Promoting forgiveness in cases of bullying: A review

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Keyword :	**Abstract**
Forgiveness; bullying; review. ***Corresponding Author:** Arifah Handayani Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta Email : arifahafif69@gmail.com	A systematic review on promoting forgiveness in addressing victimization analyzed 36 studies selected from 72 articles retrieved from the Scopus database spanning the years 2004 to 2023. Included articles were required to be in English, present at least an abstract, not be review articles themselves, and focus on forgiveness among victims of bullying. Critical factors influencing forgiveness identified in the literature encompass the nature of bullying, the presence of justice and punishment, empathy, timing of interventions, personal beliefs, and cognitive processes. Age-related differences also emerged as significant, necessitating tailored approaches for children, adolescents, and adults. Proposed strategies include implementing restorative justice initiatives for children, employing avoidance strategies for adolescents, and recognizing the religious dimensions for adults. Integrating forgiveness-oriented programs in educational settings, parenting practices, and workplace training is essential for shifting victims' negative perceptions toward positive outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Human beings are inherently social creatures, bound by relationships with others. These interactions sometimes lead to problems and can result in prolonged conflicts, such as bullying. Bullying is a persistent social phenomenon that occurs across various aspects of human life, stemming from interactions between individuals, peer groups, and broader social relationships (Swearer & Hymel, 2015). Characterised by repeated aggressive behaviour, bullying involves two or more individuals with unequal power or strength (Smith, 2016). However, (Cuadrado-gordillo, 2011) notes that victims often perceive the perpetrator's intent to cause harm as more significant than the repetition of actions or the power imbalance.

Common types of bullying include mocking physical appearance or facial features and ostracizing the victim from activities or ignoring them (Švecová et al., 2023). This can involve name-calling, physical threats, and spreading rumors (Thomas et al., 2016). Perspectives on the most impactful type of bullying vary. In England, physical bullying is considered the most dangerous (Maunder et al., 2010), while in Taiwan, relational bullying, such as spreading rumors, is deemed more harmful than physical bullying (Chen et al., 2012). In Australia, neglect is the most feared form of bullying (Thomas et al., 2016), whereas in Germany, cyberbullying is perceived as the most impactful type (Baier et al., 2019). Verbal bullying has the highest negative impact on the African population (Man et al., 2022).

Globally, bullying occurs across various domains of life, making it a significant policy challenge, particularly regarding mental health. Exposure to bullying is strongly associated with an increased likelihood

of mental health issues (Källmén & Hallgren, 2021). The impact of bullying manifests in numerous mental health problems, including depression, PTSD, social anxiety, and suicidal ideation (Ahmad Bhat & Amin, 2023). Conversely, poor mental health can also render children and adolescents more vulnerable to becoming victims of bullying (Le et al., 2019).

Childhood bullying has detrimental effects on mental health (Armitage, 2021). As (Arseneault, 2018) highlights, the long-term effects of bullying include academic underachievement and deteriorating social relationships in adulthood. In the workplace, bullying significantly impairs personal capabilities, reduces performance, and leads to physical and psychological fatigue (Zanabazar et al., 2023). Victims of bullying require psychological support to mitigate the negative impacts they experience. If not addressed promptly and appropriately, these effects can worsen. From the perpetrator's perspective, meeting their psychological needs through the application of an authoritative teaching style can help reduce their intention to bully (Purwandari et al., 2024). Evidence also suggests that moderate support from friends and family can protect adolescent bullying victims from poor academic performance, although this support may not fully shield them from mental health issues (Rothon et al., 2011).

The various impacts of bullying necessitate tailored interventions based on the specific conditions and culture of each country. According to a UNICEF data report in 2022, 45% of the 2,777 children in Indonesia have been victims of cyberbullying. There is a positive relationship between narcissistic behavior and cyberbullying (Permatasari & Wu, 2021). Additionally, characteristics of the Dark Triad Personality—Machiavellianism, Psychopathy, and Narcissism—are directly correlated with cyberbullying behavior, with Machiavellianism being the strongest predictor, followed by Psychopathy and Narcissism (Safaria et al., 2020). A systematic literature review by (Hassan et al., 2022) brings promising news that awareness of the impact of cyberbullying and efforts to prevent it have increased.

Rijlaarsdam et al. (2021) have noted that exposure to bullying is a risk factor for developing psychopathology. This underscores the importance of focusing on the psychological healing of victims rather than solely on punishing perpetrators. Zambuto et al. (2022) argue that addressing bullying would be more effective by empowering victims rather than concentrating on punitive measures against perpetrators. One empowerment strategy is the victim's willingness to forgive the perpetrator (Merolla, 2017; Sa'odah et al., 2023).

However, peace efforts can be hindered when victims choose retaliation or avoidance (Worthington et al., 2016). Blaming and refusing to forgive can be counterproductive in reducing the risk of future offenses by perpetrators (Lacey & Pickard, 2015). Nonetheless, forgiveness may be deemed futile if victims perceive intentional wrongdoing in the violation (Martinez-diaz et al., 2021). Moreover, peace efforts may fail when victims feel unsupported by third parties who indirectly express disagreement with the victim's decision to forgive the perpetrator (Eaton et al., 2022).

Forgiveness involves an individual's emotional and psychological processes and has long been proposed as an effective means of addressing oppression after incidents. Forgiveness represents an intra-individual and prosocial change that is expected to alter the victim's attitude towards the perpetrator, fostering

a more comfortable state of mind without resentment or the need to avoid the perpetrator (Worthington, 2019). According to Worthington et al. (2019), forgiveness is understood as an effort to relinquish one's right to seek retribution for the sake of justice. The principle is to transform the victim's negative emotions into positive ones (Egan & Todorov, 2009). Consistent choices to forgive by victims towards perpetrators are anticipated to have positive impacts on physical and mental health, reduce stress levels, and increase life satisfaction. However, Enright & Fitzgibbons (2015) caution that forgiveness is not always synonymous with reconciliation between the victim and the perpetrator of bullying or automatically restoring damaged relationships. Forgiveness also does not guarantee the resumption of relationships with the bullying perpetrator.

