



The role of forgiveness in mediating the relationship between emotion regulation and subjective well-being of students

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Abstract: University students frequently encounter academic pressures and emotional challenges that affect their subjective well-being. Emotion regulation is therefore an essential competency, while forgiveness is understood as a psychological mechanism that can mediate emotion regulation's influence on well-being. This study investigates the mediating roles of forgiveness in the relationship between emotion regulation and subjective well-being among Indonesian university students. Using a quantitative design, 1,790 participants from multiple universities were recruited through convenience sampling. The instruments employed measured emotion regulation, forgiveness, and subjective well-being. Path analysis demonstrated that forgiveness functioned as a significant mediator between emotion regulation and subjective well-being ($\beta = .521, p < .001$). Forgiveness was included in the model, the direct effect of emotion regulation on subjective well-being became non-significant ($\beta = -.023, p = .285$), indicating a full mediation effect. These results underscore the importance of promoting forgiveness, suggesting that universities should incorporate counseling and reflective programs grounded in forgiveness to enhance students' emotion regulation and subjective well-being.

Keywords: emotion regulation; forgiveness; students; subjective well-being

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Introduction

Subjective well-being (SWB) is a key measure of mental health that reflects how happy someone is with their life and how they feel about both positive and negative experiences (Diener, 1984). In the student context, SWB is susceptible to academic stress, social pressure, and uncertainty regarding future prospects. Longitudinal and cross-country studies consistently report declining SWB during college years, with a high prevalence of anxiety, depression, stress and burnout (Altwajiri et al., 2024; Magomedova & Fatima, 2025; Rogowska et al., 2021; T. Zhang et al., 2024; Y. Zhang et al., 2025). Traumatic experiences such as violence, bullying and family conflict exacerbate these problems, increasing risks of PTSD and suicidal behavior (Ebert et al., 2019; Kilicaslan et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2022; Soldevila-Domenech et al., 2021; World Health Organization, 2025). Therefore, strengthening SWB is a crucial promotive-preventive approach to students' mental health (Choi et al., 2023; Fei et al., 2023).

Emotion regulation, defined as the capacity to manage and express emotions adaptively (Gross & John, 2003) is a significant internal factor associated with SWB. It can be enhanced by adaptive strategies such as cognitive reappraisal, whereas suppression contributes to distress (Aldao et al., 2010; Alfinuha & Nuqul, 2017; Balzarotti et al., 2016; Gross & John, 2003). However, the effectiveness of emotion regulation may depend on other psychological resources, including forgiveness.

It is not only a personal matter, but also a part of cultural and relational contexts. In collectivist societies, emotions are frequently regulated not solely for individual welfare, but also to preserve harmony within relationships. This cultural perspective indicates that emotion regulation among Indonesian students may be closely connected to values such as forgiveness, which offer common frameworks for understanding challenges and achieving equilibrium.

Consequently, emotion regulation should not be regarded in isolation, but rather as an integral component of comprehensive psycho-social resources that promote well-being.

Recent empirical evidence has highlighted the dynamic interplay between emotion regulation and moral dimensions of functioning. Salem et al. (2025) discovered that spiritual mindfulness augmented self-reflective awareness, thereby promoting forgiveness and diminishing emotional suppression. These results are consistent with evidence from Southeast Asia indicating that forgiveness mitigate stress and demonstrate enhanced subjective well-being through emotional harmony (Lim et al., 2024; Susanto & Iskandar, 2023). In Indonesian culture, which has a strong emphasis on harmony between people, these ideas may work together. In this context, forgiveness gives life meaning and helps people rise above their problems, helps people feel better emotionally and connect with others. This viewpoint endorses a contextualized comprehension of emotional well-being that affective dimensions (Balboni et al., 2022; van Cappellen & LePage Drummond, 2024).

Forgiveness especially significant in Indonesia's religious-collectivist culture, offers resilience, meaning and hope during stressful situations (Mahoney et al., 2021; Pargament et al., 2013). It promotes acceptance, optimism and inner peace, and has been identified as a mediator between emotion regulation and well-being (Datu & Mateo, 2020; E. B. Davis et al., 2023; Geerling et al., 2020; Joshanloo, 2011; Lucchetti et al., 2021).

