Well-being, Dispositional Gratitude and Dispositional Forgiveness in Adolescence and Emerging Adulthood

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Abstract The paper focuses on the relationship between the measure of well-being, the measure of dispositional gratitude, dispositional forgiveness in 167 respondents in the period of adolescence and emerging adulthood. We used a questionnaire to measure subjective well-being (WHO Regional Office For Europe, 1998), a dispositional gratitude scale (McCullough, Emmons, Tsang, 2002) and the Heartland Forgiveness Questionnaire (Thompson et al., 2005). The existence of a positive relationship between subjective well-being and dispositional gratitude was confirmed, as well as a positive relationship between subjective well-being and overall dispositional forgiveness. A significant positive relationship was also confirmed between subjective wellbeing and dispositional self-forgiveness, dispositional forgiveness of others, and dispositional forgiveness of the situation. A significant positive relationship was also demonstrated in connection with dispositional gratitude and overall dispositional forgiveness. Furthermore, the relationship between the degree of dispositional and dispositional gratitude self-forgiveness, dispositional forgiveness of others, and dispositional forgiveness of the situation was found.

Key words: Adolescence, Dispositional gratitude, Dispositional forgiveness, Subjective well-being, Emerging adulthood

1. INTRODUCTION

Adolescence and emerging adulthood are periods characterized precisely by the fact that adolescents must adapt to the changes that come with adulthood (Lewis et al., 2015; Gilmore, 2019). Future independence, the expectation of independence from parents, as well as an increased perception of the need for new competences and self-regulation and coping strategies come to the fore.

As a follow-up to one of these tasks – independence, it is obvious that its fulfillment is becoming more and more difficult and complicated with the onset of modern times (Gilmore, 2019; Hochberg, Konner, 2020), not to mention significantly worsened survival within the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. as well as the situation with the war in Ukraine, which left "traces" on the physical

and mental health of the entire population. The adverse effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, intensified by the war conflict in the immediate vicinity of our borders, refer in many works (e.g. Quigley et al., 2022, Kurapov et al., 2022) to adverse effects on psychological well-being, the subjective measure of which naturally decreases temporarily in this turbulent development period of the separation-individuation process (Koepke, Denissen, in Hill, Burrow, Sumner, 2016) according to individual demands and the subjective and objective possibilities of the individual. Therefore, like the authors Mead et al. (2021) we decided to focus our attention on selected protective factors – gratitude, forgiveness, which could not only protect personal well-being, but also positively influence the individual's quality of life.

Well-being, or personal well-being, forms the basis of everyday life and represents the result of our thoughts, experiences and actions. Nevertheless, it is still not explicitly defined. However, many agree that well-being can be characterized as the occurrence of positive moods and emotions (e.g. happiness), life satisfaction, fulfilling functioning, positive functioning, while negative emotions (e.g. anxiety) are not present (Well-being Concepts, 2018). Currently, the World Health Organization (2021) leans towards an optimistic definition and describes well-being as a positive state experienced by people and the entire society.

According to Blatný (2020), psychological and subjective personal well-being are separate conceptual constructs that are internally dependent on each other and complement each other. The philosophical basis of subjective well-being or subjective comfort is the hedonic approach, on the basis of which it is understood as pleasure or happiness, in which a person experiences satisfaction with his own life, experiences positive emotions and, conversely, negative ones are absent (Bradburn, 1969; Diener, 1984). The term psychological well-being can be understood as a set of criteria that are personal and private, while evaluating one's own functioning (Keyes, Lopez 2002).

In the life of an adolescent, mental well-being is an important factor in adaptive development. It is helpful in creating one's identity and also in finding a kind of refuge (Balážová, Uhrecký, 2018). As is the case with psychological well-being, also for experiencing subjective

well-being, in addition to relationships in the family, with teachers or peers, fun activities, a sense of freedom and a sense of security proved to be important (Balážová, Uhrecký, 2018).

