Forgiveness and Subjective well-being as correlates of National Identity: Implications for National Development

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Abstract
This study examined relationship between forgiveness and subjective well-being as correlates of National identity: implications for National Development. The participants were 166 students who were drawn from Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. Age range of participants was between 17 years and 29 years while mean age was 21.24 years and standard deviation 2.17. Data for the study was collected using forgiveness scale Rye (1998), subjective well-being scale by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985) and National Identity Scale by Lilli and Diehl (1999).The study adopted correlation design. Consequently Pearson product moment correlation coefficient was used to as the statistical tool for data analysis. Result showed that there was significant correlation between forgiveness and national identity at r= .53**, P < .00. Also there was a significant positive correlation between Subjective well-being and national identity at r=.48**, P<.001. It was concluded that both forgiveness and subjective well-being relate positively to national development. It was recommended that forgiveness should be adopted among students as this will enhance national identity. Also, that school management should seek ways to improve well being of students so as to enhance sense of identity.

Introduction

Soon after the works of Tajfel and Turner (1986) scholars revived interests in studies to gain nuanced understanding of social identity, group and inter-group processes. National identity was found to be synonymous with social identity (Nigbur & Cirrinnelle, 2007; Smith, Giannini, Heikama, Maezynski & Stumps, 2005). Similarly, others define national identity as the central element of self-determination (Deaux, 2001) multidimensional construct that involves historical, territorial, common memories and myths of origin, standardized, public cultures, common economy and territorial mobility, common legal rights (Smith, 1992) the consciousness of forming a group based on the closeness that is felt with those who belong to the same nation (Guibernau, 2004). One could say that national identity is sense of belonging to ones nation or state with the consciousness of cultural tolerance of every member.

Tajfel and Turner (1986) observed that one of the main motivations that sustain group identity is protection of self-esteem (personal or group). The present study examines relationships between variables of national identity such as forgiveness and subjective well-being.

"Lasting peace cannot be brought about between different communities who have fought-each other for many centuries if the cycle of violence (aggressive –revenge cycle) is not broken at sometime, this cycle can be broken if the members of the different parties decide to do so and decide not only to negotiate but also to forgive", (Azar, Mullet, & Vinsonneaur, 1999). The importance of forgiveness has been in scholarship within the past two decades as the world sort for lasting peace among nations in identity crisis. Especially the United Nations in bid to achieve peace through application of forgiveness were joined by American Psychology Association Scholars in 2006 annual DPI/NGO conference.

Furthermore, in pursuit of peace and national development, authors have plethora of definitions that sort to convey the weight and meaning of forgiveness. Accordingly, forgiveness was defined as a process of or result of a process that involves a change in emotion and attitude regarding the offender, process which results in decreased motivation to retaliate or maintain estrangement from an offender despite their actions, and requires letting of negative emotions toward the offender (APA, 2006). Forgiveness is behavior that requires an offender and the offended. It establishes a fact that a hurt has been done in the past to the offended, which requires apology and forgiveness. Forgiveness as observed earlier depends on the offended personality disposition and the situation he/she finds him/her self. This classification was echoed by Mahatma Gandhi (12, p. 301) who postulated that only the strong could forgive. There may be variations in personality traits of individuals who could forgive. One may say that forgiveness with respect to national identity is a process or end of process in which ethnic groups decide to pardon one another of their ill doings thereby changing from negative to positive emotion and never to retaliate in future.

Shriver, (1995) argues that there are four dimensions of forgiveness:

1. A preliminary agreement between two or more parties that there is something from the past to be forgiven without which forgiveness stalls;
2. Abandoning of vengeance,
3. Empathy for enemy's humanity and
4. Aims at the renewal of human relationship.

According to scholarly literature forgiveness was found to be an important ingredient in aiding psychological healing through positive changes in affects, and improvement in physical and mental health (Exlime & Baumeister, 2000; Toussaint & Webb, 2005; West, 2001). Similarly, other scholars reported that forgiveness restores the victims sense of personal power (Fincham, Hall, & Beach, 2005) and brings about reconciliation between the offender and the offended (Hoyt, Finchman,

McCullough, Maico & Dauilla, 2005). Scholars argue that forgiveness promotes hopes for the resolution of real world intergroup conflict (Hewstone & Cairas, 2001). However, studies have linked subjective well-being and forgiveness to feelings of closeness with partner (Bono, McCullough & Root, 2007)

Furthermore, over the last two decades, there has been a growing interest in the study of subjective well-being (Diener, Suh, Lucas & Smith, 1999). Diener, *et al.,* (1999) defined subjective well-being as a multidimensional concept, which includes cognitive evaluations of life in general (life satisfaction) as well as positive and negative affects (PANA). Diener, (1984) defined subjective well-being as life satisfaction, feeling more positive emotions and feeling less negative emotions. Diener, Lucas and Oishi (2002) defined subjective well-being as experiencing pleasant emotions, low levels of negative moods and high life satisfaction. Evidence, from the definitions of the above scholars on definition of subjective well-being suggests that they basically focused on the three dimensional approach to subjective well-being (see Diener, *et al.,* 1999, Diener, 1984, Diener, *et al.,* 2002, Diener *et al.,* 2006).