The theme of forgiveness is more frequently discussed among adults, with limited research focusing on forgiveness in children. Vera Cruz et al. (2024) indicate that children up to the age of four do not yet comprehend the concept of forgiveness. Only between the ages of four and seven do children begin to understand forgiveness, gradually considering the consequences of offenses against them. Nonetheless, children learn about and are taught forgiveness from an early age, both in the family and at school. According to Garthe & Guz (2019), forgiveness in children involves abilities in self-regulation (emotions, cognition, and behavior), skills in problem-solving strategies, and socialization abilities to interact with others in various situations. Krause (2015) states that older adults are more likely to decide to forgive, whereas differences in cognitive abilities significantly influence children's tendencies to forgive (Wal et al., 2014).

Addressing recovery from the impact of bullying is essential, and one widely agreed-upon aspect is forgiveness. However, forgiveness is a personal choice that cannot be forced. Not all painful events can be resolved through forgiveness, and not everyone is willing to forgive for various reasons (Castillo, 2022). Thus, although forgiveness is one alternative option in efforts to recover the mental health of bullying victims, the question of whether forgiveness can be applied in various bullying victim situations and the role forgiveness plays in different bullying cases remains not fully understood. Specifically, it is crucial to determine what factors influence an individual's forgiveness process in bullying cases. Additionally, are there differences in the role of forgiveness at various stages of developmental age? This article offers a systematic review of the importance of forgiveness attitudes as seen from various bullying cases affecting victims in different locations and across varying ages.

METHOD

This article review was conducted using the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews) guidelines. The search strategy involved querying the Scopus database with the keywords "forgiv*" AND "bullying." Articles were included based on specific criteria: they had to discuss forgiveness in victims of bullying, be written in English, present at least an abstract, not be review articles, and be published between 2004 and 2023. The selection process is illustrated in Figure 2, which shows the number of articles that met the inclusion criteria. All authors collaborated to ensure accurate data extraction and analysis.

A total of thirty-six articles from various countries were collected (Figure 1), with the highest representation from China (25%), followed by Spain (14%), Australia (11%), and others (42%). The research approaches included 31 quantitative studies, 4 qualitative studies, and 1 mixed-method study. Including diverse research approaches allowed for comprehensive comparisons and deeper insights. The characteristics of the selected articles are detailed in Table 1, which includes information on the title, author, year of publication, country, participant characteristics, type of research, sample size, age, gender, measurement scales used, research results, and implications.

The samples primarily consisted of school students, followed by participants in workplace settings, with none focusing on family environments. One study was conducted in an orphanage. Notably, one study used the same participant data for two different research titles by the same author in different years. In total, approximately 23,273 participants were reported. Sample sizes ranged from 10 to 24 for qualitative studies, 134 to 2,758 for quantitative studies, and 95 for the mixed-method study. The participants included teenagers/students (58%), adults/employees (25%), and children (17%). The youngest mean age was 8.28 years, and the oldest was 43.38 years. The percentage of female participants ranged from 42.9% to 84.1%. Most reported bullying incidents were relational, occurring mainly among peers or colleagues rather than by teachers or leaders.

The research approaches employed in the studies included quantitative methods (longitudinal, experimental, cross-sectional) and qualitative methods (phenomenology, grounded theory, case study). The TRIM-18 (Transgression-Related Interpersonal Motivations Inventory) was the most frequently used scale for measuring forgiveness, while a variety of scales were used to assess bullying, with no single scale predominating. Participant attrition was relatively low, with an average participation rate exceeding 75%, ranging from 76.50% to 99%. Reasons for dropout included skepticism about the benefits of the study, a lack of understanding of bullying, and difficulties in contacting participants. This diverse methodological approach provided a comprehensive perspective on the role of forgiveness in cases of bullying.

Research on forgiveness among bullying victims is predominantly quantitative. Findings from these studies primarily recommend fostering forgiveness attitudes across various life domains, including school, family, and the workplace. However, since these studies mainly explore or determine relationships between variables, their results often lack depth. Further qualitative research is needed to provide a more nuanced understanding. For example, victims of criminal-related bullying show lower motivations to forgive compared to those experiencing non-criminal bullying (Gerlsma & Lugtmeyer, 2018). However, there is no in-depth explanation of the background, types of bullying, and the extent of its impact, leading victims to choose not to forgive.

Conversely, qualitative research delves deeper into the psychological dynamics of victims, offering more personal insights. While this research typically involves individual interviews, it could be enhanced by conducting Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) to obtain more accurate results, especially in studies involving specific groups or communities. Forgiveness is a highly complex variable, and subjective or self-report methods may introduce bias. A mixed-methods approach, which combines both qualitative and quantitative