Gratitude is considered to be one of the most important human virtues. The concept of gratitude is not easily defined, as we can imagine under it an emotion, life orientation, attitude or moral virtue (Wood, Froh, Geraghty, 2010). According to Wood (2014), gratitude can be understood on the one hand as a state that is characterized as a reaction at a certain point in time. On the other hand, we can understand it as a personality trait that is defined based on specific differences in how intensely and how often an individual experiences situational gratitude. We can recognize the difference between situational gratitude and dispositional gratitude on the basis that situational gratitude depends on a specific event, while dispositional gratitude represents a stable affective characteristic that is mostly unaffected by occurring events (Alkozei, Smith, Killgore, 2017).

In relation to adolescents and emerging adults, Froh et al. (2011) spoke about gratitude as a key that can help adolescents escape the negative influences of the present, which include too much emphasis on wealth and materialism. Bausert, Froh (s.a.) and Balthip, Suwanphahu and McSherry (2022) also agree that it has an important position in well-being, health care, and positive adaptation of the adolescent. The fact that gratitude can cause an increase in emotional well-being and social well-being even in adolescents was confirmed in the work of Froh, Bono and Emmons (2010), with the fact that it can later have a positive impact on their future. In a study with a sample of university students by Măirean, Turliuc, and Arghire (2018), trait gratitude was found to be positively correlated with dimensions of psychological well-being. Gratitude is positively related to positive parenting behavior, closeness between parents and children, and dispositional gratitude of parents (Bausert, Ruscio, Froh in Bausert, Froh, s.a.).

Although there is no single definition of *forgiveness*, several authors agree that forgiveness is not the same as forgetting, excusing, tolerating, reconciling, appeasing, or saying "I forgive you" (Kim, Enright, Wong, 2022). However, this way of adjusting to people and events has a positive impact on a person (Drábiková, 2012).

Most often, we can meet the distinction of forgiveness into situational and dispositional. Situational forgiveness is forgiveness from one person to another in specific contexts of interpersonal injustices (Kim, Enright, 2016). In the case of dispositional forgiveness, or otherwise called trait forgiveness, we are talking about the tendency to forgive transgressions despite various circumstances (Allemand et al., 2007). Dispositional forgiveness differs from situational forgiveness in that dispositional forgiveness occurs in a person who possesses the virtue of forgiveness (Roberts, 1995).

The relationship of these three constructs of positive psychology, i.e. the relationship of dispositional forgiveness and dispositional gratitude to well-being among Filipino adolescents, was followed by Datu (2013), whose results confirmed that self-forgiveness, situational forgiveness, and gratitude were significantly correlated with well-being, with the most significant determinant of well-being was gratitude. In a study by Fincham and May (2019) a significant positive correlation between self-forgiveness and subjective well-being was also found. Between the tendency to forgive and the tendency to be grateful, in young adults, Kumar and Dixit (2014) confirmed a significant positive relationship. In his work, the author of Safaria (2014) found a positive correlation between dispositional gratitude and happiness, which is considered an important aspect of subjective well-being. However, no significant relationship emerged

between forgiveness and happiness. This means that well-being is associated with gratitude, but not with forgiveness, in college students. However, in a study by Akhtar, Dolan and Barlow (2017) situational forgiveness proved to be efficient in connection with mental well-being feeling. In a study by Jiang et al. (2016) dispositional gratitude also showed a positive relationship with school well-being, which includes cognitive and affective components of well-being at school. The improvement of adolescent school well-being may also be related to the reduction of materialism (Jiang et al., 2016). The results about the positive relationship between dispositional gratitude and well-being also agree with the work of Hill and Allemand (2011), where it was found in a sample of adults that those who showed dispositional gratitude and forgiveness had a higher level of well-being. Yao et al. (2017) confirmed previous findings in that both interpersonal dispositional forgiveness and intrapersonal dispositional forgiveness are significantly related to adolescent subjective well-being.

1.1 Research problem and research objectives

Considering the burden that adolescents and emerging adults experience not only within their transitional period, but also with its increase due to the emerging pandemic and neighboring war, we decided to verify whether gratitude, forgiveness and well-being are helpful for living a more meaningful and happy life of individual in adolescence and emerging adulthood.

