FORGIVENESS AND HAPPINESS THROUGH RESILIENCE

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Abstract. The aim of this study was to examine the correlation between forgiveness and happiness among college students, with a particular focus on the role of resilience in mediating the forgiveness-happiness correlation. Participants consisted of 203 undergraduate students enrolled at a private university in center of Java who completed the subjective happiness scale, Heartland forgiveness scale, and Connor-Davidson Resilience scale. Result of mediational analysis confirmed the hypothesis, revealing the resilience partially mediated the correlation between forgiveness and happiness with the overall model explaining 27 percent of the variance in happiness.

Introduction

Over the past few years, there has been a growing interest among psychologist in the field of positive psychology (Compton, 2005). Being a major focus in positive psychology (Snyder & Lopez, 2007), the concept of happiness has been widely explored in previous research and is acknowledged to provide many benefits for physical as well as mental health. For example, happiness has been shown to serve as a protective factor against illness, thus predicts physical health and even longevity (Simmons, Nelson, & Simonsohn, 2011; McNulty & Fincham, 2012; Cohn & Fredrickson, 2010). In addition, Biswas-Diener & Patterson (2011) reviewed substantial evidence of links between happiness and desirable life outcomes, such as fulfilling social relationships and marriages, adaptive coping, successful jobs, and mental health. All things considered, happiness is essential for an individual’s life.

Considerable attention has been paid to mental health issues happening among students and academics in higher educational institutions around the world. College students experience the transition from adolescence to adulthood (Waters, 2011). Having to adapt to a new environment, they are likely to face pressures and challenges in various aspects of their lives (Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2015).

In a survey administered to 100 students at a mid-sized, Midwestern university, Day (2010) examined the primary sources of stress among college students which were then classified into four aspects, namely, academic, environmental, intrapersonal, and interpersonal. Results of the survey showed that 89 percent of the participants reports to have problems related to change in sleeping habits, 74 percent to change in eating habits, 73 percent in new responsibilities, and 73 percent in increased workload, those four factors being the most
prevalent in the study. Financial difficulties (71%) and change in social activities (71%) were also frequently reported.

In 2015, a similar survey was carried out by Donaldson, Dollwet, and Rao, (2015) to 93,034 college students in 108 institutions by means of paper and web survey. The survey highlighted the result of the college students’ mental health conditions within the last 12 months. Finding suggested that issues in academic, finance, intimate relationship, sleep difficulties, family problems, and career were the most significant items respectively reported to be traumatic of difficult to handle, with details contained in table 1. As illustrated, academic stress comprised the highest percentage of mental health-related issues among college students.

**Table 1.**
Issues among College Students within the Last 12 Months Regarding Mental Health (American College Health Association, 2015)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Male (%)</th>
<th>Female (%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academics</td>
<td>38,8</td>
<td>48,1</td>
<td>45,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>28,6</td>
<td>35,8</td>
<td>33,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimate realtionship</td>
<td>27,3</td>
<td>31,6</td>
<td>30,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sleep difficulties</td>
<td>25,1</td>
<td>30,2</td>
<td>28,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family problems</td>
<td>19,1</td>
<td>30,7</td>
<td>27,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career-related issue</td>
<td>24,1</td>
<td>27,4</td>
<td>26,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal appearance</td>
<td>17,1</td>
<td>29,4</td>
<td>25,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other social relationship</td>
<td>20,4</td>
<td>27,7</td>
<td>25,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal health issue</td>
<td>14,7</td>
<td>23,2</td>
<td>20,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health problem of family member or partner</td>
<td>14,4</td>
<td>22,0</td>
<td>19,6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of family member or friend</td>
<td>11,3</td>
<td>16,4</td>
<td>14,8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8,0</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>9.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student reporting none of the above</td>
<td>33,2</td>
<td>22,5</td>
<td>25,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student reporting only one of the above</td>
<td>14,8</td>
<td>12,1</td>
<td>12,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student reporting 2 of the above</td>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>12,5</td>
<td>12,5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student reporting 3 or more of the above</td>
<td>39,5</td>
<td>53,0</td>
<td>48,7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Mental health concerns comprising depressive feelings, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, and mental disorders had been covered in the study (Donaldson, Dollwet, & Rao, 2015). In this respect, respondents reported experiencing overwhelming feelings of sadness (63,9%), loneliness (56,9%), and hopelessness (47,7%) within the last 12 months. Moreover, 8,9 percent of the students questioned have seriously considered suicide, 6,3 percent engaged in self-harm, and 1,4 percent attempted suicide. Some of the respondents reported being diagnosed (or having received professional treatment) with a variety of mental disorders, including anxiety disorders (15,8%) being the most frequent, followed by depression (13,1%) and panic attacks (7,4%). Severe mental illness such as schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, anorexia, and substance abuse or addiction were also reported with a percentage under 2 each.

