

# THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FORGIVENESS MEDITATION INTERVENTION IN THE GROUP OF EMERGING ADULT STUDENTS

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## Abstract

Evidence of the effectiveness of forgiveness meditation intervention among college students in 'emerging adulthood' is still limited. This study aims to examine the effect of forgiveness meditation intervention toward forgiveness, self-forgiveness, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations among college students. This study used a quasi-experimental one-group pretest-posttest design with measurements follow-up two weeks after treatment ended. The subjects were "emerging adulthood", as many as 9 college students from Diponegoro University, Indonesia ( $M_{Age} = 20.67$ ;  $SD_{Age} = 0.5$ ; Female = 77.8%). The results of quantitative analysis using statistical test of Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test between pretest and posttest showed a significant increase in forgiveness ( $z = -2.668$ ,  $p < .01$ ), self-forgiveness ( $z = -2.670$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and forgiveness of situations ( $z = -2.384$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Testing between posttest and follow-up were not significant ( $p > .05$ ). However, the test results between pretest and follow-up on these three variables were still significant,  $z = -2.668$ ,  $p < .01$ ;  $z = -2.673$ ,  $p < .01$ ; and  $z = -2.388$ ,  $p < .05$ , respectively. In contrast, no significant increase in the variable of forgiveness of others ( $p > .05$ ). The qualitative analysis and further discussions are also presented.

**Keywords:** college student; emerging adulthood; forgiveness; meditation

## INTRODUCTION

Becoming an adult and taking a bigger responsibility are expectations that are placed on those in "emerging adulthood", a period approximately between the ages of 18 and 25. Students as emerging adults are characterized by identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feelings of being in a transition, and thoughts of opportunities or possibilities to change their lives (Arnet in Santrock, 2014). Various life events contribute to the achievement of their actual life in the present and in the future. Furthermore, achievement as a result of social and academic pressure is an important phenomenon in this period due to new roles with greater responsibilities that they will carry out (Santrock, 2014).

In relation to that, problems related to psychopathology among emerging adults may be experienced in two forms, namely problems related to individual internal experiences (such as anxiety and depression) and those related to social external experiences, such as juvenile delinquency

(Santrock, 2014). This has an impact on other areas of life, such as academic achievement and career in which adolescents are exposed to academic procrastination, perfectionism, anxiety, study failure; or social situations in which they are exposed to delinquent behavior, substance abuse, withdrawal behavior, depression, or even misperception of body image which can lead to a life-threatening eating disorder. A study on the mental health of 495 students at Diponegoro University showed that 45.7% of them were at risk of having general mental health problems, so that attention and mental health services were needed (Salma et al., 2017).

Efforts to further explore the emergence of this problem cannot be separated from various factors which include demographic factors such as gender, psychological factors such as emotion regulation strategies, tolerance for distress, and optimism, or environmental factors and stressors from various life experiences such as over-parenting, ethnic discrimination, or interpersonal and non-interpersonal problems (Jiang et al., 2022;

Love et al., 2022; Rahman et al., 2022; Sheets & Craighead, 2014). When faced with such problems, people may choose to persist in difficult situations which do not solve their problems. Instead, they act to accept the situation, improve themselves, and value painful experiences as helpful for self-development. Forgiveness is one of the solutions that can be offered to overcome those problems. Forgiveness involves dismantling negative emotions that are manifested in the form of self-defense mechanisms (Enright, 2003). When the self-defense mechanisms are continuously used, physical and psychological functions are weakened (Cramer, 2015).

Forgiveness cannot be forced, and some people sometimes find it difficult to put it into practice. This is very likely due to the influence of some factors that are more permanent, such as personality. Neuroticism personality, for example, is associated with protracted hatred and difficulties in forgiving whereas conscientiousness personality is associated with individuals who tend to be easy to forgive (Kaleta & Mróz, 2018). However, the process of forgiveness has also been shown to be able to be cultivated and has a positive impact on a person's life psychologically, biologically, and socially.

Psychologically and socially speaking, higher levels of forgiveness are associated with better psychological health, such as lower rumination, subjective well-being, better life satisfaction, and more positive emotions (Allemand et al., 2012; Eldeleklioglu, 2015; Gao et al., 2022). Observations on physical conditions and healthy lifestyle behaviors show that forgiveness has an impact on various indicators of physical health, such as better heart rate, blood pressure, or cortisol level and lower general physical symptoms, somatization, or doctor visits (Rasmussen et al. al., 2019). Furthermore, forgiveness contributes to physical health through improving psychological health, namely by alleviating or improving negative psychological conditions, such as anxiety and depression (Rasmussen et al., 2019).

The screening for forgiveness in this study used the same research scale as used in the previous research intervention in 2016 conducted to students from the Faculty of Public Health, Universitas Diponegoro, Indonesia which showed that, of the 209 students from the 2013 batch who became the population in this study, there were only 16.75% students who had a high category of forgiveness, while the rest were in the medium category (80.38%) and low category (2.87%). If presented in more detail and sequentially, there were only 18.18%, 31.1%, and 25.36% of students who had a high category of forgiving themselves, others, and situations; while the remaining 79.43%, 66.5%, and 72.73% were in the medium category, and 2.39%, 2.39%, and 1.91% were in the low category. This percentage shows that the majority of the student population is in the moderate category and a small portion is more prone to experiencing psychological problems because of the low level of forgiveness. The number of students who showed a protective factor for mental health, namely those with a high level of forgiveness, was still relatively small.