1.2 Research questions and hypotheses

H1: We assume that there is a positive relationship between the level of experienced subjective well-being and the level of dispositional gratitude in people from adolescence to emerging adulthood (e.g. Bausert, Froh, sa; Safaria, 2014).

H2a: We assume that there is a positive relationship between the level of subjective well-being and the level of overall dispositional forgiveness in the period of adolescence to emerging adulthood (Hill, Allemand, 2011; Akhtar, Dolan, Barlow, 2017).

H2b: We hypothesize that there is a positive relationship between the level of subjective well-being and the level of dispositional self-forgiveness in the period of adolescence to emerging adulthood (Datu, 2013; Yao et al., 2017; Fincham, May, 2019).

H2c: We hypothesize that there is a positive relationship between the level of subjective well-being and the level of dispositional forgiveness of others in people from adolescence to emerging adulthood (Yao et al., 2017).

H2d: We assume that there is a positive relationship between the level of subjective well-being and the level of forgiveness of situations in people from adolescence to emerging adulthood (Datu, 2013).

H3: We hypothesize that there is a positive relationship between the level of dispositional gratitude and the level of overall dispositional forgiveness in people from adolescence to emerging adulthood (Kumar, Dixit, 2014).

Q1: Is there a relationship between the level of dispositional gratitude and the level of individual domains of dispositional forgiveness in people in adolescence and emerging adulthood?

1.3 Research file

The overall research sample consisted of 167 respondents aged 15-25 (M = 21.32; SD = 2.64; Mdn = 22). Research participants consisted of 67 (40 %) males (M = 21.48; SD = 3.04; Mdn = 22) and 100 (60 %) females (M = 21.21; SD = 2.35; Mdn = 21). Part of the research were respondents in the period of adolescence and emerging adulthood showing the highest level of education from elementary school to higher education II. degree.

1.4 Research procedure

We collected data for our research online through a questionnaire battery during the months of February to March 2023. We worked with the acquired data using the statistical program Jamovi 2.2.5.

1.5 Research methods

To determine subjective well-being, dispositional gratitude and dispositional forgiveness in the period of adolescence and emerging adulthood, we compiled the following test battery. To measure subjective well-being, we used a short questionnaire with 5 items rated on a 6-point Likert scale (0 = all the time; 1 = sometimes; 2 = less than half the time...) Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5) (WHO Regional office for Europe, 1998). Respondents rated the items with respect to the last two weeks. Items include e.g. "I felt active and full of energy". Cronbach's alpha value reached 0.83. We used The Gratitude Questionnaire-Six-Item Form (GQ-6) (McCullough, Emmons, Tsang, 2002) to investigate specific differences in the tendency to be grateful in everyday life. It consists of 6 items evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = completely agree). An example of an item from the scale is, for example: "I have so much in my life for which I can be grateful". Cronbach's alpha value is 0.71. We obtained the Slovak versions of both questionnaires by translating the items from the English versions, according to the methodological manual for translating foreign language methodologies. We used the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) (Thompson et al., 2005) to measure general tendency to forgive. The respondent evaluates 18 items using a 7-point Likert scale (from 1 = almost never applies; to 7 =almost always applies). The items are situated in three dimensions the tendency to forgive oneself, the tendency to forgive other people and the tendency to forgive uncontrollable situations. The dimension of forgiving oneself includes e.g. item: "I am angry with myself for the bad things I have done". In our work, we used the Slovak adaptation of the questionnaire from Chlebcová and Greškovičová (2019). Internal consistency for the entire questionnaire and individual domains of the HFS questionnaire represents acceptable values: HFS total dispositional forgiveness $\alpha = 0.81$; HFS selfforgiveness $\alpha = 0.66$; HFS forgiveness of others $\alpha = 0.75$; HFS forgiveness situation $\alpha = 0.63$. To verify the hypothesis H1, we used the Pearson correlation, given the observed assumptions. We confirmed hypothesis 1, and found a statistically significant weak to moderately strong relationship between the level of experienced subjective well-being and the level of dispositional gratitude. We present the results from the correlation analysis in Table no. 1.

