

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND FORGIVENESS IN INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY DATING VIOLENCE

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ABSTRACT

Dating relationships are a common form of intimacy in the emerging young adulthood phase; yet, dating violence affects millions worldwide, disproportionately impacting women. Emotional intelligence (EI) plays a crucial role in managing interpersonal relationship dynamics, and prior research indicates that higher levels of EI may enhance forgiveness among individuals affected by dating violence, thereby supporting emotional recovery. However, existing studies report mixed findings regarding the relationship between EI and forgiveness. This study aims to examine the relationship between EI and forgiveness among individuals who have experienced dating violence. Data were collected from 388 participants, consisting of 91.2% women and 8.8% men aged 18–25 years, residing in the Greater Jakarta area (Jabodetabek). All participants had experienced dating violence within 6 months to 1 year following their breakup. EI was measured using the Alat Ukur Kecerdasan Emosional developed by the Research and Measurement Division, Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Tarumanagara (2013), while forgiveness was assessed using the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Indonesian Translation), adapted by Suleeman and Sabili (2016) from Thompson et al. (2005). The results, analyzed using Spearman's correlation test, revealed a significant positive correlation between EI ($M = 3.96$, $SD = 0.99$) and forgiveness ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 0.74$), with $r = 0.587$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. These findings indicate that individuals with higher EI tend to exhibit greater forgiveness. This study suggests further exploration of the influence of educational, familial, and social factors in shaping EI and forgiveness abilities.

Keywords: emotional intelligence, forgiveness, dating violence, emerging young adulthood

1. PREFACE

Romantic relationships in young adulthood are marked by emotional, physical, and often sexual intimacy, providing a context for learning essential skills for fostering healthy relationships in the future (Boisvert et al., 2023; Papalia et al., 2009). A recent study in 2019 demonstrated that high-quality relationships enhance self-potential, secure attachment, and individual well-being through stable commitment (Gómez-López et al., 2019). However, while dating relationships can be beneficial, they also carry risks, including negative interactions, jealousy, and low satisfaction, which can lead to physical and psychological aggression (Collibee & Furman, 2016). Dating violence reveals a paradox, where potential harm often lurks beneath the closeness of a relationship.

WHO (2018) statistics indicate that more than one in four women worldwide aged 15–49 have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by intimate partners (World Health Organization, 2024). In Indonesia, the Komnas Perempuan Annual Report (2023) recorded 3,528 cases of dating violence, with the highest number of victims aged 18–24, a group within emerging young adulthood (Komnas Perempuan, 2023). Dating violence encompasses physical, sexual, and psychological abuse, which can have long-term effects (Lestari et al., 2022; Surya et al., 2024; Yeo & Hadiwirawan, 2023).

Emotional intelligence (EI), developed by Salovey and Mayer (1990) and popularised by Goleman, refers to the ability to recognize and manage emotions (Salovey & Mayer, 1990),

shaped by both internal and external factors such as family dynamics, societal and educational influences, and biological conditions. EI contributes to psychological well-being, reduces stress, and enhances satisfaction in both workplace and romantic relationships (Mayer et al., 2004). Forgiveness is the process of overcoming pain and resentment to cultivate a positive attitude toward the offender (Thompson et al., 2005), and it has beneficial effects on physical, psychological, social, and spiritual health (Kim et al., 2022).

EI plays a crucial role in forgiveness, particularly through emotion regulation, which helps transform negative emotions into positive ones (Goleman, 1995) and is known to be significantly associated with forgiveness (Dwityaputri & Sakti, 2015; Prakash & Srivastava, 2022). This study aims to explore the relationship between emotional intelligence and forgiveness in emerging young adults who have experienced dating violence, as forgiveness may mitigate the negative effects of this phenomenon and offer new insights into its role in the well-being of survivors.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

Samples

The study involved 388 emerging adults (91.2% women, 8.8% men) aged 18–25 years, all residing in Jabodetabek and holding educational qualifications ranging from high school to higher education. Eligible participants had experienced at least one form of dating violence—physical, psychological, or sexual—based on criteria from Burelomova et al. (2018). They were required to have been in a heterosexual dating relationship with a single partner that ended 6 months to 1 year prior, ensuring they were no longer in a relationship with the perpetrator.

Measurement

Emotional intelligence, as conceptualized by Goleman (1995) and grounded in the work of Mayer and Salovey (1997), refers to the ability to recognize, regulate, and effectively manage one's own emotions and those in interpersonal interactions. This construct comprises five core dimensions: self-awareness, emotional regulation, self-motivation, empathy, and interpersonal relationship management. The *Alat Ukur Kecerdasan Emosional* (2013) by the Faculty of Psychology, Universitas Tarumanagara, adapts this theory with 60 items on a 5-point Likert scale. Forgiveness was measured using the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS), originally developed by Thompson et al. (2005) and later adapted for the Indonesian population by Suleeman and Sabili (2016). This scale evaluates forgiveness across three dimensions—self, others, and situations—using a 4-point Likert scale.

