

## Finding Inner Peace: An Exploration of Forgiveness Therapy for Bullying Trauma Recovery

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### Abstract

This study aims to explore the effectiveness of Forgiveness Therapy in reducing the emotional pain of bullying in college students. This case study involved client "DL", a 21-year-old student who experienced bullying during Campus Orientation activities. Data were collected through Forgiveness Therapy sessions and analyzed using the Forgiveness Therapy Outcome Assessment. The results showed that the client experienced deep trauma, social anxiety, and depression due to bullying, but after undergoing Forgiveness Therapy, the client felt relief and calmness, and was free from excessive anxiety. This suggests the potential of Forgiveness Therapy in helping bullying victims recover from trauma. Further research needs to be conducted to test the effectiveness of Forgiveness Therapy on different trauma cases, such as sexual violence and domestic violence.

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji efektivitas Forgiveness Therapy dalam mengurangi rasa sakit luka batin akibat bullying pada mahasiswa. Laporan kasus ini melibatkan klien "DL", seorang mahasiswa berusia 21 tahun yang mengalami bullying selama kegiatan Orientasi Kampus. Data dikumpulkan melalui sesi Forgiveness Therapy dan dianalisis menggunakan Penilaian Hasil Forgiveness Therapy. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa klien mengalami trauma mendalam, cemas secara sosial, dan depresi akibat kejadian bullying, namun setelah menjalani Forgiveness Therapy, klien merasa lega dan tenang, serta terbebas dari kecemasan yang berlebihan. Hal ini menunjukkan potensi Forgiveness Therapy dalam membantu korban bullying pulih dari trauma. Penelitian lebih lanjut perlu dilakukan untuk menguji efektivitas Forgiveness Therapy pada kasus trauma yang berbeda, seperti kekerasan seksual dan kekerasan dalam rumah tangga.

## INTRODUCTION

Research on bullying in higher education has flourished in recent decades. Studies consistently demonstrate that senior students (perpetrators) often exploit their power to repeatedly intimidate juniors (victims).<sup>1</sup> This bullying behavior can manifest in various forms, including verbal, physical, relational, and cyberbullying.<sup>2</sup> Bullies typically target individuals perceived as weak or powerless, both physically and mentally. The consequences of bullying for victims are profound, leading to physical, mental, and social distress, and even withdrawal from their surroundings.<sup>3</sup> Data indicates that between 2011 and 2019, there were 37,381 reported cases of violence against children and 2,473 reported cases of bullying in educational settings and social media.<sup>4</sup>

Bullying remains a prevalent issue in higher education institutions, with over half (50%) of students reporting experiences of physical or verbal bullying.<sup>5</sup> A separate study revealed that 30.4% of research participants admitted to engaging in bullying behaviors, while 2.9% acknowledged having bullied others and 21.7% reported being victims of intimidation and harassment.<sup>6</sup> The forms of bullying experienced by students vary widely, encompassing physical assault, pinching, insults, humiliation, threats, and name-calling.<sup>7</sup> Additionally, senior-to-junior bullying involving physical harm, harassment, threats, and extortion of personal belongings has also been documented.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, another study

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<sup>1</sup> A Beane, *Protect Your Child from Bullying* (Jossey-Bass, 2008); Angela Scott, Carol Joughin, and Mike Shaw, *Finding the Evidence: A Gateway to the Literature in Child and Adolescent Mental Health* (RCPsych Publications, 2001); H Yandri, Daharnis, and H Nirwana, "Pengembangan Modul Bimbingan Dan Konseling Untuk Pencegahan Bullying Di Sekolah," *Konselor* 2, no. 1 (2013): 98–106, <https://doi.org/10.24036/0201321866-0-00>; Hengki Yandri et al., "Bullying Behavior in Orphanage Children Judging from the Psychoanalytic Therapy Approach," *Jurnal KOPASTA* 9, no. 2 (2022): 180–86, <https://doi.org/10.33373/kop.v9i2.4669>.

