

# DOES RELIGIOSITY AFFECT FORGIVENESS WHEN MODERATED BY OPTIMISM IN INFIDELITY VICTIM

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**Abstract.** An *infidelity* is an act that is difficult or even unforgivable by someone who experienced it. Even so, there are also people who are defended for various reasons. Previous research has value on the perpetrators of infidelity, so this study uses victims of infidelity to study, which can be a unique thing in this study. This research aims to determine whether the effect of religiosity moderated by optimism can affect the forgiveness of infidelity victims. This study has two hypotheses; the first hypothesis assumes that there is an influence between religiosity and optimism on forgiveness. The second hypothesis suspects that there is an effect between religiosity and forgiveness moderated by optimism. The research method used is a quantitative method with a convenience sampling technique. The results of the study showed that there was no effect between religiosity and optimism on forgiveness in the victim of infidelity. So the first hypothesis was rejected, and there was no effect between religiosity and forgiveness moderated by optimism in the victim of infidelity, so the second hypothesis was also rejected. However, there is a positive correlation between religiosity and optimism, as well as between optimism and forgiveness

**Keywords:** religiosity, forgiveness, optimism, dan infidelity.

## INTRODUCTION

Lately, infidelity has become a trending topic that netizens are discussing on social media. Pros and cons adorn each case of infidelity, which has its own story. Infidelity does not just happen nowadays; it has existed since ancient times. History records that infidelity has been found since the time of ancestors and contemporary pre-industrial society, which later became common in post-industrial society. The United States has evidence that about one in three married men and about one in five married women have an extramarital affair in their lifetime. Another study shows that more than half of the participants tend to cheat on their partners (Apostolou & Demosthenous, 2020).

*Infidelity* is generally defined as an emotional or sexual relationship outside the couple's agreement. This phenomenon can occur due to dissatisfaction with the partner; one example is the partner's unmet needs. There are two types of infidelity, namely sexual and emotional. Generally, problems that arise in relationships start with communication problems, causing misunderstandings that can cause someone to look for something new to meet their needs. However, infidelity violates the norm regardless of the cause of the problem (Vowels et al., 2019; Wijaya & Shanti, 2020).

In several cases of infidelity, the victim will generally not forgive a partner who has had an affair and chooses to separate. However, not a few also choose to forgive their partners because it is for their children's best, followed by infidelity, reducing the possibility of infidelity in the future and dependency on their partner. The length of the relationship and age also affect a person's likelihood of forgiving their partner who cheated on them. Older people who have experienced being cheated on by their former partners are more likely to forgive their partners than younger people who have never been cheated on (Apostolou et al., 2019; Apostolou & Demosthenous, 2020).

To be able to maintain a relationship, forgiveness from the victim is needed. Forgiving behavior overcomes the perpetrator's anger but does not deny his moral right to that anger. Forgiveness is the victim's attitude not to take revenge on the perpetrator, not the desire to separate from the perpetrator, but instead to make peace and do good to the perpetrator even when the perpetrator commits hurtful behavior. In addition, several factors can influence an individual's willingness to forgive (forgiveness); for example, the behavior of a partner through apologies and regrets with a perception of infidelity that is relatively not severe will increase personal empathy (Braithwaite et al., 2011; Sari, 2012).

Victims can forgive perpetrators because victims still have feelings of love and affection for their partners, are afraid of negative public opinion when they have to divorce, and think about the future and self-esteem of their children. Therefore, they decided to maintain their marriage for family pride in society (Anisa et al., 2021).

Forgiveness is vital in interpersonal relationships. Forgiveness occurs when a person is no longer motivated to seek revenge or avoid mistakes. Forgiveness, especially in an affair, is not easy; it requires time and a strong desire from the individual to forgive. Several factors play a role in forgiveness, one of which is religiosity. The contribution of religiosity to forgiveness has a positive relationship with forgiveness and is an essential aspect of forgiveness. Several other studies describe a relationship between religiosity and forgiveness (Fitriani et al., 2018; Szcześniak et al., 2011).