research, addresses the limitations inherent in using either method alone. However, this review identified only one mixed-methods study.
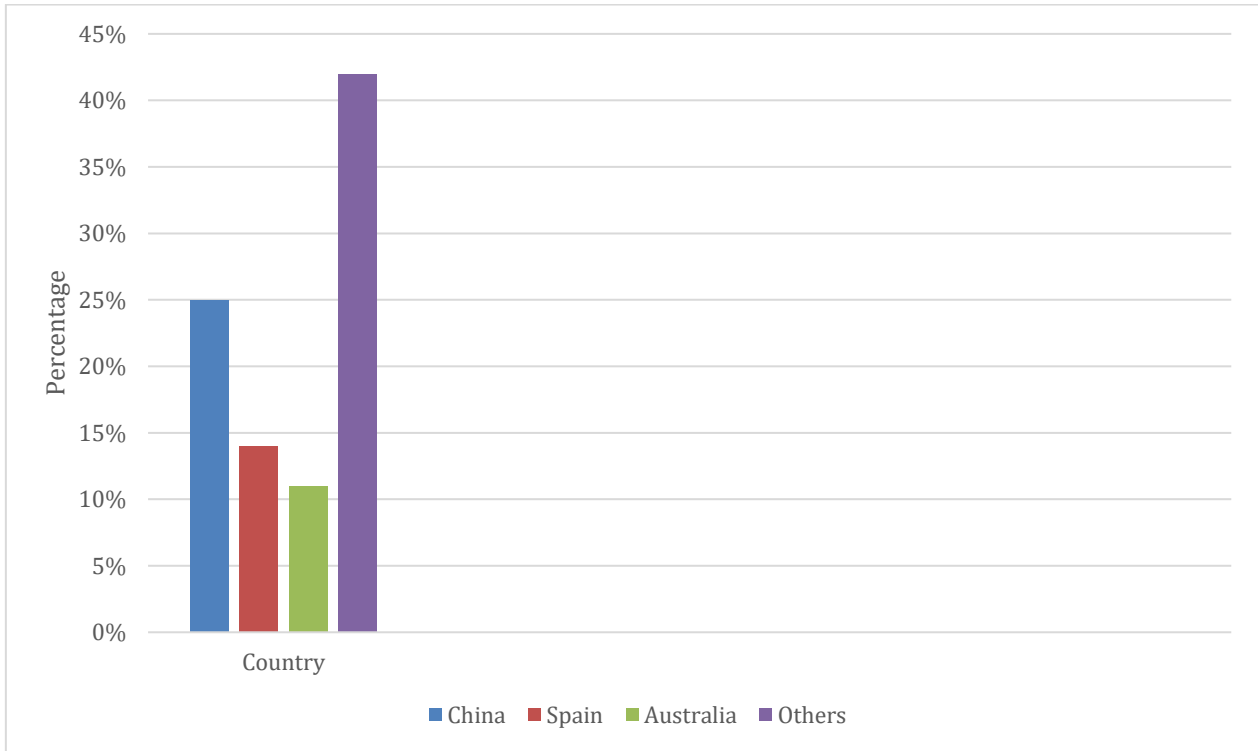

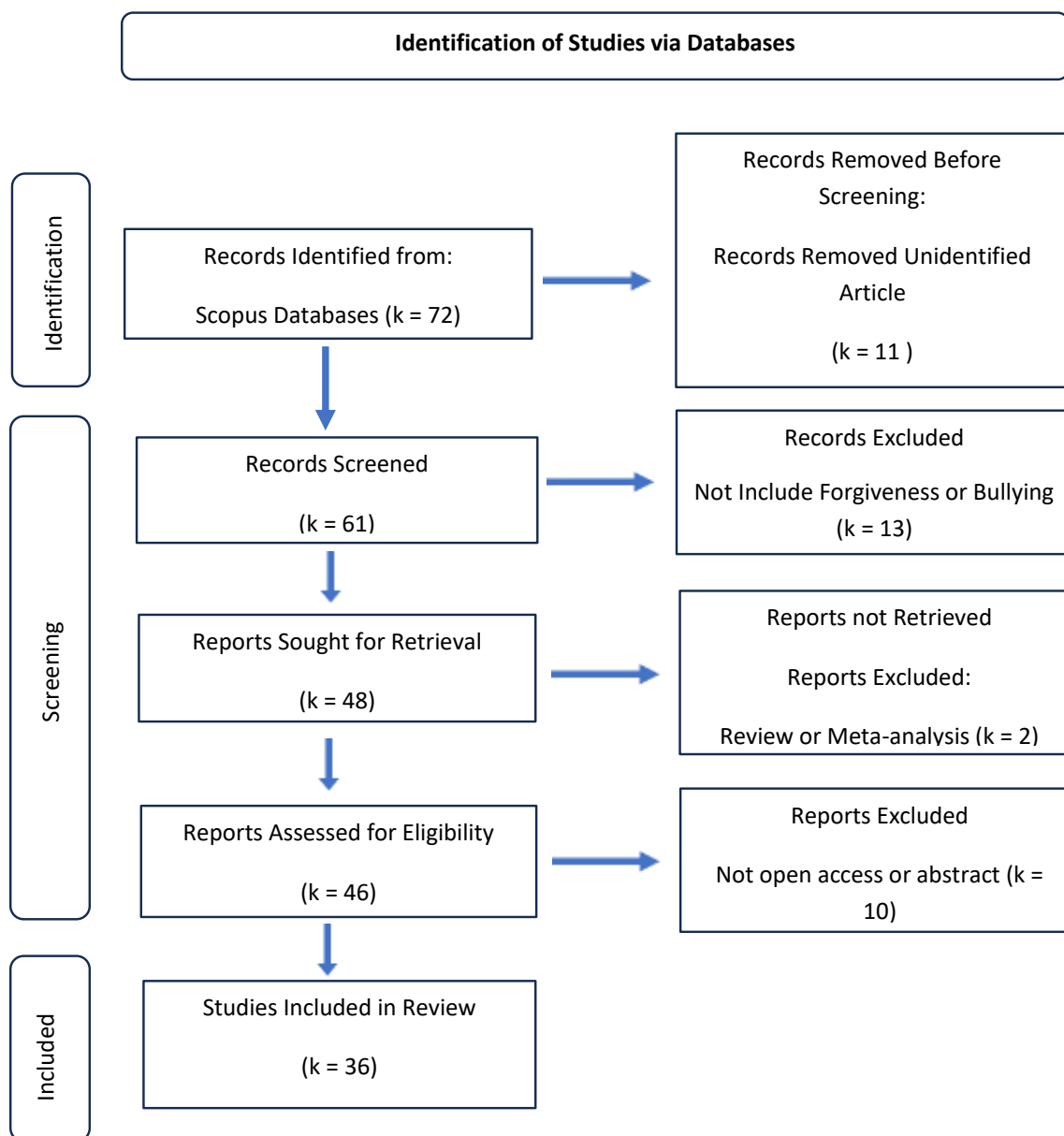**Figure 1.** Research's Country Distribution

