

Examining Emotional Intelligence in the Context of Peer Victimization and Forgiveness among Pakistani High School Students

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Abstract

The study of the harmful implications of peer victimization for victims has grown in popularity in recent decades. Emotional intelligence had a moderating role in the association between peer victimization and forgiveness among high school students in Pakistan. The present study used a cross-sectional research design to investigate the perceptions of emotional intelligence, peer victimization, and forgiveness among Pakistani adolescents. The present research examined the impact of emotional intelligence on peer victimization and forgiveness, as well as its predictive ability in relation to victimization. The study included a sample of 252 adolescents enrolled in high school, who provided self-reported data on their emotional intelligence, experiences of peer victimization, and engagement in forgiving behaviors. The impact of emotional intelligence on the relationship between peer victimization and forgiveness was significantly reduced among high school students in Pakistan. Despite experiencing victimization, there was a positive correlation found between greater levels of emotional intelligence and the tendency to engage in forgiving. Both emotional intelligence and forgiveness were shown to be significant predictors of peer victimization. Students who possess high levels of emotional intelligence and have forgiveness tendencies exhibit a decreased likelihood of experiencing victimization. The data was collected by administering the Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale, the Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale, and the Bolton Forgiveness Scale. The study used the SPSS Process Macro Hayes Model 1 to perform a serial moderation analysis and identify the obtained outcomes. The aforementioned results emphasize the relevance of emotional intelligence as a characteristic that safeguards individuals from becoming victims, and emphasize the need of cultivating forgiveness in order to facilitate healthy social interactions among high school students. The present study examines the practical consequences of the obtained findings for various stakeholders, including educators, parents, and policymakers. The discussion highlights the possible advantages of fostering emotional intelligence and advocating forgiveness within school environments as strategies to effectively address and avoid instances of peer victimization.

Index Terms: *Bullying behavior, Emotional intelligence, Forgiveness, High school, Pakistan, Peer victimization, Students*

INTRODUCTION

Peer victimization, Peer victimization, which encompasses acts of aggression and harassment occurring among adolescents, is a pervasive phenomenon observed in high schools globally, including the context of Pakistan [1]. The adverse consequences of this phenomenon are evident in the victims, resulting in psychological anguish and unfavorable social consequences [2]. Nevertheless, there is a lack of research on the extent to which emotional intelligence can mitigate the adverse effects of peer victimization and promote forgiveness [3].

The primary objective of this study is to address the existing disparity by examining the correlation between emotional intelligence, peer victimization, and forgiveness within the context of high school students in Pakistan [4]. The issue of peer victimization, which includes various forms of aggression, bullying, and harassment, is a prevalent concern in high schools globally, including the context of Pakistan [5]. The issue presents considerable obstacles to the mental health and interpersonal growth of individuals in the adolescent stage. Although there has been considerable research conducted on the adverse consequences of peer victimization, there is a noticeable lack of studies examining the influence of emotional intelligence on the relationship between peer victimization and forgiveness among high school students in Pakistan [6]. Consequently, the primary objective of this research is to fill this void by investigating the influence of emotional intelligence on the association between encounters of peer victimization and propensities for forgiveness [7].

Emotional intelligence encompasses the capacity to accurately perceive, comprehend, regulate, and skillfully employ emotions in a proficient manner. It includes essential skills such as empathy, self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal relationships [8]. Numerous studies have underscored the significant influence of emotional intelligence on diverse facets of individuals' lives, encompassing academic attainment, psychological well-being, and interpersonal dynamics [9]. Emotional intelligence, a concept that encompasses the capacity to perceive, comprehend, manage, and articulate emotions with proficiency, has garnered considerable interest within the realm of psychological research. Empathy and adaptive coping strategies play a vital role in fostering interpersonal relationships [9]. Previous research indicates that individuals who possess a higher level of emotional intelligence are more inclined to effectively navigate challenging circumstances, such as instances of peer victimization [10]. Emotional intelligence has the potential to serve as protective factor, empowering individuals to effectively manage their emotions, demonstrate empathy towards others, and embrace forgiveness [11]. Emotional intelligence (EI) has garnered substantial interest in the field of psychology due to its profound influence on multiple facets of individuals' lives, encompassing their interpersonal relationships, academic accomplishments, and overall state of well-being. Emotional intelligence (EI) refers to the capacity to recognize, comprehend, and effectively regulate both one's own emotions and the emotions of others. The role it plays in navigating social interactions and effectively coping with challenging situations is of utmost importance [12]. During adolescence, individuals experience significant developmental processes, such as forming their identity and engaging in intense social interactions. Therefore, peer victimization can have a significant impact on high school students [13]. Forgiveness is a complicated psychological process that leads to greater mental health, increased well-being, and stronger interpersonal connections, yet victim emotions like anger, resentment, and a desire for retaliation get in the way [14].

