THE ROLE OF GRATITUDE AND FORGIVENESS ON SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING IN EMPLOYEES WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED LAYOFFS

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a decline in global socio-economic conditions, including a surge in unemployment, which has impacted individuals' low subjective wellbeing (SWB). This study aims to analyze the effect of forgiveness and gratitude on SWB in employees who have experienced termination of employment (PHK), focusing on a unique context in Semarang, Indonesia. The research used a correlational quantitative approach with a sample of 402 employees selected through purposive sampling. SWB variables were measured using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS) and Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) scales. In contrast, gratitude and forgiveness were calculated using the Gratitude Questionnaire (GQ-6) and a scale based on avoidance, revenge, and benevolence motivation aspects. Data analysis was carried out using multiple linear regression and product-moment correlation. The results showed that forgiveness and gratitude significantly affected SWB (20.8% effective contribution), with gratitude as the dominant factor. The SWB and gratitude categories were moderate, while forgiveness was relatively high, indicating the positive adaptability of participants, even though they had experienced layoffs. The implications of this study emphasize the importance of forgiveness and gratitude-based psychological interventions to improve the mental well-being of post-layoff vulnerable groups, as well as recommendations for follow-up research with a more diverse sample and measurement time closer to the incidence of layoffs.

KEYWORDS	*Subjective Wellbeing, Forgiveness, Gratitude*

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INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic, for more than two years, has led to a decline in global socio-economic conditions, including a surge in unemployment due to lockdowns, where the International Labour Organization (ILO, 2020) estimates that 25 million jobs were lost in the early phases of the pandemic. South Africa recorded the highest unemployment rate (32.6%) based on Trading Economy data (September 27, 2023), followed by Spain (11.6%), Turkey (9.4%), and India (8%). Work is strongly correlated with happiness because it provides optimal stimulation, fulfillment of psychological needs, financial security, and identity (Pleeging et al., 2021), while unemployment is associated with lower life satisfaction and higher risk of suicide (Oswald, 1997; Platt & Kreitman, 1990), which reflects low subjective wellbeing.

Subjective wellbeing (SWB) is subjective experience, an overall evaluation and feeling of the quality of life based on the standards set by oneself, and consists of two parts, namely the cognitive component and the emotional component. The cognitive component refers to life satisfaction (Diener, 2009)Individuals with high SWBs can balance their positive and negative emotions well, have more energy to explore the world and themselves, and find the meaning of life so that they can gain more experience (Yin, 2019).

This study focuses more on subjective wellbeing (SWB) than psychological wellbeing (PWB) because the theoretical constructs of PWB overlap. This is strengthened by the statement of Burns (2016), who stated that although the concept of PWB from Ryff is appealing, the empirical evidence supporting the PWB scale of Ryff lacks consistency. Several attempts to validate the scale found that the dimensions of environmental mastery, personal growth, life goals, and self-acceptance were grouped in the same category, which should be separated into four different factors (Burns, 2016). According to Burns, this result illustrates the findings of Clarke et al. (in Burns (2016) that these four factors have a high correlation, where they should be constructively different, with low or no correlation. While in the SWB theory construct, it is found that all dimensions are unidimensional, this is proven by Ventura-León et al (2023) that SWB is a unidimensional measurement both in terms of CFA and EFA (CFI = 1.00; RMSEA = 0.000). Based on the quality of the theoretical construct between SWB and PWB, the researcher focuses on the SWB variable. In addition, Zelenski &

Larsen (2000) suggest that many SWB researchers often focus on the general emotional dimension rather than specific emotions, because over a long time, specific emotions with the same strength (valence) have a moderate to high correlation.