Several forgiveness intervention approaches have been carried out to test their effectiveness in increasing forgiveness. Interpersonal contact with the offender may still happen in the process of forgiving, especially if the participants are still continuing their relationship with the offender. However, psychologists and researchers generally agree that forgiveness is an intrapersonal process (Hook et al., 2012). In relation to that, forgiveness meditation in this study can be viewed as an approach to forgiveness intervention through meditation that emphasizes intrapersonal processes.

Interventions with meditation have been extensively researched, with results showing many physical and psychological improvements. A single meditation session can reduce the physiological symptoms of anger in experienced meditators, even in novice meditators (Fennell et al., 2016). Short-term meditation can increase the

capacity of local specialization and integration of global information in the brain (Xue et al., 2014). Long-term meditation has an impact on increasing emotion regulation and decreasing the level of cardiac reactivity when perceiving and reassessing an affective picture (Pavlov et al., 2015). Intensive meditation results in positive psychological changes, which increase the activity of telomerase, an enzyme that protects DNA from damage and maintains chromosome stability (Jacobs et al., 2010). In addition, mind-body relaxation meditation can regulate prefrontal cortex activity and help participants develop reassessment strategies which can modulate brain activity in several emotion-processing systems leading to lower levels of depression (Chen et al., 2015).

There have been many definitions of meditation put forward. In general, meditation can be viewed as an effort that involves cognitive, affective, or behavioral changes by relinquishing the right as a victim of a violation that is shown either by reduced feelings of anger/hate/resentment, negative judgment, desire to be indifferent, avoidance of the person who has committed the offence, and the desire to harm or seek revenge as well as increased feelings of compassion, generosity, and even love, positive judgment, and the desire to act positively toward the person who has committed the offence (Rahmandani, 2015). The person who becomes the source of the transgression that ultimately becomes the target of forgiveness can come from oneself, another person or a number of people, or situations which are beyond one's control, such as illness, "fate", or natural disaster (Hodge et al., 2019).

Meditation belongs to one of the professional deep relaxation families that involves efforts to maintain focus or concentration on very simple stimuli (Smith, 2005). Health professionals who use meditation generally teach concentrative and mindfulness meditation. There are seven types of concentrative meditation (Smith, 2005). Three involve relaxation for bodily sensations

(or body meditation, i.e., body sensation meditation, shaking meditation, breathing meditation), two involve mental activity (or mental meditation, i.e., mantra meditation, visual image meditation), and two involve external sensations (or sensation/sensation meditation, i.e., sound meditation and external image meditation). Mindfulness meditation/Zen meditation involves trying to focus calmly on the flow of all stimuli continuously without judgment or analysis (Smith, 2005).

Forgiveness meditation means using meditation as a means to forgive. The practice of formal forgiveness meditation according to Kornfield (in Kolvig, n.d.) is done by asking participants to allow themselves to sit comfortably, allowing the eyes to close, allowing the body and breath to be natural and light. The participants are instructed to let the body and mind relax, breathe gently in the area around the heart, and allow themselves to feel all the obstacles that have been brought up because they have not been forgiven, have not forgiven themselves, and have not forgiven others. Participants were also asked to recall the experience of pain in the form of mental images and allow themselves to feel the pain that had covered their hearts. After breathing gently and slowly to the heart for some time, participants began to apologize and extend forgiveness, utter words containing apologies/forgiveness, and allow the person who has been hurt to open their heart and forgive the participant; allow participants to forgive themselves; and to forgive others. Participants are expected to repeat the meditation practice and at the same time allow words, visualizations, and feelings to grow deeper.

Based on the description above, the practice of meditation begins with apologizing others who have suffered as a result of the participant's actions, forgiving oneself, then forgiving others (Kornfield, in Kolvig, n.d.). Slightly different from the scenario proposed by Regents of the University of Minnesota (2013), the three-step practice of forgiveness meditation begins by focusing on people who

have felt the harm caused by the participant’s actions, whether intentionally or unintentionally. Furthermore, attention is directed to people who have caused harm to participants, either intentionally or unintentionally. Finally, participants turned their attention to forgiving themselves for things that had harmed themselves, intentionally or unintentionally. Added by Regents of the University of Minnesota (2013), the best forgiveness meditation can start with someone who may be the easiest to forgive or be forgiven and slowly move to people who are more difficult to forgive or be forgiven.

The stages above show how forgiveness and meditation can be used as an alternative intervention to improve physical and psychological health. Physical and psychological health is expected to help students to achieve improvement in social relationships, academic achievement, and careers. Some studies on forgiveness interventions generally use group settings in their interventions. A study on women who experienced intimate partner violence showed that group intervention proved to be as effective as individual intervention and was considered more efficient and able to overcome waiting time limitations for individuals who have not been able to access individual psychological interventions (Crespo et al., 2021). A systematic review of 19 studies on the effectiveness of group interventions or those involving social

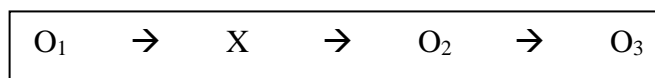
participation resulted in an increase in social networks, individual resources, and reduced isolation, thereby supporting recovery from mental health problems (Webber & Fendt-Newlin, 2017).

