

Forgiveness and Psychological Well-Being: A Process-Based Mediation Analysis of Emotional Intelligence Components

Salima Barkat Ali ¹, Mudasir Hussain ², Saba Naseem ³

^{1,2,3} Department of Allied Health Sciences, Iqra University

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70670/sra.v4i1.1987>

Abstract

The current research investigated the mediation role of the elements of emotional intelligence between forgiveness and psychological well-being. A cross-sectional design was used to gather data on 408 adolescents, young adults, and adults. The emotional intelligence employed exploratory factor analysis showed that there are two components such as emotional appraisal and emotional regulation. Hayes PROCESS macro (Model 4) was used to prepare the mediation analyses. The results indicated that forgiveness had a positive relationship with psychological well-being and with the two aspects of emotional intelligence. The relationship between forgiveness and psychological well-being was partially mediated by both emotional appraisal and emotion regulation although a significant indirect effect was explained by emotional appraisal. The immediate impact of forgiveness on psychological health was substantial, which meant that forgiveness had other channels other than emotional intelligence. The findings contribute to a process-driven concept of forgiveness, emphasizing the importance of emotional processes, particularly emotional appraisal, in promoting psychological well-being. This study makes a contribution to the literature in revealing the connection between emotional mechanisms and forgiveness and well-being, as well as providing implications on interventions that include emotional awareness and regulation.

Keywords: Psychological well-being, forgiveness, emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, emotional appraisal.

Introduction

The modern psychological environment has been paying more attention to the constructs of positive psychology that facilitate human flourishing. Among them, forgiveness, psychological well-being, and emotional intelligence have become one of the most important variables, which play a vital role in individual and interpersonal functioning. Forgiveness is a voluntary procedure in which a person discharges the negative affect and cognitions toward an offender (Worthington & Wade, 2020). The psychological well-being has both hedonic (subjective happiness) and eudaimonic (meaning and purpose) elements (Ryff, 2018). The ability to identify, interpret, and manage feelings in others and oneself constitutes emotional intelligence (Mayer et al., 2016). There is recent theoretical literature that has broadened classical conceptualizations of forgiveness. Unlike in the earlier models where interpersonal forgiveness is more stressed, recent studies that are being done are more focused on self-forgiveness and collective forgiveness. Toussaint et al. (2023) suggested the Tripartite Forgiveness Framework, which is characterized by the decisional forgiveness (behavioral intention),

emotional forgiveness (affective change), and relational forgiveness (restoration of connection). This slight awareness has helped to correctly measure and formulate the treatment. Neurobiology regarding forgiveness has also been given more attention. The results of the functional MRI studies indicate the involvement of the regions connected to the mechanisms of empathy (temporoparietal junction) and cognitive control (dorsolateral prefrontal cortex) and inhibition of the regions linked to retaliation (anterior cingulate cortex) during the process of forgiveness (Wang et al., 2024). These results help to justify forgiveness as a complicated behavioral decision based on cognition and emotions rather than a simple behavioral choice. Modern wellbeing studies have parted ways with the classical hedonic strategies to include the eudaimonic and social aspects. The modified model by Ryff (2022) recognizes six elements: autonomy, environmental mastery, personal growth, positive relations, purpose in life, and self-acceptance. This cross-culturally validated multidimensional approach has been observed to show differences in the weightings of the various components depending on cultural differences (Kim et al., 2022).

One of the most common measurement tools that has become predominant is the PERMA-Profiler (Positive Emotion, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning, and Accomplishment), and research has proven its reliability in various populations (Kern, 2022). The social determinants of well-being have been the focus of recent studies, which have focused on the importance of interpersonal relationships and community integration in people's flourishing. The trait and ability models of emotional intelligence debate have changed, and integrative models have become more dominant. The Four-Branch Model (perceiving, using, understanding, and managing emotions) has been proven to be valid in organizational, educational, and clinical testing (Brackett et al., 2023). The latest developments are ecological momentary assessment and implicit association tests that resolve the shortcomings of self-report measures. Various components of emotional intelligence have been found to have specific neural correlates. For example, the perception of emotion is associated with the activation of the fusiform gyrus (Hortensius et al., 2016), whereas emotion control is linked to prefrontal-amygdala relationships. The findings add to the emotional intelligence being a trainable skill, but not an innate trait. The recent meta-analyses established strong positive correlations between forgiveness and psychological well-being. A meta-analysis of 72 studies by Davis et al. (2023) conducted in the period 2020-2023 announced an overall effect size of $r = .42$ between the measures of forgiveness and well-being indices. The correlation was higher with eudaimonic well-being ($r = .48$) than with hedonic well-being ($r = .37$), and the evidence of forgiveness is more related to meaning and purpose than momentary positive affect. Temporal dynamics have been shed light on by longitudinal studies. Three years of follow-up of 1,200 adults revealed that initial forgiveness was the variable predicting changes in psychological well-being after three years, despite adjusting for initial well-being, personality, and social support (Rodriguez et al., 2024).

This interrelation renders the study of forgiveness even more useful when it comes to emerging adults in higher education as a stage where the development of virtues such as forgiveness is necessary in shaping professionals of excellence and integrity, as well as, in offering a humanistic education that builds the main attributes of being a human (Bates et al., 2019; Lopez Gonzalez et al., 2023).

However, knowledge can take the place of human competencies in university curricula, which can make it difficult to acquire the soft skills required by the labor market, change, and adjust to its changes, handle workplace conflicts, and lead a good life (Bates et al., 2019; Peralta et al., 2022; Crespi, 2024). Because forgiveness has already turned out to be a promising psychological instrument in terms of enhancing well-being and resilience, it can be argued that programs that would help learn this skill become part of the transversal competencies that would be required of future professionals. It might be possible to design more harmonious workplaces and more flexible and skilled employees with the help of such initiatives (Brady et al., 2023; Faldetta, 2022; Worthington & Scherer, 2004). This necessity is especially acute based on the issues linked to the college-to-work transition, such as

the establishment of new social ties, the need to adjust to technologies, and the risk of not getting a job (Abdel-Rahimm et al., 2023), which may add to the stress and interpersonal pressure. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic probably exacerbated the anxiety that was already present in this population (Lee et al., 2023), which also brings up the value of providing students with resilient coping mechanisms, like forgiveness.

