

## Research Article

# The Role of Gratitude and Forgiveness Toward Self-awareness in Emerging Adulthood

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## Abstract.

A transition period from adolescence to adulthood is called emerging adulthood. Individuals experience periods of life that offer opportunities to explore identity in various aspects of life, such as love, work, and views of the world. Self-awareness is an important self-development component for emerging adulthood. Self-awareness is the ability to see oneself clearly and objectively. Self-awareness will become more visible when individuals can use character strengths in living their lives. One of the two character strengths that people have is gratitude and forgiveness. Gratitude is the character strength most strongly associated with life satisfaction. Forgiveness is one of the characteristics of the virtue of temperance, namely a virtue that correlates with an individual's attitude to refrain from anything that is excessive and has the potential to cause undesirable consequences. This research uses a non-experimental quantitative approach using the Indonesian version of the character strength scale developed by the VIA Institute via the viacharacter.org with an internal consistency reliability of 0.75, which the researcher uses for the gratitude and forgiveness sections. The scale for self-awareness uses the Self-Awareness Outcomes Questionnaire (SAOQ) that has 38 items. The research subjects were 138 respondents in the emerging adulthood category (18-25 years). The research results found that gratitude and forgiveness had a significant role in self-awareness by 42%. Significance in a positive direction, the more gratitude and forgiveness increases, the more self-awareness increases.

**Keywords:** emerging adulthood, self-awareness, gratitude, forgiveness

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## 1. Introduction

Mental health and wellbeing is an issue that is being discussed, both in face-to-face forums and online. Access to various types of mental health education is quite easy due to advances in technology. Issues related to mental health are spread across various platforms. To respond to these developments, individuals need to have control even though the developmental stage has entered adulthood. Long-term individual functioning can be related to attitudes of neglect towards mental health. Therefore, during the transition from adolescence to adulthood, it is important to address resources for mental health [1].



The transition period from adolescence to adulthood, which is the threshold age, is usually called emerging adulthood. This is a stage with an age range of 18-25 years, when teenagers enter the end of late adolescence and will enter their role as adults [2]. At this time, individuals experience a period of life that offers opportunities to explore identity in various aspects of life, such as love, work, and views on the world [2]. Even in the developmental period of adolescence, things are associated with identity formation.

Identity formation shows the involvement of various activities of trying out various life possibilities and gradually moving towards making decisions that can be maintained over a long period of time [2]. The process of trying begins in adolescence, but mainly decision formation will occur during emerging adulthood. Therefore, at this time a person needs to develop self-awareness so that they can make the right decisions in accordance with their identity.

Self-awareness itself is the ability to see oneself clearly and objectively, thereby enabling individuals to be more confident and more creative in managing the abilities they already possess because self-awareness plays an important role in identifying obstacles [3]. In addition, individuals will make wiser decisions, have the ability to build more lasting relationships, and communicate more effectively when they have self-awareness [3]. Based on experimental study, self-awareness through increasing orientation towards problem solving in an effort to achieve goals, encouraging problem solving abilities that are in line with goals [4]. Therefore, self-awareness may promote regulatory flexibility, an individual differences construct previously described in the context of emotion regulation and address the description of individual flexibility in adapting a regulatory strategy in a feedback-based manner [4-5].

On the other hand, self-awareness also has a negative correlation with anxiety of 10.1% [6]. High self-awareness even contributed to a lower desire to harm oneself, namely self-injury [7]. If someone has good self-awareness, then that person will have the opportunity to develop good self-regulation [8]. Individuals will have the ability to regulate themselves according to their existing capacities because they have an understanding of their condition. Self-awareness will work well when individuals have character strengths related to psychological well-being.

Character strength is the basis for lifelong development which is manifested in thoughts, feelings and behaviour so that they can develop optimally [9]. This shows that the strength of this character is very important. Character strength is dimensional and can be expressed in degrees, such as the degree of creativity, honesty, and various

other characteristics [10]. One of the two dimensions of character strength is gratitude and forgiveness.

Gratitude is the character strength most strongly associated with life satisfaction [11] which is beneficial for mental health and wellbeing. Gratitude itself is included in the virtue of transcendence, which means there is a connection between the individual and the universe which fosters meaning in life [11]. These strengths are associated with reduced depression and anxiety and adults and adolescents feel more social support and subjective well-being [12]. Gratitude has been proven to be positively related to self-esteem [13]. However, there is still a lot to pay attention to regarding gratitude and self, including self-awareness.

Forgiveness involves a strength that goes beyond just accepting what is or has happened, or involves stopping being angry. In contrast, forgiveness involves a voluntary transformation of feelings, attitudes, and behaviour. This means that a person's feelings are no longer dominated by hatred and the individual can express compassion, generosity, or the like towards people who have wronged him [14]. Forgiveness is also one of the characteristics of the virtue of temperance, namely a virtue that correlates with an individual's attitude to refrain from anything that is excessive and has the potential to cause undesirable consequences [11].