<sup>2</sup> B Colorosa, *Stop Bullying (Memutus Rantai Kekerasan Anak Dari Prasekolah Hingga SMU)* (Ikrar Mandiri Abadi, 2007); Rifal Nawaldi, Hengki Yandri, and Dosi Juliawati, "Dampak Layanan Informasi Teknik Modeling Simbolik Dalam Meningkatkan Pemahaman Siswa Untuk Mencegah Perilaku Cyberbullying," *Indonesian Journal of Counseling and Development* 4, no. 2 (2022): 78–85, <https://doi.org/10.32939/ijcd.v4i2.1601>; Eko Sujadi, Hengki Yandri, and Dosi Juliawati, "Perbedaan Resiliensi Siswa Laki-Laki Dan Perempuan Yang Menjadi Korban Bullying," *Psychocentrum Review* 3, no. 2 (2021): 174–86, <https://doi.org/10.26539/pcr.32665>.

<sup>3</sup> N Ruswita, H Yandri, and D Juliawati, "Analisis Perilaku Bullying Siswa Di Sekolah," *Jurnal Konseling Komprehensif: Kajian Teori Dan Praktik Bimbingan Dan Konseling* 7, no. 2 (2020); Eko Sujadi, Hengki Yandri, and Dosi Juliawati, "Perbedaan Resiliensi Siswa Laki-Laki Dan Perempuan Yang Menjadi Korban Bullying," *Psychocentrum Review* 3, no. 2 (2021): 174–86, <https://doi.org/10.26539/pcr.32665>.

<sup>4</sup> KPAI, "Sejumlah Kasus Bullying Sudah Warnai Catatan Masalah Anak Di Awal 2020" (Jakarta, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> N Dewi, H Hasan, and Mahmud AR, "Perilaku Bullying Yang Terjadi Di SD Negeri Unggul Lampeuneurut Aceh Besar," *Jurnal Ilmiah Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar* 1, no. 2 (2016): 37–45.

<sup>6</sup> Shuqing Xu et al., "School Bullying Among Vocational School Students in China: Prevalence and Associations With Personal, Relational, and School Factors," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37, no. 1–2 (2022): NP104–24, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260520907360>.

<sup>7</sup> Farah Aulia, "Bullying Experience in Primary School Children," *SCHOULID: Indonesian Journal of School Counseling* 1, no. 1 (2016): 28, <https://doi.org/10.23916/schoulid.v1i1.37.28-32>; Hengki Yandri, Neviyarni Suhaili, and Riska Ahmad, "School Counselor Management in Handling Bullying Cases in Students," *An-Nadwah* 29, no. 1 (2023): 67–73, <https://doi.org/10.37064/nadwah.v29i1.15571>.

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad Hasanuddin and Bagus Amirullah, "Fenomena Perilaku Bullying Di Kalangan Dusun Tambak Batu Desa Larangan Perreng Kecamatan Pragaan," *Jurnal Konseling Pendidikan Islam* 3, no. 2 (2022): 398–405.

found that 31.9% of students had experienced mild forms of bullying.<sup>9</sup> These findings collectively underscore the pervasiveness of bullying in higher education settings and highlight the need for concerted efforts to address this concerning phenomenon.

Research findings consistently indicate the pervasiveness of bullying in higher education institutions, with an average of 83.9% of bullying incidents perpetrated by seventh-semester students.<sup>10</sup> Notably, this trend extends beyond traditional senior-junior dynamics, encompassing bullying among students of closer academic standing. Furthermore, evidence suggests that bullying in higher education often manifests as a systematic phenomenon involving multiple parties. A study involving 307 participants revealed that 49% identified as perpetrators, 45% as bullying assistants, 52% as bystanders, and 75% as defenders of bullies.<sup>11</sup> Bullying incidents in higher education are particularly prevalent during orientation or initiation ceremonies for new students. Verbal bullying, characterized by yelling, insulting, and glaring, stands as the most common form of bullying observed in this context.<sup>12</sup>

A meta-analysis of various studies has identified multiple factors contributing to bullying behavior, including: dysfunctional and disharmonious family environments,<sup>13</sup> intimidation and aggression,<sup>14</sup> peer and media influence,<sup>15</sup> social media and online gaming,<sup>16</sup> psychosocial disorders,<sup>17</sup> socioeconomic disparities,<sup>18</sup> low self-efficacy,<sup>19</sup> low

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<sup>9</sup> Abdul Wakhid, Nila Sari Andriani, and Mona Saparwati, "Perilaku Bullying Siswa Usia 10-12 Tahun," *Jurnal Keperawatan Jiwa* 5, no. 1 (2019): 25, <https://doi.org/10.26714/jkj.5.1.2017.25-28>.