The explanatory paradigm acquires certain urgency in the context of the present mental health situation. It has been impressive that the intensity of mental illness has increased, particularly in young emerging adults (Elmer et al., 2020; Magson et al., 2020). Global disability is frequently caused by depression and anxiety disorders, and suicide is the most common cause of death among the population aged 15-29 (World Health Organization, 2023a, 2023b; Osorio et al., 2022). This fact is manifested on campuses, where cross-sectional studies indicate a high rate of depressive and anxiety symptoms (Wang and Sabran, 2024), and almost 1/3 of students at universities have had a mental disorder in the last year (Roldan-Espinola et al., 2024). In this respect, the interpretation of the motive-attribution framework of forgiveness (Gollwitzer & Okimoto, 2021), according to which the communication of forgiveness determines how an offender will respond by revealing the underlying motive of the victim, becomes of the utmost importance. Psychological distress may be worsened by the interpersonal discordance experienced during academic and early career transitions. The manner in which these conflicts are worked out, with messages likely to either lead to reconciliation or continue with further alienation, may thus have important consequences for the well-being of a population that is already strained enough.

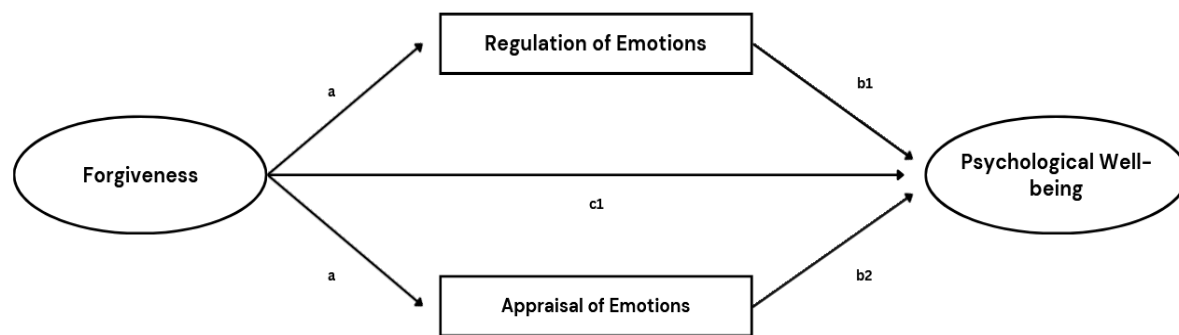
The possibility of interpersonal conflict whose solution may not be found can adversely affect mental stability, which explains the need to develop mechanisms of resistance to emotions at a young age. In fact, the teenage age is marked by the continuous pressure of academic tasks, social stress, and competitive situations (Ye et al., 2019; Hogberg, 2021). The studies prove that positive emotional support at this stage of development may help to withstand such stress, expand cognitive and attention abilities, and develop psychological resilience (Fredrickson, 2004; Zhang et al., 2022). One of the most promising avenues toward fostering such beneficial results is physical activity because physical activity is associated with depression reduction, increased self-efficacy, and well-being among adolescents (Singh et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2022).

Of critical importance, physical activity also seems to boost emotional intelligence, which is a competency that is paramount in dealing with the same interpersonal conflicts that may arise in the future academic and work environments (Chan et al., 2019; Karaoglan Yilmaz et al., 2023). Higher emotional intelligence also provides adolescents with better opportunities to recognize, interpret, and manage emotions, thus supplying them with better social skills and problem-solving capabilities. The basis is also directly applicable in the interpersonal forgiveness context, where managing tricky emotional terrain is the key to constructively addressing grievances. With the current levels of physical activity among adolescents still being below the recommended standards (Van Sluijs et al., 2021) and the scarce research on stimulating the development of positive emotions in adolescents (Shen et al., 2018), the need to proactively develop emotional and interpersonal competencies that can avert the severe effects of unresolved conflict on the mental condition in the workplace is evident (Kaushik et al., 2021). Therefore, encouraging the development of physical activity and emotional intelligence during the adolescent period can be a preventive basis for the forgiveness-related competencies that make it possible to nurture well-being and harmony in the future workplace.

Theoretical Framework

The present research theory analyzes the interrelatedness of forgiveness, psychological well-being, and emotional intelligence (EI), where EI is broken down into statistically significant factors, and its mediating effects on forgiveness and psychological well-being are examined. Modern scholarly work

(2020-2024) has increasingly understood forgiveness as a process shaped by situational factors and expressed through individuals' capacities, rather than as a trait. It is a framework that integrates the recent empirical evidence to suggest that emotional intelligence improves the ability to forgive, which subsequently facilitates psychological well-being in various ways.



The model dwells on the ways in which the capability of persons to perceive, comprehend, and control emotions promotes the processes of forgiveness, leading to improved mental health results. Recent research has sharpened insight into forgiveness as a complex model that entails cognitive, emotional, and motivational shifts. In contrast to the previous perception of forgiveness as a one-time event, the modern studies highlight the process-focused and situational changeability of this phenomenon.

Interpersonal forgiveness is a multi-dimensional psychological mechanism, with the forgiveness routes to well-being being uneven, sequential, and contextual. It is a framework that combines two central constructs, decisional forgiveness (a volitional, behavioral commitment) and emotional forgiveness (an affective, motivational change), and suggests that the functional effect of the two on distress and well-being is moderated by the temporal sequence and cultural context.

The Dual-Pathway Mechanism: Different Functional Alignment.

The paradigm is constructed on the grounds of the given distinction between decisional and emotional forgiveness, yet the paradigm goes beyond the comparison of their static power. It suggests such a principle of functional alignment as differential (Chi et al., 2019; Wu et al., 2022). All the types of forgiveness correspond to different psychological processes, which also project on the corresponding outcome domains:

Decisional Forgiveness works in the form of cognitive-behavioral and virtue-ethical. The refusal to retaliate through conscious choice and treating the criminal with respect directly impacts the self-concept of the individual as a moral agent and modifies social behavior. The pathway is hypothesized to have a better functional correspondence to purpose-based outcomes, character development, and perceived righteousness (e.g., posttraumatic growth, sense of purpose) since the outcomes depend on cognitive reappraisal and taking action (Byra et al., 2022).

