

Study on the Forgiveness Concept of Aceh Conflict Victims

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Abstract: The people of Aceh experience traumatic experiences due to conflict and prolonged war. This research was started from a literature study. The field study was then conducted by using phenomenology as a qualitative method. The aims of this research are to find the forgiveness basic concept of Aceh people. The total of research participants were 10 respondents which chosen from 1 to 3 direct victims by using purposive sampling technique. The data collection methods utilized in-depth interviews, observation, and analysis of documentation. This study applied the important principles in a phenomenology research: epoch, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of meanings and essences. The concept of forgiveness varies depending on the socio-cultural norms of each individual. The results reveal that for the Acehnese who are rooted in the conceptualized culture of Islam, the concept of forgiveness is closely related to the concept of spirituality.

1 INTRODUCTION

People in Aceh are still suffering from a highly traumatic experience of Aceh conflict. The conflict between the Indonesia Government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM) took place from 1976 to 2005. Nurrachman (2005) said that on an individual level, the tragedy of Aceh conflict can leave physical, mental and emotional trauma, and from the social level, the events will always be remembered and memories will be passed on from generation to generation. This memory may not be separated from hatred and resentment. In line, Hafnidar (2012) found that the conflicts in Aceh left deep psychological wounds, both to people who experienced Aceh conflict as a victims first hand (direct victims) as well as the people who only see, hear, and read (indirect victims).

Forgiveness is one of way to maintain peace in Aceh. Warmke and Warmke (2016) stated that forgiveness allows both sides to rethink. Enright and Coyle (1998) view forgiveness as a process through which negative thoughts, feelings, and behaviors towards a transgressor are replaced with positive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Several experts mention that forgiveness has a positive relationship with a number of psychological aspects in human beings such as well-being, self-esteem, depression, anxiety, spirituality, and post-

traumatic development (Poloma and Gallup, 1991; Enright and Fitzgibbons, 2000 ; Fischer, 2006; Fincham, 2015; Lutjen, Siltan, and Flannelly, 2012; Maltby, Day, and Barber, 2004), Matter, Mcfarland, Smith, Toussaint, and Thomas Smith, Toussaint, and Thomas, 2012; Svalina and Webb, 2012; Unterrainer, Lewis, and Fink, 2012; Webb 2012; Unterrainer, Lewis, and Fink, 2012; Webb, Phillips, Bumgarner, and Conway-Williams 2012). Therefore, forgiveness is very important to allow a person to stay psychologically healthy, have a vision for the future and can re-grow and heal after experiencing traumatic experience (Hafnidar, et al, 2013).

The concept of forgiveness is essentially complex and multidimensional (Enright and North, 1998), and has a great deal of influence on the way individuals think, feel, and behave and is rooted in cultural views and traditional values (Rye et al, 2000). Thus the concept of forgiveness varies depending on the socio-cultural norms of each individual.

Likewise, the Acehnese who are rooted in the conceptualized culture of Islam, need to learn to find the basic concept of forgiving and the concept of forgiveness in accordance with the culture of the Acehnese society that is a Muslim majority. The Aceh conflict victim's forgiveness concept will be an important theory that will append to the large concept of forgiving in general. The finding of the

concept of forgiving in this study also will append to help the religious community like Acehese.

2 METHODS

This research took on a qualitative phenomenological approach. The informants of each element were selected from 1 to 3 people using purposive sampling technique, that is based on the following predetermined criteria: (1) is one of the following elements: Islamic leaders, scholars, casualty in remote areas and urban area, social activists, political organization activist, government official, housewife, as well as representatives of each profession in society, (2) Represents direct victims of Aceh conflict, (3) A native Acehese and have lived in Aceh since the conflict (1976) until now. The data collection methods were in-depth interviews, observation and documentation analysis.

According to Moustakas (1994), there are several important processes in phenomenology research: epoche, reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of meanings and essences. Epoche is the process of eliminating prejudices, reducing biases and opinions on things. Reduction is a methodical procedure whereby the researcher can interpret knowledge from fact to idea or from fact to essence in general. Then, in the process of imaginative variation, researchers look for possible meanings through the use of imagination, differentiation of various reference frames, grouping and reversal, and phenomenon approach from diverging perspectives, positions, roles, or different functions. The goal is to achieve a structural description of experience, the underlying factors and affect what has been experienced.