Data collection and analysis

This study utilized a quantitative correlational design with purposive and snowball sampling to recruit participants from all over Jabodetabek, Indonesia, via online questionnaires (Google Forms). Data were analyzed using Spearman's correlation test in SPSS version 24 to assess the relationship between emotional intelligence and forgiveness. A total of 388 participants were obtained for this study.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Based on the categorization of emotional intelligence dimensions, the data revealed that a majority of individuals who had experienced dating violence but were no longer in such relationships (52.3%, $n = 203$) demonstrated high levels of emotional intelligence. No participants were in the "very high" category, while 26.3% had moderate, 6.4% low, and 14.9% very low emotional intelligence. The categorization table is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Categorization of the Emotional Intelligence Scores

<i>Categorization</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Very low	58	14.9
Low	25	6.4
Moderate	102	26.3
High	203	52.3
Very high	-	-

Of the individuals who experienced dating violence but were no longer in the relationship, 159 (41%) exhibited high forgiveness, while 147 (37.9%) had moderate forgiveness, 22 (5.7%) showed low forgiveness, and 60 (15.5%) had very low forgiveness. No participants were in the "very high" forgiveness category. The categorization table is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Categorization of the Forgiveness Scores

<i>Categorization</i>	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Very low	60	15.5
Low	22	5.7
Moderate	147	37.9
High	159	41
Very high	-	-

The findings of this study, using Spearman's correlation test at an alpha level of 0.05, revealed a significant positive relationship between emotional intelligence and forgiveness ($r = 0.587$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$), as displayed in Table 3 below. This indicates that higher emotional intelligence is associated with greater forgiveness, while lower emotional intelligence correlates with reduced forgiveness. These results align with previous research by Prakash and Srivastava in 2022 (Carvalho et al., 2010), which reported a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.54$) between emotional intelligence and forgiveness.

Table 3

Correlation Test of Emotional Intelligence and Forgiveness

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Sig. (2-tailed)</i>	<i>R</i>
Emotional Intelligence and Forgiveness	.000	.587

Furthermore, the findings are consistent with the study by Dwityaputri and Sakti in 2015, which highlighted the significant role of emotional regulation—an essential component of emotional intelligence—in fostering forgiveness (Dwityaputri & Sakti, 2015). Similarly, another study demonstrated a negative relationship between emotional intelligence and prolonged resentment or negative affect (Carvalho et al., 2010), reinforcing the idea that individuals with higher emotional intelligence are better equipped to manage and release negative feelings.

Additional comparative tests were conducted to support the correlation between the two variables. Notable findings from the demographic data analysis include the differences tests in forgiveness and emotional intelligence (EI) based on gender, EI based on age and education level, and forgiveness and EI in relation to types of violence. A Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to compare emotional intelligence (EI) scores by gender, revealing a significant difference between females ($n = 355$) and males ($n = 33$), $U = 632.000$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. This

finding contrasts with previous studies, which found no significant gender differences in total EI scores but identified higher scores for females in dimensions like emotional self-awareness, interpersonal relationships, self-regard, and empathy (Meshkat & Nejati, 2017). However, the current study, focusing on individuals with dating violence experiences, found that females had significantly higher EI scores (Mean = 209.22) than males (Mean = 36.15), potentially reflecting the distinct nature of dating violence experienced by each gender.

Similarly, forgiveness was compared by gender, with a significant difference found between females ($n = 355$) and males ($n = 33$), $U = 630.500$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$. A study found that men generally exhibit higher dispositional forgiveness than women, although no significant gender differences were observed in positive forgiveness like kindness (Kaleta & Mróz, 2022). Gender influences the relationship between emotions and self-forgiveness or forgiveness of situations but does not affect forgiveness toward others (Kaleta & Mróz, 2022). In the context of dating violence, women often endure more severe and recurring violence (Komnas Perempuan, 2023; World Health Organization, 2024), which can impact their capacity to forgive, suggesting that forgiveness differences may stem more from the severity of violence than gender. The data is shown in Table 4

Table 4

Correlation Test of Emotional Intelligence and Forgiveness

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>Z</i>
Emotional Intelligence	Male	33	36.15	.000	632.000	-8.489
	Female	355	209.22			
Forgiveness	Male	33	36.11	.000	630.500	-8.519
	Female	355	209.22			

The Mann-Whitney test showed no significant difference in emotional intelligence (EI) scores between individuals aged 18-21 ($n = 211$) and 22-25 ($n = 177$), with $U = 17556.500$, $p = 0.309 > 0.05$, suggesting that both age groups, as part of emerging young adulthood, exhibit similar developmental characteristics (Arain et al., 2013). However, a significant difference in EI was found between individuals with high school education ($n = 199$) and those with higher education ($n = 189$), with $U = 16411.000$, $p = 0.030 < 0.05$, indicating that education level significantly impacts EI (Arain et al., 2013). Higher education fosters more systematic and complex thinking, enhancing emotional intelligence (EI) through diverse learning experiences rather than age alone. The data is presented in Table 5 and 6.