Based on the background above, the researchers found the problem formulation, namely the role of the character strength of gratitude and forgiveness on self-awareness in emerging adulthood. So the aim of this research is to find the role of the character strengths of gratitude and forgiveness on self-awareness in emerging adulthood.

Previous studies have found the role of character strengths on life satisfaction and also the role of self-awareness on various impacts of self-regulation. The novelty of this research is the identification of the role of character strength, especially the character of gratitude and forgiveness, on self-awareness specifically during the transition from adolescence to adulthood.

The benefit of this research is that it theoretically develops and adds to the theoretical study of the character strengths of gratitude and forgiveness as well as self-awareness, as well as the developmental stages of emerging adulthood. The practical benefit is that emerging adulthood gains knowledge about the importance of knowing the characters of gratitude and forgiveness which play a role in self-awareness so that you will be more productive and achieve prosperity.

## 2. Literature Review

Emerging adulthood is a period of transition from adolescence to adulthood, often called threshold age. This period is between the ages of 18-25 years, when teenagers enter the end of late adolescence and will enter their role as adults [2]. At this time, individuals experience a period of life that offers opportunities to explore identity in various aspects of life, such as love, work, and views on the world [2]. Identity formation shows the involvement of various activities of trying out various life possibilities and gradually moving towards making decisions that can be maintained over a long period of time [2]. The process of trying begins in adolescence, but mainly decision formation will occur during emerging adulthood. Therefore, at this time a person needs to develop self-awareness so that they can make the right decisions in accordance with their identity.

Self-awareness itself is the ability to see oneself clearly and objectively, thereby enabling individuals to be more confident and more creative in managing the abilities they already possess [3] because self-awareness plays an important role in identifying obstacles [3-4] emphasizes that individuals will make wiser decisions, have the ability to build more lasting relationships, and communicate more effectively when they have self-awareness [3]. Based on an experimental study, self-awareness through increasing orientation towards problem solving in an effort to achieve goals, encouraging problem solving abilities that are in line with goals [4]. Thus, self-awareness may promote regulatory flexibility, an individual differences construct previously described in the context of emotion regulation, and address the description of individual flexibility in adapting a regulatory strategy in a feedback-based manner [5].

Character strength as the basis for life-span development which is manifested in thoughts, feelings and behaviour so that humans can grow and develop optimally [9]. Character strength is dimensional which is manifested in degrees, such as the degree of creativity, honesty, and various other characters [10]. One of the two dimensions of character strength is gratitude and forgiveness which are forms of virtue

Gratitude is the character strength most strongly associated with life satisfaction which is beneficial for mental health and wellbeing [9]. Gratitude itself is included in the virtue of transcendence, which means there is a connection between the individual and the universe which fosters meaning in life [11]. This strength was associated with reduced depression and anxiety and adults and adolescents feel more social support and subjective well-being [12]. Gratitude has been proven to be positively related to self-esteem [13], improve social well-being by helping people form and maintain relationships

[15-17], more trusting of strangers [16], and even physical health is positively related to gratitude [18]. Gratitude is a light expression that is not necessarily conditioned only on good, pleasant times that allows a person to maintain good feelings, even gratitude is present during negative experiences or the most difficult times [19]. Gratitude is an important element of character in a life that is developed, involved and lived well.

Gratitude originates from the study of positive psychology as a multidimensional concept involving emotions, personality traits, or coping responses [20]. This characteristic shows a moderate to large positive relationship with well-being, such as positive affect, happiness, and life satisfaction [21-23].

Forgiveness is a positive character that does not just accept what is or has happened, or involves stopping being angry. However, forgiveness involves a voluntary transformation of feelings, attitudes, and behaviour. This means that a person's feelings are no longer dominated by hatred and the individual can express compassion, generosity, or the like towards people who have wronged him [14]. Forgiveness is also one of the characteristics of the virtue of temperance, namely a virtue that correlates with an individual's attitude to refrain from anything that is excessive and has the potential to cause undesirable consequences [11].

The character of forgiveness involves behavioural, cognitive and emotional elements [24]. The forgiveness process includes four phases: the uncovering phase, which helps gain insight into a violation; decision making phase, where the individual actively decides to seek forgiveness; work phase, which helps change a person's attitude; and finally, the deepening phase, in which negative feelings are continuously reduced while positive and meaningful emotions are increased [24]. Furthermore, forgiveness is applied as replacing destructive emotions with prosocial emotions towards the perpetrator or oneself [22].

