

The role of forgiveness towards happiness: Perceived social support as a mediator

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Abstract

Dating represents a form of human relationship, ideally, based on love. Unfortunately, some dating relationships deviate from this ideal, leading to psychological violence experienced by one of the parties involved.. The purpose of this research is to find out how significant forgiveness contributes to the happiness of individuals who experience psychological violence in dating, by involving 101 respondents who are in the emerging aged stage who experience violence in lawyers. Three scales were involved: the HFS (Heartland Forgiveness Scale), the Oxford Happiness Scale, and The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS). This research used quantitative research methods with mediator analysis techniques using JAMOVI. Based on the results of this analysis technique, it indicates that social support functions as a mediator, contributing to 25.2% of the role of forgiveness in fostering happiness.

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INTRODUCTION

Based on developmental psychology, establishing an intimate relationship rooted in love, such as a romantic partnership, is considered a developmental task with the theme of love that individuals are expected to explore during emerging adulthood (Atwood & Scholtz, 2008; Wood et al., 2018). Emerging adulthood period is an individual who is experiencing a transition period from adolescence to adulthood in the age range of 18-25 years (Arnett, 2000). During emerging adulthood, love is focused on the quality of the relationship, including feelings of affection, intimacy, and satisfaction, and if these things increase as time goes by, commitment is solidified (De Goede et al., 2011; Wider et al., 2018).

Unfortunately, not all dating relationships are based on love. Based on the 2023 National Commission on Violence Against Women's records, violence in the personal realm was the highest at 3,528 cases. Based on the 2023 National Commission on Violence Against Women's Records, in Indonesia, the highest level of violence in the personal realm was 3,528 cases (Dewi, 2023). Violence within personal realm is primarily characterized psychological violence at 40%, with 713 cases of violence perpetrated by ex-girlfriends. According to Yeo & Hadiwirawan (2023), the absence of clearly defined boundaries when categorizing psychological violence. Consequently, investigative teams address psychological violence by focusing on its the psychological impact and assessing the extent of violent behavior experienced by the victim (Poerwandari & Lianawati, 2010). However, psychological violence can be interpreted as behavior that has a

psychological impact and occurs in the context of a situation that is perceived as psychological violence (Yeo & Hadiwirawan, 2023).

According to Wolfe & Temple (2018), When partners abuse their partners, the victims experience negative impacts like as drug such as criminal acts, drug abuse, and losses in physical health. They also suffer psychological losses such as psychosomatics symptoms and suicidal thoughts. Other sources also mention the impacts experienced by victims of dating violence, from physical to psychological impacts such as depression, stress, anxiety, and trauma (Safitri & Sama'i, 2013). Even from a developmental perspective, violence in dating can hurt a person's emotions and mental health (Sholikhah & Masykur, 2020).

Individuals who experience violence from their girlfriends need a healing process in the form of forgiveness to be able to move on with their lives. Forgiveness can be called a healing process because it can improve psychological well-being through increasing efforts to overcome problems to survive (Watts, 2004; Bryana, 2019).

Even though it is not easy, one of the recovery efforts that can be done is to forgive (Natasya & Susilawati, 2020; Pattiradjawane et al., 2019). According to Worthington & Scherer (2004), forgiveness can be divided into two types, namely decisional forgiveness and emotional forgiveness. Decisional forgiveness refers to forgiveness expressed through behavioral intention (cognitive) but not yet translated into behavior (conative). The primary aim of decisional forgiveness is to eliminate revenge and avoid threats (Lichtenfeld et al., 2015). Meanwhile, emotional forgiveness is the process of forgiving by changing negative emotions into positive emotions toward the perpetrator (Wijaya & Widyorini, 2023).

Forgiveness is a positive and healthy way that a person can deal with stress from a psychological and neurobiological perspective (Trivedi, 2023). Being a victim of psychological violence in a relationship is a situation that has the potential to cause someone to experience stress. Forgiveness can also be considered a coping strategy that aims to make individuals feel better about themselves than before, than before, control their excessive anger, and be more tolerant of what has happened (Sholikhah & Masykur, 2020).

Forgiveness is something that victims of psychological violence in dating need because it will provide positive emotions, more trust, and be ability to understand if something similar happens, minimizing the desire for revenge and hurt feelings (Pramintari & Febrian, 2022). Individuals who are more capable of forgiveness according to Jiang et al. (2014), are shown by people with happiness because they have more positive thoughts about themselves than people with low levels of happiness. Positive emotions which can lead to increased happiness when someone has a positive self-assessment, (Rina et al., 2022). Apart from that, even though it is painful if the individual can forgive the source of the problem, he will feel more relieved and capable to achieve happiness (Laela & Laksmiwati, 2021).