Forgiveness, characterized as the relinquishment of anger and resentment towards oneself or others (Worthington & Scherer, 2004), is similarly correlated with diminished distress and elevated subjective well-being (E. B. Davis et al., 2023; Toussaint & Worthington, 2020; Worthington et al., 2007). It functions via emotion regulation, specifically reappraisal, which assists individuals in substituting negative emotions with empathy

and compassion (Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2015; Finkel et al., 2013; McCullough et al., 2000). Meta-analytic and longitudinal studies have validated its efficacy in improving life satisfaction and alleviating depressive symptoms (Chen et al., 2019; Gao et al., 2022; Graça & Brandão, 2024; Kim et al., 2022).

Conceptually, emotion regulation provides the cognitive and affective foundation that enables individuals to engage in forgiveness reflection. When students successfully manage emotional impulses through cognitive reappraisal, they become more capable of releasing resentment and developing compassion, which constitute forgiveness (D. E. Davis et al., 2012; Kusprayogi & Nashori, 2017; Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Forgiveness consequently convert emotion regulation into moral and existential development, promoting inner tranquility and subjective well-being (Balboni et al., 2022; Joshanloo, 2011). In this context, forgiveness function as emotional-moral conduits that transform regulatory mechanisms into enduring psychological equilibrium and life contentment, especially pertinent in collectivist such as Indonesia (Raya et al., 2023).

While forgiveness has been extensively researched, the mechanisms through which they collectively impact student well-being remain inadequately examined. Previous research predominantly focuses on individual factors in isolation, neglecting their possible interaction as a cohesive pathway. Given that Indonesian students frequently utilize both religious beliefs and interpersonal values to manage stress, a dual-mediation model may more effectively encapsulate the intricacies of their combined functionality. Specifically, forgiveness is positioned as mediators because it serves as internal mechanisms that translate emotion regulation into greater well-being. Such regulation enables individuals to control emotional reactions; forgiveness facilitates emotional release and reconciliation. These two variables thus represent

transformative processes through which regulated emotions evolve into peace, acceptance and positive life evaluation.

Emotion regulation is positioned as the initial variable because it serves as a fundamental psychological capacity that influences how individuals process, interpret and respond to stressful experiences (Gross, 2015). When individuals successfully regulate their emotions, they are more capable of developing forgiveness (Worthington & Sandage, 2016). Therefore, forgiveness are employed as mediating variables, as both function as internal processes that translate emotion regulation into higher subjective well-being (A. K. Davis et al., 2020; Kaya & Odacı, 2024).

Forgiveness is positioned as mediator variables because they function as inner mechanisms that convert emotion regulation into subjective well-being. Emotion regulation helps manage emotions, but forgiveness determines how those emotions are given meaning and released. whereas forgiveness converts adverse emotions into compassion and tranquility (Pargament, 2013; Worthington & Scherer, 2004). Consequently, function as pathways that internalize emotion regulation into enduring well-being, aligning with positive psychology viewpoints that highlight moral integration in flourishing (E. B. Davis et al., 2023; Sari et al., 2025).

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Forgiveness pathway that makes emotion regulation effective on SWB (E. B. Davis et al., 2023;

Theodora et al., 2023; Wills, 2009; Wong et al., 2018). Few studies have tested as mediators, especially among student populations (Hafnidar, 2024; Joshanloo, 2011; Wang et al., 2023). Considering the profound cultural integration forgiveness in Indonesia, the examination of this mediation is both theoretically and practically significant.

Consequently, the study seeks to examine the mediating roles of forgiveness in the relationship between emotion regulation and subjective well-being among Indonesian students. The results are anticipated to enhance theoretical comprehension of forgiveness mechanisms and guide practical interventions aimed at fostering mental health in higher education.

Based on the literature review, the following hypotheses were formulated:

- H₁ Emotion regulation positively predicts forgiveness and subjective well-being.
- H₂ Forgiveness positively predict subjective well-being.
- H₃ forgiveness mediates the relationship between emotion regulation and subjective well-being.