Even though modernization and secularization have almost put religion aside, religion remains integral to individual and social life (Mahudin et al., 2016). Religiosity comes from the word religion (English), translated in Indonesian as a religion that means belief in God or as one's devotion and commitment to religion (Fitriani et al., 2018; Fahrudin, 2019). In this case, the purpose of religiosity is not just to claim to be religious (having a religion) but to become a comprehensive unity of what someone designates as a religious person (religion). Studies have found that people with religious and spiritual beliefs have more resources to cope with and are generally happier than those with less critical beliefs (Steiner et al., 2015).

Until now, Indonesia has been included in an optimistic study conducted by 95% of the world's population. The study concluded that optimism and its relationship with the educational context could become a new ideology in Indonesia. *Optimism* is an individual difference variable that reflects the degree to which people generally have positive expectations about their future. An optimistic view of a relationship and oneself is expected to influence whether forgiveness occurs. However, several studies have shown that optimism can predict forgiveness behavior if it allows positive coping and cooperative post-conflict problem-solving (Rey et al., 2014; Suryadi et al., 2021).

Several studies have shown that forgiving behavior can reduce negative emotions and increase positive emotions. Optimism and forgiving behavior are positively related to good (interpersonal) relationships and healthy behavior, but these variables are negatively related to anxiety, depression, and stress. People who have not been able to forgive try to avoid problems related to painful things in the past in order to forgive. Forgiving behavior can also predict changes in one's level of optimism. For example, individuals can develop an optimistic attitude when letting go of painful past situations by forgiving others (Zuroida et al., 2019).

A study reveals that optimism does not affect a person's religiosity, as other studies prove. Which state that a person forgives a spouse who has an affair because they already have children, dependency on their partner, and other factors that have nothing to do with one's religiosity. At the same time, optimism has a positive relationship with forgiveness (Apostolou & Demonsthenous, 2020; Harpan, 2015; Zuroida et al., 2019). However, Harpan's research (2015) shows a direct role of the religiosity factor in optimism. The higher a person's level of religiosity, the higher the optimism.

As a novelty, this study aims to determine whether there is an influence between religiosity and optimism on forgiveness. The hypothesis states that religiosity and optimism can influence forgiveness. This hypothesis is based on the results of previous research by Fitriani et al. (2018) and Amrilah et al. (2015), which stated that religiosity affects forgiveness which has a positive relationship. The results of other studies show that the higher the optimism and gratitude scores, the easier it is to forgive others (Rey and Extreme, 2014). So, the first hypothesis we put forward is:

H1: There is an influence between religiosity and optimism on forgiveness

Furthermore, this study also aims to determine whether there is an influence between religiosity and forgiveness moderated by optimism. There are results from a study that there is a positive effect between religiosity and optimism, namely the higher the religiosity, the higher the optimism (Harpan, 2015). Intuitively it can be concluded that optimism can moderate religiosity so that it increases forgiveness for victims of infidelity. So, the second hypothesis that we propose is:

H2: There is an influence between religiosity on forgiveness which is moderated by optimism.

## RESEARCH METHOD

A total of 112 individuals participated as respondents in this study. Respondents were selected based on the criteria: individual with a range of age 18-40 years old ( $M = 22,93$ ;  $SD = 4,26$ ) and having experience of being cheated on by a dating partner or spouse. The study was conducted in December 2022. The procedure in this study was to use a google form containing informed consent to be distributed to respondents using a convenience sampling technique. The researcher informs that the respondents' participation is voluntary, and has the right to cancel whenever the respondent wants.

The Forgiveness Scale, The Indonesian version of the Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R), and IUM Religiosity Scale (IUMRelS) measuring instruments were used in this study. They filled in this instrument using a Likert scale with 4 and 5 answer choices (1 = strongly disagree to 4/5 = strongly agree). The Forgiveness Scale, containing 15 questions, was used to measure individual forgiveness towards an offender (Rye et al., 2001). This instrument have 2 dimensions which absence of negative and presence of positive with an item example: "(saya tidak bisa berhenti memikirkan betapa saya diperlakukan tidak adil oleh orang ini)", and "(saya berharap hal baik terjadi kepada orang yang memperlakukan saya secara tidak adil)". Internal consistency in this measuring instrument for this study is 0.79.