There are two components to forgiving others: the willingness to abandon negative things such as feelings of resentment and the willingness to be merciful (Enright, 1996; Yuliatun & Megawati, 2021). Furthermore, victims of psychological violence in relationships need forgiveness because it reduces the urge for retaliation and upset sentiments and increases good emotions, trust, and the ability to understand if something similar happens. (Pramintari & Febrian, 2022). The victim's forgiveness is not a form of justifying

what the perpetrator has done. The victim forgave the other person in order to meet their own needs and have a happy life in the future. This is in line with research by Jiang et al. (2014) who found that individuals who can forgive tend to be happier because they have more positive thoughts about themselves than those with low levels of happiness.

Positive emotions which can lead to increased happiness, when someone has a positive self-assessment of themselves, (Rina et al., 2022). Apart from that, even though it is painful if the individual can forgive the source of the problem, it will make him feel more relieved and able to achieve happiness (Laela & Laksmiwati, 2021). In the context of this research, the source of problem triggers is the experience of experiencing psychological violence in dating. The hope is that victims who can forgive will be more relieved and happier. According to Natasya & Susilawati (2020), through forgiveness, a person can have a better cognitive condition in dealing with stress. Furthermore, forgiveness can also affect a person's psychological well-being. When victims of dating violence practice forgiveness, it can contribute to restoring a healthier mental state and prevent trauma and stress, thereby reducing the risk of depression. (Natasya & Susilawati, 2020).

Apart from that, various kinds of benefits can be obtained by someone who forgives. According to Laela & Laksmiwati (2021), even though it is painful, if an individual can forgive the source of the problem he will be more relieved and able to achieve happiness. In light of this research, individuals who experience psychological violence during dating are expected to be able to forgive what happened to be more relieved and happier. In this case, forgiving someone is about achieving psychological well-being rather than justifying what they have been through. This has been stated in previous research which states that forgiveness can also affect a person's psychological well-being and help them avoid experiencing trauma and stress which can lead to depression (Natasya & Susilawati, 2020).

Thus, it can be concluded that there is a correlation between forgiveness and happiness and the correlation between these two variables has been studied in previous studies. According to Asnawati (2017), forgiveness correlates with the happiness of victims of domestic violence. The degree of forgiveness increases with the degree of happiness. Even though they have different problem backgrounds, recent research conducted by Susanto & Hartini (2022) also found that teenagers whose parents were divorced experienced the lower the level of happiness the more forgiveness they practiced. Maharani (2015) explained that physical and mental happiness is related to a sense of joy and peace of mind in life. Happiness can also be interpreted as a peaceful physical and spiritual life, both in mind and a sense of joy, which can improve personal function and bring happiness to people with healthy personalities (Puspitorini, 2012).

Previous research has also proven that social support is correlated with happiness. This is supported by Handayani (2021) who states that social support is one way of creating happiness in individuals. Social support functions as a buffer between individuals and stressful situations allowing victims of violence to feel more peaceful, and more loved, and more confident in themselves. (Natasya & Susilawati, 2020). Therefore, this research can potentially contribute references to studies related to the correlation between forgiveness

and social support. Meanwhile, practically, the results of this research can increase the amount of social support provided in order to maximize the process of forgiving and create happiness.

Thus, based on the introduction presented in the previous section, it was formulated that this research aimed to determine the magnitude of the role of forgiveness on happiness. Thus, the hypothesis proposed by this research is "The Role of Forgiveness on Happiness with Perceived Social Support as a Mediator". It is hoped that this research can highlight how crucial the act of forgiving others is to the happiness of individuals who experience psychological violence while dating.

METHOD

The variables in this research underwent an initial phase of data categorization before undergoing hypothesis testing. Data categorization involved the classification of data into low, medium, and high based on a hypothetical scale. This scale is a data categorization method determined by the number of scale items used in the research. The specific breakdown of data categorization is outlined in the table below. in the table below.

Table 1. Description of Research Participants

Category	Amount	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Woman	79	78,22
Man	22	21,78
Age		
18	7	6,93
19	17	16,83
20	16	15,84
21	9	8,91
22	28	27,72
23	11	10,89
24	2	1,98
25	11	10,89

This study took data from Indonesia with the final sample of 137 participants. However, However, upon data verification, the number of participants included in the study was reduced to 101 individuals. This reduction was due to various reasons, including subjects' refusal to participate in the research, instances of verbal violence (though not related to dating), and other participants who did not experience verbal violence and other participants did not experience verbal violence.