Environmental condition such as waiting in long line, placed in unfamiliar situation, disorganized living conditions, and change in living environment may trigger stress as previously stated in the survey conducted by Johnson & Wood, (2017). According to a study in depression among university students, there is an association between perceived (Jayanthi, Thirunavukarasu, & Rajkumar, 2015). Students who claim to have negative perceptions about the university academic
environment and their living arrangements experience higher levels of depressions. As shown by Malboeuf-Hurtubise, Joussemet, Taylor, and Lacourse, (2018) and Donaldson, Dollwet, and Rao, (2015) in both surveys, issues regarding interpersonal relationship were also common among college students. Family or intimate relationship problems, roommate conflict, and experience of change in social activities were several common sources of stress encountered by college students.

Previous study have highlighted the importance of developing and maintaining positive interpersonal relationship and family strength to promote mental health. Algoe and Zilinsky, (2016) found that unhealthy processes and perceptions of relationship (e.g., conflict, aggression) induced larger stress responses and impaired mental health in general, whereas positive relationship processes and perceptions provided a buffer against stress and improved health. Furthermore, social support from family was shown to be positively related to happiness (Gander, Proyer, & Ruch, 2016). Other research indicated that students are at greater risk for depression, anxiety, intrusive thoughts, and sleep disturbance in the experience of a breakup distress of a romantic relationship (O’Connell, O’Shea, & Gallagher, 2016).

In a recent study with 120 participants, Lomas, Hefferon, and Ivtzan (2015) investigated sources of stress among college students in Canada. Results indicated that stress levels reported by participants were 37 percent low, 32 percent moderate, 27 percent high, and 4 percent extremely high. Psychological problems have been found to be the most significant sources of stress for 61 percent of the participants, particularly academic stress (32%), unreleased anger (22%), traumatic events (21%), and intimate relationships (13%). Factors related to social relationship also contributed to participants’ stressors, specifically interpersonal conflict with a friend or a romantic partner (47%), family problems (23%), and health issue of a family member (11%). Similar findings were reported in a study conducted in the same year at another Canadian university, with 50.8 percent of 240 participants experiencing significant levels of stress (Proyer, Wellenzohn, Gander, & Ruch, 2015).

Happiness is considered to be highly important by college students from around the world (Michalos, 2017). However, based on the findings reviewed above, either daily hassles or traumatic events encountered by college students can trigger stress responses thereby increasing the likelihood of developing mental health problems especially anxiety, depression, and mental disorders. Because happiness is a part of emotional well-being that is characterized by the presence of general life satisfaction, positive emotion (e.g., serenity, joy, contentment), and low levels of negative emotions (e.g., sadness, anxiety, anger), the absence of these symptoms indicates unhappiness (Etkin & Mogilner, 2016; Groot, et al., 2015).

Happiness can be influenced by many factors. Many studies have demonstrated that happiness was related to mental attitudes (Djankov, Nikolova, & Zilinsky, 2015; Ye, Ng, & Lian, 2015), personality traits (Pollock, Noser, Holden, & Zeigler-Hill, 2016), social support (Findler, Jacoby, & Gabis, 2016), friendship and marital qualities (Han, Kim, & Burr, 2019; Sanchez, Haynes, Parada, & Demir, 2018), spirituality (Walther, Sandlin, & Wunsch, 2015; Fave, Brdar, Vella-Brodrick, & Wissing, 2013), and socio-economic status as well as demographic variables (Cheng & Furnham, 2014; Frey & Stutzer, 2014; Bartolini & Sarracino, 2014).

Resilience, which refers to the ability to bounce back or successfully adopt when exposed to adversity, trauma, and significant sources of stress in life (Berkes & Ross, 2013), plays a key role in preventing someone from engaging in risky behaviors and has been shown to be predictive to mental health, including depression, psychological well-being, and happiness
(McGorry, 2018; MacKerron & Mourato, 2013; Ruiz-Aranda, Extremera, & Pineda-Galán, 2013; (Zhang, Zhang, & Chen, 2017). The mediating role of resilience has been highlighted in a number of recent studies (e.g., Steptoe, Deaton, & Stone, 2015; Ha & Hwang, 2014; Abdollahi, Talib, Yaacob, & Ismail, 2014; Shoshani & Steinmetz, 2014). Indeed, while multiple variables are predicted by resilience, resilience itself is determined by the interaction between protective and risk factors (Dwiwardani, et al., 2014). Adaptive coping ability and spirituality serve as internal sources that may have a protective impact on resilience (Kumar & Kumar, 2014; Falb & Pargament, 2014; Weber & Pargament, 2014).