The term "intelligence" was initially utilized in 1990 (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), and emotional intelligence (EI) is derived from the intelligence [15]. Prior to the publication of Daniel Goleman's book, "Why It Can Matter More Than IQ," in 1995, emotional intelligence (EI) was not widely known [16]. The aforementioned publication generated considerable attention among researchers and individuals during the latter part of the 1990s [17]. The recognition of this study was attributed to the researcher's unwavering commitment, steadfastness, and systematic approach, which surpassed prior research efforts [18]. At the beginning of the 1990s, there were few theories and assertions describing the theories of emotional intelligence (EI), despite the existence of some dissimilar theories. The concept of emotional intelligence has undergone significant growth, yet it remains a topic of debate. There

are two primary theories regarding emotional intelligence, with one perspective considering it as a combination of various personality-related attributes [8]. Emotional intelligence, as defined by [19]. According to Sasseti (2021), emotional intelligence is the capacity to manage personal and others' emotions, identify different emotions, and apply this understanding to shape thoughts and behaviors. Emotional intelligence encompasses emotional attention, emotional clarity, emotional repair, and the three processes of emotional intelligence (perception, understanding, and regulation), which help in minimizing and controlling negative emotions [3].

The mixed model considers EI as a combination of traits linked to various cognitive abilities, a consistent personality, motivation components, and social-emotional competencies [20]. The skills model emphasizes the emotional processing of information and the related abilities [21]. According to Trigueros et al. (2020), this perspective defines emotional intelligence (EI) as the capacity to effectively recognize, comprehend, perceive, and communicate emotions, as well as the ability to utilize emotions to enhance cognitive processes and regulate emotions for emotional growth. This approach facilitates research on the role of emotional abilities in social interaction. Peer interactions require emotional intelligence, a crucial factor for effective socialization and the development of positive, mature romantic relationships [23]. As per a study conducted by León-del Barco et al. (2020), it has been found that emotional intelligence has the potential to effectively combat bullying in educational institutions. This is particularly evident when a child's ability to manage their emotions acts as a protective measure. Several studies have focused on the involvement of emotional mechanisms in the regulation of violent behavior and peer victimization [3]. Victimization can be predicted by emotional control and emotional expressiveness [24]. Elkady (2019), emphasize that students with higher levels of emotional intelligence experience less peer victimization and demonstrate better social behavior.

Eastern cultures have examined the sensitive link between emotional intelligence (EI) and violence less than Western societies [26]. Pakistan's collectivism draws foreigners to study EI and violence's harmony [27]. Where power dynamics often involve female subjugation and male supremacy. Women should strive to be considerate, accommodating, and respectful members of the family in all aspects of their lives due to traditional gender roles. Males, however, are often perceived as more prone to violence and abuse, as it showcases their dominance and masculinity. The current study highlights the link between EI and violence among Pakistani students. Despite the concerning increase in aggressive behaviors among students [28], its examination within Pakistan's educational system has been limited. Previous studies have examined the relationship between emotional intelligence (EI) and various aspects of university students' lives, such as self-esteem, religious preferences, and mental health [29], among other subjects. According to our understanding, only one study (Masum & Khan, 2014) examined the connection between emotional intelligence (EI) and aggression in Pakistani college students aged between 18 to 24. This study revealed a negative correlation between the two variables. We conducted an analysis on the correlation between EI and aggression, taking into account gender differences and the cultural context of Pakistan, specifically the increasing levels of hostility among university students [29].