Identification of Studies via Databases

Identification	

Records Identified from:

Scopus Databases (k = 72)

Records Removed Before Screening:

Records Removed Unidentified Article

(k = 11)

Records Screened

(k = 61)

Records Excluded

Not Include Forgiveness or Bullying (k = 13)

Reports Sought for Retrieval

(k = 48)

Reports not Retrieved

Reports Excluded:

Review or Meta-analysis (k = 2)

Reports Assessed for Eligibility

(k = 46)

Reports Excluded

Not open access or abstract (k = 10)

Studies Included in Review

(k = 36)

Figure 2. The research's PRISMA-style flow diagram

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Overall, this study's findings support the effectiveness of forgiveness in addressing cases of bullying. There is significant potential for bullying victims to derive benefits from choosing forgiveness. Positive impacts include reduced tendencies towards revenge (Flanagan et al., 2012), mitigation of suicidal ideation (Liu et al., 2013), decreased levels of proactive and reactive aggression (Watson et al., 2017; García-Vázquez, Parra-Pérez, et al., 2020), improvements in heart health and restoration of systolic blood pressure (May et al., 2021), enhanced psychological well-being (Barcaccia et al., 2017; Barcaccia et al., 2018; Eroglu et al., 2022), facilitation of reconciliation or peace between victims and perpetrators (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006; Berndsen et al., 2018), and a reduced likelihood of victims becoming bullies themselves (Quintana-Orts & Rey, 2018).

Conversely, choosing not to forgive can lead to a higher risk of psychopathology compared to those who do forgive (Van Rensburg & Raubenheimer, 2015), increased symptoms of depression (Rey et al., 2020), elevated stress levels (Sharma & Prasad, 2022), and a heightened propensity for aggression (Quintana-Orts et al., 2020). However, the forgiveness process is influenced by various factors, including developmental stages.

Factors Influencing Forgiveness in Victims of Bullying

Forgiveness in victims of bullying is influenced by a complex interplay of factors, 1) Nature of the Bullying, the type of bullying significantly influences victims' propensity to forgive. Victims subjected to criminal acts such as physical violence, sexual assault, theft, and threats demonstrate less inclination to forgive compared to those experiencing non-criminal behaviors such as social exclusion and indirect aggression (Gerlsma & Lugtmeyer, 2018). his distinction underscores the pivotal role of offense severity and criminal nature in shaping the forgiveness process. Therefore, there is a need for differentiated approaches in attitudes towards forgiveness, particularly concerning perpetrators of criminal acts, taking into account the varying levels of harm experienced by victims (Gerlsma & Lugtmeyer, 2018; Mishra et al., 2018).

2) Punishment and Justice, in this study, none of the victims of bullying unequivocally refused to forgive their perpetrators. However, there must be a consequence or punishment that accompanies the act of forgiveness. The presence of consequences or punishment for the perpetrator often facilitates the forgiveness process. When victims perceive that justice has been served, they are more likely to forgive the perpetrator (Gerlsma & Lugtmeyer, 2018; Mishra et al., 2018; Salifu Yendork et al., 2022). This combination of punishment and forgiveness validates victims and acknowledges their feelings and experiences. Empowering victims to speak out is more effective than either not punishing the perpetrator at all or punishing without allowing victims the opportunity to express their experiences (Strelan et al., 2017).

3) Empathy and Restorative Justice, forgiveness also considers the perpetrator's perspective on the incident (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006; Berndsen et al., 2018). It is more likely to occur when the perpetrator comprehends the impact of their actions and shows genuine remorse (Salifu Yendork et al., 2022). However, perpetrators sometimes employ moral disengagement mechanisms to justify their negative behavior (Gini et al., 2014). For example, they may argue that their actions were driven by anger or disappointment with the victim. A recent meta-analysis by Luo & Bussey (2023) corroborates the association between moral disengagement and aggressive behavior, as well as anti-social attitudes. Restorative justice approaches, which focus on repairing harm and fostering empathy, are particularly effective in encouraging forgiveness (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006; Cantu & Chen, 2021). Victims are more willing to forgive when they witness the perpetrator acknowledging their wrongdoing and making amends (Watson et al., 2017; Berndsen et al., 2018; Cantu & Chen, 2021; Salifu Yendork et al., 2022).

4) Timing, immediate forgiveness is generally not advisable, as victims need time to process their emotions. An interval of avoidance or distance from the perpetrator allows victims to recover and later

contemplate forgiveness (Watson et al., 2016; Watson et al., 2017). This period is crucial for emotional healing, preventing victims from feeling pressured into premature forgiveness.

5) Personal and Social Factors, the forgiveness process following bullying is complex and influenced by various individual factors. Victims with strong beliefs in a just world may find it particularly challenging to forgive, as the bullying disrupts their sense of fairness (Wang et al., 2022). Gender differences also play a role, with research indicating that forgiveness might be more effective for females (Sechi et al., 2023). Additionally, self-introspection, where victims reflect on their own experiences and responses, is crucial in facilitating forgiveness (Recchia et al., 2020). A meta-analysis by Akhtar & Barlow (2018) demonstrates that the inability or unwillingness to forgive is often associated with negative emotions such as depression, stress, anxiety, and anger. Similarly, Juvonen & Graham (2013) found that victims of bullying frequently experience depression and low self-esteem. Therefore, promoting forgiveness as a sole strategy for bullying victims requires careful consideration. It is essential to prioritize the maintenance of the victim's self-esteem to prevent further decline and mitigate the burden of negative emotions.