Past empirical studies have asserted the effects of spirituality on resilience and well-being. For instance, a longitudinal study conducted by Krause, Pargament, Hill, & Ironson (2016) found that religious worship attendance was related to reduce odds for suicide attempts over a ten-year span compared to those who did not attend religious services. Similar study has confirmed that intrinsic religiosity is inversely correlated with suicide risk and predicts higher resilience and better quality of life (Mosqueiro, Rocha, & Fleck, 2015). Furthermore, an increasing amount of evidence demonstrated significant relationships between forgiveness and resilience (Cheavens, Cukrowicz, Hansen, & Mitchell, 2015; Mary & Patra, 2015; Nagra, Lin, & Upthegrove, 2016).

Forgiveness can be considered as a spiritual coping. Many religious traditions extol the value of forgiveness and encourage the followers to cultivate this virtue (Skerrett & Fergus, 2015). For example, in Islam, al-afu (forgiveness) is a religious practice according to the Quran that helps Muslims to succeed in dealing with life’s challenges and difficulties (Mosher & Marshall, 2014). Forgiveness may also serve as an emotion-focused coping strategy to minimize the emotional stress responses towards a transgression as well as reducing health risks (Tongeren, et al., 2014).

Research from Cornish and Wade (2015) found that individual with high levels of forgiveness were inclined to be cognitively flexible, less hostile, less vengeful, less anxious, more satisfied with life, experience more positive emotions, and ruminate less. Another study conducted in the Philippines examined the relationships between forgiveness, gratitude, and well-being outcomes (Yalçın & Malkoç, 2015). Findings showed that both gratitude and forgiveness predicted happiness, with particularity forgiveness of self and gratitude being the strongest predictors. In line with these findings, as Adams, Zou, Inesi, & Pillutla (2015), concluded, practicing forgiveness might pro, promote feelings of belongingness, reduce perceived burdensomeness, and prevent suicidal behaviors.

Consequences of daily stressors and significant adversity faced by college students raised some questions to be explored in the context in this study. What relationships exist between resilience, forgiveness, and happiness? Does resilience play a mediating role within the relationship between forgiveness and happiness? Therefore, according to this rationale, the current study focused on several variables related to resilience. First, resilience predicts happiness. Finally, this study is designed to investigate forgiveness as a predictor of happiness with the possible mediating effect of resilience in college students.

Method

Participants recruited for this study were males and females college students. College students were chosen as a research participants because this population is likely to experience a set of daily and major life stressors, including academic stress, problems related to family, social relationships, finance, mental health, and traumatic events (Rivera & Fincham, 2014; Toussaint, Shields, Dorn, & Slavich, 2014; Akhtar & Barlow, 2016). Following
previous studies in positive psychological research, non-probability sampling method, specifically a convenience sampling technique, was used to select the participants (Elliott & Valliant, 2017; Bosnjak, Das, & Lynn, 2015).

This study was conducted based on primary data which were acquired by administering self-report questionnaires to participants. Through the questionnaires, data and information regarding participants’ demographic profiles and responses to the happiness, and resilience scales were gathered. Responses of the participants were then quantified according to the scoring procedures. The scores were computed and analyzed using statistical analysis software. Finally, results from data analyses were interpreted and discussed to provide the research findings.

Result
Mediational analysis was conducted to test the hypothesis whether resilience would have a mediating effect on the relationship between forgiveness and happiness. Overall scores from the forgiveness scale were used in the mediation model because it represents dispositional forgiveness as a whole (Carpenter, Tignor, Tsang, & Willett, 2016). The hypothesis was tested following Frölich and Huber’s (2017) criteria for mediation. This approach requires significant relationships between the predictor and the mediator variables, the mediator and the outcome variables, the predictor and the outcome variables, and reduced or zero effect of the predictor on the outcome variable after controlling for the mediator.