<sup>10</sup> Shavreni Oktadi Putri and Beta Rapita Silalahi, "Gambaran Perilaku Bullying Pada Mahasiswa Umm Alwashliyah," *JURNAL EDUKASI: Jurnal Bimbingan Konseling* 3, no. 2 (2017): 146, <https://doi.org/10.22373/je.v3i2.3092>.

<sup>11</sup> Dyah Desti Hapsari and Budi Purwoko, "Perilaku Bullying Pada Mahasiswa Fakultas Bahasa Dan Seni (FBS) Di Universitas Negeri Surabaya," *Jurnal Mahasiswa Bimbingan Konseling* 6, no. 3 (2016): 1–9.

<sup>12</sup> Adelaide Irma Ningrum, "Bullying Dan Kekerasan ( Studi Kualitatif Ospek Fakultas Di Universitas Airlangga )," *Jurnal Sosiologi Universitas Airlangga*, 2018, 37.

<sup>13</sup> Maria Papanikolaou, Thomai Chatzikosma, and Koutra Kleio, "Bullying at School: The Role of Family," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 29 (2011): 433–42, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2011.11.260>.

<sup>14</sup> Prahbhjot Malhi, Bhavneet Bharti, and Manjit Sidhu, "Aggression in Schools: Psychosocial Outcomes of Bullying Among Indian Adolescents," *Indian Journal of Pediatrics* 81, no. 11 (2014): 1171–76, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12098-014-1378-7>.

<sup>15</sup> Hülya Kartal et al., "Factors Affecting Bullying in Home and School Life: A Mixed Method Research," *Journal of Qualitative Research in Education* 7, no. 1 (2019): 1–36, <https://doi.org/10.14689/issn.2148-2624.1.7c1s.3m>.

<sup>16</sup> R Pranawati, "Sosmed & Game Online Jadi Pemicu Bullying Anak" (Jakarta, May 2018), <https://www.kpai.go.id/publikasi/sosmed-game-online-jadi-pemicu-bullying-anak>.

<sup>17</sup> Supa Pengpid and Karl Peltzer, "Bullying and Its Associated Factors among School-Aged Adolescents in Thailand," *The Scientific World Journal* 2013 (2013): 1–7, <https://doi.org/10.1155/2013/254083>.

<sup>18</sup> Catarina Machado Azeredo et al., "School Bullying: A Systematic Review of Contextual-Level Risk Factors in Observational Studies," *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 22 (2015): 65–76, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2015.04.006>.

<sup>19</sup> Hariyanto Wibowo, Fijriani Fijriani, and Veno Dwi Krisnanda, "Fenomena Perilaku Bullying Di Sekolah," *Orien: Cakrawala Ilmiah Mahasiswa* 1, no. 2 (2021): 157–66, <https://doi.org/10.30998/ocim.v1i2.5888>.

moral values,<sup>20</sup> low parent-child attachment,<sup>21</sup> parenting styles, play environments, social circles, and mass media.<sup>22</sup>

Experiencing bullying can lead to various negative consequences for the victim, both emotionally and psychologically. The emotional impact often felt by bullying victims includes anger, frustration, sadness, self-blame,<sup>23</sup> loneliness, withdrawal, isolation, fear, shame, helplessness, and low self-esteem.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the long-term effects of bullying can be more serious, such as mental health issues like anxiety and depression, self-harm, and suicidal ideation.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, bullying can have negative repercussions on the school environment and students' academic performance, impacting the school's reputation, student dropouts, classroom absenteeism, poor concentration, and low academic achievement.<sup>26</sup>