The assessment of emotional intelligence as a moderating factor in the link between peer victimization and forgiveness holds significant relevance within the sphere of high school students in Pakistan. Pakistan, akin to numerous other nations, grapples with the formidable predicament of bullying and peer victimization within the realm of educational establishments.

The intricate interplay of cultural dynamics and prevailing social norms in Pakistan can potentially exert a profound influence on the manner in which emotional intelligence impacts the intricate process of forgiveness among high school students [30]. Peer victimization, an omnipresent concern within the realm of high school education, encompasses the recurrent encounter of aggression, bullying, or harassment perpetrated by fellow students. The detrimental impact of such experiences on individuals is far-reaching, encompassing a multitude of adverse consequences that permeate various aspects of their lives. Victims find themselves grappling with profound emotional distress, which manifests as a debilitating burden on their psychological well-being. Furthermore, the deleterious effects extend to their social interactions, as they often withdraw from the company of others, seeking solace in isolation. In addition, the academic realm is not immune to the repercussions, as victims frequently encounter difficulties in their scholastic pursuits [31]. An integral facet profoundly influenced by peer victimization is the concept of forgiveness, denoting the capacity to relinquish sentiments of anger, resentment, and vengeful inclinations towards the wrongdoer [32].

Peer victimization in educational settings is a pressing concern with far-reaching implications for both the well-being and academic progress of students. Peer victimization encompasses various forms of mistreatment, such as physical, verbal, or psychological harassment, which can have detrimental effects on both mental and physical well-being [33]. The objectives outlined in Healthy People 2020 encompass a range of crucial health goals, one of which is the reduction of school-based victimization among adolescents to a level below 17.9% of the overall youth population [34]. Nevertheless, as per the esteemed Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), a staggering 20% of young individuals disclose instances of victimization encountered within the educational setting [35]. Further investigation is imperative in order to comprehensively comprehend the multifaceted elements that contribute to the occurrence of peer victimization [36]. By implementing this approach, it is possible to achieve the goals set forth by Healthy People 2020 [37]. This entails effectively utilizing research findings to develop targeted initiatives that specifically address the issue of victimization within educational settings [38]. A multitude of scholarly investigations have unequivocally showcased the adverse ramifications stemming from peer victimization on the emotional and psychological well-being of students [38]. The ramifications encompass heightened levels of depression, anxiety, diminished self-esteem, and challenges in academic pursuits. Furthermore, students who have fallen victim to various forms of mistreatment are inclined to display aggressive tendencies, encounter social marginalization, and encounter difficulties in establishing bonds of trust with others [39].

The concept of forgiveness is a beautiful journey that involves various intricate dimensions. It includes recognizing and accepting the harm inflicted, experiencing a profound emotional transformation, and ultimately letting go of resentment to embrace reconciliation. Numerous studies have unequivocally demonstrated that the act of forgiveness holds immense potential in fostering enhanced mental well-being [40], thereby yielding a plethora of positive outcomes such as diminished stress levels, alleviated depression, and mitigated anxiety [2]. Also, the act of forgiving is a key part of repairing social relationships and teaching people to act in a kind way. In the world of human experiences, forgiveness stands out as a deep and clear reaction to a wide range of situations, such as the actions of a bad person or a social faux pas [41]. The capacity for forgiveness necessitates a profound reservoir of fortitude, cognitive acuity, self-control, and resilience, all of which pose formidable challenges in light of our propensity for distorted cognition and maladaptive conduct [42], [43]. The concept of

forgiveness encompasses a multitude of dimensions, each contributing to its intricate nature. These dimensions encompass interpersonal, motivational, behavioral, decisional, affective, and cognitive aspects, as thoroughly examined by esteemed scholars [44], [45]. Multiple models are widely utilized in various fields of study, including the model of stress and coping, the model of interpersonal interdependence, and the evolutionary model, which primarily finds application in the context of forgiveness. These models offer valuable insights and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in their respective areas. A study conducted by the (Quintana et al., 2021) [4] emphasized an exciting and thorough study on the subject matter.