If the path from forgiveness to happiness is not zero even after the mediator variable is included but the number is reduced from the initial path, this indicates that partial mediation is occurring (Frölich & Huber’s, 2017). Thus, these results satisfied each criterion and supported the hypothesis that resilience partially mediated the relationship between forgiveness and happiness. Overall, this mediation model explained 27 percent (adjusted $R^2 = 0.271$, $p<0.01$) of the variance in happiness which according to Jose (2016) is a large effect size.

Summary of Mediational Analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Path</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Path a</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness to resilience</td>
<td>0.193</td>
<td>5.174</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resilience to happiness</td>
<td>0.335</td>
<td>7.317</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path c</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness to happiness</td>
<td>0.118</td>
<td>4.336</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Path c'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forgiveness to happiness when controlling for resilience</td>
<td>0.053</td>
<td>4.336</td>
<td>0.040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model summary</td>
<td>$R^2$</td>
<td>Adj. $R^2$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0.279</td>
<td>0.271</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion
This study was designed to examine the possible relationships between forgiveness, resilience, and happiness among college students. It was further anticipated that resilience would serve as a mediator of the forgiveness-happiness relationship. Overall, the findings provide several significant connections between forgiveness, resilience, and happiness. Meanwhile, results of the mediational analysis supported the hypothesized mediating function of resilience in the relationship between forgiveness and happiness. These results suggest degree of
resilience, and in turn they show higher happiness.

The current research revealed a statistically significant positive correlation between forgiveness and resilience. This relationship would imply that college students who are capable of abandoning their negative feelings, thoughts, and behavior from transgressions also possess the ability to bounce back from adversity. These findings are largely consistent with results from prior studies that highlighted forgiveness as an important predictor of resilience in college students, one of which is a study carried out by Worthington, et al. (2016) on university students in Malaysia. In the study, forgiveness, acceptance, and gratitude related significantly to higher levels of resilience with gratitude being the strongest predictor, followed by forgiveness and acceptance. More recently, IV and Kelly (2018) explored the same variables using a sample of undergraduate students in India. The results converge with findings presented by O'Grady, Orton, White, & Snyder (2016), and also with the present findings, substantiating the predictive value of forgiveness on resilience.

Another empirical study among a sample of chronic pain patients suggests that patients who report to be more forgiving toward other people are more likely to be resilient (Saffarinia, Mohammadi, & Afshar, 2016). Likewise, the propensity to forgive others has been shown to be closely linked to better interpersonal adjustment (Tuck & Anderson, 2014). Characteristics of interpersonal adjustment may be observed in resilient individuals as they are generally capable of preserving healthy interpersonal relationship and exerting emotional and impulse control (Mancini, Sinan, & Bonann, 2015; Martin, Distelberg, Palmer, & Jeste, 2015).

The present finding provides support for the notion that forgiveness can boost an individual’s resilience capacity (Chaudhary, Jyoti, & Chaudhary, 2014). It is also consistent with forgiveness theories which emphasize the coping mechanism of forgiveness to overcome negative behavioral, cognitive, emotional, and motivational responses that a transgression has caused (Eldeleklioglu, 2015; Arslan, 2017; Thompson & Ravlin, 2016). Since resilience broadly refers to successful adaptation in difficult circumstances (e.g., Lei, Wang, Yue, Zhou, & Yin, 2014; Maru, Smith, Sparrow, Pinho, & Dube, 2014; Ungar, 2015; Ellis, Bianchi, Griskevicius, & Frankenhaus, 2017), this relationship seems reasonable. Furthermore, it reinforces the importance of forgiveness as a spiritual coping that enables Muslims to handle difficult problems they encounter throughout their lives (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015).

Characteristics of forgiveness such as benevolence, acceptance, cognitive flexibility, less rumination, and less hostility (Cornish & Wade, 2015; Skerrett & Fergus, 2015; Findler, Jacoby, & Gabis, 2016) resemble the internal protective factors of resilience. Examples of these factors include self-regulation, problem solving, interpersonal skills, and coping ability which apparently facilitate recovery from stressful events and mitigate the impact of risk factors (Truebridge, 2016; Raj, Elizabeth, Padmakumari, & Walla, 2016; Beck, 2016; Olick, 2016). Therefore in principle, forgiveness provides the internal resources needed for enduring stress and adverse life experience.

