



# Self-Forgiveness's Role in Addressing Low Life Meaning and Self-Harm Urges in Emerging Adults

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## ABSTRACT

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Early adulthood is a period of emotional turmoil because numerous changes occur throughout this time. Developmental activities that differ significantly from previous phases of development necessitate individuals to adapt to new living patterns. With these demands, significant pressure is created, causing individuals to suffer stress and feelings of helplessness, impacting the meaning of the individual's existence and allowing the temptation to self-harm to express negative emotions. This study aimed to see if there was a relationship between self-forgiveness and meaning of life in early adulthood with nonsuicidal self-injury behavior. A quantitative technique utilizing correlational methodologies is used in this work. The correlation coefficient for this study was 0.914, and the significance value ( $p$ ) = 0.000 < 0.01, indicating a significant positive relationship between self-forgiveness and meaning of life in early adulthood with self-harm (nonsuicidal self-injury) behavior.

**Keywords:** Meaning of Life; Self-Forgiveness; Self-harm (Nonsuicidal Self Injury)

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## INTRODUCTION

Early adulthood is a period of transition from adolescence to adulthood. Jannah et. al (2017) states that adulthood is the most complex and longest period in life. Early adulthood is a period of transition from adolescence to adulthood. Currently, a person is experiencing a change from dependence on others to economic independence, freedom to determine one's way of life, and a more realistic view of the future.

The stages of early adulthood take place in the age range of 18-25 years (Arnett, 2015). The identified age range of 18-25 years describes an important period in which individuals face various developmental and adjustment tasks (Putri, 2018). Early adult developmental tasks are a series of tasks that must be faced and completed by individuals in the transition period from adolescence to maturity. These tasks involve significant physical, psychological, social, and emotional changes, as well as adjustment to new roles and responsibilities in life. One of the tasks of early adult development is developing self-identity. During this time, individuals seek a deeper understanding of who they are, what their values and beliefs are, and what they want in their lives. They face pressure to make educational, career, and relationship choices that match their identity. This task involves intense exploration and reflection, during which individuals try out different roles and environments to find their own unique identity.

Early adult development tasks that are not fulfilled or experience difficulties can trigger an

unfavorable impact on individuals. The impact can be a sense of loss or confusion of identity. If individuals cannot complete the developmental task of finding a meaningful personal identity, they may feel lost or confused about who they really are. This can result in self-doubt, feelings of emptiness, or confusion about the direction and purpose of their life.

Not fulfilling early adult developmental tasks can also cause feelings of worthlessness in individuals. If individuals cannot find meaningful social contributions or feel that they have no impact on society or the environment around them, it can reduce the meaning of their lives. Feelings of worthlessness can lead to feelings of emptiness or a lack of satisfaction with their lives. If the challenging developmental task is difficult or even not fulfilled, it will cause stress and cause high anxiety. This can interfere with the meaning of individual life and encourage self-harm behavior (nonsuicidal self-injury; NSSI) (Mahtani et al., 2017).

Based on the findings of Sawyer et al. (2018) in their research stated that low meaning of life has a higher probability of engaging in self-harm (non-suicidal self-injury) behavior in young adults. There are several factors that can increase the meaning of an individual's life including: positive experiences such as happiness, satisfaction and joy; creativity which can enable individuals to express themselves and create something meaningful; being part of something bigger and being able to contribute to others; and self-forgiveness (Steger et al., 2014).

Self-forgiveness can help someone find meaning in their life. When a person feels guilty or regretful for what he has done, it can create emptiness and hopelessness in his life. However, when individuals forgive themselves and work on accepting themselves as they are, it can help them feel better and find meaning in their lives.

Razkia et al. (2021) found that forgiveness is positively related to the meaning of life. The results of this study indicate that individuals who have good self-forgiveness are able to achieve the meaning of their lives well even though they have a past and are in a bad environment. In other words, individuals who are able to forgive themselves will be better able to cope with stress and find meaning in their lives. Likewise, other research shows that forgiving will make individuals have more meaning and purpose in their lives (Rahmania, 2021)

In this context, self-forgiveness can be the key to finding meaning in life. Giving compassion, generosity and self-love can replace feelings of self-hate and can free themselves from emotional burdens that prevent them from finding meaning in life. In addition, a person can feel better and find greater purpose in life by taking responsibility for mistakes and making necessary changes. When a person is able to forgive themselves for their mistakes or failures, it can help them overcome feelings of guilt, regret, and emotional baggage associated with the past. In this process, self-forgiveness allows individuals to break free from past negative shackles and build a stronger foundation to feel the meaning of life.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The research method used in this study is a quantitative research method. This type of research method produces knowledge by providing data in the form of numbers and then processing it using statistical methods. This research is also included in the correlational study to see the extent of the relationship between each variable, namely self-forgiveness and the meaning of life.