Meanwhile, the problem gap in Indonesia is 11th in the world, with an unemployment rate of 5.45% as of February 2023 (Annur, 2023). The unemployment in Semarang City based on data from the Central Statistics Agency of Semarang City on the Open Unemployment Rate from 2020 to 2022 is indeed relatively decreasing, but the Mayor of Semarang stated the opposite thing, Mrs. Hevearita Gunaryanti Rahayu (Mrs. Ita) in the tvonenews.com media on Friday / March 31, 2023 where according to her the poverty rate in Semarang City increased from the previous 3.9% before 2019 to 4.5% after the pandemic, where as a result of the pandemic, many people's income has decreased, especially after they experience termination of employment (PHK) and the three highest urban villages that are the priorities of the 2023 Semarang City poverty reduction program, namely Bandarharjo, Tanjung Mas and Jomblang Villages. According to Mrs. Ita, the 7% figure in Semarang City is still relatively high because other provinces and nationalities are 5% and 6% respectively, so the TPT rate must be lowered. This pandemic condition has not only had an impact on the increase in the number of unemployed, but from a psychological point of view, it has also caused anger, anxiety, and burnout in the community.

This was revealed by Malakoutikhah et al. (2022) in their research that lockdown conditions due to previous pandemics increased the frequency of anger and anxiety. In fact, anger control can predict a higher increase in SWB (Mustafa et al., 2016). When anger is not expressed correctly, it leads to hostility, individual hatred, and revenge (Nakagawa et al., 2017). The most common form of anger is anger due to employees having to be "sent home" because the company is also going bankrupt. The outpouring of anger arises because they are in the phase of disappointment in the psychological response to the disaster due to job loss, and ultimately, it has an impact on the family's economy, becoming unstable.

Unemployment is a significant cause of unhappiness, but it should be noted that not all unemployed people experience unhappiness (Argyle, 1999). Argyle (1999) further revealed that some of the causes of unhappy people are reduced positive affectation (self-esteem), satisfaction with money, health, and housing, and the appearance of apathy. However, after the pandemic ended, economic conditions improved, and several companies began to recruit new employees to improve company operations. For individuals who have high subjective wellbeing (SWB) where those who were previously laid off will certainly be able to accept the previous condition by forgiving, on the other hand, for individuals who have low subjective wellbeing (SWB) will continue to harbor anger, resentment and continue to find fault because of the existing conditions. The ability to forgive is also perhaps one of the most important in maintaining subjective wellbeing (Yalçın & Malkoç, 2015).

Previous research has also shown that people with high forgiveness rates (Forgiveness) are likely to have high levels of Subjective Wellbeing (SWB), which is high (Koç et al., 2016); (Ma & Miller, 2021) (Dewi & Nasywa, N., 2019)His research

shows that Subjective Wellbeing (SWB) is influenced by the gratitude factor (Gratitude), forgiveness, personality, self-esteem, spirituality, and social support. The reason why the researcher chose the variables Forgiveness (pardon) and Gratitude (gratitude) is that these two variables have been proven to be partially or simultaneously able to increase Subjective Wellbeing (SWB) in individuals.

Based on the results of the researcher's pre-survey in early October 2023 on two workers who had experienced Termination of Employment (PHK), one of which was a single parent woman with the initials A (37 years old) who stated that when she was affected by the layoff, subject A felt hopeless, angry, and helpless, and sad even though at that time subject A had to pay for the school fees of her two children. And another is a young man with the initials F (20 years old) who is also the "backbone" of the family because his father has died, and he has to support his mother and younger siblings. At that time, subject F immediately felt that "his world was destroyed", angry, resentful, sad, afraid that he would not be able to get a better job later, and worried that later his family would also be "abandoned", but with his struggle, now subject F can work again at a beverage franchise, namely Mixue, so that with better conditions, the subject becomes more grateful and forgiving for the conditions he has experienced before. Currently, subject F feels more excited at work, proud because he can still support his family, and has a chance to succeed in a new place

Factor Forgiveness is assumed to contribute to Subjective Wellbeing (SWB), as evidenced by various studies such as the meta-analysis of Gao et al. (2022) Compared to 83 studies with 39,104 subjects showing that forgiving attitudes correlated with higher SWB, greater life satisfaction, more positive emotions, and fewer negative emotions, with a gender-moderated influence (a higher proportion of women weakened the relationship between Forgiveness and negative emotions) (Septarianda et al., 2020; Roxas, 2019; Yalçın & Malkoç, 2015). Forgiveness improves well-being by reducing stress and negative emotions (Worthington et al., 2005), and is associated with better mental health (Peterson et al., 2017; Toussaint et al., 2017), higher self-esteem (Pandey et al., 2020), personal growth (Levi-Belz & Gilo, 2020; Woodyatt et al., 2017), and emotional stability (Fournier et al., 2022). Conceptually, Forgiveness has a social-psychological and spiritual dimension (Michael E. McCullough & Worthington, 1999), with definitions varying from the elimination of negative emotions towards the perpetrator (Rye et al., 2001; McCullough et al., 1998) to the affective and cognitive transformation into a neutral/positive response (Thompson et al., 2005), creating a research gap related to its relationship with SWB.

