

## Forgiveness in Terms of Emotion Regulation and Empathy

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**Abstract:** Victims of bullying are often the perpetrators of bullying. The victims feel hurt by what they have experienced and take their revenge on others who are weaker. The behaviour that can eliminate the feeling of revenge on the victim of bullying is forgiveness. There are several factors of forgiveness including emotion regulation and empathy. This study aims to determine the relationship between emotion regulation and empathy with forgiveness in victims of bullying. The subjects of this study were 233 Yogyakarta students who had been bullied. The measuring instrument used in this study is the forgiveness measure compiled by Nashori. Then for measuring emotion regulation using The Heidelberg Form for Emotion Regulation Strategies (HFERST) compiled by Izadpanah, Barnow, Neubauer, and Holl. The empathy measuring instrument in this study used the Basic Empathy Scale in Adults (BES-A) compiled by Carre, Stefaniak, D'ambrosio and Bensalah. In addition, to measure tool for victims of bullying used the multidimensional peer victimization scale-24 (MPVS-24) compiled by Joseph and Stockton. The results showed that the F-count value was 43,466 with a significance value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Based on this, it shows that there is a simultaneous influence of emotion regulation and empathy on forgiveness. research shows that there is a relationship between emotion regulation and empathy with forgiveness in victims bullying.

**Keywords:** *Forgiveness, Emotion Regulation, Empathy, Bullying*

### 1. Introduction

Some victims of bullying often become perpetrators of bullying. A study (Wong et al, 2008) showed that 38% of respondents of bullying victims took revenge because they previously had been victims of bullying. Some perpetrators of bullying think that their problems in the past are negative, causing internal conflicts in their minds, so these make them wreak their



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revenge against others. This is in line with an argument of (Coloroso, 2007) explaining that the victims of bullying may become perpetrators of bullying. The victims perceive that they are abused and hurt by adults or older children. Therefore, they will take revenge on others as a way to treat their bad feelings such as self-hatred and powerlessness. Their targets were weaker individuals or other weaker students to wreak their sadistic revenge.

Normally, the victims of bullying ideally do not turn into a perpetrator. A strategy to solve this problem is to eliminate their feelings of revenge. This is to make them not take their revenge on other weaker individuals. One of the behaviours that can eliminate their feelings of revenge is forgiveness.

Forgiveness is a willingness to abandon any unpleasant aspects that occurred in interpersonal relationships with others and to generate positive thoughts, feelings, and interpersonal relationships with others who have been unfair (Nashori, 2011). Supporting the previous perspective, forgiveness is a positive behaviour contributing for harmonious social life and for individual serenity of life (Setiyana, 2013). It is also a method of controlling stress from negative thoughts by not having hate or revenge against someone who hurts, causes harm, betrays and so on (Salsabila et al, 2019).

The current phenomenon is that most victims of bullying are unable to forgive the perpetrators. According to Okoie et al (2015), the victims have not been able to forgive the perpetrators because they are still dominated by feelings of anger, frustration and depression. They tend to be difficult to forgive and have a desire for revenge, and this can turn them into perpetrators (Sourander et al., 2010). One of the factors of this situation is that the victims have a negative behaviour, especially avoidance (Hutzell & Payne, 2012). If this behaviour is not addressed, it can make the victims have antisocial attitudes, anxiety, depression and panic disorder when becoming adults (Copeland et al, 2013). Therefore, the victims of bullying need to have forgiveness and to be able to forgive, as this will contribute to their further well-being.

## **2. Literature Review**

Forgiveness is one of core moral value in Islam. The importance of forgiveness is known by the abundance of commands to forgive. In the holy book of Al Qur'an the command of forgiveness is written 34 times (Nashori, 2015). One of them is written in chapter Al A'raf verse 199. Allah shad commanded "Take what is given freely, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the ignorant".

Ahmed and Braithwaite (2006) state that forgiveness is a positive response of the victims of bullying. Their negative emotions become positive by forgiveness. McCullough (2000) explains that forgiveness is a behaviour to reduce revenge, to avoid the perpetrators and to generate a willingness to reconcile with the perpetrators. According to Nashori (2011), forgiveness consists of three dimensions. The first is an emotional dimension, the dimension related to the victims' feelings towards the perpetrators. The second is a

cognitive dimension; it is forgiveness related to how someone thinks about unfair events. The third is the interpersonal dimension, an individual's desire and behaviour to forgive others.