Method

Research Design

This research utilized a quantitative path analysis design through structural equation modelling (SEM). The path analysis method was selected to examine the direct and indirect relationships between emotion regulation, forgiveness and subjective well-being. This design facilitates the analysis of mediation effects and offers thorough comprehension of how emotional processes affect students' well-being via forgiving mechanisms.

Research Participants

Data were collected through an online survey (Google Forms) distributed via academic

networks, university groups and student organizations. Participants were recruited using a non-probability convenience sampling technique.

The study employed a convenience sampling technique, with predefined inclusion criteria applied to ensure that participants possessed characteristics relevant to the research focus. The sample consisted of undergraduate students aged 18–25 who were actively engaged in academic and organizational activities, placing them in the developmental stage of emerging adulthood (see Table 1). This age group was considered appropriate because they commonly experience challenges related to emotion regulation and identity formation, making them suitable for exploring the links between emotion regulation, forgiveness, and subjective well-being. Nevertheless, the use of online distribution and voluntary participation introduced elements of convenience sampling, which may limit the extent to which the findings can be generalized.

Using G*Power 3.1 for the path analysis (medium effect size $f^2 = .15$, $\alpha = .05$, power = .95), it was established that the research needed at least 204 participants. The final sample of 1,790 students far exceeded this threshold, which meant that the results were very reliable and the parameters were stable. The participants came from multiple regions of Indonesia, such as Sumatra, Java, Kalimantan, Sulawesi, Bali, Nusa Tenggara, Maluku, and Papua, reflecting a range of cultural, gender and academic backgrounds. This heterogeneity enhanced the external validity of the study, although interpretations should remain cautious given the convenience-based sampling.

Data Collection Procedure

A Google Form was used to gather data from students at each university. The demographic distribution of respondents in the study can be seen in Table 1. The participants were given information about the study goals, how to complete the scale, and assurance of data confidentiality before they signed the informed

consent form. With this method, it was possible to gather data from a large and diverse sample of Indonesian universities, guaranteeing its accuracy for the path analysis.

Research Instruments

The process by which people intentionally or unintentionally control the type, strength, duration and expression of their emotions is known as emotion regulation (Gross, 2002). In order to enable individuals to perform adaptively in daily life, such regulation aims to modify emotional reactions to conform to situational demands or personal objectives. Gross and John's Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ) (2003) was used to measure emotion regulation. Ten items make up the measure, which was adjusted to

include expressive suppression and cognitive reappraisal markers. Examples of statements with a dependability of .827 included "I keep my emotions under control" and "I control my emotions by not expressing them."

Thompson et al. (2005) assert that forgiveness is an intrapersonal process by which individuals relinquish negative emotions, including anger, resentment or pain, directed at the perpetrator or situation, and substitute them with empathy, understanding or goodwill. The objective of measuring forgiveness is to evaluate the degree to which individuals can acknowledge their own errors or limitations, and relinquish anger towards those who have wronged them, or towards adverse situations or occurrences.

Table 1
Participant Characteristics (n = 1,790)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	680	38.0
	Female	1,110	62.0
Age Range	18-21 years old	1,358	75.8
	22-25 years old	432	24.2
Region	Sumatra (Aceh, North Sumatra, West Sumatra, South Sumatra, Riau, Jambi, Bengkulu, Bangka Belitung, Lampung)	224	12.5
	Java (Banten, Jakarta, West Java, Central Java, East Java, Yogyakarta)	1,348	75.3
	Bali & Nusa Tenggara (Bali, NTB, NTT, Lombok)	42	2.3
	Kalimantan (North, Central, East, West, South Kalimantan)	44	2.5
	Sulawesi (North, Central, Southeast, West, South Sulawesi)	85	4.8
	Maluku & Papua	47	2.6
University of Origin	Indonesia State Islamic Higher Education Institutions (PTKIN)	430	24.0
	Indonesia State Universities (PTN)	353	19.7
	Non-State Universities	252	14.1
	Muhammadiyah Universities	115	6.4
	Indonesia State Universities outside Java	310	17.3
	Other universities	330	18.4

The Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS), created by Thompson et al. in 2005, is used to measure forgiveness. The HFS comprises 18 statements that consider three main areas: forgiving yourself, forgiving others and forgiving situations. "I accept that I can make mistakes like anyone else" and "I am able to forgive people who have hurt me" are two examples of statements with a reliability of .956.

The Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS), created by Diener in 1984, was used to measure subjective well-being (SWB). The scale assesses individuals' perceptions of life satisfaction in general. Examples of statements are "My current living conditions are very satisfying" and "In the past few days, I have felt excited," with a reliability of .954.

All the measurement instruments were originally in English, so were adapted and translated for Indonesian participants following Lopez et al.'s (2008) and Brislin's (1980) back-translation procedure. Two bilingual psychology experts translated the instruments into Indonesian, and another set back-translated them into English. Discrepancies were addressed to ensure that the concepts were the same. Subsequently, three experts in the field considered how clear, culturally relevant and valid the content was. A pilot test involving 200 university students evaluated comprehension and initial reliability, followed by confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) to investigate construct validity (Hair, 2009).

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using path analysis with SEM via SPSS AMOS 26. Several steps were undertaken: 1) testing of classical assumptions, including normality and multicollinearity; 2) CFA to test construct validity and reliability; 3) assessment of model fit using multiple indices (χ^2/df , CFI, TLI, RMSEA); 4) evaluation of convergent and discriminant validity; 5) structural model testing to examine direct and indirect effects between variables; and 6) bootstrapping

(5,000 resamples) to assess the significance of mediations (forgiveness). This procedure allows a robust evaluation of whether forgiveness significantly mediated the relationship between emotion regulation and subjective well-being among the university students.

Results

Descriptive statistics for all research variables are presented in Table 2. The table presents descriptive statistics for research variables based on a sample of 1,790 participants, including minimum, maximum, mean, and standard deviation values. Overall, the variables show relatively wide score ranges, indicating variability in participants' responses.

As presented in Table 3 and 4, the CFA demonstrated that all measurement indicators loaded significantly on their respective latent constructs (standardized loading $> .50$, $p < .001$). The constructs also showed strong reliability, with composite reliability (CR) values ranging from .84 to .93 and average variance extracted (AVE) values of above .50, confirming convergent validity. Discriminant validity was also established, as the square root of each AVE exceeded the inter-construct correlations. The measurement model exhibited good fit to the data ($\chi^2/df = 2.71$, CFI = .957, TLI = .951, RMSEA = .048), meeting recommended thresholds (CFI and TLI $\geq .90$, RMSEA $\leq .08$). The structural model similarly showed adequate fit ($\chi^2/df = 2.84$, CFI = .953, TLI = .947, RMSEA = .050).

Path analysis revealed that emotion regulation significantly predicted forgiveness ($\beta = .597$, SE = .022, $p < .001$). In addition, forgiveness significantly predicted subjective well-being (SWB) ($\beta = .873$, SE = .017, $p < .001$). However, the direct effect of emotion regulation on SWB was not significant ($\beta = -.023$, SE = .021, $p = .285$). Bootstrapping analysis confirmed a significant indirect effect of emotion regulation on SWB through forgiveness ($\beta = .521$, SE = .025, $p < .001$).

The total effect of emotion regulation on SWB was significant ($\beta = .498$, $SE = .022$, $p < .001$), supporting a full mediation model in which forgiveness fully mediates the relationship between emotion regulation and subjective well-being. See Table 5.

In the mediation pathway Emotion Regulation \rightarrow Forgiveness \rightarrow SWB, emotion regulation showed a strong and significant positive effect on forgiveness (path a: $\beta = .597$, $p < .001$), indicating that individuals with better emotion regulation abilities tend to exhibit higher levels of forgiveness. Furthermore, forgiveness demonstrated a very strong positive effect on subjective well-being (path b: $\beta = .873$, $p < .001$), suggesting that forgiveness plays a crucial role in enhancing SWB by alleviating negative emotional experiences and

fostering positive psychological states. The indirect effect of emotion regulation on SWB through forgiveness was substantial and significant ($\beta = .521$, $p < .001$), while the direct path from emotion regulation to SWB became non-significant, indicating full mediation. These findings highlight forgiveness as a key psychological mechanism through which emotion regulation contributes to students' subjective well-being.