The second factor that is assumed to contribute to subjective wellbeing (SWB) is the Gratitude. Some previous studies have proven that Gratitude affects Subjective Wellbeing (SWB), such as research from (Situmorang & Syuhada, 2021), (Ramzan & Rana, 2014), (Tilkeridou et al., 2021), (Alkozei Smith & Killgore, W. D. S., 2018), (Situmorang & Syuhada, 2021), (Safaria, 2018), (Bono et al., 2020), (Mead et al., 2021). (Tilkeridou et al., 2021) also states that gratitude, forgiveness, and hope significantly affect Subjective Wellbeing (SWB). In addition (Kumar & Dixit, 2014), it was also stated that Forgiveness and Gratitude positively affect psychological

resilience. In fact, (Yoo, 2020) in his study with 761 Korean adults also proved that Gratitude (gratitude) has a positive effect on subjective well-being (such as life satisfaction, hope, and positive and negative affects), in addition to showing that Gratitude and subjective well-being is no different between men and women.

The existence of different research results is shown by (Yang et al., 2021) and (Hermaen & Bhutto, 2020) that gratitude is not proven to affect subjective wellbeing (SWB), but they suggest that forgiveness has a positive effect on subjective wellbeing (SWB), and together, gratitude and forgiveness affect subjective wellbeing (SWB). On the other hand, (Kirmani, 2015) stated that gratitude and forgiveness do not affect subjective wellbeing (SWB).

Based on the phenomenon that has been stated and the gap in the results of previous research, the researcher sees the importance of researching more deeply related to subjective wellbeing (SWB), the level of forgiveness and gratitude in employees who have experienced layoffs, especially in Semarang City and the uniqueness of this research is that there is still no research on similar problems to date, especially in employees who affected by layoffs, so it needs to be further developed. This study empirically aims to prove and analyze the influence between gratitude and forgiveness on subjective wellbeing (SWB) in employees who have experienced Termination of Employment (PHK). The hypothesis assumption proposed by the researcher is that gratitude and forgiveness have a significant influence on subjective wellbeing (SWB).

RESEARCH METHOD

This correlational quantitative research consists of three variables: Subjective Wellbeing (bound variable), Gratitude, and Forgiveness (independent variable). Variable Subjective Wellbeing Based on the theory of Diener et al (1985) that is, affective aspects (consisting of positive and negative effects) and cognitive aspects (related to life satisfaction). As for the measurement of variables, Subjective Wellbeing Using the scale Likert SWLS (Satisfaction with Life Scale) and HOT (Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule) from (Diener et al., 1985) and has been adapted into Indonesian. SWLS (Satisfaction with Life Scale) has five items developed to identify the subject's overall life satisfaction, and the scale PANAS (Positive Affect Negative Affect Schedule) to measure aspects of positive affect and negative affect. This scale contains twenty items, with ten items measuring positive affect (such as being happy and excited) and ten measuring negative affect. In SWB, a separate scale is used because, based on the results of factor analysis, each of these components stands alone and has a different correlation with other variables (Diener et al., 1985). The gratitude variable was measured using a questionnaire, Gratitude-Questioning (GQ-6), which is a measuring instrument (McCullough et al., 2002) Based on the aspects of gratitude, namely intensity, frequency, span, and density. The GQ-6 scale consists of six items. Variable Forgiveness measured by the aspect of (Mccullough & Pargament, 2002) That

is, Avoidance motivation, revenge motivation, and Benevolence Motivation. The scale model is a Likert scale with 4 ratings.