Table no. 1 The relationship between subjective well-being and dispositional gratitude

	Subjective well-being		
	r	Sig.	
Dispositional gratitude	0.30	< 0.001	
Note N = 167 r = Pearson			

Note. N = 167, r = Pearson correlation coefficient

We confirmed hypothesis H2a, as we found a statistically significant weak relationship between subjective well-being and overall dispositional forgiveness.

In hypothesis H2b, where we assumed the existence of a positive relationship between the level of subjective well-being and dispositional self-forgiveness, we confirmed a statistically significant weak to moderately strong relationship.

Furthermore, we hypothesized in H2c that there is a positive relationship between the level of subjective well-being and dispositional forgiveness to others. The existence of a relationship was also confirmed in this case, as we found a significant positive weak relationship between the level of subjective well-being and the level of forgiveness to others. We also used Pearson's correlation coefficient for hypothesis H2d, where we confirmed the existence of a statistically significant weak positive relationship between subjective well-being and the dispositional forgiveness domain. We present the results from the correlation analyzes in Table no. 2.

Table no. 2. The relationship between subjective well-being and dispositional forgiveness

	Subjective well-being	
	r	Sig.
Total disposition forgiveness	0.29	< 0.001
Dispositional self-forgiveness	0.30	< 0.001
Dispositional forgiveness of others Dispositional forgiveness of the	0.17	0.015
situation	0.21	0.003

Note. N = 167, r = Pearson correlation coefficient

We confirmed hypothesis H3, as we found a statistically significant moderately strong relationship between the level of dispositional gratitude and the level of total dispositional forgiveness.

Finally, we posed research question O1, where we focused on the relationship between individual domains of forgiveness and dispositional gratitude. By calculating Pearson's correlation coefficients, we found statistically significant positive very weak relationships between the level of dispositional gratitude and dispositional self-forgiveness and dispositional gratitude and dispositional forgiveness of the situation. We confirmed a moderately strong statistically significant positive relationship between dispositional gratitude and dispositional forgiveness. The results of correlation analyzes are presented in Table no. 3.

Table no. 3 The relationship between dispositional gratitude and dispositional forgiveness

	Dispositional gratitude	
	r	Sig.
Total disposition forgiveness	0.33	< 0.001
Dispositional self-forgiveness	0.16	0.019
Dispositional forgiveness of others	0.38	< 0.001
Dispositional forgiveness of the	e	
situation	0.21	0.003

Note. N = 167, r = Pearson correlation coefficient

DISCUSSION

The quality of life has been affected by stressful situations in recent years, such as pandemic or war (e.g. Donker, Mastrotheodoros, Branie, 2021; Bačíková, Janovská, 2022; Kurapov et al., 2022), which is closely associated with mental health and well-being

(World Health Organization Europe, 2005). The well-being of adolescents also decreased, e.g. forced by isolation during the pandemic, which later turned into isolation increasingly required by adolescents (Sikorska et al., 2021).

The acquisition of adequate subjective well-being, characterized by the experience of happiness, positive emotions and satisfaction with life (Bradburn, 1969; Diener, 1984), also depends on a person's moral traits, the higher or lower level of which is reflected in his level. One of the moral characteristics is dispositional gratitude, which is reflected in addition to mental and physical health (Alkozei, Smith, Killgore, 2017) and in adolescent relationships within the family or peer group, which have a decisive position for the period of adolescence (Bausert, Froh, sa; Walsh, 2020).

As part of our work, we verified the positive relationship between subjective well-being and dispositional gratitude, which we assumed based on the results of Safaria (2014). In addition, we pointed out the fact that gratitude brings an optimistic outlook on life to an adolescent (Bausert, Froh, et al.) and is also a factor helping to avoid the negative aspects of the present time (Froh et al., 2011). Our results suggest that with an increase in the tendency to express gratitude, a person's subjective well-being may increase during this tumultuous period. If a teenager even shows gratitude, it can give him a sense of meaning and fulfillment, which are necessary for achieving adequate well-being (Křivohlavý, 2004). Based on our results, we believe that the development of gratitude in adolescents could lead to avoiding pitfalls not only resulting from the experienced life phase, but also from current events (Froh et al., 2011). Besides, their life would have a happier and more contented quality.