6) Cognitive Processes, forgiveness involves substantial cognitive, affective, and behavioral transformations. Victims often engage in a cognitive evaluation, weighing the benefits of forgiving against the drawbacks of retaining negative emotions. Effective forgiveness programs need to address these cognitive dimensions, offering counseling and support to help victims reframe their experiences and develop a forgiving mindset (Watson et al., 2016; Darimis et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023). Enright & Fitzgibbons (2015) argue that for complete forgiveness to occur, changes must take place across all three domains: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. This perspective is supported by Salavera et al. (2021), who found a correlation between cognitive aggression and empathy, particularly among victims of bullying.

Differences in Forgiveness at Various Ages

The approach to forgiveness varies significantly across different age groups, reflecting developmental and cognitive differences are 1) Children, in children, forgiveness is often associated with restorative justice approaches, which aim to resolve conflicts peacefully and promote the long-term development of positive social behaviors. Pérez-Jorge et al. (2023) suggest that implementing restorative justice strategies for resolving bullying cases in children can better support the expedited resolution of conflicts. However, a challenge in the restorative justice process is the lack of proper understanding of its meaning, making it difficult for the families of victims to reconcile by forgiving the perpetrators. Winslade (2018) notes that restorative justice is only applicable to specific bullying cases, considering the young age of children and their long futures ahead. Forgiveness can indeed reduce the long-term impact of childhood bullying (Theodora et al., 2023). However, the choice of forgiveness in adulthood may be unrelated to whether a person has experienced bullying in childhood (Sansone et al., 2014). It is important to note that childhood bullying is a strong predictor of bullying in later adolescent stages (Connell et al., 2016).

Children's understanding of justice and forgiveness is still developing, and restorative practices provide a structured way for them to learn these concepts. However, their limited comprehension of restorative

justice can sometimes complicate the forgiveness process (Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006; (Sansone et al., 2014; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2021). Jin (2023) emphasizes that the goal of restorative justice is to mend the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator while maintaining a balance of rights and responsibilities for the bully. Restorative justice fosters positive relationships between peers and between students and teachers by developing social and emotional skills (Lodi et al., 2022). The focus is on resolving conflicts in a manner that supports children's growth and future potential, highlighting the importance of tailoring interventions to their developmental stage.

2) Adolescents, for adolescents, immediate forgiveness may be less suitable due to their heightened emotional state and evolving cognitive abilities. Research suggests a period of avoidance and reflection is more appropriate before deciding to forgive (Watson et al., 2017; Strelan et al., 2017; Cantu & Chen, 2021). External pressure to forgive quickly should be avoided; instead, adolescents require time to process their emotions and observe genuine behavioral changes in the transgressor (Watson et al., 2017; Strelan et al., 2017; Barcaccia et al., 2018; Cantu & Chen, 2021). This may include a period of self-protection, particularly if there is a risk of continued bullying, until the perpetrator demonstrates a clear shift in behavior (Boulton et al., 2017).

Adolescents also face social pressures and motivations for revenge, which can complicate the forgiveness process (Watson et al., 2017; León-Moreno et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2022). It is important to recognize that adolescents who regain their strength have the choice to either punish or forgive (Strelan et al., 2017). Forgiving during adolescence does not negate the need for appropriate consequences for the perpetrator (Cantu & Chen, 2021). Forgiveness should stem from genuine awareness and personal growth, rather than as a response to external pressures. This aligns with the notion that forgiveness should not result from social pressure or a desire to demonstrate moral superiority, but should arise from an awareness of forgiveness after observing changes in the perpetrator or considering the perpetrator's perspective as worthy of forgiveness (Belicki et al., 2020).

However, the effectiveness of forgiveness as a protective factor for bullying victims remains a subject of debate. While some studies suggest limited benefits (Wang et al., 2022), (Sansone et al., 2014), others posit that forgiveness, akin to strong friendships, can be protective (Barcaccia et al., 2018). A meta-analysis by (Quintana-Orts et al., 2019) further supports this notion, indicating that adolescents with higher forgiveness tendencies are less likely to engage in bullying behavior themselves and are also less likely to be targeted by bullies.

3) Adults, compared to adolescents, adults possess a more nuanced and critical understanding of forgiveness, shaped by factors such as life experiences, cognitive maturity, and religious beliefs (Sansone et al., 2014; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2021). This allows adults to weigh the potential benefits and drawbacks of forgiveness more effectively, considering its impact on mental health and relationships. Religious involvement is generally associated with a greater propensity to forgive (Krause, 2018), although challenges with self-forgiveness and forgiveness in specific situations may persist (Matuszewski & Moroń, 2022). The relationship between childhood bullying experiences and adult forgiveness attitudes can vary, underscoring

the long-term impact of early experiences on one's ability to forgive later in life (Sansone et al., 2014; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2021).

Understanding these factors and the variations in forgiveness across different age groups is essential for developing effective support mechanisms for bullying victims. Tailored interventions that take into account the victim's age, the nature of bullying experienced, and individual psychological factors can foster forgiveness and improve psychological well-being, thereby mitigating the long-term adverse effects of bullying.