Based on the authors’ search, there seem to be a lot of forgiveness meditation guides which can be found in the literature (Vimalaramsi, 2015). However, there are still few guidelines that have been adapted and tested empirically on students in emerging adulthood, especially in Indonesia. For this reason, this study aims to examine the effectiveness of the forgiveness meditation intervention in increasing forgiveness in general, forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations in emerging adult students in Indonesia. The hypothesis in this study is that forgiveness meditation intervention in a group is effective in increasing forgiveness of self, others, and situations in emerging adult students in Indonesia.

**METHOD**

**Study design**

This study used an experimental method. The independent variable is meditation forgiveness intervention, and the dependent variable is forgiveness in general, forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations. The experimental design used was a one-group pretest-posttest design and a follow-up measurement two weeks after the treatment ended.



O<sub>1</sub> : Pretest data collection  
 O<sub>2</sub> : Posttest data collection

X : Forgiveness meditation intervention  
 O<sub>3</sub> : Follow-up data collection

**Figure 1.** Study design

**Participant**

The number of participants in this study were nine students of the Faculty of Public Health, University of Diponegoro Indonesia, who were studying for a regular undergraduate program and met the inclusion and exclusion

criteria for this study. Inclusion criteria for participants were: (1) emerging adults in the age range between 18-25 years and (2) having moderate or low levels of forgiveness based on the results of screening measurements. The exclusion criteria in this study were participants who had never undergone

psychological and drug therapy for the treatment of psychological problems.

The recruitment of participants was carried out by purposive sampling technique through screening based on predetermined criteria. The Researchers screened undergraduate students of the Faculty of Public Health to obtain participants who met the criteria based on the access owned by the researcher. An explanation about this research was given to participants who had met the criteria before asking about their willingness to participate voluntarily. All participants signed consent forms before the experimental study started. At the beginning of the experiment, there were 13 people involved. Four of them were then aborted because of not being fully involved in the experiment. Thus, there were only nine participants whose data were analyzed.

### Measurement

Data were collected using the Forgiveness Scale (40 items;  $\alpha = .903$ ) with the reliability of each subscale as follows: (1) self-forgiveness (14 items;  $\alpha = .783$ ), (2) forgiveness of others (19 items;  $\alpha = .874$ ), (3) forgiveness of situations (13  $\alpha$  items; = .815). The Forgiveness Scale used in this study was modified and retested from the scale compiled by Rahmandani (2015) after considering the aspects proposed by Thompson et al. (in

Hodge et al., 2019) as well as a reduction of negative things and an increase of positive things in cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects.

The Forgiveness Scale was in the form of a Likert scale consisting of four response categories, namely Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA). Scores on the favorable items were 0, 1, 2, and 3 for SD, D, A, and SA. In contrast, the scores on the unfavorable items according to the order of the responses above are 3, 2, 1, and 0. Examples of items on this scale are “I can immediately respect myself even though I have done something bad” and “The heartache I experience is due to the actions of others will last a long time in me.”

### Procedure

The forgiveness meditation treatment based on Vimalaramsi (2015) was carried out on the 22nd, 24th, 27th, and 31st of May 2016. The forgiveness meditation intervention in groups was carried out in four sessions in two weeks with a duration of 90–150 minutes for each. Forgiveness meditation was guided by a qualified therapist and had more than five years of experience in clinical practice. An overview of the forgiveness meditation intervention procedure is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.**

The Forgiveness Meditation Group Intervention Procedure

Session	Duration	Activity
I	150'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participant attendance and distribution of training kits.</li> <li>• Opening and self-introduction of the research team.</li> <li>• Self-introduction of participants.</li> <li>• Explanation of research, contract, and informed consent.</li> <li>• Explanation of the background of forgiveness meditation (negative emotions and their impact on life) followed by questions and answers.</li> <li>• Relaxation and facilitation of negative emotions.</li> <li>• Recording negative emotions and ranking negative emotions (from notes that had been made).</li> <li>• Forgiveness meditation practice.</li> <li>• Practice evaluation.</li> <li>• Determination of the next schedule and closing.</li> </ul>

**Table 1.**  
(continued)

II	90'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening.</li> <li>• Forgiveness meditation practice.</li> <li>• Practice evaluation.</li> <li>• Determination of the next schedule and closing.</li> </ul>
III	90'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening.</li> <li>• Forgiveness meditation practice.</li> <li>• Practice evaluation.</li> <li>• Determination of the next schedule and closing.</li> </ul>
IV	90'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opening.</li> <li>• Forgiveness meditation practice.</li> <li>• Practice evaluation.</li> <li>• Termination and closing.</li> </ul>

In addition to practice in group meetings, participants were also given an audio CD containing instructions for self-practice of forgiveness meditation at home and a diary for self-monitoring and evaluation. The series of interventions ended at the fourth meeting. After the intervention was terminated, self-practice at home was no longer instructed as a task.