Hypothesis test results illustrating the structural relationships among emotion regulation, forgiveness, and subjective well-being. Emotion regulation has a direct effect on subjective well-being as well as indirect effects through forgiveness. Path coefficients are presented in standardized form, and ** indicates statistical significance ($p < .001$), shown in Figure 1.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables (n = 1,790)

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	M	SD
Life Satisfaction	5.00	25.00	18.72	4.74
PANAS	34.00	85.00	52.25	7.43
Forgiveness	22.00	85.00	64.06	15.13
Emotion Regulation	15.00	70.00	49.42	10.18

Table 3

Measurement and Structural Model Fit Indices

Model	χ^2/df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Measurement Model	2.71	.957	.951	.048
Structural Model	2.84	.953	.947	.050

Table 4

Construct Reliability and Validity

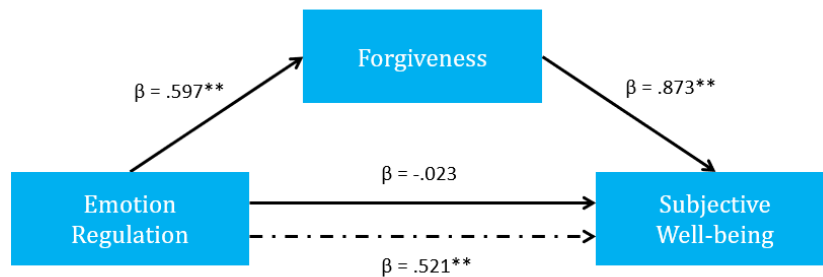
Construct Criteria	Threshold	Result	Conclusion
Factor Loadings	> .50	All > .50	Valid
Composite Reliability (CR)	$\geq .70$.84 – .93	Reliable
Average Variance Extracted	$\geq .50$	All > .50	Valid
Discriminant Validity	$\sqrt{AVE} > \text{corr.}$	Satisfied	Valid

Table 5
Results of Path Analysis and Mediation Effects

Path	Estimation	SE	Z	p	95% Confidence Interval		Effect Type
					Lower	Upper	
• Emotion Regulation → Forgiveness	.597	.022	27.004	< .001	.552	.641	a (mediation)
• Forgiveness → Subjective Well-being (SWB)	.873	.017	52.891	< .001	.84	.905	b (mediation)
• Emotion Regulation → Subjective Well-being (SWB) (direct)	-.023	.021	-1.068	.285	-.064	.018	c' (direct)
• Emotion Regulation → Forgiveness → Subjective Well-being (SWB) (indirect)	.521	.025	20.847	< .001	.474	.571	mediation
Total Effect	.498	.022	22.71	< .001	.456	.541	

Note. β = standardized regression coefficient; SE = standard error

Figure 1
Hypothesis Test Results



Note.
→ = direct effect
-> = indirect effect
** = $p < .001$

The direct effect (c') of Emotion Regulation on subjective well-being (SWB) was not significant after forgiveness was included in the model ($\beta = -.023$, $p = .285$). This finding indicates that emotion regulation does not exert a direct influence on SWB when forgiveness is taken into account. Instead, the relationship between emotion regulation and SWB operates entirely

through the mediating role of forgiveness. In other words, the positive contribution of emotion regulation to subjective well-being is fully explained by its effect on forgiveness, providing clear evidence of full mediation rather than a suppression effect.

The non-significant direct path suggests that emotion regulation alone is insufficient to directly

enhance subjective well-being unless it facilitates adaptive psychological processes such as forgiveness. When individuals are able to regulate their emotions effectively, this capacity increases their tendency to forgive, which in turn contributes significantly to higher levels of SWB. Thus, forgiveness functions as a crucial psychological mechanism that translates emotion regulation abilities into well-being outcomes

Discussion

The study findings demonstrate that emotion regulation is positively associated with forgiveness, which in turn enhances students' subjective well-being. These findings confirm earlier evidence suggesting that forgiveness functions as an important mediator in the process by which individuals manage their emotional experiences (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005; Li et al., 2020). Emotion regulation enables individuals to reframe distressing experiences, and when integrated with forgiveness, students are more likely to attain inner peace and greater life satisfaction. This pattern aligns with previous research indicating that forgiveness-based interventions can markedly diminish negative affect and enhance psychological adjustment (Hirsch et al., 2011; Worthington et al., 2016).