In measuring Islamic religiosity, the IUM Religiosity Scale (IUMRelS), which contains 10 questions (Mahudin et al., 2016) is used in this study with an item example: "(saya merasa buruk melakukan sesuatu yang dilarang bahkan Ketika saya tahu orang lain juga melakukannya)", and "(saya memperjuangkan untuk lebih mengikuti aql (logika) saya daripada nafs (nafsu) saya)". Internal consistency in this measuring instrument for this study is 0.89. and in measuring optimism, The Indonesian version of the Life Orientation Test-Revised (LOT-R) is being used. LOT-R consists of 6 item with an item example: "(saya jarang menggantungkan harapan pada hal-

hal baik yang terjadi pada diri saya)”, and “(saya jarang sekali mengharapkan sesuatu terjadi sesuai keinginan saya)”. Internal consistency in this measuring instrument for this study is 0.65.

The analysis technique in this study uses moderation analysis, namely regression analysis involving moderator variables as a modeling of causal relationships. Analysis was performed using IBM SPSS 22.0 program and with an add-on Process by Hayes.

## RESULT AND ANALYSIS

This study used 112 respondents who had an age range of 18-40 years and had experiences of being cheated on by their partners. The following results of the distribution of data are described using tables:

**Table 1.** Demographic Variable.

KARAKTERISTIK SAMPEL	FREKUENSI	PERSENTASE
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	21	19%
Female	91	81%
Total	112	100%
<b>Occupation</b>		
Private Employees	22	20%
Student	73	65%
Civil Servant	7	6%
Unemployed	6	5%
Self-Employed	4	4%
Total	112	100%
<b>Relationship Status</b>		
Dating	43	38%
Single	53	47%
Married	16	14%
Total	112	100%
<b>Income Status</b>		
Above Rp. 10,000,000	7	6%
Below Rp. 3,000,000	69	62%
Rp. 3,000,000 - Rp. 5,000,000	25	22%
Rp. 5,000,001 - Rp. 10,000,000	11	10%
Total	112	100%

### 1.1. Pearson’s Correlations and Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 describes the three variables' means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlation coefficients. There are positive correlation between religiosity and optimism, as well as optimism and forgiveness. Meanwhile, there is no correlation between religiosity and forgiveness.

**Table 2.** Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson’s Correlation Coefficient for Religiosity, Optimism, and Forgiveness.

Variables	M (SD)	1.	2.	3.
1. Religiosity	33.38 (4.45)	1	.52**	.14
2. Optimism	12.55 (1.93)	–	1	.20*

3.Forgiveness	44.55 (8.45)	-	-	1
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*\*p < .05, and \*\*p < .01*

### 1.2. Multiple Regression Analyses

Multiple regression analysis will be conducted to see the effect of two variables, namely religiosity and optimism to forgiveness (see table 3). Religiosity has no influence on forgiveness. Furthermore, the optimism variable has a positive effect on forgiveness and has a total of 3% variation in forgiveness. Then when tested the two variables using multiple regression, both of variables have no influence on forgiveness. First hypothesis has been rejected.

**Table 3.** Multiple Regression results of Religiosity and Optimism as predictors of Forgiveness

Predictors	Religiosity		Optimism		Religiosity (Rel) & Optimism (Opt)	
	b	SE	b	SE	B	SE
Forgiveness	.05	.10	.06	.10	.02 (Rel); .06 (Opt)	.04 (Rel); .04 (Opt)
R 2 Adj	.01		.03		.02	
F	2.14 (1; 110)		4.55 (1; 110)*		2.35 (2; 109)	

$\beta$  = standardized regression coefficient; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .001$

### 1.3. Moderation Analysis

Multiple regression analysis reveals the influence of only optimism on forgiveness, which motivates researchers to analyze further whether optimism can be a moderator in increasing forgiveness when interacted by religiosity. The moderation model in this study was not significant, with the interaction of religiosity and optimism found not to be significant ( $\beta_{rel} = .02$ , 95% CI [-.10, .14],  $p = .73$ ;  $\beta_{opt} = .06$ , 95% CI [-.03, .16],  $p = .24$ ).