Forgiveness is an internal problem; it has nothing to do with past pain. Despite the fact that this is far from a comprehensive explanation of forgiveness. The processes of justification and forgiveness place an emphasis on the growth of good characteristics of one's ideas and emotions, as well as the reduction of negative ones [4]. According to the latest theories, forgiving someone is a way to deal with their bad behavior. Both the individual and social dimensions of forgiveness have been studied [46]. It has been shown that high levels of interpersonal forgiveness improve both physical and mental health [4]. People who like forgiving others tend to have lower levels of stress, depression, anxiety, and blood pressure than those who don't [4], [46]. In addition to improving physical health, forgiveness also has positive effects on a person's sense of well-being and self-awareness [4]. Long-term replacement of aggressiveness with nonviolence is associated with higher levels of interpersonal forgiveness [4], [46]. Further, forgiveness may lead to closure, better community services, higher levels of emotional intelligence in relationships, and less desire for revenge [4]. This kind of bond strengthens through time [47] when love is shown and reciprocated.

When adult students' social relationships are disrupted, they often react negatively and are mocked by their peers. In these difficult situations, forgiveness is the most kind and caring action anybody can take toward mending broken relationships. Teenagers are less able to forgive because they have less self-control, leading to more aggressive behavior [48], [49]. They must have been hurt by other people and sought to get even since they were so angry. It relies on their willingness to forgive the offense. The worth of forgiveness may be determined by a variety of criteria, according to the research [50]. The connection between wrongdoing and mercy is under scrutiny. Numerous studies have shown a connection between empathy and forgiveness, but none of them have pinpointed exactly where this connection is greatest. High school students that are more able to forgive others tend to be less likely to engage in bullying behavior [51].

In the context of Pakistan, there exists a notable scarcity of research that delves into the multifaceted issues stemming from the absence of forgiveness [52]. Furthermore, a distinct lack of qualitative analysis hampers our understanding of the intricate factors that contribute to the act of forgiveness within its socio-cultural framework [53]. Exploring the concept of forgiveness within the realm of education, as elucidated by [54]. Cox (2011),? not only sheds light on the rationale behind individuals' decision to embrace forgiveness, but also unravels the profound impact forgiveness has on navigating the myriad challenges of existence within the Pakistani cultural context, thereby addressing a notable gap in the existing body of scholarly work [52]. The intricate dynamics of emotional intelligence and forgiveness exhibit striking parallels, as elucidated by Lowry in a seminal study conducted in 2016. Numerous scholarly investigations have consistently underscored a compelling correlation between the intricate construct of emotional intelligence (EI) and various traits associated with the pervasive issue of bullying. In a study conducted by [53]. Garcia-Sancho et al. (2014), it was observed that

there exists no correlation between emotional intelligence (EI) and antagonistic behavior, as indicated by factors such as age, aggression, and social context.

The investigation of the association between emotional intelligence, peer victimization, and forgiveness among high school students in Pakistan is a pressing research endeavor that highlights a notable gap in current scholarly discourse [6]. Extensive research has been dedicated to exploring the adverse consequences of peer victimization on adolescents. However, the crucial aspect of emotional intelligence and its potential in ameliorating these effects and nurturing forgiveness has received relatively limited scrutiny. Comprehending this intricate interplay assumes utmost significance, given the pervasive nature of peer victimization within the realm of high school environments, and the consequential deleterious effects it imposes upon the psychological well-being and social functioning of students [51]. Through an in-depth examination of the impact of emotional intelligence on the intricate dynamics of the forgiveness process, the present study endeavors to make a valuable contribution to the already extensive corpus of scholarly literature [54]. By shedding light on this crucial aspect, the research aims to offer valuable insights into the development of efficacious interventions and support mechanisms. These interventions and support systems have the potential to ameliorate the adverse ramifications of victimization, fostering the restoration of well-being and fortitude among students who have been affected [55]. Moreover, taking into account the distinctive cultural and contextual elements prevalent in Pakistan, such research holds the promise of enlightening the creation of culturally attuned methodologies that tackle the particular obstacles encountered by high school students within the Pakistani educational milieu [54]. This, in turn, has the potential to amplify the efficacy and pertinence of interventions.