**Analysis**

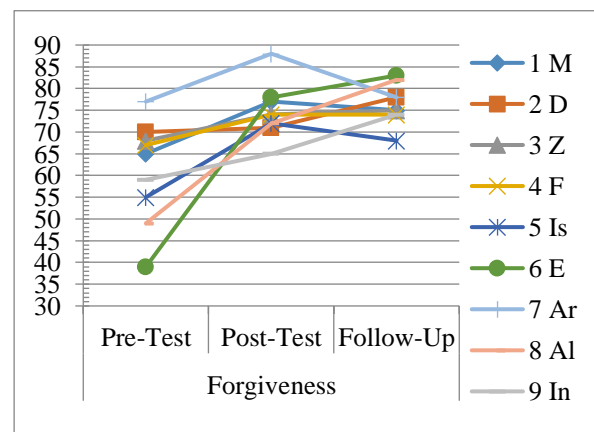
The data in this study were analyzed using a nonparametric difference test in groups, namely the Wilcoxon test for the variables of forgiveness in general, forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations. The test was carried out between pretest and posttest, posttest and follow-up, and pretest and follow-up. Descriptive analysis was also applied to understand the description of the data obtained. In addition, qualitative analyzes were also carried out based on diaries or self-monitoring reports conducted by participants during the intervention. Participants' self-monitoring report data were analyzed by clustering themes abstracted from the report.

**RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

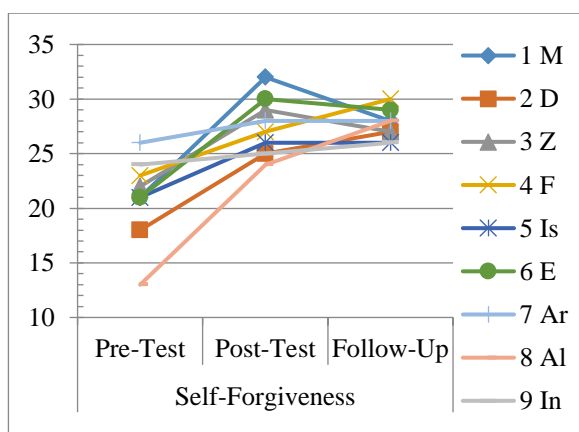
This study aimed to examine the effectiveness of group-based forgiveness meditation interventions on emerging adult students. The

statistical description of the research measurement data is shown in the appendix (attached). It can be seen from the appendix that there was an increase in the mean between the measurements in the pretest and posttest of all variables. The follow-up measurement showed a non-significant increase and a decrease in the forgiveness variable for others.

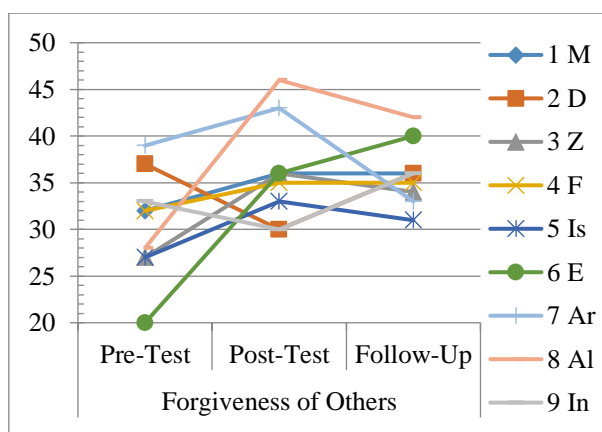
Figure 2-5 shows graphs that facilitate the observation of differences in scores between measurements and between participants on the variables for forgiveness in general, forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations. Differences in score fluctuations can also be seen by comparing the trend patterns between graphs.



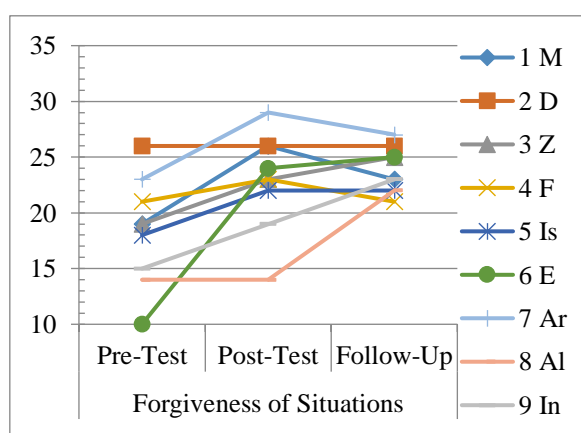
**Figure 2.** Score Comparison of Forgiveness Measurement



**Figure 3.** Score Comparison of Self-Forgiveness Dimension



**Figure 4.** Score Comparison of Forgiveness to Others Dimension



**Figure 5.** Score Comparison of Forgiveness to Situation Dimension

**Table 2.**

Inter-measurement Difference Test Results on the Level of Forgiveness, Forgiveness of Self, Others, and Situations

		Pretest – Posttest	Pretest – Follow-Up	Posttest – Follow-Up
Forgiveness	<i>z</i>	-2.668**	-2.668**	-0.771
	<i>p</i>	.008	.008	.441
Forgiveness of Self	<i>z</i>	-2.670**	-2.673**	-0.425
	<i>p</i>	.008	.008	.671
Forgiveness of Others	<i>z</i>	-1.780	-1.840	-0.085
	<i>p</i>	.075	.066	.932
Forgiveness of Situations	<i>z</i>	-2.384*	-2.388*	-0.511
	<i>p</i>	.017	.017	.610

Note. Analysis using Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test.