The sample criteria include employees who have worked or have not worked and have experienced layoffs at previous companies. Purposive sampling was used, and 402 people were sampled. Data analysis techniques include multiple linear regression analysis and product-moment correlation, using SPSS version 23.0.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULTS

The validity test results on the SWLS scale ranged from 0.904 to 0.932, with an alpha Cronbach reliability = 0.972. On the SWLS scale, there are five items, all of which are valid. The HEAT scale consists of the positive affective scale and the negative affective scale, where the validity value on the positive affective scale ranges from 0.596 – 0.807; Alpha Cronbach reliability = 0.931 with all ten items valid and negative affective scale having validity values ranging from 0.690 – 0.827; alpha Cronbach reliability = 0.944 with all ten items valid. The forgiveness scale has a validity range of 0.709 – 0.870; Cronbach's alpha reliability = 0.969, with twelve valid items. On the GQ-6 scale, the validity value ranges from 0.756 to 0.862; reliability = 0.939. The testing of hypotheses with multiple regression and Pearson correlation can be seen in the Table.1

Table 1. Hypothesis testing

Variable	R	R2	F	rxy	Ket
Forgiveness*SWB				0,357**	Significant
Gratitude*SWB				0,451**	Significant
Forgiveness*Positive affectation				0,588**	Significant
Forgiveness*Negative affectation				0,463**	Significant
Forgiveness*SWLS	0,456	0,208	52,582**	0,773**	Significant
Gratitude*Positive affectation				0,691**	Significant
Gratitude*Negative affectation				0,463**	Significant
Gratitude*SWLS				0,822**	Significant

Description : (*)   = sig 5%; (**) = sig 1%

DISCUSSION

This study's results show a significant influence of forgiveness and gratitude on subjective well-being, so the proposed hypothesis is accepted. This study's results align with previous studies, which showed that people with high levels of forgiveness tend to have high levels of SWB (Koç et al., 2016; Ma & Miller, 2021). According to Dewi & Nazwa (2019), their research shows that Subjective Wellbeing is not only influenced by factors from within the individual (internal), but can also be influenced by external factors, where internal factors consist of gratitude (Gratitude), Forgiveness, Personality, Self-esteem, and spirituality. At the same time, external factors consist of social support. (Shourie & Kaur, 2016) also stated that Gratitude and Forgiveness affect Subjective Wellbeing in adolescents. (Silfiasari et al., 2019) in their research shows that the attitude of Forgiveness affects life satisfaction by being mediated by Gratitude. Individuals who have a high and grateful Forgiveness will more easily achieve life satisfaction. Conversely, when a person has a low level of forgiveness and gratitude, it tends to be more difficult for them to achieve life satisfaction. This study also shows that the influence of Forgiveness and Gratitude contribute to SWB of 20.8%, meaning that when individuals experience helplessness in facing problems, especially unilateral dismissal from the company, individuals always have the opportunity to see life more positively by forgiving and being grateful for what happened to them where when the individual has a level of Forgiveness and Gratitude The higher the individual, the individual will be able to feel the positive in him, namely in the form of life satisfaction (SWB). The SWB variable category in this study is moderately (78.4%), as shown by the Empirical Mean value (ME) = 65.83, Hypothetical Mean = 62.5, and Standard Hypothetical Deviation (SDH) = 12.5. This can be interpreted as a person's (employee's) self-evaluation of all aspects of their life in a reasonably positive way, especially after they experience the termination of their employment relationship.

The first factor that contributes to the SWB variable is Forgiveness. This is proven by several studies that have been conducted, such as: (Gao et al., 2022) a meta-analysis showed that people with a forgiving attitude had a higher SWB, greater life satisfaction, more positive emotions, and fewer negative emotions. The relationship between forgiving personality tendencies and NE (Negative emotion) is regulated by gender. In particular, the higher the proportion of women in forgiving personality tendencies, the weaker the relationship between forgiving personality tendencies and NE. According to Septarianda et al.(2020) & Roxas (2019) also conducted research on Subjective Wellbeing with Forgiveness, the analysis results show a positive correlation between the two. Next Yalçın & Malkoç, (2015), also found that Forgiveness has a positive influence on subjective wellbeing. Forgiveness can improve well-being by reducing the effects of stress and negative emotions, resulting in a more harmonious response for individuals (Worthington et al., 2005). A lot of evidence suggests that Forgiveness is associated with many positives, including improved mental health (Peterson et al., 2017); (Toussaint et al., 2017)), higher levels of self-esteem and confidence (Pandey et al., 2020)personal growth and greater life satisfaction ((Levi-Belz & Gilo, 2020); (Woodyatt et al., 2017)and greater emotional stability and flexibility (Fournier et al., 2022).