Emotional Forgiveness is provided mainly by the affective-regulation and relationship-attunement channels. It eases internal affective distress directly by substituting negative and unforgiving emotions with neutral or positive other-oriented emotions and mends emotional connections. It is hypothesized that this direction corresponds more to the functional correspondence with the results embedded in the state of affectiveness and relational intimacy (e.g., symptoms of depression, stress, relationship satisfaction) (Cowden et al., 2019).

This principle of alignment describes the seeming contradiction in the literature: emotional

forgiveness does not always prove to be stronger. It has been found to have a stronger influence on affective and intimate-relational consequences, whereas decisional forgiveness can be just as strong or stronger in other outcomes of cognitive-meaning making and personal growth (Mroz et al., 2022; Byra et al., 2022).

The Temporal Sequence: Behavioral commitment to Emotional Resolution.

One of the vital constraints that this framework would take care of is the lack of dynamism in previous cross-sectional evidence. We present a hypothesis of temporal propagation. The model assumes that, to most people, the process of forgiveness takes a dynamic nature whereby trajectories affect each other as time goes by:

Stage 1 (Behavioral Catalyst): Decisional forgiveness can be a very important first step, which establishes the behavioral and social facilitation conditions (e.g, less hostility, involvement in prosocial action) that enable emotional change.

Stage 2 (Affective Deepening): When it occurs, emotional forgiveness solidifies and internalizes the gains that the decision has triggered, resulting in lasting decreases in distress and improvements in emotional well-being.

Feedback Reciprocal: The sense of relief of the emotional work, in turn, can lead to the strengthening and hardening of the primary commitment of the decision, and then it establishes a positive feedback loop that stimulates a holistic flourishing.

However, this linear model requires longitudinal studies that can decouple the predictions of whether the decisional forgiveness is the predictor or the prediction of subsequent emotional change and well-being, or the other way around, beyond correlation to conclude about the potential directional effect.

The Cultural Context: Salience and Expression of Pathways Moderation.

The framework specifically denies generalizing the findings of Western, individualistic samples. It includes a cultural-contextual moderation hypothesis (Ho, 2020; Sandage et al., 2020). There are cultural values that determine the salience, expression, and functional utility of every pathway of forgiveness:

The emotional forgiveness pathway might be more culturally congruent and therefore, more closely related to personal well-being metrics in individualistic cultures, where personal autonomy and emotional authenticity are highly valued.

Role fulfillment, behavioral propriety, and social harmony are social values that have a strong emphasis in collectivistic cultures; therefore, a deliberate decision of restoration relational balance (decisional forgiveness pathway) can be more normative, more readily available, and therefore, display stronger relationships with social and virtue-based outcomes.

This stratum justifies the fact that the overall narrative of the superiority of emotional forgiveness might be culturally limited, and the need to extend the study to non-Western groups is critical to a full theory.

The Expansive Outcome Space: Remediation to Flourishing.

Lastly, this model suggests the need to reconstruct the notion of forgiveness as an antidote to suffering as a generator of healthy human life. It assumes that the stimulation of one or both forgiveness pathways may lead to an array of salubrious effects that are widespread and go significantly beyond the repair of psychological symptoms (Wade & Tittler, 2020). The outcome space includes:

Eudaimonic Well-being: Improvement of purpose, meaning, and character virtues.

Relational Well-Being: Relationship satisfaction and social connectedness improved.

Psychological Well-being: Decrease in the symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress.

This wide-angle view of intervention research poses a challenge to quantifying the achievement of

intervention research based not only on decreasing pathology but also on flourishing across various life spheres (Toussaint et al., 2020; Webb & Toussaint, 2020).

Emotional Intelligence (EI) can be understood to be the underlying meta-capacity of adaptive emotional functioning in professional settings (Moore & Gregory, 2024; Lin et al., 2024). In the case of teachers, it is hypothesized that EI functions by intrapersonal and interpersonal emotional regulation processes. On the intrapersonal level, it allows perceiving and controlling emotional reactions to classroom and institutional demands correctly and in the most optimal way. Interpersonally, it helps to comprehend and react to the feelings of students and colleagues, which is important in building relationships and classroom atmosphere (Rodriguez-Lopez et al., 2023). It is argued that this regulatory ability forms the main one on which more specific adaptive assets, such as resilience, are built (Garcia-Martinez et al., 2022; Valverde-Janer et al., 2023). Resilience is theorized as not a characteristic but a dynamic process of positive adaptation in the face of adversity and, as such, is built upon EI. In this context, resilience is theorized to play the primary role of a mediator in the well-being pathway. This model assumes that the set of skills that make up EI, specifically emotional repair and regulation, gives the cognitive-affective means that are needed in responding with strength (Rabal-Alonso & Gonzalez-Romero, 2023; Zhi & Derakhshan, 2024).

When the profession-related issues (e.g., workload, conflict) occur, increased EI will enable more effective emotional processing, which contributes to the robust coping mechanisms. In its turn, this strong position is theorized to directly de-stress the subjective experience of ongoing stress and avoid burnout development in the high-demand environment in the profession, where role multiplicity and complexity between teachers occur (Tamang, 2021; Ortiz-Cuenca et al., 2024). Stress and burnout are defined as different and yet similar manifestations of affective depletion. Stress is an immediate or chronic perception and physiological reaction to demands, whereas burnout is a more extreme condition of emotional exhaustion, cynicism, and diminished efficacy because of the unrelenting stress. The model classifies them as key intermediate health-related factors, with burnout showing especially a high negative correlation with such dimensions as relationship building and environmental mastery (Lucas-Mangas et al., 2022; Rodriguez-Chavez et al., 2024). The fundamental role of the EI-Resilience pathway is to cushion against this loss. The framework uses a eudaimonic view of psychological well-being and expresses it as being more than the lack of distress. In the case of trainee teachers, well-being is a concept of positive functioning comprising autonomy, environmental mastery, purpose, positive relationships, and personal growth. Theorization is based upon the fact that it is the final result of effective emotional control and adjustment. According to the model, EI does not produce well-being directly, but rather facilitates it in the following way: EI helps to sustain a resilience state, which makes the effects of stress and burnout less significant, and thus the affective and cognitive space in which flourishing is possible is created (Corcoran & O'Flaherty, 2022; Calderon-Palacio, 2023).