There are some factors that can influence the victims of bullying to have forgiveness. Two of them are emotion regulation and empathy. According to Wade and Worthington (2003), there are some factors that influence forgiveness such as empathy, perpetrator responses, relationship quality, contemplation and rumination, religious commitment, problem factors and emotion regulation. Emotion regulation is a skill to recognize emotions within oneself and others, for example, ability to regulate emotions, to utilise emotions in making decisions, to plan and to provide motivation. Individuals will more easily forgive others who have made mistakes if they can have good control on their emotions. Emotion regulation can reduce, intensify or maintain emotional stability, depending on one's goals.

Dwityaputri and Sakti (2015) found that there was a significant positive relationship between emotion regulation and forgiveness. This study indicated that the emotion regulation could affect forgiveness. This study, focusing on 288 high school students, showed that the students' emotion regulation was in a high category so that it was easier for them to implement their forgiveness. Another similar study is conducted by Ho et al (2020) observing 317 students in Hong Kong who had filled out an online questionnaire. Its results showed that there was a significant positive relationship between emotion regulation and forgiveness. A study by Dwityaputri and Sakti (2015) also indicated that there was a very significant positive relationship between emotion regulation and forgiveness in students in High School.

Another factor that influences forgiveness is empathy. Empathy is a psychological method that makes individuals understand intentions of others, project their attitudes and experience emotions that are triggered by others' emotions. They seem to have entered into emotions of others so that they can feel emotional situations and conditions of the others (Angraini & Cucuani, 2014). High ability to have empathy in individuals is that they can understand, think and feel the conditions of others. This is related to forgiveness, as empathy makes an individual understand, feel and appreciate feelings of others. This is because empathy is a process of understanding and feeling expressed in forms of interpersonal relationships. This will encourage teenagers to easily eliminate feelings of disappointment or hurt caused by others which leads to forgiveness (Annisa & Maretih, 2016).

Untari (2014) found that there was a positive and significant relationship between empathy and forgiveness in girls experiencing violence by their partners. This is in line with a previous study (Angraini & Cucuani, 2014) reporting that there was a relationship between empathy and forgiveness in late adolescents. The higher the empathy of the adolescents, the higher the forgiveness of the adolescents in everyday

life. Otherwise, the lower the empathy of the adolescents, the lower the forgiveness of the adolescents in everyday life. The subjects of this study were 346 students of an Islamic university in Riau aged 17-21. Another study (Annisa & Marettih, 2016) also showed a similar result that there was a positive relationship between empathy and forgiveness. This study indicated that there was an influence of empathy care training on forgiveness behavior. The subjects of this study were 16 individuals divided into 8 subjects as an experimental group and 8 subjects as a control group.

Based on the discussions above, the researchers aim to study relationships between emotion regulation, empathy and forgiveness in victims of bullying. In this study, there were three hypotheses. The first is there is a positive relationship between the emotion regulation and forgiveness of the victims. The higher the emotion regulation, the higher the forgiveness. The second is there is a positive relationship between empathy and forgiveness among the victims of bullying. The higher the empathy, the higher the forgiveness. The third is there is a positive relationship between emotion regulation, empathy and forgiveness in the victims of bullying. The higher the emotion regulation and empathy, the higher the forgiveness.

### **3. Method**

This study was quantitative research using three scales as data collection methods.

#### **3.1. Sample**

The subjects of this study were university students aged 18-23 years old living in Yogyakarta Indonesia. The subjects have experienced bullying. The number of subjects was 233 students.