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

The results of statistical tests of quantitative data using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank test program SPSS 17.0 as listed in Table 2 shows an increase in scores between the pretest and

posttest measurements on the forgiveness variable ( $Mdn_{Pre-} = 65$ ,  $Mdn_{Post-} = 74$ ;  $z = -2.668$ ,  $p = .008$ ), on the forgiveness-of-self variable ( $Mdn_{Pre-} = 21$ ,  $Mdn_{Post-} = 27$ ;  $z = -$

2.670,  $p = .008$ ), and on the forgiveness-of-situations variable ( $Mdn_{Pre-} = 19$ ,  $Mdn_{Post-} = 23$ ;  $z = -2.384$ ,  $p = .017$ ). Although there was an increase between the posttest and follow-up measurements on the three variables, there was no statistically significant difference (forgiveness with  $z = -0.771$ ,  $p = .441$ ; forgiveness of self with  $z = -0.425$ ,  $p = .671$ ; forgiveness of situations with  $z = -0.511$ ,  $p = .610$ ). The statistical test results between the pretest and follow-up measurements on the three variables still showed statistically significant differences, forgiveness ( $Mdn_{Pre-} = 65$ ,  $Mdn_{FU} = 75$ ) with  $z = -2.668$ ,  $p = .008$ ; forgiveness of self ( $Mdn_{Pre-} = 21$ ,  $Mdn_{FU} = 28$ ) with  $z = -2.673$ ,  $p = .008$ ; forgiveness of situations ( $Mdn_{Pre-} = 19$ ,  $Mdn_{FU} = 23$ ) with  $z = -2.388$ ,  $p = .017$ . The data above shows that the scores between the posttest and follow-up measurements tend to be stable and the increase in scores from the pretest on these three variables is still significant until the follow-up measurement.

In contrast to the three variables mentioned above, the increase in the mean score on forgiveness of others did not show a significant difference (posttest – pretest with  $z = -1.780$ ,  $p = .075$ ; follow-up – pretest with  $z = -1.840$ ,  $p = .066$ ; follow-up – posttest with  $z = -0.085$ ,  $p = .932$ ).

The qualitative analysis conducted in this study was based on self-reports in four collective sessions. The reports were clustered into themes which characterized each session. Each session was run with an intervention procedure consisting of relaxation and forgiveness meditation. Relaxation and meditation are practiced as a series because relaxation of body and mind is a prerequisite for practicing meditation. After undergoing the session, the participants were provided with a written self-report in which the names of the participants were anonymized.

Session 1: Flow of negative emotions.

In the first session, participants expressed their negative emotions. This expression gave

them the opportunity to note negative emotions that arose when they were in a relaxed state. Participants were encouraged to let the suppressed or repressed negative emotions flow out. This result is in line with the study conducted by Pagnini et al. (2013), who proposed that relaxation provides an opportunity to release pressure, anxiety, and tension which contain negative emotions or physiological arousal. The following statement from IS describes the emotional flow that participants commonly experienced:

“I have mixed emotions, all the memories I don’t like pop up and make me sad.”

However, one participant reported resistance when receiving instructions to let negative emotions flow. There was an attempt to resist at the outset and then followed by a desire to try to accept instructions for relaxation and forgiveness as shown in the following statement:

“I couldn’t follow instructions. There was a feeling of not following. There were times when I really didn’t hear the orders, then suddenly I came back to my senses and heard the instructions again.”

When undergoing relaxation, the participants felt a flow of emotions that caused discomfort. However, meditation on forgiveness following the flow of emotions was considered an incentive for participants to learn to accept suppressed or repressed negative emotions. The following are the extracts of participants’ experiences in the first session.

IS : “There’s nothing to be sorry for... It was just a person’s mistake that should be forgiven.”

E : “I have to let go of the disappointment... that I’ve been holding back all this time, that I feel I can get through this, and can be like this.”

In : “I have kept too many repressed emotions because I feel that I am inferior compared to other people



- because of what other people do and say to me.”
- Ar : “I have to let go of my painful past, and I have to move on to live my life with a better future.”
- M : “Hating others only hurts ourselves.”
- D : “Problems can be solved... don’t make it stay longer.”
- Z : “...(I am) forgiving myself who still doesn’t understand the problem...”
- F : “They [the people who make me feel hurt] just don’t understand...”

One of the subjects who had been resistant since the beginning of the session kept trying to be resistant while practicing forgiveness meditation. Al, who had previously tried to refuse to follow instructions during relaxation, reported on his post-meditation experience by writing, “My mind is against orders”.