The rampant occurrence of bullying incidents in various environments, including schools, has resulted in severe physical and mental impacts on the victims. This situation further highlights the urgency of providing easily accessible and high-quality counseling services for victims of bullying. A qualitative retrospective study conducted by Jones<sup>27</sup> on four school bullying victims provides a more in-depth understanding of their experiences, the impact of bullying, and the crucial role of counseling services in aiding their recovery. The research findings demonstrate that counseling has significant benefits for bullying victims. Other studies report that counseling helps them rediscover their sense of self after experiencing the trauma of bullying. Counseling also provides a platform for them to "vent" their pent-up emotions in a healthy and constructive manner. Overall, this research emphasizes that counseling services are an essential component in bullying prevention and intervention efforts. Counseling can assist bullying victims in overcoming trauma, rebuilding self-confidence, and developing healthy coping mechanisms to manage stress and anxiety.

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<sup>20</sup> Jarl B. Anderson, "Clash of Values: Workplace Bullying and Moral Injury," *Counseling and Family Therapy Scholarship Review* 3, no. 2 (2020), <https://doi.org/10.53309/pwex4999>.

<sup>21</sup> Khoiril Latif and Kusnarto Kurniawan, "Indonesian Journal of Guidance and Counseling : Theory and Application Hubungan Antara Kelekatan Orang Tua Dan Konsep Diri Dengan Perilaku Bullying Siswa SMP Negeri 28 Semarang," *Indonesian Journal of Guidance and Counseling: Theory and Application* 11, no. 1 (2022): 25–39.

<sup>22</sup> Hijrawatil Aswat et al., "Eksistensi Peranan Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter Terhadap Bentuk Perilaku Bullying Di Lingkungan Sekolah Dasar," *Jurnal BASICEDU* 6, no. 5 (2022): 9105–17.

<sup>23</sup> Kevin Dyer and Tom Teggart, "Bullying Experiences of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service-Users: A Pilot Survey," *Child Care in Practice* 13, no. 4 (2007): 351–65; Dosi Juliawati, "Latihan Asertif Bagi Siswa Korban Bullying Di Sekolah," *Tarbawi: Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan* 12, no. 1 (2016): 1–8.

<sup>24</sup> Paul R Smokowski and Kelly Holland Kopasz, "Bullying in School: An Overview of Types, Effects, Family Characteristics, and Intervention Strategies," *Children & Schools* 27, no. 2 (2005): 101–10.

<sup>25</sup> Callum Jones, "Is Person-Centred Counselling Effective When Assisting Young People Who Have Experienced Bullying in Schools?," *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research* 20, no. 4 (2020): 657–65; Susan M Swearer and Shelley Hymel, "Understanding the Psychology of Bullying: Moving toward a Social-Ecological Diathesis--Stress Model.," *American Psychologist* 70, no. 4 (2015): 344.

<sup>26</sup> Noel A Card, Jenny Isaacs, and Ernest V E Hodges, "Correlates of School Victimization: Implications for Prevention and Intervention.," in *Bullying, Victimization, and Peer Harassment: A Handbook of Prevention and Intervention* (Haworth Press, 2007), 339–66.

<sup>27</sup> Jones, "Is Person-Centred Counselling Effective When Assisting Young People Who Have Experienced Bullying in Schools?"

The Forgiveness Therapy approach is considered appropriate for use in counseling services for victims of bullying.<sup>28</sup> This is based on several reasons, namely: This approach is carried out in a way that is appropriate and in accordance with the client's needs. Forgiveness Therapy does not force victims to forgive the perpetrators directly, but rather helps them to cope with the pain caused by bullying and release negative emotions in a healthy way.<sup>29</sup> Statistically, research results show that Forgiveness Therapy has been proven to reduce anxiety levels in clients. This indicates that this therapy can help victims of bullying to reduce the stress and trauma they experience. This approach can be used to overcome the trauma of victims of bullying in students.

College students are one of the groups vulnerable to bullying, and Forgiveness Therapy can help them recover from trauma and rebuild their lives. Forgiveness Therapy involves the decision to address the pain caused by others, let go of negative emotions, and treat the perpetrator with compassion.<sup>30</sup> Murray<sup>31</sup> suggests that Forgiveness Therapy can be an effective therapy option for a variety of problems, including individual, relational, and marital issues. This therapy has positive long-term implications for interpersonal relationships, including helping victims of bullying rebuild healthy relationships with others.