In the last decades, it appears that research in SWB heightened due to importance of the construct in field of Social Psychology, yet with controversy in the dimensions of SWB (see Kahneman and Riis, 2005; Ku, Mckenna and Fox, 2007). A two dimensional approach component of subjective well-being argue that SWB was based on evaluation of life satisfaction/dissatisfaction (evaluation well-

being measures) and the combination of experience affect-range of emotion from joy to misery (experience well-being measures). Evaluation well-being focuses on an individual's evaluation of how satisfied or dissatisfied he/she is with life globally, while experience well-being is more concerned with the affect of life's experience on mood which is a measure of how happy, joy, misery one felt.

Ku, Mckenna and Fox, (2007) postulated the seven dimensional approach to SWB which encompasses physical, psychological, developmental, material, spiritual, socio-political, and social. Ku *et al.,* (2007) postulation was on a more explicit aspect of SWB. Despite the controversies surrounding SBW, it has been found that it is of great importance to humans. Increased levels of SWB, have been found to reduce inflammation, improve cardiovascular health, immune and endocrine system, lowers risk of heart disease (longevity) and increase income and support for prosociality tendencies (De Neve, Diener, Tay and Xuereb, 2013). Scholars have come up with promising results in the relationship between subjective well-being and national identity (Dimitrova, Buzea, Ljujics and Jordanor 2013; Morrison, Jay and Diener, 2011). However, Grozdanovsta (2016) was not able to confirm a significant relationship between national identities and affect (positive and negative) aspects of subjective well-being.

In contemporary Nigeria, it has been observed that various groups have been calling for restructuring and cessation. These calls are social indicators that the present national identity shared by the groups demand urgent attention.

Review of related literature

In a study reported by Berry, Worthington, & Wade (2005) it was found that valuing warmth-based virtue predicted forgiveness of the offenders. Karremans & VanLange (2008) reported that forgiveness was associated with greater perceived overlap between self and partner in a graphical measure of inclusion of the other in self scale. Recently, Rullo, Presaghi, Mazzuca, & Dessi (2017) found that after one year, in-group members were more likely to forgive in-group than out group transgressions but only when the threat to the group stereotype was salient. Earlier, Westernhof & Barrett (2005) reported that feeling younger than ones actual age is related to higher levels of satisfaction and positive feeling and lower levels of negative affect. It was hypothesized that there will be a positive and significant correlation between forgiveness and national identity, and also a significant and positive correlation between subjective well-being and national identity.

Methods

The study adopted a correlation design. Statistics employed for data analysis was Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. Participants for the study were 166 undergraduate students of the department of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka. The participants comprised of males (54, 32.5%) and females (112, 67.5%) between the ages of 17 to 29 years, with mean age of 21.24 years and standard deviation of 2.17. Using a multi stage sample technique, participants were drawn from study level two.

Rye (1998) Forgiveness scale (FS) was used to assess forgiveness. The scale consists of

15 items with response options 1- strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. Loiacono, Fokck, Olszewski, Heim, Madia, (2001) reported test retest reliability of .81 Cronbach alpha. Reliability of the scale in the present study was found at .75.

Subjective well-being was measured using satisfaction with life scale (SWLS). SWLS is a 5-item questionnaire developed by Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin (1985). SWLS has Likert response possibility options ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Diener, et al., (1985) reported coefficient alpha of .85, scores on the SWLS has maximum of 35 and minimum of 5. Internal reliability of Cronbach alpha .70 was found in the present study.

National identity scale (NIS) developed by Lilli and Diehl (1999) was used to measure national identity. NIS comprises of 20 items which measure five domains (Membership, Private, Public, Identity and Comparison) consisting of 4 items each. NIS has response options of 1-disagree to 6-totally agree. Items 1, 3, 5,7,8,10,13,15,16,17, were reversed while other items were directly measured. Overall reliability of the scale was reported by Lilli and Diehl (1999) at .84 Cronbach alpha. The internal reliability of the scale was found in the present study at .76 Cronbach alpha.

Table 1. Correlations among measures

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**
Forgiveness	1			
Subjective well-being	.045	1		
National identity	.532**	.477**	1	

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level
Correlation is significant at the .05 level

Correlation result shows that forgiveness correlated at $r = .532^{**}$ and subjective well-being correlated at r .477** with national identity. The correlation between forgiveness and subjective well being was positive but not statistically significant. Therefore the results of the study confirmed both hypothesis one and two, which expected positive correlation between forgiveness and subjective well being and national identity. These findings were in consonant with earlier reports by previous scholars in the relationship between forgiveness and subjective well being on national identity (Berry et al.; 2005; Karremans & Van lang 2008, Rullo et al 2017; Grozdanovska, 2016). It was concluded that forgiveness and subject well being were essential ingredients in national identity. It was recommended that those that practice forgiveness and improved subjective well being may report enhanced national identity which could predict national development. The study was limited to the students of Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra state. Therefore, caution should be taken in generalizing the study report to the wider public. Again, self report measure may be prone to some levels of deception due to personality and other contextual factors operating at the time of study. The implications of findings were that students that practice forgiveness and report improved well being may have more identity. It is recommended that further studies should be carried out from other universities within the country, to strengthen the claims of the present study. Also, samples should be drawn from other demographics apart from students to gain nuance understanding of the relationships among forgiveness and subjective well being. This will enable wider understanding of the relationships of these variables and seek new ways of achieving national identity and development. It is hoped that forgiveness, subjective well being and national identity model would lead to reduction in national identity crisis witnessed in various parts of the country.

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