Hypothesis

1. Forgiveness will be positively associated with psychological well-being.
2. Forgiveness will be positively associated with emotional intelligence components.
3. Emotional intelligence components will be positively associated with psychological well-being.
4. Emotion regulation will be positively associated with psychological well-being.

Methodology

Research Design

The study used a cross-sectional research design with quantitative analyses to examine the correlation between forgiveness and psychological well-being. After establishing the connection, the mediating

role of emotional intelligence components in this relationship was investigated. Furthermore, a process-based mediation framework was employed to analyze and identify the emotional mechanisms through which forgiveness may influence well-being. SPSS was used for all analyses, including exploratory factor analysis, reliability estimation, and mediation analysis using Hayes' PROCESS macro (Model 4).

Participants

A total of 408 participants, ranging from adolescents to adults aged 13 to 35 years and older, were administered via an online survey.

Participation was voluntary, and respondents were required to meet basic inclusion criteria of being able to understand survey instructions and willingness to respond to self-report measures related to emotions, forgiveness, and psychological well-being.

Measures

Forgiveness

Forgiveness was measured using the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS). It has 18 items and assesses a person's ability to forgive across interpersonal and intrapersonal contexts. While it is a dispositional scale, forgiveness was interpreted as a context-dependent emotional stance rather than a fixed personality trait.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence was assessed using the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale (BEIS). It has 10 items. While the scale has subcomponents, due to the changes in culture and population, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the factor structure of the BEIS within the present sample. Items 6 and 7, which failed to load adequately, were excluded from further analyses.

EFA using principal axis factoring with oblimin rotation identified two interpretable components:

- Emotional appraisal, reflecting awareness and understanding of emotional states.
- Emotion regulation, reflecting the management and control of emotional responses.

Psychological Well-Being

Psychological well-being was measured using the Psychological Well-Being Scale (PWS). The scale has 18 items, and it assesses positive psychological functioning across multiple domains.

Procedure

Data were collected with an online self-report survey administered to adolescents and young adults. It comprised the three standardized instruments (BEIS, HFS, and PWS) with 46 items in total. Before administering, participants were given clear instructions and told that researchers would be available during the process to answer any questions or address any technical issues.

In order to lessen environmental and emotional confounds, a pre-survey interview was briefly and informally carried out. In this, the participants were questioned about a couple of things that would determine whether they had enough time to fill out the survey, whether they felt comfortable answering questions touching on personal well-being and whether they were in an environment that would enable them to focus their attention during the survey. Participants who mentioned being distressed, distracted or otherwise incapable of attentively responding were not requested to fill out the survey.

The steps were taken according to the American Psychological Association ethics such as informed

consent and confidentiality.

Emotional intelligence components were tested in terms of reliability. Cronbach alpha was indicated because of the few items in a given factor and omega of McDonald was retained in the other multidimensional scales.

Exploratory Factor Analysis of Emotional Intelligence

KMO and Bartlett test were used to confirm the factorability of BEIS. To consider the correlated factors, exploratory factor analysis was performed using the principal axis factoring and oblimin rotation. Pattern matrix loadings and theoretical interpretability then informed the factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.

Result

Table 1

Demographic statistics of the sample size	
Demographics	
● Sex	
Female	306
Male	101
Prefer Not to Say	1
● Age	
13-16	7
17-20	90
21-25	259
26 and Above	52
	= 408

Table 1 presents the detailed breakdown of demographic characteristics for the 408 participants in this study. Gender distribution shows that 101 participants (24.8%) are male, 306 (75%) are female, and 1 participant (0.2%) preferred not to disclose their gender.

The age distribution shows a varied spread: 7 participants (1.7%) are aged 13–16 years, 90 (22.1%) are aged 17–20 years, 259 (63.5%) are aged 21–25 years, and 52 (12.7%) are aged 26 years and above.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations						
Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4

Psychological Well-Being	4.57	0.67	—			
Forgiveness	4.40	0.66	.51**	—		
Emotion Regulation	3.57	0.93	.32**	.24**	—	
Emotional Appraisal	3.89	0.72	.40**	.32**	.54**	—

Note. $p < .01$.

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlations among forgiveness, emotional intelligence components, and psychological well-being. Psychological well-being showed a moderate positive correlation with forgiveness ($r = .51$, $p < .001$). Forgiveness was also positively correlated with emotional appraisal ($r = .32$, $p < .001$) and emotion regulation ($r = .24$, $p < .001$). Emotional appraisal demonstrated a stronger association with psychological well-being ($r = .40$, $p < .001$) than emotion regulation ($r = .32$, $p < .001$). The two emotional intelligence components were moderately correlated ($r = .54$, $p < .001$), indicating related but distinct constructs.

Table 3A

Factor Loadings for the Brief Emotional Intelligence Scale

Item	Emotional Appraisal	Emotion Regulation
BEIS1	—	.63
BEIS2	—	.75
BEIS3	.62	—
BEIS4	.64	—
BEIS5	.40	—
BEIS8	.70	—
BEIS9	.76	—
BEIS10	.67	—

Note. Loadings below .40 are suppressed.

Table 3A highlights the pattern matrix for the exploratory factor analysis of BEIS using principal axis factoring with oblimin rotation. Items loaded clearly onto two factors with minimal cross-loadings. Emotional appraisal items revealed moderate to strong loadings ranging between .40 and

.76. Emotion regulation items loaded strongly on the second factor, ranging from .63 to .75. Items that did not load adequately or had values below .40 were excluded from further analyses. The resulting pattern supported the distinctiveness of the two components of emotional intelligence.

Table 3B

Eigenvalues, Variance Explained, and Reliability of Emotional Intelligence Factors

Factor	Eigenvalue	% Variance	α
Emotional Appraisal	4.04	40.37	.81
Emotion Regulation	1.11	11.05	.72

In Table 3B, the emotional appraisal factor shows a strong eigenvalue of 4.04, accounting for 40.37% of the total variance. The emotion regulation factor had an eigenvalue of 1.11, which is an 11.05% variance. As such, the emotional appraisal factor was dominant in the present sample.

The two factors accounted for 51.42%, a little over the half mark. Moreover, the reliability analysis showed strong and acceptable internal consistency for emotional appraisal ($\alpha = .81$) and emotion regulation ($\alpha = .72$).

