiding negative emotions and struggling with self-control. In adolescence, the impact of divorce includes issues of identity, independence, and social trust. According to Wulandari & Khoirunnisa (2023), even when entering early adulthood, the influence of divorce on children's parents is still felt in family relationships, such as children experiencing feelings of sadness and anxiety. It can break family ties and even cause trauma in children. A child must have a good quality interpersonal relationship with both parents, support from extended family, spouses, and even friends, so that it helps individuals to get up from adversity and move on and decide to forgive their parents. Forgiveness has a very meaningful contribution in the lives of adolescents, which directly helps increase their happiness.

Forgiveness effectively contributes to happiness, evidenced by the results of descriptive tests, which show that forgiveness provides an effective contribution of 24.2%. The data means that forgiveness is one of the factors that can affect the happiness of late adolescents with divorced parents. Most respondents in this study, most late adolescents, have forgiveness at a moderate level, namely 65 people or 32.5%, which means that most children in late adolescence can forgive divorced parents. According to Rienneke & Setianingrum (2018), during adolescence, having the ability to forgive oneself and others is very important. As they get older, individuals tend to develop more mature forgiveness abilities and find forgiving mistakes from themselves and others easier.



According to Seligman (2002), the factors influencing happiness on forgiveness are internal factors of happiness, specifically in the satisfaction with the past, a person's ability to accept and appreciate past positive and negative experiences. Satisfaction with the past involves learning from experiences, overcoming regrets, and forgiving oneself and others.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results and discussion described, this study revealed a significant positive relationship between forgiveness and happiness in late adolescents with divorced parents. The results show that the higher the level of forgiveness of late adolescents, the higher their level of happiness. Forgiveness effectively contributes 24.2% to happiness, indicating forgiveness's important role in overcoming the impact of parental divorce. Most respondents had a moderate level of forgiveness, indicating that adolescents have the potential to accept and let go of the traumatic experience of parental divorce. This study confirms that forgiveness is an effective psychological mechanism in helping adolescents transform negative experiences into personal strengths, so that they can maintain emotional well-being and happiness despite facing the situation of parents who have separated. Suggestions for future researchers can also include interview methods with several representative respondents to deepen the discussion about the experience of forgiveness and happiness of children of divorced parents. They can explore other variables affecting children's happiness from divorced families, such as social support, quality of relationships with parents, and environmental factors. The study's shortcomings are that some respondents who did not come from divorced parents still filled out the research questionnaire, so the researcher needed quite a long time and thoroughness in sorting the data, so that when processing the data, the respondents were excluded from the criteria for research participants. Practical recommendations that can be applied to this study are to increase psychological counseling services. Adolescents who have difficulty in forgiving or show signs of decreased happiness can be provided with individual or group counseling services. Professional psychologists can use cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) or forgiveness therapy.

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