Happiness can be defined as a person’s subjective evaluation of his or her emotional well-being (Hargrave & Zasowski, 2016). In the present study, resilience had a significant positive association with happiness, meaning that college students who possess the capacity to rebound from perceived negative life circumstances are more likely to report higher happiness. These results strengthen previous research evidence linking resilience to several variables related to well-being, mental health, and happiness. For example, research from MacLeod, Musich, Hawkins, Alsgaard, and Wicker (2016) found significant positive association between resilience and happiness in dengue fever survivors. Similar
results were evident in a more recent study conducted on college students in China (Graham, Zhou, & Zhang, 2017). Likewise, reduced depressive symptoms have been shown to be predicted by high levels of resilience (Westrum, 2017). Other empirical findings indicate that resilient people have a lower risk of suffering from psychological distress, depression, and anxiety and a significantly higher degree of psychological well-being (Balzarotti, Biassoni, Villani, Prunas, & Velotti, 2016; Lubans, et al., 2016).

The link between resilience and happiness can be explained by examining various factors and sources of happiness, including coping ability and social support (Meneghel, Salanova, & Martínez, 2016; Satici, 2016). These factors are characteristics of resilient individuals who execute positive adaptation in the face of difficulties and establish strong social connections (Wang, Xu, & Luo, 2016). Other factors that influence happiness include self-control, optimism, and spirituality (Matz, Matz, & Stillwell, 2016; Campos, et al., 2016; Mogilner & Norton, 2016; Fave, et al., 2016; Uchida & Oishi, 2016). These factors can be observed in resilient people as well, who generally maintain faith and hopeful outlook during hardship and possess the capacity to manage their emotions, behavior, and impulses (Fujita, 2017; Gao, Barzel, & Barabási, 2016). On the other hand, low-resilient individuals have less access to those personal and interpersonal strengths that seemingly increase happiness (Johnstone, et al., 2016; Dekker, 2017).

In the current study, forgiveness was positively associated with happiness, suggesting that individuals who score high on forgiveness are more likely to express higher estimates of happiness. These findings are in line with previous work concerning forgiveness as an important determinant of happiness. Nelson, Kurtz, and Lyubomirsky (2015) found forgiveness to be positively associated with happiness among college students. Specifically, students who report to be self-forgiving are happier and more satisfied with their lives. Further evidence of an existing relationship forgiveness and indications of unhappiness was observed by Batik, Bingöl, Kodaz, and Hosoglu (2017). It was demonstrated that intrapersonal and interpersonal forgiveness influence suicidal behavior after controlling for depressive symptoms. Individuals who are more disposed toward forgiveness of self and others experience fewer depressive symptoms, which in turn they are less likely to engage in suicidal behavior.

One possible explanation for the relationship between forgiveness and happiness is that forgiveness might serve as a coping strategy, particularly emotion-focused coping (Akhtar, Dolan, & Barlow, 2017; Luchies, et al., 2017). This reflects this regulation of negative emotional responses (e.g., pain, anger, vengefulness) following a transgression which should lead in diminished stress (Akhtar, Dolan, & Barlow, 2017; Luchies, et al., 2017). Perceived stress has been shown to be negatively correlated with happiness (Saricam, 2015). In this way, forgiveness may be conceptualized as a factor that bolsters happiness.

Another possible explanation for the significant forgiveness-happiness relationship is that college students who have successfully released their pain, resentment, shame, or desire to seek revenge toward the transgression, start to experience less unpleasant feelings which in turn would result in relief and positive well-being. This statement seems reasonable since this specific happiness feature appears in the outcome phase of the forgiveness process posited by Liu, Chang, Wu, & Tsai (2015):

“A key outcome is improved psychological health; when the pain has been absorbed as a sponge absorbs water, that pain gradually diminishes, as the water imperceptibly from a sponge”

Although the above findings support the significant association between
forgiveness and happiness, not all research has consistently reached this conclusion. Yao, Chen, Yu, and Sang (2017) examined the extent to which interpersonal forgiveness and gratitude related to happiness among participants who shared similar characteristics as participants in the present study, namely undergraduate students majoring in psychology at a private university located in central of Java. However, the research yielded diverging results compared to those obtained by present and past studies. No significant relationship was found between forgiveness and happiness, whereas gratitude was identified as a strong contributing factor of happiness.

As expected, when analyzed in the mediation model the path through which forgiveness affected happiness weakened from the initial step. This reduction indicates the role of resilience in mediating the forgiveness-happiness relationship according to Hill, Heffernan, and Allemand’s (2015) test of mediation. That is, apart from the significant relationship between forgiveness and happiness, forgiveness has been shown to exert its effect on happiness partially through resilience with the overall model explaining 27 percent of the variance in happiness which is considered to be a large effect size (Russell, 2006). These findings provide evidence that to some extent, resilience serves as a mechanism to explain why individuals who are dispositionally more forgiving tend to be happier.