Table 3C

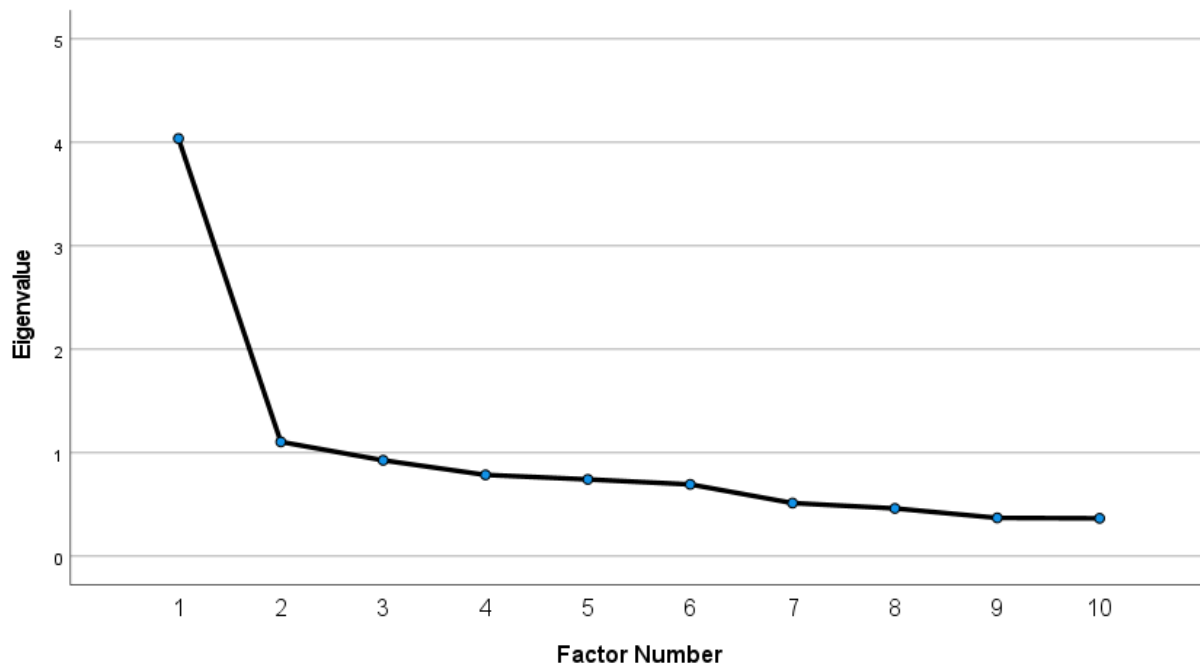
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure and Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity

Test	Value
Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	.85
Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity	
χ^2	1179.19
df	45
p	< .001

Table 3C reports Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity, wherein the KMO measure of sampling adequacy was high and in the acceptable range (.85). This indicates that the correlation matrix was appropriate for factor extraction. Additionally, Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant, $\chi^2(45) = 1179.19$, $p < .001$. As such, the correlations among the BEIS items were sufficient for an exploratory factor analysis. These results provide strong support for the validity of the factor analytic procedures applied to the emotional intelligence data.

Table 3D

Scree Plot Factor Analysis



Visual inspection of the scree plot revealed a pronounced elbow after the second factor, with eigenvalues declining sharply and leveling off below 1 after factor 2. This supports the retention of those two factors and indicates that additional factors would contribute minimal explanatory value.

Table 4

Regression Paths in the Mediation Model

Outcome	Predictor	B	SE	t	p
Emotional Appraisal	Forgiveness	.35	.05	6.89	< .001
Emotion Regulation	Forgiveness	.33	.07	4.88	< .001
Psychological Well-Being	Forgiveness	.42	.04	9.63	< .001
	Emotional Appraisal	.19	.05	4.13	< .001

Forgiveness significantly predicted emotional appraisal ($B = .35$, $SE = .05$, $t = 6.89$, $p < .001$), explaining 10.45% of its variance ($R^2 = .10$). Forgiveness also significantly predicted emotion regulation ($B = .33$, $SE = .07$, $t = 4.88$, $p < .001$), accounting for 5.54% of its variance ($R^2 = .055$). When predicting psychological well-being, the overall model explained 33.07% of the variance ($R^2 = .33$). Moreover, emotional appraisal was a significant predictor ($B = .19$, $SE = .05$, $t = 4.13$, $p < .001$) alongside emotional regulation ($B = .08$, $SE = .04$, $t = 2.33$, $p = .020$). And as expected, forgiveness was a strong direct predictor ($B = .42$, $SE = .04$, $t = 9.63$, $p < .001$), suggesting partial mediation.

Table 5

Direct and Indirect Effects of Forgiveness on Psychological Well-Being

Effect	B	Boot SE	95% CI
Direct effect	.42	.04	[.34, .51]
Total indirect effect	.10	.02	[.06, .13]
Via Emotional Appraisal	.07	.02	[.04, .11]
Via Emotion Regulation	.03	.01	[.00, .05]

Bootstrapped mediation analysis (5,000 samples) shows a significant total indirect effect of forgiveness on psychological well-being ($B = .10$, 95% CI [.06, .13]). The indirect effect through emotional appraisal ($B = .07$, 95% CI [.04, .11]) was bigger than the indirect effect through emotional regulation ($B = .03$, 95% CI [.00, .05]). The direct effect of forgiveness remained significant ($B = .42$, 95% CI [.34, .51]), confirming a partial mediation model.

Discussion

Forgiveness was positively correlated with psychological well-being and this connection was partially mediated by emotional appraisal and regulation, as hypothesized. The notable observation was the dominant mediation of emotional appraisal in this pathway. Emotional appraisal accounted for more of the indirect effect than emotion regulation. This shows the importance of emotional mechanics over simple association in the current model.

The mediation results indicate that forgiveness contributes to psychological well-being by enhancing emotional capabilities. People who reported higher levels of forgiveness also showed greater capacity to appraise and regulate emotions, which, as discussed earlier, accounts highly for psychological well-being. When compared, emotional appraisal showed a stronger association with psychological well-being than regulation.

We can infer that a pattern exists whereby emotional awareness is important in adaptive functioning, and that it highlights the ability to interpret emotional experiences, which may be an important process through which forgiveness takes place.