Numerous studies have showcased the correlation between emotional intelligence and instances of peer victimization among adolescents [56]. In a study conducted by Extremera [57], it was discovered that individuals with higher levels of emotional intelligence exhibited a decreased likelihood of experiencing victimization. This implies that individuals who possess highly developed emotional intelligence skills may have more effective coping strategies to navigate interpersonal challenges, thereby decreasing their susceptibility to victimization. In a study conducted by [58]. Brackett et al. (2019), it was found that interventions targeting emotional intelligence had the potential to reduce instances of victimization among high school students. The exploration of the impact of peer victimization on forgiveness has been extensively examined in numerous studies. According to a study conducted by Sourander et al. (2007) [59], it was found that adolescents who have been victims of mistreatment often display elevated levels of resentment and may face difficulties in embracing forgiveness. Additionally, Joanne et al. (2018) [60] highlighted that peer victimization can have enduring implications on individuals' capacity for forgiveness, resulting in the persistence of negative emotions. The importance of addressing the impact of peer victimization on forgiveness in high school students for fostering healthier social interactions is highlighted by these findings.

Emotional intelligence has been shown to correlate well with the capacity for forgiveness. Higher levels of emotional intelligence, as measured by Extremera [57], are associated with greater self-awareness and empathy, both of which increase the likelihood that a person may forgive an offense committed against them. Perspective-taking is an important part in forgiving someone, stressed the importance of emotional intelligence in this regard [62]. These findings suggest that teenagers' emotional intelligence significantly affects whether or not they forgive those who have victimized them. A number of studies have investigated how

emotional intelligence may have a mitigating effect in the correlation between victimization by peers and willingness to forgive. Emotional quotient has been proposed as a buffer between victimization and forgiveness [63]. Positive reactions to victimization events were also associated with emotional intelligence treatments [64]. For Pakistani high school students, the extant research sheds light on the complicated connections between emotional intelligence, peer victimization, and forgiveness [65]. Adolescents' levels of victimization and their capacity for forgiveness seem to be significantly influenced by their emotional intelligence. Pakistani high school kids' emotional intelligence, resilience to peer victimization, and capacity for forgiveness would all benefit greatly from treatments designed with this context in mind [66].

Present Study

This innovative research project intends to contribute to the current body of knowledge by examining the intricate relationship between emotional intelligence, peer victimization, and forgiveness among Pakistani high school students. This study aims to shed light on the moderating effect of emotional intelligence in the context of peer victimization on the capacity for forgiveness. The importance of this research rests in the fact that it provides valuable insight into the role of emotional intelligence in the forgiving process after peer victimization and sheds light on the difficulties and possibilities experienced by teens in Pakistan. The results have real-world applications, since they may guide the creation of tailored treatments and support systems that aim to improve students' ability for emotional control, resilience, and forgiveness. The ultimate goal of the research is to create schools that are more supportive of kids' emotional and social well-being and friendships. With the ultimate goal of fostering students' social and emotional growth and giving insights into the psychological processes of forgiveness, this study makes a significant contribution to the disciplines of social psychology and education.

Hypotheses

- H1: Emotional intelligence is moderate the relationship between peer victimization and forgiveness among high school students in Pakistan.
- H2: Emotional intelligence and forgiveness predict the peer victimization among high School students in Pakistan.
- H3: There is a negative correlation between peer victimization and forgiveness among high school students in Pakistan.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1. Participants

A sample of 250 high school students from various districts of Pakistan who ranged in age from 13 to 18 participated in the study. The pupils' rights and obligations were honored in the classroom.

2.2. Scales of Measurements

The Wong and Law Emotional Intelligence Scale (WLEIS) [67]: consists of components derived from emotional intelligence skills Please indicate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements in response to this inquiry. The emotional intelligence scale comprises 16 items, numbered from 1 to 16. The items are assessed on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The study revealed

that the WLEIS scores exhibited a reliability coefficient of .88. The selected alpha value is in line with the research objectives of this study (Henson, 2001; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) and is consistent with previous reliability estimates of WLEIS scores [67].

The Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale: The Multidimensional Peer Victimization Scale (MPVS; Mynard & Joseph, 2000) [68] is a 16-item questionnaire that asks “how often during the last school year has another pupil done these things to you? Response options are 0 = “Not at all”, 1 = “Once”, and 2 = “More than once”. Four factors (consisting of four items each) comprise the MPVS to address multiple dimensions of victimization: physical victimization, verbal victimization, social manipulation, and attacks on property [69].