As another salutoprotective factor, we included dispositional forgiveness, which reduces negative feelings such as anger or anxiety (Toussaint et al., 2019; Kaleta, Mróz, 2022). We correlated the level of subjective well-being with all domains of dispositional forgiveness as well as with total dispositional forgiveness, with correlations showing positive statistical significance, although slight variations in the strength of the relationship were demonstrated.

The assumption stated in hypothesis H2a about the existence of a positive relationship between the level of subjective well-being and the level of overall dispositional forgiveness, based on the findings of Hill, Allemand (2011), Akhtar, Dolan and Barlow (2017), was confirmed to us at the level of a weak relationship. This means that with a higher level of subjective well-being of people in the period of adolescence and emerging adulthood, the degree of dispositional forgiveness also increases. We confirmed hypothesis H2b about the existence of a positive relationship between the measure of subjective well-being and dispositional self-forgiveness, in which we based the results of e.g. Datua (2013), Fincham and Maya (2019), on the basis of which we can conclude that higher subjective well-being is associated with a person's tendency to forgive himself for a certain offense he has committed. Similarly, in hypothesis H2c, we confirmed the existence of a relationship between subjective well-being and dispositional forgiveness to others, which is in agreement with the findings of Yao et al. (2017) that an adolescent who has proven to be more prone to reduce negative thoughts or feelings towards the perpetrator, can also be characterized by a higher experience of positive feelings, happiness and satisfaction with one's life. We also confirmed the assumption H2d from the work of Datu (2013) about the relationship between subjective wellbeing and dispositional forgiveness of a situation at the level of a weak relationship. Since adolescents, regardless of the complexity of the times, encounter many conflicting situations during their stormy period full of significant changes, the tendency to forgive the situation can help them to experience a higher subjective well-being.

In hypothesis H3, we confirmed a positive relationship between dispositional gratitude and overall dispositional forgiveness, which is consistent with the findings of Kumar and Dixit (2014).

As part of the statistical analysis, we correlated all three types of forgiveness with gratitude. For research question O1, correlations between dispositional gratitude and individual domains of dispositional forgiveness, i.e. forgiveness of self, others, and situation, were also shown to be statistically significant. We can state that if a teenager is characterized by a higher tendency to show gratitude, this can also be reflected in his tendency to forgive himself, others and the situation.

3. CONCLUSION

In summary, the results of our research pointed to the fact that the constructs of positive psychology, i.e. dispositional gratitude and dispositional forgiveness, contribute positively to experiencing subjective well-being also among Slovak adolescents and emerging adults.

There are also certain limitations in our work that could partially distort the results of our research. This is a limitation in connection with the Heartland Forgiveness Questionnaire, where within the domain concerning dispositional self-forgiveness and dispositional forgiveness of the situation, the internal consistency we calculated showed a lower value. Another limitation was our strict focus only on subjective well-being. As part of future research, we would therefore recommend focusing on other types of well-being in connection with adolescents and persons emerging as adults, such as e.g. psychological well-being, social well-being or school wellbeing, as well as other constructs, e.g. loneliness, use of social networks. The results of our work could be implemented in practice in the form of a certain intervention provided in the framework of lectures, workshops or counseling, which would lead adolescents to develop values based on gratitude and forgiveness. These two constructs could thus help to maintain adequate subjective wellbeing, which would enable the adolescent to smoothly transition into adulthood. As part of the intervention, we would recommend putting emphasis mainly on self-forgiveness, which could be helpful in consolidating identity in this period of adolescence, when identity is being formed (Macaskill, 2012). From our results, it can be assumed that moral personality traits can have a positive impact on subjective well-being.

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