Although forgiveness was measured with a dispositional scale, the findings support its conceptualization as a context-dependent emotional state. Forgiveness showed both direct links to psychological well-being and indirect associations through emotional processes, suggesting multiple routes of influence. Forgiveness may not always work the same way in every situation, and the findings support that claim. Emotional understanding shapes the effects of forgiveness on psychological well-being.

Theoretical Contributions and Implications

The present study builds on earlier work by clarifying how forgiveness, emotional intelligence, and well-being are interconnected in a sequence of effects rather than simple correlations. Past literature often treats emotional intelligence as something that changes the strength of other relationships, but the findings point to it as a mechanism in itself. The ability to recognize and make sense of emotions stands out as the most important process within the broader emotional intelligence. Whether the act of managing emotions matters less or not cannot be concluded from these findings alone, but they certainly point us in a direction.

Limitations and Future Directions

The data were collected at a single point in time, so the direction of change in the effect of these factors over time cannot be inferred. Although the mediation model fits the theory and the statistics, it cannot prove that forgiveness leads to changes in emotional skills or well-being over time. Future studies can take multiple surveys over weeks or months or test interventions that build forgiveness and emotional intelligence, and see how it affects well-being and the changes in these effects.

How one says they deal with emotions may vary significantly compared to how they actually do. Perception plays a big role. Future studies can reduce these effects by using a mixed-methods approach combining self-report and observation of emotional responses.

Individuals in a later age group may handle forgiveness differently from those who are still young and building experiences. The sample here consisted mostly of adolescents and young adults.

Most importantly, we failed to fit the original structure of the emotional intelligence questionnaire, and it needed to be reorganized based on how items were grouped together empirically. Although this did result in two clear and reliable components, future studies should confirm this structure with other datasets to increase confidence.

References

- Alonso, J. M. R., & Romero, M. G. (2023, October 20). La influencia de la inteligencia emocional y la resiliencia en el desempeño académico de aspirantes a docentes. <https://riidici.com/index.php/home/article/view/25>
- An, M., Kivlighan, D. M., & Hill, C. E. (2022). Working alliance after transferring from one therapist to another in a training clinic: Influence of therapist attachment style. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 70(1), 67–80. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000642>
- Brackett, M., Delaney, S., & Salovey, P. (2026). Emotional intelligence. In R. Biswas-Diener & E. Diener (Eds), *Noba textbook series: Psychology*. Champaign, IL: DEF publishers. Retrieved from <http://noba.to/xzvpfun7>
- Brady, D. L., Saldanha, M. F., & Barclay, L. J. (2022). Conceptualizing forgiveness: A review and path forward. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 44(2), 261–296. <https://doi.org/10.1002/job.2632>
- Byra, S., Kaleta, K., & Mróz, J. (2022). Posttraumatic growth and interpersonal forgiveness in persons with physical disabilities. *Rehabilitation Psychology*, 67(4), 567–574. <https://doi.org/10.1037/rep0000451>

- Castaño, C. a. O., Garzón, E. O., Prieto, B. L. A., & Del Rocío Hernández Pozo, M. (2022). Sentido de vida y su asociación con la ansiedad y la depresión en jóvenes. *Interdisciplinaria Revista De Psicología Y Ciencias Afines*, 39(2). <https://doi.org/10.16888/interd.2022.39.2.22>
- Chan, J. S. Y., Liu, G., Liang, D., Deng, K., Wu, J., & Yan, J. H. (2018). Special Issue – Therapeutic Benefits of Physical Activity for Mood: A Systematic Review on the effects of exercise Intensity, duration, and modality. *The Journal of Psychology*, 153(1), 102–125. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00223980.2018.1470487>
- Chi, P., Tang, Y., Worthington, E. L., Chan, C. L. W., Lam, D. O. B., & Lin, X. (2019). Intrapersonal and interpersonal facilitators of forgiveness following spousal infidelity: A stress and coping perspective. *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, 75(10), 1896–1915. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jclp.22825>
- Corcoran, R., & O’Flaherty, J. (2021). Social and emotional learning in teacher preparation: Pre-service teacher well-being. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 110, 103563. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2021.103563>
- Davis, D. E., Ho, M. Y., Griffin, B. J., Bell, C., Hook, J. N., Van Tongeren, D. R., DeBlaere, C., Worthington, E. L., & Westbrook, C. J. (2015). Forgiving the self and physical and mental health correlates: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 62(2), 329–335. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000063>
- Davis, D. E., Hook, J. N., & Worthington, E. L., Jr. (2023). A meta-analysis of forgiveness interventions: The role of rumination and stress reduction. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 70(1), 45-58. <https://doi.org/10.1037/cou0000642>
- De Los Ángeles Ortiz Cuenca, M., Del Pilar Ortiz Cuenca, C., Unapucha, M. C. C., Barrera, C. E. C., & Cuenca, P. O. (2024). Factores que influyen en el estado emocional y desempeño de los docentes en la educación presencial. *MENTOR Revista De Investigación Educativa Y Deportiva*, 3(7), 60–77. <https://doi.org/10.56200/mried.v3i7.6819>
- De Lourdes Rodriguez Peralta, M., Tobón, S. T., & Vargas, P. F. A. (2022). Emotional development and integral university education. *Logos Universality Mentality Education Novelty SOCIAL SCIENCES*, 11(2), 68–73. <https://doi.org/10.18662/lumenss/11.2/71>
- Elmer T, Mepham K, Stadtfeld C (2020) Students under lockdown: Comparisons of students’ social networks and mental health before and during the COVID-19 crisis in Switzerland. *PLOS ONE* 15(7): e0236337. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0236337>
- Faldetta, G. (2021). Forgiving the unforgivable: the possibility of the ‘Unconditional’ forgiveness in the workplace. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 180(1), 91–103. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-021-04885-2>
- Forgiveness moderates relations between psychological abuse and indicators of psychological distress among women in romantic relationships. (n.d.). *South African Journal of Science*. <https://sajs.co.za/article/view/6353>
- Fredrickson, B. L. (2004). The broaden–and–build theory of positive emotions. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B Biological Sciences*, 359(1449), 1367–1377. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2004.1512>
- García-Martínez, I., Augusto-Landa, J. M., Quijano-López, R., & León, S. P. (2022). What are pre-service teachers like? Analysis of their psychosocial profile. *Scandinavian Journal of Psychology*, 63(5), 555–564. <https://doi.org/10.1111/sjop.12834>
- Gollwitzer, M., & Okimoto, T. G. (2021). Downstream Consequences of Post-Transgression Responses: A Motive-Attribution Framework. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 25(4), 275–294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10888683211007021>
- González, J. L., Espinosa, V. F., & De Montellano, S. O. (2023). A virtue-based model of leadership education. *Journal of Moral Education*, 53(3), 433–449.