Bolton Forgiveness Scale [70]: The Bolton Forgiveness Scale contains (1 to 6) scores that may be calculated: (1= always false for me to 6 Always true of me). (Note that the high and low scores in each example were calculated using the mean and standard deviation from the original research by Reginald U. Amanze and Jerome Carson, respectively).

2.3. Procedure

Before the study began, a high school student who wished to participate in it was given an informed consent form. Before distributing the questionnaires to the pupils, school administrators were made aware of the goal of the study as well as its timing. Students were also informed of the fundamental goal of data collection and the ethical standards upheld, such as the fact that data were gathered before classes even began and, notably, the ethical standards upheld by the American Psychological Association (Ref. UALBIO 2019/014).

2.4 Data Analysis

The non-probability sampling technique was applied. In this work, researcher used SPSS's Process Macro Hayes Model 1 to conduct a serial moderation analysis [67]. First, to examine the moderated factors' indirect impacts, where tested the bootstrap method [68]. We resampled the data 5000 times throughout the bootstrap procedure to determine the indirect impacts of each research sample. The study generated a non-standardized route coefficient for all potential paths in the moderation model and added an indirect impact composed of the indirect effect of mean estimate, standard error, and standard deviation of 95% CI. Also, 95% CI highlights the fact that there will be large indirect impacts if zero is left out [68].

3. RESULTS

Table 1: Model Summary

Model	R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
	0.7533	0.5674	98.2626	108.4479	3.0	248	0.000

The R-squared value of 0.5674 suggests that peer victimization and emotional intelligence account for 56.74% of the difference in forgiveness. The F-statistic of 108.4479 and p-value of 0.000 for the model suggest statistical significance. Peer victimization and emotional intelligence predict forgiveness, with a correlation coefficient (multiple correlation) of 0.7533 indicating a very significant positive relationship. The method ties together peer victimization, emotional intelligence, and forgiveness.

Table 2: Model Coefficients

Variables	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-value	p-value	95 % CI (LLCI, ULCI)
Constant	26.5736	9.4526	2.8112	0.0053	(7.9559, 45,1912)
Peer Victimization	-0.3150	0.3003	-1.00489	0.0000	(-0.9064, 0.2765)
Emotional intelligence	0.4457	0.1197	3.7241	0.0002	(0.2100, 0.6815)
Int_1	0.0037	0.0038	0.9824	0.0000	(-0.0038, 0.0112)

When both peer victimization and emotional intelligence are zero, the expected value of forgiveness is shown by the constant term (26.5736). The correlation for peer victimization is -0.3150, meaning that for every unit increase in peer victimization, forgiveness is expected to decrease by 0.3150 units. However, this effect is statistically negligible ($p > 0.05$), showing that the relationship between peer victimization and forgiveness is not reliable in this population. The emotional intelligence coefficient is 0.4457, which means that forgiveness is expected to improve by 0.4457 units for every unit rise in emotional intelligence. This finding is statistically significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that more emotional intelligence is associated with greater forgiveness. When both peer victimization and emotional intelligence are increased by one unit, the interaction term Int_1 (0.0037) reflects the additional change in forgiveness projected value. The interaction effect ($p < 0.001$) is statistically significant, indicating that emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between peer victimization and forgiveness.

Table 3: Product Terms Key

Interaction	R2-chang	F-value	df1	df2	p
PRVMTOL*EMISTL	0.0017	0.9651	1	248	0.0000

It has been shown that the collective impact of peer victimization and emotional intelligence accounts for an extra 0.17% of the variance in forgiveness, surpassing the influence of each individual component. The observed interaction effect demonstrates statistical significance (F-value = 0.9651, $p < 0.001$), hence enhancing the predictive capacity of the model. The interplay between peer victimization and emotional intelligence significantly influences the process of forgiving. The study suggests that there is a moderating effect of emotional intelligence on the association between peer victimization and forgiveness. The correlation between elevated emotional intelligence and increased forgiveness is well-documented, but, the connection between peer victimization and forgiveness is more complex and contingent upon the individual's emotional intelligence level. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that the observed impact of peer victimization on forgiveness does not demonstrate statistical significance within this particular group.