Table 5

Comparative Test of Emotional Intelligence Based on Age Group Differences

<i>Gender</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>Z</i>
18-21 years old	211	189.21	.309	17556.500	-1.016
22-15 years old	177	200.81			

Table 6

Comparative Test of Emotional Intelligence Based on Educational Level

<i>Education Level</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>U</i>	<i>Z</i>
Senior High School/Vocational High School or Equivalent Level	199	182.47	.030	16411.000	-8.519
Higher Education	189	207.17			

However, this study did not explore the influence of family environments on EI in individuals who have experienced dating violence which is theorized to also have a significant impact on an individual, a topic for future research.

A Kruskal-Wallis test was conducted to examine EI scores based on the type of violence experienced, with three categories: psychological ($n = 249$), physical ($n = 70$), and sexual ($n = 69$). The results showed a significant difference, with $p = 0.046 < 0.05$. The findings suggest that different forms of violence uniquely impact EI, with sexual violence linked to higher EI scores compared to psychological violence in this sample. Physical violence impairs emotional regulation and trust, sexual violence undermines emotion management and self-confidence, and psychological violence disrupts emotional processing and empathy, often causing hypervigilance or dissociation (Schnittker, 2022).

The Kruskal-Wallis test showed no significant difference in forgiveness based on the type of violence experienced ($p = 0.141 > 0.05$), suggesting that violence type does not influence forgiveness. Although prior research highlights the severe effects of sexual violence on self-concept and attachment (Schnittker, 2022), this study found no impact on forgiveness, possibly due to the predominance of psychological violence in the sample, which was perceived as less severe. These results support Snyder & Lopez (2002) theory that forgiveness depends on the severity of the transgression, its consequences, and the quality of the relationship (Thompson et al., 2005). Data are presented in Table 7.

Table 7
Comparative Test of Emotional Intelligence and Forgiveness Based on Types of Violence

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Types of Violence</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean Rank</i>	<i>X²</i>	<i>p</i>
Emotional Intelligence	Sexual	69	224.54	6.115	.046
	Physical	70	192.14		
	Psychological	249	186.84		
Forgiveness	Sexual	69	218.36	3.916	.141
	Physical	70	185.93		
	Psychological	249	190.30		

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and forgiveness among individuals who experienced dating violence. Findings confirmed a positive correlation between EI and forgiveness, supporting previous research (Dwityaputri & Sakti, 2015; Prakash & Srivastava, 2022).

Additional analysis revealed significant differences in EI based on gender, education level, and type of violence, but not based on age or the time elapsed since the relationship ended. Similarly,

forgiveness differed significantly by gender but not by age, type of violence, or duration since the breakup.

Women exhibited higher EI scores, consistent with prior studies highlighting their strengths in self-awareness, empathy, and interpersonal skills (Meshkat & Nejati, 2017). These differences may be influenced by social expectations and gender norms.

Men demonstrated higher dispositional forgiveness, whereas women showed greater empathy when forgiving others (Kaleta & Mróz, 2022; Toussaint & Webb, 2005). Factors such as spirituality, relationship closeness, and offense severity also influenced forgiveness.

EI did not significantly differ between individuals aged 18–21 and 22–25, likely due to similar developmental trajectories (Arain et al., 2013). Brain maturation, which affects emotional regulation, continues until approximately age 25.

Higher education levels were associated with greater EI. Emotional intelligence develops through early experiences, social interactions, and formal education (Goleman, 1995; Hochberg & Konner, 2020, in Setyawan & Simbolon, 2018). Education enhances systematic thinking and emotional regulation.

EI varied significantly based on the type of violence experienced. Physical, sexual, and psychological abuse negatively affects emotional intelligence by increasing stress and emotional dysregulation (Macy, 2009; Navarro-Mantas et al., 2021). However, this study reveals that forgiveness did not significantly differ across violence types.

Neither EI nor forgiveness differed significantly based on the duration since the relationship ended. Emotional intelligence is shaped by early experiences, neurological factors, and post-breakup emotional support (Goleman, 1995). Forgiveness is influenced by the severity of the transgression and individual spiritual beliefs (Snyder & Lopez, 2002).

Future research should explore the relationship between educational attainment and EI to determine whether higher education levels contribute to emotional development. Additionally, examining family functioning, including communication patterns and emotional support, may provide deeper insights into how familial environments shape EI.

These findings support the development of intervention programs aimed at enhancing EI, particularly for survivors of dating violence. Training programs should focus on key EI dimensions, such as self-awareness, empathy, and relationship management, and consider gender-specific approaches, given the higher prevalence of dating violence among women.

Emotional education, both formal and informal, plays a crucial role in maintaining EI and facilitating forgiveness. Promoting emotional regulation skills can help individuals cope with trauma and enhance psychological well-being.

Promoting forgiveness as a coping strategy can support psychological well-being and reduce the negative impact of dating violence. Public awareness campaigns should emphasize the role of forgiveness in emotional healing and mental health. Family involvement in emotional education and trauma recovery programs can further support victims of dating violence. A collaborative

approach involving families, schools, and communities is essential for fostering emotional resilience.

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