#### **3.2. Research Instruments**

One of the scales used in this study was a forgiveness scale compiled by Nashori (2012). This measuring instrument consists of three dimensions. Those are emotional dimension, cognitive dimension and interpersonal dimension. Meanwhile, the emotion regulation was measured by using the Heidelberg Form for Emotion Regulation Strategies (HFERST) scale compiled by Izadpanah et al (2017). This scale consists of eight aspects. Those were rumination, reappraisal, acceptance, problem, expressive suppression, experience suppression, avoidance and social support. Then, the empathy was measured by the Basic Empathy Scale in Adults (BES-A) compiled by Carré et al (2013). The BES-A consists of three aspects. Those were emotional contagion, emotional disconnection and cognitive empathy. Furthermore, a scale for detecting the victims of bullying used the Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale-24 (MPVS-24) compiled by Joseph and Stockton (2018). The MPVS-24 consists of eight aspects. Those were physical victimization, verbal victimization, social manipulation, attacks on property, electronic victimization and social rebuff.



After testing, the forgiveness scale had a reliability of 0.608 with 14 items without any items dropped. The emotion regulation scale had a reliability of 0.870 without any items dropped so that the number of items was 28 items. The empathy scale had a reliability of 0.752 with 20 items without items dropped out. Finally, the bullying victim scale had a reliability of 0.932 with 23 items without items dropped out.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

This study used the Multiple Regression test technique. This test was used to analyse influence levels of the independent variables on the dependent variables by using the F test. This test was used to test the simultaneous influences of the independent variables (emotion regulation, empathy) on forgiveness. This could be seen at the significant F value with  $\alpha=5\%$ . If it was significant  $> \alpha$ ,  $H_a$  was rejected, but if the F value was significant  $< \alpha$ ,  $H_a$  was accepted.

The results of the F test showed a  $F_{\text{count}}$  value of 43,466 with a significance value of  $0.000 < 0.05$ . Based on the results of the test above,  $H_0$  was rejected and  $H_a$  was accepted. These meant that there was a simultaneous influence of the emotion regulation and empathy on the forgiveness.

The levels of the relationships between the emotion regulation, the empathy and forgiveness could be seen on the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ). According to Ghozali (2016), the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was used to measure a model's ability to explain variations of independent variables. The value of the coefficient of determination was from 0 to 1. The lower the value of  $R^2$ , the lower the ability of the independent variables to explain the dependent variables, and if the value of  $R^2$  was closer to 1, the higher the ability of the independent variables to explain the higher dependent variables (Ghozali, 2016).

Based on the analysis, it could be seen that the value of Adjusted  $R^2$  was 0.268 This meant that all the independent variables (emotion regulation and empathy) in this study were able to explain 26.8% of variations that occurred in the dependent variable (forgiveness), while the rest, 73.2% of variations was influenced by other factors that were not analysed and included in the regression analysis.

The results of this study support some previous studies. For example, a study observing 288 students by Astuti et al (2019) showed that there was a significant positive relationship between emotion regulation and forgiveness. The study indicated that students' emotion regulation was in a high category so that it was easier for them to implement forgiveness. Another similar study is conducted by Ho et al (2020). A study by some researchers (Zhang et al, 2020) also found that emotion regulation had a significant influence on forgiveness. The study indicated that emotion regulation could increase forgiveness in adolescents with depression. The study observed 1,127 high school students of Shandong and Henan Provinces in China. Another study by Dwityaputri and Shakti (2015) also revealed that there

was a very significant positive relationship between emotion regulation and forgiveness in students at High School.

The results of the correlation test in this study found that there was a positive and significant relationship between empathy and forgiveness. Forgiveness is an attitude to eliminate hatred feelings for someone who has been hurt by changing negative emotions into positive emotions. According to Donovan and Priester (2017), forgiveness is based on empathy and reasoning motivation. This is in line with a study by Untari (2014) concluding that there was a positive relationship between empathy and forgiveness in female students who experience violence by their partners. The higher the empathy, the higher the students' forgiveness. Then, the lower the empathy, the lower the students' forgiveness.

## 5. Conclusion

It could be concluded that there was a positive relationship between the emotion regulation and the forgiveness in the victims of bullying. The higher the emotion regulation of the victims, the higher the forgiveness. In addition, there was a positive relationship between the empathy and forgiveness in the victims. The higher the empathy of the victims, the higher the forgiveness. Finally, this study revealed that there was a relationship between both the emotion regulation and the empathy and the forgiveness in the victims.

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