Table 1. Summary of the Selected Articles

No	Author & Country	Objective	Materials & Methods	Results	Suggestion & Implications
1	(Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2005)\n\nBangladesh	Predicting bullying from three variables: shame, forgiveness, and shaming.	Quantitative\n\n1,875 school children in grades 7-10 (60% girls). Average age 8.28 years.	The significant impact of forgiveness, resulting in a 22.4% reduction in bullying, surpasses the effect observed with reintegrative shame, which yielded an 11.3% decrease	Forgiveness emerges as a more potent restorative practice compared to reintegrative shame.
2	(Ahmed & Braithwaite, 2006)\n\nBangladesh	Examining the interplay among forgiveness, reconciliation, shame, and bullying in school settings	Quantitative\n\n1,875 teenagers (60% women) grades 7-10 Average age 8.28 years.	The findings indicate that forgiveness and reconciliation significantly predicted reduced incidents of bullying.	The study underscores the imperative for implementing restorative justice frameworks to address forgiveness in educational contexts.
3	(Hui et al., 2011)\n\nChina	Advocating for promoting the values of harmony and forgiveness across all school levels in China as a strategy to mitigate bullying.	Qualitative	Highlighted the proactive role of enhancing young people's interpersonal skills and competencies as a preventive measure against bullying.	Implementing an educational environment that emphasizes forgiveness represents a proactive stance in the battle against bullying.
4	(Flanagan et al., 2012)\n\nAmerica	Exploring forgiveness as a coping response to negative peer interactions.	Quantitative\n\n616 early teens grades 6-8 in secondary school (46% female)	A positive correlation between forgiveness and self-esteem, alongside a negative correlation with social anxiety.	Underscored the utility of adopting a forgiving attitude in conflict resolution processes to deter retaliatory behaviors.
5	(Liu et al., 2013)\n\nChina	Examining the relationship between bullying, suicidal ideation, and forgiveness.	Quantitative\n\n962 secondary school students	Victims who exhibited high levels of forgiveness reported lower levels of suicidal ideation..	Forgiveness serves as a protective factor against suicidal ideation among student victims.
6	(Sansone et al., 2014)\n\nChina	Examining the relationship between bullying in childhood and general forgiveness status in adulthood.	Quantitative\n\n301 outpatients	There was no relationship between having experienced bullying in childhood and being forgiving of others in adulthood.	Bullying experienced in childhood has no effect on the decision to forgive in adulthood..

7	(Van Rensburg & Raubenheimer, 2015) English	Investigating forgiveness as a mediator of poor mental health problems experienced by perpetrators. and victims of bullying.	Quantitative 355 grade 10 students. Age 14-16 (14.9) years. 166 (47.56%) men, 183 (52.44%) women.	Bullied adolescents who are unable to forgive others are more likely to report higher levels of psychopathology	Forgiveness can play an important role in anti-bullying prevention and education programs
8	(Watson et al., 2016) Caucasian & Asian	Evaluating the impact of imagining responses of forgiveness, avoidance, or revenge toward the perpetrator among young adult victims of bullying.	Quantitative 135 undergraduate psychology students aged 17-24 (18.39) years. (110/81.5% women, 25/18.5% men)	Negative effects decreased significantly in the forgiveness and avoidance conditions, but not in the revenge condition.	Combining short-term avoidance and long-term forgiveness could be an effective strategy for coping with the negative emotional consequences of bullying.
9	(Barcaccia et al., 2017) Italy	Examining components of forgiveness (benevolence, decreased avoidance, and desire for revenge) as mediators of the negative effects of bullying.	Quantitative 319 age students 14-22 (17.05) years old (153/47.8% men, 163/50.9% women.	Releasing unforgiveness is beneficial for the psychological well-being of adolescents.	It is important to help victims of bullying overcome the negative mental health effects by encouraging forgiveness.
10	(Quintana-Orts & Rey, 2018) Spain	Examining forgiveness and cyberbullying as predictors of cyberbullying aggression.	Quantitative 1,650 students aged 11-20 (14.10) years (825/49.5% boys and 840/50.5% girls)	Forgiveness is an important predictor of transitioning from being a victim of cyberbullying to becoming a bully.	Anti-cyberbullying interventions should also prioritize enhancing forgiveness among adolescents.
11	(Watson et al., 2017) Australia	Looking at the influence of different forms of advice (forgiveness, avoidance, revenge) on reactions to bullying. .	Quantitative 184 children aged 11-15 (13) years from private schools (80/43.5% women, 104/56.5% men)	Students are most inclined to heed advice centered around avoidance, while empathy is most frequently observed.	Avoidance and forgiveness are recommended as effective responses to ameliorate the aggressive tendencies among victimized adolescents.
12	(Berndsen et al., 2018) Australia	Testing the argument that taking the perpetrator's perspective promotes conciliation in the victim.	Quantitative 141 psychology students with an average age of 22.45 years (78% women, 22% men)	When victims perceive the perpetrator as empathizing with their perspective, they also perceive them as experiencing more moral emotions, thereby promoting greater reconciliation.	It is crucial to consider the victim's perspective and their psychological processes that facilitate peace-oriented attitudes following conflict.
13	(Strelan et al., 2017) Australia	Examines the process by which punishment enables forgiveness and tests the proposition that punishment restores a sense of justice to the victim.	Quantitative 69 undergraduates (43 women, 26 men) Average age 19.61	Victims who have the opportunity to reclaim their agency play a pivotal role in the relationship between punishment and forgiveness.	It is crucial for programs to comprehend the victim's perspective regarding the decision to punish or forgive.