A total of 101 people participated in this research, ranging in age from 18 to 25 years. Among the participants, there were more female participants (N=79; 78.22%) than males (N=22; 21.78%). Regarding age distribution, the majority of participants fell within the 22-year age group (N=28; 27.72%) while the fewest participants were in the 24-year age group (N=2; 1.98%). The subjects involved in this research were individuals who had experienced psychological violence in dating, such as being scolded for not complying

with their partner's wishes, receiving threats, hearing inappropriate words, facing unilateral breakups, being coerced into doing something, experiencing physical insults, and many more.

In this research, three variables were utilized: happiness as the dependent, forgiveness as the independent variable, and social support as the mediator variable. The happiness variable was measured using the Oxford Happiness Scale with a reliability of 0.89. Meanwhile, the forgiveness variable was measured using the Forgiveness Scale adapted by Kurlillah (2020) from the HFS (Heartland Forgiveness Scale) scale based on aspects of Thompson et al. (2005) with a reliability of 0.76. Furthermore, the social support variable was measured using The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) compiled by Zimet et al. (1988) and translated into Indonesian through a back translation process for cross-cultural research (Brislin, 1970) by Winahyu et al. (2015). The reliability of the MSPSS, based on this research data, is 0.87.

The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS) (18 items) with some sample items: 2. *I harbor guilt about the wrongs I have done.* 11). *If others mistreat me, I will constantly think badly of them.* 17). *It is very difficult for me to accept bad events that happen outside of anyone's control.* The Oxford Happiness Scale uses 29 items with sample items including 1). "I do not feel happy with my situation", 9). "Life is good." 17). "I always have a happy effect on others." The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) uses 12 items with some examples of items 3). "My family tries to help me." 7). "I can count on my friends when things go wrong." 10). "There are special people in my life who care about feelings".

The scales used in this research were consolidated into Google form for dissemination. The distribution of the scales took place online through various social media platforms, such as WhatsApp and Instagram. The targets for distributing this research scale are men and women who have experienced psychological violence in dating.

RESULTS

Based on the conducted data categorization, as outlined in the table below, the variable with the highest number of subjects is happiness (N=84; 83.17%), followed by forgiveness (N=65; 64.35%), and social support (N=79; 78.22%). All falling into the high category. However, the table below shows that the data for the happiness and forgiveness variables show normal distribution ($p > 0.05$), while for the social support variable, the data does not follow a normal distribution ($p < 0.05$).

The variables in this research underwent initial data categorization before being subjected to hypothetical testing. The data categorization included low, medium, and high based on a hypothetical scale.

Table 2. Data Categorization

Variable	Low			Medium			High		
	Range	Σ	%	Range	Σ	%	Range	Σ	%
Happiness	$X < 73$	3	2,9	$73 \leq X \leq 93$	14	13,86	$X > 93$	84	83,17
Forgiveness	$X < 36$	1	0,9	$36 \leq X \leq 72$	35	34,65	$X > 72$	65	64,35
Social Support	$X < 24$	2	1,9	$24 \leq X \leq 48$	20	19,80	$X > 48$	79	78,22

Based on the conducted data categorization, as indicated in the table above, the variable with the highest number of subjects is happiness (N=84; 83.17%), followed by forgiveness (N=65; 64.35%), and social support (N=79; 78 .22%) all falling into the high category. It implies that someone who has a high level of forgiveness tends to have a high level of happiness. This correlation becomes more optimal when individuals also possess adequate social support. Thus, a person's level of forgiveness tends to increase happiness through optimal social support. Meanwhile, the table below shows that the data for the happiness and forgiveness variables are normally distributed ($p > 0.05$), while for the social support variable, the data is not normally distributed ($p < 0.05$).

Table 3. Mediation Path Analysis

Path	95% C.I (a)				β	p	% Mediation
	b	SE	Lower	Upper			
Path a*b (Indirect) ($X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y$)	0,231	0,0725	0,103	0,383	3,18	0,001	25,2
Path a	0,0722	0,0161	0,0385	0,101	4,48	< 0,001	-
Path b	3,1947	0,6107	2,0257	4,413	5,23	< 0,001	-
Path c' (Direct)	0,684	0,1360	0,383	0,916	5,03	< 0,001	74,8
Path c (Total Effect)	0,915	0,1300	0,617	1,124	7,04	< 0,001	100

Next, the research data underwent hypotheses testing using mediator analysis techniques using JAMOVI revealing that social support had a mediating role of 25.2% in the relationship between forgiveness and happiness. The findings of this research prove that the forgiveness process can optimally contribute to happiness when mediated by social support. Apart from that, this research contributes theoretical benefits, specifically the correlation between forgiveness and social support.