Recent cross-cultural studies have further supported these findings, emphasizing forgiveness as a key psychological mechanism of emotional transformation that helps convert adverse experiences into favorable psychological outcomes. Forgiveness mediates the influence of emotion regulation on well-being by reducing rumination and strengthening compassion and optimism in the face of adversity (Chen et al., 2019; Gao et al., 2022; Graça & Brandão, 2024; Mróz & Kaleta, 2023). Wong et al. (2018) argue that forgiveness plays a central role in alleviating emotional distress, thereby fostering a cycle of emotional balance and sustained happiness (Fredrickson, 2013). These mechanisms correspond with the broaden-and-build theory of

positive psychology, which posits that positive emotions that result from forgiveness and reflection enhance cognitive flexibility and foster long-term well-being (Cohn & Fredrickson, 2010).

The results of this study indicate that emotion regulation is positively correlated with forgiveness, which subsequently improve students' subjective well-being. These findings corroborate prior evidence indicating that forgiveness serve as significant mediators in the management of emotional experiences and the attainment of psychological well-being (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005; Li et al., 2020).

The results of this study suggest that when students are able to manage their emotions effectively, they tend to develop a stronger capacity for forgiveness. Both processes appear to play an important role in supporting their overall well-being. Similar patterns have been reported in earlier research, which found that these two factors often help individuals navigate emotional difficulties and maintain psychological balance (Ano & Vasconcelles, 2005; Li et al., 2020).

Emotion regulation allows individuals to reframe distressing experiences, and when integrated with forgiveness, students can attain enhanced inner peace and life satisfaction. This pattern is consistent with prior studies emphasizing that forgiveness-based interventions can significantly reduce negative affect and enhance psychological adjustment (Hirsch et al., 2011; Worthington et al., 2016).

The results indicate that emotion regulation influences subjective well-being indirectly through forgiveness, rather than exerting a direct effect. Students who are able to manage their emotions effectively are more likely to develop forgiveness, which transforms negative emotional experiences into empathy and acceptance, thereby contributing to higher levels of life satisfaction. In this process, forgiveness serves as the central psychological mechanism that translates emotion regulation capacities into well-being outcomes.

Importantly, the non-significant direct effect of emotion regulation on subjective well-being underscores the critical role of forgiveness as a mediating variable. These findings suggest that emotion regulation alone may be insufficient to enhance well-being unless it is accompanied by adaptive interpersonal and intrapersonal processes such as forgiveness. This result highlights the importance of examining mediating mechanisms in emotional regulation research, as the adaptive value of emotion regulation appears to depend on its integration with forgiveness processes (Gross, 2015; Webb et al., 2012). This finding underscores the importance of examining mediating variables, as emotion regulation may not consistently yield adaptive outcomes unless grounded in forgiveness processes (Toussaint et al., 2020).

This suppression effect has been observed in several Asian populations, where emotional restraint is culturally valued but can also create hidden distress when unaccompanied by moral interpretation (Lee & Fung, 2023). In the Indonesian socio context, students are frequently urged to regulate their negative emotions as an indication of maturity or devotion. Nonetheless, in the absence of cognitive reframing via forgiveness or a transcendent framework that imparts meaning, such suppression may evolve into emotional fatigue. A study conducted by Han et al. (2022) demonstrated that emotional suppression, can predict burnout and anxiety, whereas oriented regulation fosters resilience. This emphasizes that emotion regulation should be situated within a cultural framework that validates the expression and transformation of emotions, rather than mere control.

The cultural context of Javanese students provides additional insight into this dynamic. Values such as *nrimo* (acceptance) and *legawa* (sincere letting go) are very similar to the mental processes of forgiveness. These cultural frameworks prompt individuals to reconceptualize

suffering not solely as a personal struggle but as an integral component of a larger life narrative imbued with significance and divine insight. This kind of cultural integration strengthens forgiveness as mediators, as they provide us with both a mental framework for turning painful experiences into opportunities to grow and become stronger (Daryanti et al., 2020; Magnis-Suseno, 1984). The study's findings indicate that theoretical models of well-being should encompass not only universal psycho-logical processes but also be sensitive to the cultural significances that influence emotion regulation strategies among Javanese students.