Some experts define forgiveness as the loss of negative emotions towards the Offender (Rye et al., 2001), like McCullough et al. (1998), which defines forgiveness as an attempt to reduce negative emotions (revenge and avoidance) and increase the drive for relationship reconciliation towards the Offender. On the other hand, experts state that Forgiveness not only the absence of emotions Negative, but the presence of positive emotions towards Offender, as it says (Rye et al., 2001), which states that Forgiveness is a response to Offender by eliminating negative emotions (affective, cognitive and behavioral) and presenting positive emotions. Forgiveness is a process of affective, cognitive, judgmental, and motivational transformation from negative to neutral or positive towards the Offender (Thompson et al., 2005). The variable category Forgiveness, including high (70.1%), indicated by the Empirical Mean value (ME) = 36.49; Hypothetical Mean (MH) = 30, and Hypothetical Standard Deviation (SDH) = 6. It can be interpreted that the individual as a whole is capable of getting rid of the confusion of his painful past, Accepting the mistakes made by others, decreasing the motivation for revenge, not avoiding the perpetrator, and increasing the motivation to make peace with the perpetrator. Variable Forgiveness in this study had a relatively small influence, which was only 3.32% on the SWB variable, because during the course of time, the individual concerned had learned to forgive and accept the situation of the problems faced, so that the negative effects felt had been treated. Forgiveness can improve well-being by reducing the effects of stress and negative emotions, resulting in a more harmonious response for individuals (Worthington et al., 2005).

Furthermore, the second factor, according to (Park et al., 2004), one of the positive forces that gives the most strength to SWB is Gratitude. Emmons and McCullough (2003) say that Gratitude has been conceptualized as a form of feelings or emotions, attitudes, moral virtues, habits, personality traits, or coping responses in individuals living life. Then (Watkins et al., 2003)Define Gratitude as an attitude of appreciating every life as a gift and realizing the importance of expressing that appreciation. Then, there are four characteristics of individuals who have gratitude according to Watkins et al. (2003), including; have a sense of abundance (Sense of Abundance), have an appreciation for others (sense appreciation for others), has a simple appreciation (Simple Appreciation), and expressing gratitude (expressing of gratitude) with Gratitude, will affect a person in reacting to something or situation, such as in responding to an event or life experience with Gratitude, individuals will feel better in living life. This is reinforced by (Cahyono, 2014a), which says that by being grateful, a person will be touched in aspects of cognition (way of thinking), emotions (empathy), and spirituality (belief). In this case, what is meant is the positive benefits individuals get when they are grateful, such as being better at responding to every event. The variable category Gratitude is classified as moderate (81.3%), as indicated by the Empirical Mean value (ME) = 19.80; Hypothetical mean (MH) = 15; Hypothetical Standard Deviation (SDH) = 9. This can be interpreted as the individual's attitude toward being grateful for every life as a material and non-material gift is quite

good. Through gratitude for everything that has happened to be accepted, both materially and non-materially, humans will find the true meaning of life, which can make a person more meaningful and valuable in life, leading to happiness (Arrofiq, 2013). Cahyono (2014) States that with gratitude, a person will be touched in terms of cognition (way of thinking), emotions (empathy), and spirituality (belief).

CONCLUSION

The results of this study can be concluded that forgivess and gratitude significantly affect the emergence of subjective wellbeing in employees who have experienced layoffs. The gratitude variable has the most significant influence on employees' subjective wellbeing. The higher the level of forgiveness and gratitude you have, the higher the subjective wellbeing you feel. The category of the level of the Subjective Wellbeing variable and the Gratitude variable in this study is classified as moderate, while the Forgiveness variable is classified as high. This shows that even though the employee has experienced layoffs, they have shown high forgiveness and have a good enough gratitude for the conditions they have experienced today. The suggestion for future research is that researchers can take samples with individuals who are still experiencing layoff cases in the near future, so that the impact of SWB on the individual concerned can be seen directly.

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