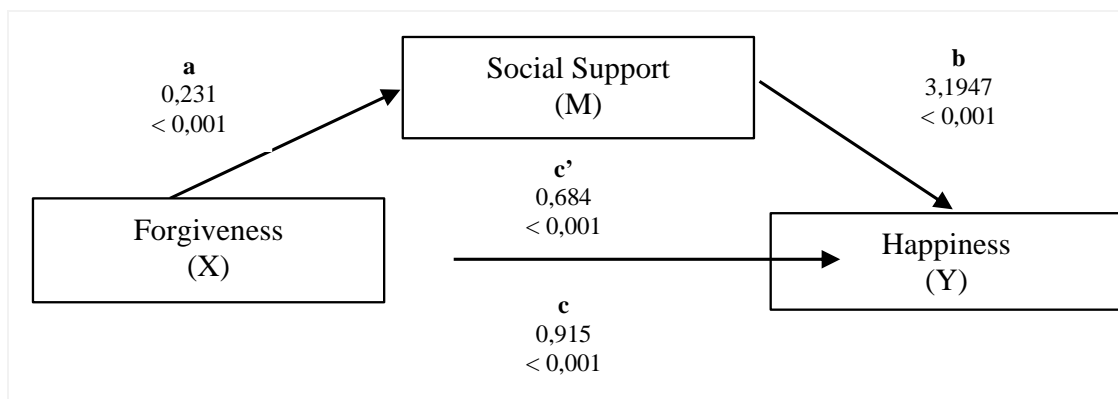


Figure 1. Regression and Mediation Models

DISCUSSION

This research confirms the significant role of forgiveness in contributing to happiness. Individuals who engage in the forgiveness process experience higher levels of happiness compared to those who have not undergone such a process. People who can forgive problems even though they are painful tend to feel more relieved and achieve happiness (Rienneke & Setianingrum, 2018). Habibi & Hidayati (2017) also stated that the process of forgiveness can neutralize and even replace negative emotions with positive emotions, including happiness serving as a problem-solving strategy.

It is expected that victims of dating violence can enhance their mental well-being and avoid trauma and stress and potentially avoid depression by embracing forgiveness (Natasya & Susilawati, 2020). If victims of violence find it difficult to forgive, according to Chung (2016), they tend to grapple with persistent depression, as individuals with difficulty forgiving often exhibit low self-compassion.

Table 4. Details of the Contribution of Social Support Dimension to Happiness

Dimensions	R	R Square	(%)
Social Support from Significant Other	0,420	0,176	17,6
Social Support from Family	0,490	0,240	24,0
Social Support from Friend	0,365	0,133	13,3

The role of forgiveness on happiness becomes more optimal when considering social support variable. The social support variable used in this research is perceived social support, comprising three dimensions sourced from significant others, family, and friends. Linear regression analysis revealed that social support originating from the family contributed the most (24.0%). This means that the higher the availability of sources of social support from the family correlated with the increased happiness during the forgiveness process for individuals who have experienced psychological violence. According to Baranczuk (2019), family social support may manifest through spending time together, providing attention and knowledge, useful information for solving problems, and instrumental assistance when needed.

A closely-knit family social support particularly during challenging times, can have positive effects, such as enhancing happiness (Erniati et al., 2018). Adequate family support facilitates individual

development and contributes to an increased sense of happiness. When individuals receive ample support from their family, they are more likely to navigate challenges and experience happiness. Positive social relationships within families can significantly influence an individual's overall happiness. (Erniati et al., 2018).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research reveal that forgiveness can significantly contribute to happiness, and this effect is mediated by social support at a rate of 25.2%. This means that the forgiveness process is most effective when individuals get social support from their social environment, including family, friends, or other influential people. For those who experience psychological violence in dating the forgiveness process, when coupled with social support, can aid in recovery and lead to a happier state. The process of forgiveness will be more optimal if individuals who experience psychological violence in a relationship receive social support from the people around them, especially from the family.

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The author would like to thank all participants who contributed to this research. Prior to their involvement, all participants were asked to provide informed consent, which was presented at the beginning of the Google Form page. Through informed consent, the researchers assured participants of the confidentiality of all data, emphasizing that data were only used for research purposes in compliance with the ethical standards of psychology. In addition, researchers provide contact information for support in case participants experience discomfort after filling out the data. The authors affirm that there are no conflicts of interest associated with the conduct of this research up to the writing of this article, and the article has not been previously published.

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