Moreover, culturally grounded reflective practices can promote emotional release and facilitate forgiveness. Such practices are consistent with emotion-focused coping, which helps individuals reinterpret distressing experiences within a broader meaning framework (Abdel-Khalek et al., 2019; Pargament, 2013). Recent cross-sectional studies involving Muslim student populations have shown that *dhikr* practices strengthen mindfulness and emotion regulation, which may indirectly support life satisfaction by fostering adaptive emotional responses (Sholihah et al., 2024). In this cultural context, forgiveness emerges as a key psychological outcome of effective emotion regulation, helping to mitigate resentment and enhance emotional stability (Newman et al., 2023). These findings suggest that forgiveness may extend beyond purely psychological processes, particularly within religious communities, while still functioning as a central mechanism linking emotion regulation to well-being.

The practical implications of this research include the development of psychological services in higher education that emphasize forgiveness-based interventions as a means of strengthening emotion regulation and improving students' subjective well-being. The findings suggest that universities should implement counseling

programs, reflective training, and personal development activities that help students process emotions in adaptive ways. This research may also serve as a reference for counselors, campus psychologists, and educators in designing intervention modules that foster forgiveness and constructive emotion regulation, thereby enhancing students' psychological resilience in the face of stress and adversity.

In practical terms, university counseling programs should teach students how to control their emotions, as well as how to reflect on their learn how to forgive. For instance, structured interventions such as the REACH Forgiveness model of Worthington (2024) could be modified to include cultural components, allowing students to reframe adverse experience contemplation, and acceptance. Recent intervention research conducted by D. E. Davis et al. (2013) showed that combining forgiveness exercises greatly improved students' emotional balance and sense of well-being. Likewise, the integration of mindfulness and compassion practices derived from traditions has proven effective in bolstering resilience and alleviating stress among Southeast Asian students (Omachi et al., 2025; Solichah et al., 2025). The findings of this research collectively endorse the formulation of culturally attuned counseling that integrates contemporary psychology with indigenous insights.

The study offers insight into how students' personal coping tendencies interact with their cultural orientations to shape their overall well-being. By treating forgiveness as interconnected processes, the analysis highlights that emotional health in higher education cannot be explained solely through cognitive emotion regulation techniques. A more comprehensive perspective is required, one that acknowledges the importance of meaning-making, relational harmony, and transcendental beliefs that are often influential in collectivist contexts. These findings also provide a practical foundation for universities to strengthen

their psychological support systems by developing counseling services, reflective activities, informed programs that help students manage their emotions more adaptively. This integrated framework can guide counselors, psychologists, and educators in designing interventions that cultivate forgiveness, deepen students' sense of meaning, and reinforce their emotional resilience when dealing with academic pressure, stress, or personal adversity.

This study has several limitations, despite the contributions made. First, its cross-sectional design limits the ability to establish causal inferences, as the interrelations among emotion regulation, forgiveness, and subjective well-being may change over time. Second, using self-report measures could lead to response bias, especially social desirability, as Javanese students' culture places great value on harmony. Third, the sample was restricted to university students, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings to wider populations, including non-student or older adult cohorts. Subsequent research should employ longitudinal or experimental designs; integrate diverse data collection methodologies; and examine a broader range of populations to enhance the validity and applicability of the findings.

Future research should also investigate gender disparities and the influence of digital religiosity among younger cohorts. Recent research indicates that online engagement correlates positively with emotion regulation and perceived connectedness. Additionally, experimental models could test whether forgiveness-based interventions grounded local wisdom frameworks could sustainably improve SWB over time.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that emotion regulation significantly predicts forgiveness, with forgiveness emerging as a full mediator in the relationship between emotion regulation and

subjective well-being. Forgiveness is revealed as a key psychological process that bridges emotion regulation and subjective well-being, translating individuals' capacity to manage emotions into enhanced well-being outcomes. The non-

significant direct path from emotion regulation to subjective well-being indicates that emotion regulation does not independently contribute to well-being unless it operates through adaptive mechanisms such as forgiveness.[]

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