The steps in conducting imaginative variation include:

- a. Establish systematically from the possibilities of all constructed meanings that may be the basis of the textural meaning.
- b. Recognize themes or contexts as the basis for the cause of the phenomenon.
- c. Consider the overall structure that can lead to conclusions that are too fast for the feelings and thoughts associated with a phenomenon, such as the structure of time, space, attention that is only focused on the main things, materiality, causality, relationships with self, or relationships with other people.
- d. Look for illustrations as examples that can give a clear picture of the structure of unchanged

themes and facilitate the development of structural phenomenon description.

The final step of the phenomenological research process is the fundamental integration of the textural and structural descriptions into a statement as the essence of an experience of the overall phenomenon (Husserl in Moustakas, 1994)

3 RESEARCH FINDING

3.1. Definition of Forgiveness

The definition of forgiveness from the respondents of this study can be summed up as the willingness and ability to control negative thoughts, feelings and behaviors about bad experiences of the past into positive thoughts, feelings and behaviors whether it is forgiving oneself, situations or others.

The above definition is very broad and covering general aspects, and different from the definitions previously put forward by experts. This is because previous experts still make restrictions on some terms that should not be excuses for forgiveness such as pardoning (legal term), condoning (implying good offense reasons), excusing (implying justification for mistakes), denying (implying a reluctance to acknowledge), forgetting (implying failed memory, something beyond conscious awareness), or reconciling (Enright and Coyle, 1998; McCullough, Pargament, and Thoresen, 2000). Like Enright and Coyle (1998), Augsburg (1981), Enright and Fitzgibbons (2000), McCullough, Fincham, and Tsang (2003), Worthington and Scherer (2004). In this study, the respondents focus more on efforts to surrender to God. In other words, the aspect of spirituality and religiosity is highlighted thus a complete forgiveness will be easily achieved.

3.2 Dimensions of Forgiveness

Based on the data analysis of the data collected, the dimensions of forgiveness are:

3.2.1 Forgiveness of Self

3.2.1.1 Be willing to accept God's Fate:

Willing to accept (related spiritual concept).

Accepting means to believe that everything is a scenario that God has established for one. God never has evil intentions for his servant. It also

means simply expecting a good outcome from Allah SWT. It can also mean *ridha*, according to the Hadith of the Prophet SAW, namely: "If Allah loves a person then He will test them. Anyone who is blessed (to the test) then for him ridho Allah and those who are angry (against the test) then for him his wrath." (Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah at Tirmidhi, a Hasan Ghorib hadith).

Having no regrets about what has happened (related with Post traumatic Growth (PTG) concept)

Having no regrets is defined as not complaining and not wishing for an event that had passed had not taken place. It also means accepting all the events that had passed with an open heart. Respondents were more looking ahead than looking back.

Self-acceptance (related with positive self-concept)

Forgiveness means having a positive self-concept. Accepting shortcomings and strengths, so whatever negative things have happened to him, over time he can tolerate himself and let it slide.

3.2.1.2 Take wisdom or lessons from bad past experiences:

Fix mistakes (related with PTG concept)

To forgive is to learn from past experience and to fix it in the future.

Not repeat mistake (related PTG concept)

Forgiveness means not wanting to repeat the same mistakes, therefore he can learn from his past experience not to fall again for the same problem.

Stop interacting with the things that cause the problem (related with trigger concept)

Forgiveness means not wanting to repeat the same problem. Interacting with the things that cause the problem has a chance to repeat the same problem.

Be able to think logically and profoundly (related with strategic coping concept).

Forgiveness means not wanting to repeat the same problem. Interacting with the things that cause the problem has a chance to repeat the same problem.

Be able to think logically and profoundly (related with strategic coping concept).

A person who is able to think logically and profoundly will only take wisdom from painful past events and then rise up to meet his future. Regretting what has happened is something illogical. Time cannot be turned back and the past cannot be changed.