14	(Ogurlu & Sarıçam, 2018) Türkiye	Comparing gender, bullying, victimization, obedient behavior, and forgiveness between gifted and non-talented students.	Quantitative 284 secondary school students 142 gifted (64/45.07% female, 78/54, 93% male) 142 not talented 76/55.52% female, 66/46.48% male	The incidence of bullying is lower among gifted students compared to non-gifted students.	Forgiveness can serve as a constructive approach in addressing bullying.
15	(Barcaccia et al., 2018) Italy	Exploring the role of forgiveness and friendship in the psychological adjustment of youth who are victims of bullying.	Quantitative 2,105 teenagers aged 13-20 (15.9) years (979 men, 1126 women)	Forgiveness emerged as a protective factor for adolescents, similar to friendship, although they did not function interactively as protective factors.	Since forgiveness is linked to the well-being of adolescents, integrating forgiveness into prevention and treatment programs for bullying cases would be beneficial.
16	(Gerlsma & Lugtmeyer, 2018) Dutch	Examining the extent to which adolescents' interpersonal responses to bullying in terms of revenge and forgiveness depend on the type of offense.	Quantitative 455 teenagers aged 16-26 (18.08) years (254/55.8% women, 201/44.2% men)	Victims of criminal offenses show less motivation to forgive compared to victims of non-criminal offenses.	To enhance understanding of revenge and forgiveness, it is essential to consider the nature of the offense.
17	(Mishra et al., 2018) India	Knowing the dynamics of forgiveness experienced by respondents.	Qualitative Hermeneutic phenomenological study of 24 employees	Victims experience greater well-being and healing when they forgive, regardless of the particulars of their forgiveness response.	Revenge and forgiveness towards victims who endure minor social offenses cannot be extrapolated to victims of criminal offenses.
18	(Quintana-Orts et al., 2020) Spain	Investigating impact of unforgiveness on bullying victims which ends with cyberbullying aggression as a consequence.	Quantitative 979 teenagers 12-18 (13.72) years old. (436 Men, 543 women)	Stress and motivation for revenge act as mediators between cyberbullying and subsequent behaviors.	Forgiveness offers novel insights into the recovery process for victims of cyberbullying.
19	(García-Vázquez, Valdés-Cuervo, et al., 2020) Mexico	Analyzing the relationship between character strengths (forgiveness and gratitude), happiness, and observers' prosocial behavior in bullying.	Quantitative 500 early teens (286/55% boys, 215/45% girls) 500 mid teens (237/47.5% men, 262/52.5% women) ages 12-18 (14.70) years	Self-moral schemas (such as attitudes of forgiveness and gratitude) and happiness positively correlate with bystander prosocial behavior.	Activation of self-moral schemas (including gratitude and forgiveness) equips observers with a dispositional readiness to engage in appropriate behaviors in bullying contexts.
20	(Liu et al., 2020) China	Examining the relationship between workplace bullying and employee silence and its mechanisms.	Quantitative 322 employees Average age 31.88 years (57.10% men and 42.90% women)	A climate of forgiveness moderates the mediating effect of bullying on employee silence by mitigating its negative impact on victims'	Organizations should consider fostering a workplace atmosphere that promotes mutual forgiveness, friendship, and mutual support among employees.

No					
				psychological safety.	
21	(García-Vázquez, Parra-Pérez, et al., 2020) Mexico	Examining the direct and mediating relationships between forgiveness, gratitude, self-control, and proactive and reactive aggression in proactive and reactive aggression through their positive effects on self-control.	Quantitative 1000 students aged 12-17 years 500 early adolescents (12.36 years) and 500 middle adolescents (16.64 years)	Gratitude and forgiveness positively correlate with self-control, thereby decreasing both proactive and reactive aggression through the beneficial impacts of enhanced self-control.	Forgiveness and gratitude directly and indirectly mitigate proactive and reactive aggression in instances of bullying
22	(Rey et al., 2020) Spain	Analyzing the relationship between positive personal resources and clinical symptoms in adolescent victims of cyberbullying.	Quantitative 251 of 1622 teenagers ages 12-17 (14.03) years (50.2% women, 49.8 men)	Cyberbullying victims experiencing depressive symptoms tend to exhibit lower levels of personal resources, including emotional intelligence, gratitude, optimism, and forgiveness.	There is a critical need to bolster personal resources such as emotional intelligence, gratitude, optimism, and forgiveness among adolescents following experiences of cyberbullying
23	(Yao et al., 2020) China	To explore whether workplace bullying impacts employees' knowledge hiding.	Quantitative 327 technology company R&D employees	Forgiveness culture as a moderator weakens the positive impact of workplace bullying on emotional exhaustion.	Companies must form a good organizational culture to provide a climate of mutual tolerance and forgiveness for employees.
24	(Recchia et al., 2020) Colombia	Examining how adolescents' desires and actions for revenge are juxtaposed with attitudes of forgiveness and unforgiveness in their peer conflict narratives.	Mixed Method 95 teenagers	Exposure to violence may interfere with adolescents' capacity to reflect on revenge by recognizing their own mistakes and thereby opening the door to forgiveness.	Revenge only on losses in unforgivable events.
25	(Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2021) Spain	Research 1 aims to analyze whether teacher training in the Learning to Forgive Program increases their knowledge about forgiveness. Study 2 evaluated program satisfaction for youth.	Quantitative Study 1, 88 elementary and middle school teachers Average age 43.38 years (15.9% men, 84.1% women). Research 2, 153 students. Mean age was 11.9 years (42.4% men, 57.6 women).	Study 1, a significant increase in the forgiveness group regarding their knowledge about forgiveness. Study 2, high satisfaction with this program and has helped them forgive in a great way.	It is recommended to include education about forgiveness in bullying prevention programs.
26	(May et al., 2021) America	Investigating whether interpersonal forgiveness buffers the relationship	Quantitative 134 medical residents with a mean age of 31.76 years	Forgiveness reduced the harmful association between two forms of workplace bullying	Forgiveness can serve as an effective way to reduce the impact of bullying on medical staff.