At the low moderation, the conditional effect was not significant ( $\beta = .02$ , 95% CI [-.07, .12],  $p = .66$ ). At (the) middle moderation, the conditional effect was not significant ( $\beta = .02$ , 95% CI [-.05, .09],  $p = .62$ ). At the high moderation, the effect was not significant ( $\beta = 0.01$ , 95% CI [-.08, .10],  $p = .77$ ). These results prove that optimism cannot be moderator when there is religiosity present in defining forgiveness. All types of moderators, from low, medium, and high, have no potential to increase forgiveness.

**Table 4.** Moderation Analysis of Religiosity to Forgiveness with Optimism as Moderating

Predictors	Religiosity x Optimism (Moderation)	
	b	SE
Forgiveness	.02 (Rel); .06 (SC); -.00 (Mod)	.03 (Rel); .04 (SC); .02 (Mod)
R 2 Adj	.04	
F	1.55 (3; 108)	

$\beta$  = standardized regression coefficient; \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .001$

This study aims to see whether a person's forgiveness can be influenced by religiosity moderated by optimism in the victim of an affair. The hypothesis says that religiosity can affect forgiveness. This hypothesis comes from findings in previous studies by Agung (2018) and Widodo et al. (2015), which state that the contribution of religiosity to forgiveness has a positive relationship and is an essential aspect of forgiveness. The findings in other studies show that the higher a person's optimism and gratitude score, the lower the desire to take revenge. In other words, someone with a high optimism and gratitude score will more easily forgive others (Rey and Extremera, 2014).

However, the results obtained in this study indicate that the hypothesis needs to be proven. Of the 112 respondents who were the subjects of this study with an age range of 18-40 years, both men and women who had experiences of being cheated on by their partners showed that religiosity could not affect a person's forgiveness significantly when moderated by optimism. Based on the short story told by the respondent, the wound felt when being cheated on is so painful that it is difficult to forgive. The absence of the influence of religiosity moderated by optimism for one's forgiveness proves that someone who worships and has a good religion does not necessarily lead to forgiveness, especially in the case of an affair.

Based on the study's results, it was found that religiosity moderated by optimism cannot affect forgiveness. There are previous studies that can strengthen the results of this study. For example, Apostolou and Demosthenous (2020) revealed that a person forgives their cheating partner because having children, followed by their infidelities, reduces the likelihood of future infidelity and dependency on a partner. This study did not reveal that there is an effect of religiosity moderated by optimism for someone to forgive their cheating partner. Other studies have revealed that optimism cannot mediate between religiosity and psychological well-being (Harpan, 2015). It can be concluded that optimism does not affect one's religiosity.

Although in this study, religiosity moderated by optimism is not proven to affect a person's forgiveness, optimism still has the potential to affect a person's forgiveness. One study revealed that the higher the value of a person's optimism, the more effective the forgiveness therapy is (Zuroida & Irmayanti, 2019). Therefore, optimism has the potential to influence forgiveness.

An Infidelity is difficult to forgive because of the betrayal committed by the perpetrator against his partner. In general, someone whose partner cheats tends to break up the relationship because it is challenging to forgive mistakes that are considered fatal. In this study, two hypotheses were proposed. The first hypothesis assumed that there was an influence between religiosity and optimism on forgiveness. The second hypothesis assumed that there was an effect between religiosity and forgiveness moderated by optimism. However, the research results prove that the two hypotheses cannot be proven. Based on short stories from respondents, they said that the pain or disappointment felt by someone being cheated on is so deep that the level of religiosity cannot influence someone to forgive their partner who is having an affair. On the other hand, optimism still has the potential to influence someone's forgiveness.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows a positive correlation between religiosity and optimism and between optimism and forgiveness. However, there is no relationship between religiosity and forgiveness. In the Moderation Analysis section, optimism cannot be a moderator when religiosity affects forgiveness. This finding applies to all moderators, from low to medium to high. There is no possibility of increasing forgiveness. The limitations of our study were that there were only 112 participants (lack of research sample). For future researchers, increasing the number of samples is recommended to get even more accurate results and include sample criteria with more specific cases/conditions.

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