Patience (related with emotion focused coping concept)

The person who has forgiven himself can be patient and tolerant of everything that happens, because of his belief that God is just, and that after bad events there will be good and pleasant things for him.

3.2.1.3. Have hope for the future:

Be optimistic (related PTG concept)

The person who has forgiven himself will be optimistic in achieving a better future. An optimistic person can get out of trouble easily.

Not despair of God's grace (related spirituality concept)

The self-forgiving person is convinced that God's Grace is vast, even though it is now in a bitter experience but never despair that one day he will meet the situation he aspires to.

Be grateful (related PTG concept)

The person who has forgiven himself can be grateful for what his current state is. Especially when looking at others who are in worse conditions.

3.2.2 Forgiveness of Situations

Accept events as destiny from Allah (related with religiosity):

The person who has forgiven the situation believes that everything is God's destiny. Any endeavor cannot fight fate.

Learn from the past (The ability of lessons learned)

The person who forgives the situation never regrets the situation of the incident, but is able to take lessons so that the same incident will not happen again, or if it happens again he already has ways to overcome it.

Wish to change the situation

The person who forgives the situation has a desire to turn a painful situation into a pleasant situation when he sees no opportunity for it, for example, joining a community organization, a socio-political organization, publishing its experiences and thoughts about the painful situation and how to handle it, whether written or oral and so on.

3.2.3 Forgiveness of Others

Hold no grudge (related with religiosity concept).

People who forgive others are able to accept others without the slightest feeling of vengeance. This can be done if someone has a good relationship with Allah SWT. The person is convinced that there is happiness in the world and in the hereafter for someone who will forgive others. A Muslim does not need to be overwhelmed by stress and frustration because whatever he experiences is essentially all solutions already in the Qur'an.

Gain insight (the ability of lessons learned)

The ability to gain insight from a lesson is very important for a Muslim. Wisdom is a positive lesson from every occasion. Forgiveness is very closely connected with wisdom. The more wisdom obtained from an event the easier one forgives another person. Al Baqarah: 269 says: "Allah bestows wisdom on whom He will. And whoever is blessed with wisdom, he has indeed been blessed with many gifts. And only those who believe can learn from it".

Not giving physical or psychological punishment

Forgiving others means not giving punishment of both physical and psychic punishment. But it does not matter if the authorities give the punishment.

Leave problems to the experts

People who forgive others do not mean they do not want to leave the issue to the authorities. The victim gives full authority to the authorities to pay off his case without requiring the authorities to impose penalties, etc.

Understand the mistakes of others

People who forgive others find ways to understand the mistakes of others.

Set aside the mistakes of others, just look at the advantages

People who forgive others try to put aside other people's mistakes, but that does not mean forgetting. The one who forgives others merely sees the strengths of others as a way of maintaining a relationship with that person.

Be realistic, practice logical thinking, and focus on the purpose of life

People who forgive others will think logically and deeply that thinking about the future is better than keeping the bitterness of the past, which certainly will not change what has happened.

Pray for the good of the people who hurt us

People who forgive others also want to pray for the good of others.

Not sacrifice others.

Do not sacrifice others. Do not forget that the person also has a family and friends who will be affected by what happened to him.

Do not throw out anger at others

Some forgiving people have displaced others by throwing out anger at those who hurt them by releasing angry emotions on others who are not at fault or inanimate objects, etc. For example, a mother who is angry at her husband to throw out angry emotions on innocent children.

Trigger has no power

In someone who has forgiven others, the trigger has no power to bring it back in the past.

Be casual in meeting the other person

People who forgive others will treat others just as before a painful event occurs.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The concept of forgiveness of Aceh conflict victim's very influences by socio-cultural norms of Acehnese. The results reveal that for the Acehnese concept of forgiveness is closely related to the concept of positive psychology such spirituality, post traumatic growth (PTG), coping strategic and positive self-concept. Aceh conflict victims define forgiveness as the willingness and ability to control

negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours about bad experiences of the past into positive thoughts, feelings and behaviours whether it is forgiving oneself, situations or others.

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