### **Participants**

The number of young adults who did self-harm (non-suicidal self-injury) in 2023 is still not known with certainty. Therefore, the researchers distributed questionnaires in the form of a Google form for five days and from 7 -11 June 2023. After 5 days, it was found that 185 participants had



filled out the questionnaire. The sampling technique that will be used is a purposive sampling technique with the criteria of early adulthood involved in self-injury and aged 18-25 years.

### **Instrument**

The instruments used in this study consisted of three instruments, namely self-harm (nonsuicidal self-injury) which was created based on the theory presented by Eliana (in Walsh, 2007), the meaning of life which was created based on the theory presented by Bastaman (2007) and self-forgiveness based on the theory presented by Woodyatt (2013). a) self-harm (nonsuicidal self-injury), the results of the validity of this instrument require four rounds with five items dropped and obtain a Coefficient of Corrected Item Total Correlation of 0.301-0.616 ( $> 0.30$ ), then it is declared valid. The reliability results on this instrument using Cronbach's Alpha obtained a very high value, namely 0.895 ( $> 0.600$ ). b) The significance of life, the results of the validity of this instrument require four rounds with twenty-nine items dropped and obtain a Coefficient of Corrected Item Total Correlation of 0.408-0.778 ( $> 0.30$ ), then it is declared valid. The reliability results on this instrument using Cronbach's Alpha obtained a very high value, namely 0.950 ( $> 0.600$ ). c) Self-forgiveness, the results of the validity of this instrument require three rounds with twelve items dropped and obtain a Coefficient of Corrected Item Total Correlation of 0.472-0.776 ( $> 0.30$ ), then it is declared valid. The reliability results on this instrument using Cronbach's Alpha obtained a very high value, namely 0.944 ( $> 0.600$ ).

### **Research procedure**

The research procedure carried out in this study began with making the required measurement instruments and then distributing them to research subjects via the Google form. Then the data that has been collected is analyzed so that the results can be concluded into sentences that are easily understood by readers.

### **Data Analysis Techniques**

The data analysis technique in this study consisted of two, namely the normality and linearity tests. In the normality test the results obtained showed a significance value of 0.200 ( $> 0.05$ ), so the distribution of data in this study was normally distributed. For the linearity test, the results obtained from the relationship between self-forgiveness and the meaning of life obtained sig. 0.170 ( $> 0.05$ ) then the two variables are declared linear.

Based on the two data analysis tests that have been carried out, the next step is to analyze the data using Pearson's product moment with the aim of knowing the relationship between self-forgiveness and the meaning of life in early adulthood perpetrators of self-harm (nonsuicidal self-injury) with the help of SPSS 22.

## **RESULT**

Based on the data obtained from the distributed questionnaires, 144 subjects or as much as 78% of the total subjects were involved in self-harm (non-suicidal self-injury) with moderate to very high intensity. When viewed from the level of meaning of life, some of these subjects have a low level of meaning of life. And if you look at the level of self-forgiveness, all subjects have a low and very low level of meaning in life.

Research conducted on early adulthood perpetrators of self-harm (nonsuicidal self-injury) aged 18-25 years using Pearson's product moment analysis resulted in a relationship between self-forgiveness

and the meaning of life which obtained the results  $r=0.914$  and  $p=0.000<0.01$  . This means that there is a very significant positive relationship.

**Table 1 Pearson’s Product Moment Test**

Variable	r	Sig.
Self-forgiveness – Meaning of Life	0,914	0.000

## DISCUSSION

This research was conducted to determine whether there is a relationship between self-forgiveness and the meaning of life in early adulthood nonsuicidal self-injury. Based on the results of research that has been carried out using Pearson's product moment, the hypothesis proposed reads that there is a positive relationship between self-forgiveness and the meaning of life in early adulthood. This means that the higher the self-forgiveness possessed by an individual, the higher the meaning of his life. This is supported by research conducted by Rizkia et al., (2021) which states that there is a positive relationship between forgiveness and the meaning of life. This means that the higher the forgiveness that is owned by an individual, the higher the meaning of his life. But on the contrary, if the forgiveness he has is low, then the meaning of his life will also be lower. Rizkia added that individuals who forgive themselves and reflect on their past actions will find positive meaning and understanding from the negative events that occurred. This finding is supported by research conducted by Zuanny and Subandhi (2016), who found that forgiveness therapy can help psychological well being (PWB) make peace with themselves and situations that suppress and reduce negative emotions thereby increasing the meaning of life. It can be concluded that self-forgiveness assists individuals in releasing the emotional burden they feel such as disappointment and hatred that exist within the individual. Self-forgiveness can also reduce the emotional burden that can hinder the growth and meaning of life.

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