- <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2023.2218058>
- Gross, J. J., Uusberg, H., & Uusberg, A. (2023). Mental illness and well-being: An affect regulation perspective. *World Psychiatry*, 22(1), 363–374. <https://doi.org/10.1002/wps.21071>
- Ho, M. Y. (2019). Forgiving in East Asian Cultures. In *Handbook of Forgiveness* (2nd ed., pp. 234–241). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351123341-22>
- Högberg, B. (2020). Educational stressors and secular trends in school stress and mental health problems in adolescents. *Social Science & Medicine*, 270, 113616. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113616>
- Hortensius, R., Terburg, D., Morgan, B., Stein, D. J., Van Honk, J., & De Gelder, B. (2016). The role of the basolateral amygdala in the perception of faces in natural contexts. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B Biological Sciences*, 371(1693), 20150376. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2015.0376>
- Kaushik, A., Ravikiran, S., Suprasanna, K., Nayak, M. G., Baliga, K., & Acharya, S. D. (2021). Depression, Anxiety, Stress and Workplace Stressors among Nurses in Tertiary Health Care Settings. *Indian Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 25(1), 27–32. https://doi.org/10.4103/ijoem.ijoem_123_20
- Kern, M. L. (2022). PERMAH. In *Handbook of positive psychology in schools: Supporting process and practice* (3rd ed., pp. 12–24). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003013778-3>
- Kim, J. J., Mullen, L. M., Akers, S. W., Joseph, R. A., Bishop, L. B., Bistany, B. R., Chambers, A. C., Harvey, J. R., & Houghton, A. (2022). The Efficacy of a Forgiveness Bibliotherapy: A Randomized Controlled Trial with Nursing Students. *Journal of Holistic Nursing*, 40(4), 336–350. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08980101211072288>
- Lee, Y. E., Seo, J. H., Kim, S. T., Jeon, S., Park, C. I., Kim, S. J., & Kang, J. I. (2023). Psychological factors associated with COVID-19 related anxiety and depression in young adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. *PLoS ONE*, 18(6), e0286636. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0286636>
- Lin, J., Zhang, L., & Kuo, Y. (2024). The role of social–emotional competencies in interpersonal relationships: a structural equation modeling approach. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 15, 1360467. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2024.1360467>
- López, V. E. R., Villavicencio, D. V. C., Anchundia, P. J. Q., & Arias, A. E. A. (2023). Estrés, ansiedad y desempeño laboral en docentes universitarios. *South Florida Journal of Development*, 4(8), 3047–3062. <https://doi.org/10.46932/sfjdv4n8-009>
- Lucas-Mangas, S., Valdivieso-León, L., Espinoza-Díaz, I. M., & Tous-Pallarés, J. (2022). Emotional Intelligence, Psychological Well-Being and burnout of Active and In-Training teachers. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(6), 3514. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph19063514>
- Magson, N. R., Freeman, J. Y. A., Rapee, R. M., Richardson, C. E., Oar, E. L., & Fardouly, J. (2020). Risk and Protective Factors for Prospective Changes in Adolescent Mental Health during the COVID-19 Pandemic. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 50(1), 44–57. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-020-01332-9>
- Mayer, J. D., Caruso, D. R., & Salovey, P. (2016). The ability Model of Emotional intelligence: Principles and updates. *Emotion Review*, 8(4), 290–300. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073916639667>
- Moore, B., & Gregory, R. (2024). Decision making as a pedagogy for social emotional learning. *Social and Emotional Learning Research Practice and Policy*, 3, 100034. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sel.2024.100034>
- Mróz, J., Kaleta, K., & Sołtys, E. (2020). Decision to forgive scale and emotional forgiveness scale in a polish sample. *Current Psychology*, 41(6), 3443–3451. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144->

- Othman, M. B. a. A., Al-Dosary, M. S. M., & Ismail, M. a. A. (2023). AN EDUCATIONAL STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF FUTURE ANXIETY ON THE ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS. *Conhecimento & Diversidade*, 15(40), 194–209. <https://doi.org/10.18316/rcd.v15i40.11312>
- Palacio, I. C. C. (2023). Educar para el Bienestar. *Voces Y Silencios Revista Latinoamericana De Educación*, 14(1), 20–37. <https://doi.org/10.18175/vys14.1.2023.3>
- Pilgrim, C., Carbone, A., Rixon, A., & W Bates, G. (2019). Beyond employability skills: Developing professional purpose. *Journal of Teaching and Learning for Graduate Employability*, 10(1), 7–26. <https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/INFORMIT.580460025452033>
- Ricciardi, E., Rota, G., Sani, L., Gentili, C., Gaglianese, A., Guazzelli, M., & Pietrini, P. (2023). How the brain heals emotional wounds: The functional neuroanatomy of forgiveness. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 17, 1121477. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnhum.2023.1121477>
- Roldán-Espínola, L., Riera-Serra, P., Roca, M., García-Toro, M., Coronado-Simsic, V., Castro, A., Navarra-Ventura, G., Vilagut, G., Alayo, I., Ballester, L., Blasco, M. J., Almenara, J., Cebrià, A. I., Echeburúa, E., Gabilondo, A., Lagares, C., Piqueras, J. A., Soto-Sanz, V., Mortier, P., . . . Gili, M. (2024). Depression and lifestyle among university students: A one-year follow-up study. *The European Journal of Psychiatry*, 38(3), 100250. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ejpsy.2024.100250>
- Rupérez, P. C. (2024). Developing negotiation competence at the university. *Dialnet*. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=9738606>
- Ryff, C. D. (2018). Eudaimonic well-being: Highlights from 25 years of inquiry. *Diversity in Harmony - Insights From Psychology: Proceedings of the 31st International Congress of Psychology*, 375–395. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119362081.ch20>
- Ryff, C. D. (2022). Positive psychology: Looking back and looking forward. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, 840062. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.840062>
- Sandage, S. J., Crabtree, S. A., & Bell, C. A. (2019). Forgiveness and Culture. In *Handbook of Forgiveness* (2nd ed., pp. 201–211). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351123341-19>
- Shen, L., Van Schie, J., Ditchburn, G., Brook, L., & Bei, B. (2018). Positive and Negative Emotions: Differential Associations with Sleep Duration and Quality in Adolescents. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 47(12), 2584–2595. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-018-0899-1>
- Singh, B., Olds, T., Curtis, R., Dumuid, D., Virgara, R., Watson, A., Szeto, K., O'Connor, E., Ferguson, T., Eglitis, E., Miatke, A., Simpson, C. E., & Maher, C. (2023). Effectiveness of physical activity interventions for improving depression, anxiety and distress: an overview of systematic reviews. *British Journal of Sports Medicine*, 57(18), 1203–1209. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bjsports-2022-106195>
- Szczęśniak, M., Rodzeń, W., Malinowska, A., & Kropiewski, Z. (2022). Big five personality traits and gratitude: The role of emotional intelligence. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 185, 111248. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2021.111248>
- Tamang, A. (2021). Teachers Mental Health and Education: Issues and concerns. *www.academia.edu*. https://www.academia.edu/66951627/Teachers_Mental_Health_and_Education_Issues_and_Concerns
- Toussaint, L., Worthington, E. L., Webb, J. R., Wilson, C., & Williams, D. R. (2022). Forgiveness in Human Flourishing. In *Human Flourishing* (pp. 117–131). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-09786-7_8
- Toussaint, L. L., Worthington, E. L., Williams, D. R., & Webb, J. R. (2019). Forgiveness and Physical Health. In *Handbook of Forgiveness* (2nd ed., pp. 178–187).