The process of forgiveness involves reconceptualizing past transgressions with awareness and empathy, leading to letting go of guilt and replacing it with a better outlook [24]. It is further explained that anger and hatred are the glue that holds negative beliefs, blocking the path to peace and happiness. Ultimately, forgiveness is more than just a way to deal with anger. On the contrary, the character is a completely rejuvenating entity to achieve a more peaceful and loving way of life [24].

### 3. Method

The research uses a non-experimental quantitative approach by collecting data using research instruments. Statistical data analysis is used to test research hypotheses. The research subjects were Indonesian citizens who were in the emerging adulthood stage, aged 18 - 25 years. Sampling uses a simple random sampling technique, namely sampling from the population is carried out randomly without paying attention to the strata in the population [25].

The research design uses a survey so that researchers will use a scale in collecting research data. This research uses two scales, namely to measure two character strengths (gratitude and forgiveness) and also self-awareness. Gratitude and forgiveness use the Indonesian version of the character strength measuring tool developed by the VIA Institute via the [viacharacter.org](http://viacharacter.org) page which was formulated by [11] with internal consistency reliability of 0.75. Meanwhile, the scale for self-awareness uses the Self-Awareness Outcomes Questionnaire (SAOQ) created by [26], which has 38 items. Researchers underwent a number of procedures in adapting the SAOQ measuring instrument into Indonesian in accordance with adaptation according to [27].

1. Translation from English (native language) to Indonesian (Forward Translation) carried out by 2 (two) translators who have lived abroad, namely Muh. Imran with an IELTS score of 6.5 and Muh. Zaifullah with an IELTS score of 7.0
2. Researchers discussed integrating the results of 2 (two) translations.
3. The results that have been integrated are then rearranged by the researcher
4. Back translation from Indonesian to English (back translation) by 2 (two) translators, namely Amalia Soraya who has an IELTS score of 6.5 and Sidik Permana who has a TOEFL IBT of 80
5. Researchers re-discussed integration
6. Prepare measuring instruments
7. Researchers conducted processing time trials
8. Researchers conducted field trials using a sample of 56 respondents

Researchers tested the hypothesis using the regression method to see the role of two character strengths (gratitude and forgiveness) on self-awareness. A simple linear

regression test is used to test the linear role between a predictor variable (X) and a criterion variable (Y).

## 4. Result and Discussion

TABLE 1: Description of Respondent's Identity (N = 138).

Age	Percentage	
	Frequency	Percent
18	35	25.4
19	17	12.3
20	32	23.2
21	23	16.7
22	16	11.6
23	6	4.3
24	6	4.3
25	3	2.2
Total	138	100.0

The descriptive statistical data above shows that the highest age frequency of respondents is 18 years old at 25.4% and the lowest is 25 years old at 2.2%.

TABLE 2: The descriptive statistical data.

Gender	Percentage	
	Frequency	Percent
Female	114	82.6
Male	24	17.4
Total	138	100.0

The descriptive statistical data above shows that the majority of respondents were female, namely 82.6%.

TABLE 3: Model Summary.

Predictors	Model Summary		
	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Gratitude Forgiveness	.660	.436	.427

The results of the hypothesis test show  $p > 0.000$ , which means that the characters of gratitude and forgiveness play a significant role in predicting self-awareness in emerging

adulthood. The simultaneous predictive power of gratitude and forgiveness for self-awareness is 42% as shown by the Adjusted R Square data in the Model Summary table above. This means that 58% of self-awareness is predicted by other factors besides the character of gratitude and forgiveness.

TABLE 4: Predictors factors.

Predictors	Coefficients					t	Sig
	Unstd B	Coef. Error	Std. Error	Std. Beta	Coef.		
Gratitude	5.197	.714	.524			7.275	.000
Forgiveness	1.897	.587	.233			3.231	.002

Partially, gratitude and forgiveness also play a significant role in a positive direction with self-awareness, which means that the higher a person's gratitude, the more self-awareness will increase. Likewise with forgiveness, the higher the forgiveness, the higher the self-awareness in emerging adulthood.

The results obtained show that there is a role for the characters gratitude and forgiveness, both simultaneously and partially, in self-awareness in emerging adulthood. This shows that experiences at each stage of development will vary greatly depending on the individual's background. Emerging adulthood as the stage of life when adolescents reach their final years and enter a more stable adult role with an age range of around 18-25 years [2]. Emerging adulthood may be a key developmental period for interventions that target changes in cognitive style by increasing awareness and gratitude in an effort to improve mental health [28].