#### Session 2: Acceptance of negative emotions.

In the second session, the participants underwent relaxation and forgiveness meditation. In this second session, most of the participants felt an awareness of the benefits of relaxation when they felt the tension caused by negative emotions, as illustrated in the following statements:

- Is : “I feel very relaxed compared to yesterday.... Can I forgive? It has had a huge impact on me now. Indeed, time cannot be repeated.”
- E : “I feel very sad. There are sensations that I feel tight and my tears come out... Life is beautiful and fair.”
- In : “I can forgive and remove the burden of my thoughts that I always repressed before.”
- Ar : “Don’t dwell on the past.”
- M : “If I hate someone, it will only harm me.”
- D : “The body was so relaxed; the mind was calm and drifting.”
- Z : “It is important to forgive and understand.”
- F : “I should be more self-accepting.”

- Al : “I can forgive people who have hurt me.”

Participants showed that most of them can enjoyed the process of relaxation and began to accept negative emotions within themselves. Some of them even began to feel the urge to forgive. Al who was resistant in Session 1 showed openness to receive instructions in this second session and felt the urge to forgive others who caused negative emotions.

#### Session 3: A more intense sense of calmness.

In the third session, the participants showed involvement in the relaxation process. The flow of negative emotions was still felt, but the mind was felt calmer when related to the flow of negative emotions. Some participants felt even stronger urges to forgive those who had caused negative emotions in them.

- Is : “It seems my problem is not that big; I think I can forgive.”
- E : “I am feeling tight in my chest, I think it’s because of the air conditioning... but my mind is bright and fresh.”
- Ar : “I have to move on and can’t be unstable anymore.”
- M : “Forgiveness makes my heart calm.”
- D : “Resting the mind and body is important.”
- Z : “I came to understand more deeply the mistakes that were not understood.”
- F : “Forgiving is beautiful.”
- Al : “I want to be able to forgive myself and others.”

#### Session 4: Feeling of being released from the burden.

In the fourth session, all participants reported a feeling of being freed from burdens. They still felt the flow of negative emotions but could calmly respond to them. All participants showed a calmer feeling and could accept negative emotions that had been disturbing.

- Is : “I am feeling fresher like I’ve been asleep for a long time... it seems

- I've become a forgiving person, for not thinking about this and that.”
- E : “... feels very painful, heavy... what I felt earlier I can handle in a relaxed way, and I cannot think.”
- In : “I can do forgiveness meditation anytime to relax my mind... this therapy really helps to calm and clear my negative thoughts.”
- Ar : “I just let it go and keep thinking positively. All people must have tests in every phase of their life...”
- M : “Making peace with the past makes the heart calm.”
- D : “There is a calmer feeling when facing a problem.”
- Z : “I gained the skill to relax mind and body.”
- F : “At the end of the session, it's pretty easy to relax... more relieved.”
- Al : “My emotions are beginning to be stable, my anger at people who have made me suffer is reduced.”

In general, the external obstacles during practice that were considered affecting concentration (especially in the third session) were feeling cold due to air conditioning, noises, snoring sounds, headaches, and body tingling. In meditation practice, any distractions that arouse out of control could become part of the practice so that they were able to stay focused and maintained relaxed state. Despite all the obstacles, participants were able to redirect attention to the meditation practice without being distracted.

The results of this study indicated that the forgiveness meditation intervention in the group could increase the average of the variables for forgiveness in general, forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations. Statistical testing using the Wilcoxon t-test showed a statistically significant increase in scores between the pretest and posttest measurements and between the pretest and follow-up measurements on the variables of forgiveness, forgiveness of self, and forgiveness of situations. The increase

between the posttest and follow-up measurements on the three variables showed no significant difference. In contrast to the three variables mentioned above, the increase in the average score on forgiveness of others showed no significant difference.

The results of this study supported previous studies by Menahem and Love (2013), who reported that forgiveness can be facilitated by techniques such as concentrative meditation and empathy cultivation to transgressor. The forgiveness meditation instruction in this study allowed the participants to accept disturbing negative emotions, forgive themselves for not understanding the actions of others, increase their understanding of the actions of others, and then forgive them. In addition, the success of the forgiveness meditation intervention in this study seemed to be strongly supported by the improvement in participants' emotional management abilities. Emotional management plays an important role in increasing cognitive control, such as controlling attention and changing the meaning of emotional stimuli (Pruessner et al., 2020). Participants in this study generally showed a variety of emotions and thoughts about unpleasant experiences (even wanting to be rejected) before finally feeling body-and-mind relaxation and then gaining self-control and making furthermore productive plans. The results of a meta-analysis of 163 studies on the psychological impact of meditation showed that meditation, whether intended as psychotherapy and/or personal enhancement (and spirituality) efforts, varies widely in terms of psychological impact classified into changes in emotionality, problems in relationships, attention, and cognitive (Sedlmeier et al., 2012). Some of the participants were explicitly aware of the detrimental impact of unforgiveness on themselves at the same time and felt the positive impact of their practice. Supporting the results of the study, forgiveness appears to be driven by fatigue due to negative emotions from not forgiving although this does not apply to severe cases (Stanton & Finkel, 2012).