- <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351123341-17>
- Valverde-Janer, M., Ortega-Caballero, M., Ortega-Caballero, I., Ortega-Caballero, A., & Segura-Robles, A. (2023). Study of Factors Associated with the Development of Emotional Intelligence and Resilience in University Students. *Education Sciences*, 13(3), 255. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13030255>
- VanderWeele, T. J. (2022). The importance, opportunities, and challenges of empirically assessing character for the promotion of flourishing. *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, 17(1), 25-34. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2021.2016911>
- Van Sluijs, E. M. F., Ekelund, U., Crochemore-Silva, I., Guthold, R., Ha, A., Lubans, D., Oyeyemi, A. L., Ding, D., & Katzmarzyk, P. T. (2021). Physical activity behaviours in adolescence: current evidence and opportunities for intervention. *The Lancet*, 398(10298), 429–442. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(21\)01259-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(21)01259-9)
- Venezuela, U. C. a. B. C., & Chávez, L. R. (2024). Autoeficacia, burnout y bienestar psicológico docente desde la psicología positiva: Una aproximación con ecuaciones estructurales. *Avances En Psicología*, 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.33539/avpsicol.2024.v32n1.3211>
- Wade, N. G., & Tittler, M. V. (2019). Psychological Interventions to Promote Forgiveness of Others. In *Handbook of Forgiveness* (2nd ed., pp. 255–265). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351123341-24>
- Wang, G., & Sabran, K. (2024). Assessing depression and anxiety among young adults after epidemics and pandemics: a cross-sectional study in Anyang, China. *Scientific Reports*, 14(1), 2759. <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-024-53292-w>
- Wang, S., Qin, J., Cheung, D. S. K., Tyrovolas, S., Leung, S. H. I., Leung, A. Y. M., & Davidson, P. M. (2024). E-bibliotherapy for improving the psychological well-being of informal caregivers of people with dementia: a randomized controlled trial protocol. *BMC Nursing*, 23(1), 84. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12912-024-01706-5>
- Webb, J. R., & Toussaint, L. L. (2019). Forgiveness, Well-Being, and Mental Health. In *Handbook of Forgiveness* (2nd ed., pp. 188–197). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351123341-18>
- World Health Organization: WHO. (2025, September 8). Anxiety disorders. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/anxiety-disorders>
- World Health Organization: WHO & World Health Organization: WHO. (2025, August 29). Depressive disorder (depression). <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/depression>
- Worthington, E. L., & Scherer, M. (2004). Forgiveness is an emotion-focused coping strategy that can reduce health risks and promote health resilience: theory, review, and hypotheses. *Psychology and Health*, 19(3), 385–405. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0887044042000196674>
- Worthington, E. L., & Wade, N. G. (2019). A New Perspective on Forgiveness Research. In *Handbook of forgiveness* (2nd ed., pp. 345–355). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351123341-32>
- Wu, Q., Chi, P., Lin, X., Du, H., Zhou, N., Cao, H., & Liang, Y. (2020). Gratitude and satisfaction in romantic relationships: Roles of decisional forgiveness and emotional forgiveness. *Current Psychology*, 41(5), 2668–2676. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-020-00780-7>
- Ye, L., Posada, A., & Liu, Y. (2019). A review on the relationship between Chinese adolescents' stress and academic achievement. *New Directions for Child and Adolescent Development*, 2019(163), 81–95. <https://doi.org/10.1002/cad.20265>
- Yilmaz, F. G. K., Yilmaz, R., & Erdogdu, F. (2022). The relationship between nomophobia, emotional intelligence, interpersonal Problem-Solving, perceived stress, and self-esteem among undergraduate students. *Journal of Technology in Behavioral Science*, 8(1), 27–35. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41347-022-00282-2>

- Zhang, Z., Wang, T., Kuang, J., Herold, F., Ludyga, S., Li, J., Hall, D. L., Taylor, A., Healy, S., Yeung, A. S., Kramer, A. F., & Zou, L. (2022). The roles of exercise tolerance and resilience in the effect of physical activity on emotional states among college students. *International Journal of Clinical and Health Psychology*, 22(3), 100312. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijchp.2022.100312>
- Zhi, R., & Derakhshan, A. (2024). Modelling the interplay between resilience, emotion regulation and psychological well-being among Chinese English language teachers: The mediating role of self-efficacy beliefs. *European Journal of Education*, 59(3). <https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12643>