At this stage of development, emerging adulthood has five main characteristics, namely identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between (feeling between two stages - adolescence and adulthood), and optimism [2]. Self-exploration is a condition when individuals begin to find out about self-identity which can provide extensive experience so that individuals become more resilient when entering adulthood [2]. Then, instability is a situation when an individual does not yet have an absolute decision regarding his life's travel plans and is very vulnerable to change according to the conditions that the individual feels. Self-focus means that individuals prioritize themselves to provide opportunities for themselves to develop various skills, self-understanding, and build a foundation for a more mature adult life. Furthermore, the characteristics of feeling between two stages - adolescence and adulthood which can be interpreted as the position of someone who cannot yet be considered an adult because the characteristics of adults in general such as self-acceptance, independence and financial freedom have



not yet been achieved, but are no longer in the teenage phase which tends to be unstable. The final characteristic is optimism as a person's positive belief regarding their hopes and expectations in all aspects of life.

A good form of self-exploration needs to be realized through self-awareness. [29] defines self-awareness as the process of individuals integrating feelings, thoughts and behaviour into awareness. Self-awareness as an attitude of examining oneself, including strengths and weaknesses so that it can make individuals more adaptive to change [30]. Therefore, someone who has self-awareness will be able to regulate their emotions and control their behaviour. An individual has self-awareness [31], then he can understand thoughts and behaviour that suit him. Self-awareness can also help individuals understand other people's perspectives [32].

Self-awareness consists of several aspects behind the formation of awareness, namely reflection on self-development, acceptance, proactiveness in work, and emotional [26]. This aspect shows full awareness of one's condition. This research shows that character strengths play a role in self-awareness and positive relationships. So by knowing the strength of character they have, individuals will have more self-awareness. Previous research found that the factors of concern, curiosity, and self-control inherent in adults are consistent with the philosophical conception of virtue or virtues [33]. These strengths represent interpersonal, intellectual, and intrapersonal functions [34]. These virtues are related to strength of character.

Character strength as a psychological element that forms virtues [11]. Meanwhile, virtues are virtues that classify each character strength. Simply put, virtues contain types of human virtues and character strengths are characteristics that support these virtues. Both character strengths and virtues are actually universal. There are six virtues, namely wisdom, courage, humanity, justice, temperance and transcendence (meaningful life).

The character of gratitude is one of the character strengths which is classified as virtue transcendence, namely the connection between an individual and the universe which then creates meaning in life. Gratitude is also a positive affective experience that brings a person to build relationships with other people [15]. Self-esteem is also related to gratitude [13], where gratitude can improve social welfare by helping people form and maintain the relationships that have been built [15][17-18], more trusting of stranger people [16], and even physical health is positively related to gratitude [18].

This research found that the role of gratitude can increase self-awareness which is beneficial for emerging adulthood's self-development before entering real adulthood.

The existence of gratitude which plays a role in self-awareness makes a person able to develop in a more positive direction. Gratitude is a light expression that is not necessarily conditioned only on happy times but also on the most difficult times [19]. Self-awareness based on the character of gratitude will provide capital for development towards adulthood so that one can carry out one's developmental tasks well. Gratitude is an important element of character in a life that is developed, involved and lived well.

The character of forgiveness is included in one of the characters in the virtue of temperance which correlates with an individual's attitude to refrain from anything that is excessive and has the potential to cause undesirable consequences. Forgiveness is a person's positive character that makes him able to accept conditions that are or have occurred, usually also involving anger regulation that is appropriate to the conditions. This character also involves voluntary transformation of feelings, attitudes, and behaviour. This means that a person's feelings are no longer dominated by hatred and the individual can express compassion, generosity, or the like towards people who have wronged him [14]. Forgiveness is also one of the characteristics of the virtue of temperance, namely a virtue that correlates with an individual's attitude to refrain from anything that is excessive and has the potential to cause undesirable consequences [11]. The role of forgiveness in self-awareness is really needed to prepare emerging adults to enter adulthood which has complex roles. Adults will increasingly be faced with uncertainty which requires self-awareness in the process. In this research, it was found that there is a role for the forgiveness character that each person has in realizing themselves.

The process of forgiveness involves reconceptualizing past transgressions with awareness and empathy, leading to letting go of guilt and replacing it with a better outlook [24]. It is further explained that anger and hatred are the glue that holds negative beliefs, blocking the path to peace and happiness. Ultimately, forgiveness is more than just a way to deal with anger. On the contrary, the character is a completely rejuvenating entity to achieve a more peaceful and loving way of life [24]. So this character can increase self-awareness in emerging adulthood in carrying out their developmental tasks.

All character strengths are interconnected and provide benefits to the individual. Various studies describes the benefits in question including life satisfaction, good job performance, healthy relationships, and adaptive behaviour [35]. Apart from that, character strength can also strengthen resilience. Previous research shows that character strengths are related to important aspects of individual and social well-being, although

different strengths predict different outcomes [9]. This means that character is important, so developing character components needs to be an important goal for everyone. Character strength is dimensional and can be expressed in degrees, such as the degree of creativity, honesty, and various other characteristics [10].

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