DISCUSSION

Given the importance attributed by the literature to victimization and EI regarding emotional adjustment, the present study went one step further by examining several factors that may be relevant to these relationships. Thus, the objectives of this research were, first, to examine the effect of emotional intelligence in the association between peer victimization and forgiveness among high school students in Pakistan. The results indicated that emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between peer victimization and forgiveness among high school students in Pakistan. The findings also allow to conclude that EI may moderate the relationship between peer victimization and forgiveness. Furthermore, considering that previous research infers that emotional intelligence has shown to have a protective role on victimization (Quintana-Orts et al., 2019), this work has achieved to deepen into the

relationship between victimization and EI. In this sense, the results indicated that forgiveness was negatively associated with victimization and positively associated with EI. In line with these findings, previous studies have identified that difficulties in peer relationships, like victimization, may have a myriad of negative consequences impacting student's performers [71]. However, these works do not attribute this association to better emotion management, typical of EI, but instead, they suggest that several variables may moderate this relationship. The first hypothesis proposed in this study postulated that emotional intelligence moderates the relationship between peer victimization and forgiveness among high school students in Pakistan. Taking into account that emotional intelligence was directly related to peer victimization, the results obtained confirm this hypothesis since this relationship was moderated by emotional intelligence. Despite the difficulty of finding studies that include analysis of emotional intelligence in the context of peer victimization and forgiveness some research could support the results of this study, indicating that emotional intelligence may play an indirect role in the psychological wellbeing of adolescent victims of bullying [4]. Despite the fact that the self-concept is not the only mediator of this relationship, there are still important gaps in the literature about that. The results supported partially this hypothesis since EI only moderated the impact of victimization on self-concept. These findings are consistent with previous works, which despite being focused on cyber victimization, have analyzed the influence of EI on emotional adjustment variables, such as self-concept in victims [56]. Although these studies do not confirm the moderating effect of EI between victimization and self-concept, the literature on cyberbullying suggests that victimization could have less impact on self-perception and self-assessment when victims have high levels of EI [61]. Based on these findings and taking into account that self-concept can act as a mediator in the relationship between victimization and satisfaction with life, the moderating effect of IE could be observed indirectly on satisfaction with life, by exerting its influence on through self-concept. The literature supports the idea that higher levels of EI promote the use of adaptive strategies in uncomfortable or difficult situations, preserving the positive assessment of life in general [56] [72]. Therefore, it is not strange to find studies suggesting that EI may act as a buffer between maltreatment experiences and life satisfaction (by alleviating the emotional discomfort associated with these experiences [56]). The results obtained in this research highlight, on the one hand, the role that self-concept plays in the relationship between victimization and life satisfaction. And on the other, the importance of the effect that EI has on self-concept and satisfaction with life in the context of peer victimization. Therefore, the data of this study underline the protective and moderating factor of EI on the negative impact that victimization has on the emotional adjustment of victims.

Author Contributions

In this research, the researcher Assist Prof Dr Gizem Oneri Uzun contributed as a supervisor such as Conceptualization also helping in Discussion and the other researcher Mr. Shahbaz Ali Shahzad did the rest of the work like, write Introduction, Hypothesis, Methodologies as well as Analysis, Results and the Conclusions also drafting the whole research.

Institutional Review Board Statement

The study followed the guidelines established by the Declaration Scientific Research Ethics Committee, thereby ensuring the ethical integrity of the research. The study received ethical approval from the Scientific Research Ethics Committee of Near East University, under the approval code NEU/SS/2022/994 and the approval date of 30 May 2022. This approval

indicates that the study underwent evaluation and was determined to be ethically sound by the designated committee. By adhering to these ethical protocols and obtaining approval, the study exhibited its dedication to maintaining the principles of scientific integrity and ensuring the protection of the well-being of the participants involved.

Informed Consent Statement

All subjects in the study provided informed consent.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study can be obtained from the first author upon request.

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Conflicts of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest declared by the authors.

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