Self-forgiveness was significantly increased in this study. There was an increase in participants' understanding which further improved cognitive control of painful experience memories. Vago and Silbersweig (2012) explained that the practice of meditation facilitates self-processing, which then has an impact on the development of self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-transcendence, as well as helps to increase awareness about the causes and inhibitors of distortion or bias. Realizing one's limitations, cultivating an ability for acceptance, and fostering better self-achievement motivation were also shown by the participants. The increased awareness, self-regulation, and self-transcendence helped participants achieve a genuine state of self-forgiveness, which was characterized by a high sense of responsibility for the mistakes made in the past, high self-forgiveness, and low self-condemnation (Cornish et al., 2018). Thus, self-forgiveness can change feelings, actions, and beliefs about oneself to be more positive as indicated by constructive thoughts and actions towards oneself and create a belief in oneself as a worthy individual. Cultural reasons may contribute to a significant increase in this self-forgiveness. This will be discussed further as a comparison in relation to the results of forgiveness of others.

The forgiveness of situations in this study increased significantly, although the increase was lower compared to forgiveness in general and self-forgiveness. This may be due to the focus of forgiveness instruction narrowly referred to interpersonal relationships and consequently did not lead to events beyond human control (Kornfield, in Kolvig, n.d.). This becomes inconsistent with the definition of forgiveness of situations. However, the results of the posttest to follow-up measurements tend to be stable, as indicated by the absence of significant differences between the two. The absence of this difference indicates that emotional fluctuations due to the meaning of non-interpersonal events in life are considered minimal or have no significant impact.

Different results were shown in the forgiveness-of-others variable. The occurrence of an increase in the mean of the forgiveness-of-others variable from pretest to posttest was not supported by the results of statistical tests, which were not significant. There was even a decrease in the mean score from posttest to follow-up. This may be due to several reasons. The first reason is closely related to culture. In a collectivistic culture, the culture in which this research is conducted, there is a tendency for interpersonal relationships to be seen as communal relationships that promote harmony, not contractual ones that prioritize individual interests (Sandage & Williamson in Sandage et al., 2019). Furthermore, forgiveness of others is always associated with reconciliation with those who have offended. Maintaining harmonization in collectivistic cultures is so important that forgiveness of others seems to be of great concern. This cultural phenomenon affects the forgiveness response of others which tended to be high.

This cultural context also explains the significant increase in self-forgiveness after the practice of forgiveness meditation. This happened because the experience of reflection gets less concern in collectivistic cultures. On the contrary, it becomes a major concern in individualistic cultures (Sandage & Williamson in Sandage et al., 2019). The facilitation of this need for reflection in this research contributed to a more significant increase in forgiveness of self when compared to forgiveness of others.

Forgiving others will become problematic if it is only used as a medium to maintain harmony without a deeper understanding of mental events occurring in them. Some people will use self-defense mechanisms to deal with unpleasant experiences when they are not truly forgiving, such as denial, suppression, repression, diversion, regression, or even identification with the abuser (Enright, 2003). This shows that forgiveness requires a long process for most people, as indicated by a

fluctuation in the score on the variable for forgiveness of others compared to scores on forgiveness of self and situations. The decrease in score occurred in two participants on the posttest and four on the follow-up measurement.

In addition to the decrease in forgiveness of others as evidence, the common phenomenon experienced by the participants since the first meeting was complaints of the emergence of various painful memories which brought forward various negative emotions, such as anger, sadness, and disappointment when listening to instructions. In addition, participants' attitude of refusing to accept the instructions for the first meeting can also be used as evidence. This resistance is in line with the vigilance-avoidance theory, which explains that defensive avoidance begins with vigilance against threats and then is followed by disengagement efforts and avoidance of attention to these threats (Derakshan et al., 2007). Furthermore, in his study, Booth (2014) concluded that avoidance predicted by state anxiety present when exposed to threats is greater than trait anxiety. Avoidance efforts are also represented by a failure in shifting performance as a form of controlled response.

There are two facets of unforgiveness which are positively associated with competition, namely retaliation and avoidance, through greater anger and rumination and a lack of empathy (Fatfouta et al., 2015). One form of revenge efforts through rebellion which is regarded acceptable is sublimation (Oliver, 2005). This was shown by participant Ar who explicitly stated that people who underestimated him were not a barrier for him to be able to achieve his goals. This is different from participant In, who realized and acknowledged his limitations. Problems in interpersonal relationships that cannot be ignored made In easily irritated, offended, and even envious. After practicing forgiveness meditation, he realized his feelings of inferiority because he felt he had no talent. This explanation emphasizes how problems with other people have a major impact on

performance when no intervention is given (e.g., Rahmandani, 2017).