		between two forms of workplace bullying and indices of well-being.	(38% women, 62% men)	and depressive symptoms, reduced blame, and cardiovascular reactivity and systolic blood pressure recovery.	
27	(Cantu & Chen, 2021) Texas	Examining experiences of bullying at school.	Qualitative Phenomenology 25 students with disabilities in Texas. Age 11-15 (13.12) years (13/52% women, 12/48% men).	Participants experienced anxiety and depression. However, they also forgive and show sympathy towards the perpetrator.	Healing the emotional wounds and psychological wounds experienced by victims of bullying, they need to forgive the perpetrators and at the same time also receive appropriate punishment.
28	(León-Moreno et al., 2021) Spanish	Analyzing the relationship between forgiveness, loneliness, and peer bullying based on gender.	Quantitative 617 students aged 10-16 (13.04) years (49.3% women, 50.7% men)	Most adolescents who were victimized by peers showed higher levels of revenge motivation, avoidance motivation, and emotional loneliness as well as negative appraisals of their social networks.	In project design interventions can encourage forgiveness in interpersonal conflicts as a prevention strategy for peer bullying.
29	(Darimis et al., 2022) Indonesia	Comparing the effectiveness of cognitive behavioral counseling with reframing and group counseling with discussion techniques for students who are victims of verbal bullying.	Quantitative 80 high school students, 40 students in the experimental group, and 40 students in the control group.	The involvement of cognitive-behavioral elements in counseling has been proven to help foster an attitude of forgiveness in students who are victims of verbal bullying.	This research was then used as a reference for effectively handling victims of verbal bullying by forgiving in cognitive-behavioral counseling.
30	(Eroglu et al., 2022) Türkiye	Uncovering underlying mechanisms that may influence the well-being of cyber victims.	Quantitative 337 age students 14-19 (16.56) years old (168/49.9% women, 169/50.1% men)	Forgiveness has a positive impact on the well-being of cyberbullying victims.	Psycho-educational programs help increase forgiveness, thereby improving the well-being of cyberbullying victims.
31	(Sharma & Prasad, 2022) India	To explore the relationship between workplace bullying and impact on employee behavior in the Indian healthcare sector.	Qualitative Grounded Theory 48 resident doctors	The prevalence of severe work stress among doctors working in health services is bullying.	Forgiveness emerges as a coping strategy in destructive work cultures.
32	(Yao et al., 2022) China	Explores the mechanisms underlying the impact of workplace bullying.	Quantitative 306 employees with an average age of 27.22 years (42.88% female, 57.12% male)	Workplace bullying causes more emotional exhaustion which influences moral disengagement, which ultimately results in employee unethical behavior.	A climate of forgiveness is perceived as a conditional factor that weakens the impact of workplace bullying on emotional exhaustion.

33	(Salifu Yendork et al., 2022) Ghana	Exploring the negative experiences of children in orphanages, their understanding of forgiveness, and the process and motivation for forgiveness.	Qualitative 10 aged orphanage children 9-18 years old	Even though they have good relationships with their friends and caregivers, they also experience insults and bullying.	The forgiveness process is carried out by informing the perpetrator about the impact of their behavior and reporting the perpetrator to the authorities.
34	(Wang et al., 2022) China	Examining the moderating role of interpersonal forgiveness.	Quantitative 831 students mean age 19.66 (556/66.43% women, 281/33.57% men)	Victim of bullying Those who have beliefs about world justice are those with a low level of forgiveness.	Forgiveness cannot always act as a protector for victims of bullying.
35	(Sechi et al., 2023) Italy	To investigate the mediating effect of a forgiving disposition on the relationship between victimization and cyberbullying.	Quantitative 481 teenagers aged 14-19 (17.2) years (229/47.8% women, 252/52.4% men)	Forgiveness reduces cyberbullying behavior by containing the negative impact of bullying victims, especially female victims.	The importance of the relevance of forgiveness in preventive interventions against bullying and cyberbullying.
36	(J. Liu et al., 2023) China	Investigating whether forgiveness moderates the direct and indirect relationship between peer bullying and adolescents' subjective well-being through self-esteem.	Quantitative 2,758 teenagers aged 14-19 (13.53) years (53.92% female, 46.08% male)	Adolescent victims of bullying with higher levels of forgiveness showed a decrease in self-esteem which was associated with a decrease in subjective well-being.	The importance of understanding the negative impact of bullying on adolescent self-esteem and the limited role of forgiveness as a protective factor.

CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

This meta-analysis underscores the multifaceted nature of forgiveness within the context of bullying. It reveals both its potential benefits and the diverse factors influencing its occurrence. Forgiveness emerges as a powerful tool for mitigating the negative consequences of bullying, demonstrably reducing aggression, protecting against suicidal ideation, fostering psychological well-being, and even facilitating reconciliation between victims and perpetrators (citations needed for specific benefits). However, the path towards forgiveness is not linear. Several factors influence its course, including the severity and nature of the bullying experience, the perceived fairness of justice or punishment delivered, the development of empathy in the perpetrator, the timing of forgiveness attempts, personal belief systems, and the victim's cognitive processing abilities.

The meta-analysis concludes that forgiveness can be a beneficial response to bullying, promoting psychological healing and reducing the long-term impacts of bullying. However, it is not a one-size-fits-all solution and must be approached with consideration of the type of bullying, timing, individual differences, and

the developmental stage of the victim. Tailored interventions that address these factors can enhance the effectiveness of forgiveness and provide better support for bullying victims.

The limitations of this article are based solely on the Scopus database. Although the results have provided answers regarding the role of forgiveness in bullying cases, future research could complement it with additional databases from ProQuest, SpringerLink, or other credible sources of literature. Additionally, forgiveness is a highly complex variable, so utilizing mixed methods research designs can yield more accurate and comprehensive results. Future research should not only focus on bullying victims but also on perpetrators to obtain balanced information. This includes considerations of cultural and religious aspects of individuals to further enrich the diversity of findings.

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