Support for the mediating role of resilience has been documented in a vast amount of studies. Research from Hao, Hong, Xu, Zhou, and Xie (2015) using a sample of Chinese college students investigated the association between personality factors and happiness. The findings showed resilience as a partial mediator of the relationship between extraversion and happiness. Further, it was found that the association between neuroticism personality factor and components of happiness was partially mediated by resilience. In another study, resilience has been identified as a partial mediator of the relation between mindfulness and life satisfaction, as well as affect components of happiness among Indian undergraduate students (Chavan, Deshmukh, & Singh, 2017). Other findings have conclusively shown that resilience has a mediating effect on the association between depressive symptoms and perceived parental rejection (Sart, Börkan, Erkman, & Serbes, 2016).

A partial mediation model in the present study suggest that there could be additional mediating variables aside from resilience which have not been included in the relationship between forgiveness and happiness. There are numerous factors that could influence a person’s state of happiness. For example, in a study conducted on 1,111 participants ranging in age from 18 to 95 years, perceived and provided social support have been shown to be associated with happiness (Khaleque, 2017). Self-esteem and coping styles have also been identified as important variables related to happiness (Liu, Li, Ling, & Cai, 2016; Soenens, Berzonsky, & Papini, 2015).

Other empirical studies have addressed the associations between forgiveness and the aforementioned variables. Griffin, Jr., Davis, Hook, and Maguen (2018) in their experimental study conveyed that forgiveness therapy can improve self-esteem. Research from Shah and Sharma (2018) found a significant relationship between forgiveness and coping styles. Finally, dispositionally forgiving people may perceive less social undermining (Rajaei, Khoynezhad, Javanmard, & Abdollahpour, 2016). Considering this, future studies may extend this research by examining other potential intervening variables such as coping styles, social support, and self-esteem within the context of the forgiveness and happiness relationship.

Conclusion
In summary, the present study confirms that resilience serves as a partial mediator of the relationship between forgiveness and happiness among college students with the overall model explaining 27 percent of the variance in happiness. These results indicate that resilience accounts for some of the relationship between forgiveness and the degree of happiness. The tendency to forgive appears to significantly influence individuals’ ability to rebound from adversity, which in turn impacts upon their happiness. The present study contributes to existing literature in explaining the association between forgiveness and happiness.

Limitations of Research

While providing some insight into the relationships between forgiveness, resilience, and happiness, the present study had several limitations that should be noted. First, although college students are considered a suitable population for happiness-related research given the daily and significant stressors and mental health concerns, participants consisted entirely of undergraduate psychology students from a private university in central Java regency who were selected based on non-random sampling technique. Given this limitation, findings of this study may not be generalized to other groups beyond the study participants.

Recommendations

The current study provide multiple recommendations for improving well-being among college students. It highlights the mediating role of resilience in the relationship between forgiveness and happiness. Therefore, the results seem to suggest that college students would benefit from practicing forgiveness when faced with a transgression as this would facilitate them developing a strong capacity for resilience which in turn engenders happiness.

For psychologists working with individuals who experience transgressions or particularly stressors, this study should offer some insight. Findings of this study suggest that individuals with lower accounts of forgiveness and resilience may be more prone to experience lower well-being subsequent adverse experiences. As forgiving and resilient qualities can be learned and cultivated (Waldron, Braithwaite, Oliver, Kloeber, & Marsh, 2018; Thompson & Korsgaard, 2018), there is the potential for intervention approaches that target forgiveness in an attempt to improve well-being through resilience. For example, mental health practitioners could provide potential therapeutic and preventative treatment programs through forgiveness-based strategies. Focusing intervention strategies on forgiveness may aid clinicians in coping efforts that promotes resilience, thus maintaining and enhancing their well-being.

Directions for future research

For future research, it would be beneficial to use experimental approach to make more informed decisions regarding the causal pathways between forgiveness, resilience, and happiness which remain unclear in the present study. Furthermore, the present study relied on a non-random sampling method. If researchers wish to generalize the results, similar studies should be conducted using random sampling techniques for data collection. Finally, the partial mediation model in the present study suggest the need for other possible intervening variables in the association between forgiveness and happiness. Future research should consider exploring other aspects to mediate the forgiveness-happiness relationship.

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