Although the results of statistical tests between pretest and follow-up showed a significant increase, statistical tests between posttest and follow-up measurements on all variables showed different results. Some showed insignificant, stable, or even decreased scores. This may be due to the participants' limitations in performing independent and routine practice when related to participants' main priority in academic obligations as university students. Such obstacles may be experienced by participants even though this study was facilitated with audio instructions. Another reason that also supports is apparent emotional fluctuations in some participants when having stimulation at the end of the session. These limitations are supported by the research conducted by Lane et al. (2007), who confirmed that the frequency of meditation practice was associated with better results which means that the more frequency of practice, the better the results. In contrast, the results of Lane et al. (2007) also explained that the practice of brief meditation could increase perceived stress and negative mood. Long-term meditation then has an impact on increasing emotion regulation and decreasing the level of cardiac reactivity when perceiving and reassessing an affective picture (Pavlov et al., 2015).

As shown in other intervention studies, not all participants recruited at the start of the study persisted and followed the entire intervention or experiment series to completion. A number of issues affecting the full participation of the participants in the research were schedule or time constraints of the participants so that they could not follow the intervention schedule and more personal reasons that could not be controlled, such as illness and forgetfulness. Researchers had tried to send reminder messages and provided a team that accompanied participants in carrying out the research. However, not all communication processes ran smoothly and were responded

by participants. Other researchers who will continue with similar research topics may consider recruiting a larger number of participants at the beginning so that more participants can follow the intervention until the end. In addition, future research could consider increasing the frequency of sessions to ensure that the participants' emotions and commitments are stable enough to increase the chances of self-practice sustainability and the long-term effectiveness of the intervention.

Another limitation of this research is the implementation and collection of data that has taken a long time in 2016. Thus, this study's results need to be understood in the context of the situation that occurred in that year in which the COVID-19 pandemic had not yet occurred, and research on forgiveness meditation interventions had not been widely carried out. Researchers and practitioners who will use or utilize the results of this study need to consider other more recent studies on related topics.

## CONCLUSION

The forgiveness meditation intervention in the group had an effect on increasing the average variable for forgiveness, forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations. A statistically significant increase in score was seen between the pretest and posttest measurements and between the pretest and follow-up measurements on the variables of forgiveness, forgiveness of self, and forgiveness of others. The increase between the posttest and follow-up measurements on the three variables did not show a significant difference. The increase in mean score on forgiveness of others did not show a significant difference in any of the measurements. Future research needs to consider allocating specific time in groups to monitor and evaluate for practice at the end of each meeting and routine individual practice each time the next meeting begins. This allows the therapist or facilitator of the practice to provide feedback on the problems faced by the participants. In addition, further

research can consider more frequent sessions to ensure that the participants' emotions and commitment are stable enough before performing independent practice.

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**Appendix**  
Statistical Description of the Results of Measurement

Participant	Sex (Age)	Forgiveness			Forgiveness of self			Forgiveness of others			Forgiveness of situations		
		Pre-	Post-	FU	Pre-	Post-	FU	Pre-	Post-	FU	Pre-	Post-	FU
M	F (21)	65 (M)	77 (M)	75 (M)	21 (M)	32 (H)	28 (H)	32 (M)	36 (M)	36 (M)	19 (M)	26 (H)	23 (M)
D	M (20)	70 (M)	71 (M)	78 (M)	18 (M)	25 (M)	27 (M)	37 (M)	30 (M)	36 (M)	26 (H)	26 (H)	26 (H)
Z	M (20)	68 (M)	74 (M)	75 (M)	22 (M)	29 (H)	27 (M)	27 (M)	36 (M)	34 (M)	19 (M)	23 (M)	25 (M)
F	F (21)	67 (M)	74 (M)	74 (M)	23 (M)	27 (M)	30 (H)	32 (M)	35 (M)	35 (M)	21 (M)	23 (M)	21 (M)
Is	F (21)	55 (M)	72 (M)	68 (M)	21 (M)	26 (M)	26 (M)	27 (M)	33 (M)	31 (M)	18 (M)	22 (M)	22 (M)
E	F (20)	39 (L)	78 (M)	83 (H)	21 (M)	30 (H)	29 (H)	20 (M)	36 (M)	40 (H)	10 (L)	24 (M)	25 (M)
Ar	F (21)	77 (M)	88 (H)	78 (M)	26 (M)	28 (H)	28 (H)	39 (H)	43 (H)	33 (M)	23 (M)	29 (H)	27 (H)
Al	F (21)	49 (M)	72 (M)	82 (H)	13 (L)	24 (M)	28 (H)	28 (M)	46 (H)	42 (H)	14 (M)	14 (M)	22 (M)
In	F (21)	59 (M)	65 (M)	74 (M)	24 (M)	25 (M)	26 (M)	33 (M)	30 (M)	36 (M)	15 (M)	19 (M)	23 (M)
<i>M</i>		61	74.56	76.33	21	27.33	27.67	30.56	36.11	35.89	18.33	22.89	23.78
<i>Mdn</i>		65	74	75	21	27	28	32	36	36	19	23	23
<i>SD</i>		11.76	6.29	4.56	3.74	2.65	1.32	5.77	5.37	3.37	4.85	4.37	2.05
<i>Min</i>		39	65	68	13	24	26	20	30	31	10	14	21
<i>Max</i>		77	88	83	26	32	30	39	46	42	26	29	27

*Note.* Pre- = Measurement before intervention; Post- = Measurement after intervention; FU = Follow-up measurement (2 weeks after the termination of intervention); L = Low; M = Medium; H = High.