Consistent research has demonstrated that Forgiveness Therapy can be an effective solution in reducing anger and negative emotional consequences for victims of bullying.<sup>32</sup> This becomes particularly relevant in the workplace, where Forgiveness Therapy can lead to healing and well-being for victims of workplace bullying.<sup>33</sup> A Forgiveness Therapy program inspired by the work of Robert Enright has been shown to increase forgiveness knowledge and satisfaction among teachers and students. This suggests the potential of Forgiveness Therapy as a bullying prevention tool in school settings.<sup>34</sup> Based on various previous research findings, it is further strengthened that Forgiveness Therapy has been proven and tested to resolve various client problems.

This study possesses several unique features that distinguish it from previous

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<sup>28</sup> Ismiyati Yuliatun and Putri Megawati, "Forgiveness Therapy To Improve Individual Mental Health: A Literature Study," *Motiva: Jurnal Psikologi* 4, no. 2 (2021): 90–97.

<sup>29</sup> Hayley Watson, Ronald M Rapee, and N Todorov, "Imagery Rescripting of Revenge, Avoidance, and Forgiveness for Past Bullying Experiences in Young Adults," *Cognitive Behaviour Therapy* 45, no. 1 (2016): 73–89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/16506073.2015.1108360>.

<sup>30</sup> Christopher C H Cook and Andrew Powell, *Spirituality and Psychiatry* (Cambridge University Press, 2022); Norvin Richards, "Forgiveness as Therapy," ed. Sharon Lamb and Jeffrie G Murphy, *Before Forgiving: Cautionary Views of Forgiveness in Psychotherapy* (Oxford University Press, June 20, 2002), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195145205.003.0005>.

<sup>31</sup> Robert J Murray, "Forgiveness as a Therapeutic Option," *The Family Journal* 10 (2002): 315–21, <https://doi.org/10.1177/10680702010003008>.

<sup>32</sup> Hayley Watson, Ronald M Rapee, and N Todorov, "Forgiveness Reduces Anger in a School Bullying Context," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 32, no. 11 (2017): 1642–57, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08862605155899>; Watson, Rapee, and Todorov, "Imagery Rescripting of Revenge, Avoidance, and Forgiveness for Past Bullying Experiences in Young Adults."

<sup>33</sup> Nidhi Mishra et al., "Forgiveness: A New Dynamic in Workplace Bullying," in *Indian Perspectives on Workplace Bullying*, 2018, 59–78.

<sup>34</sup> Óscar Sánchez-Hernández et al., "Evaluation of the Effectiveness and Satisfaction of the Learning to Forgive Program for the Prevention of Bullying," *Electronic Journal of Research in Education Psychology* 19, no. 1 (2021): 185–204, <https://doi.org/10.25115/ejrep.v19i53.2969>.

research on Forgiveness Therapy and bullying. 1). this study is the first to describe a case of bullying intervened with Forgiveness Therapy. This provides a clearer picture of how Forgiveness Therapy can be applied to help victims of bullying. 2). this study is the first to demonstrate the effectiveness of Forgiveness Therapy in reducing the pain of emotional wounds in victims of bullying. These findings provide empirical evidence supporting the use of Forgiveness Therapy to address the emotional wounds of bullying victims. 3). this study was conducted by professional counselors who met directly with clients and provided interventions tailored to their needs. This differs from previous research<sup>35</sup> much of which was conducted online or using less personal methods. 4). this study is qualitative in nature, allowing the researcher to directly observe changes in client behavior. This enables the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of Forgiveness Therapy on victims of bullying. 5). This study focuses on discussing client issues until clients feel a decrease in the level of emotional wound pain after receiving Forgiveness Therapy. This suggests that Forgiveness Therapy can provide long-term benefits for victims of bullying.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs the case report research method to describe the Forgiveness Therapy intervention for a client who has been a victim of bullying. This method aligns with the research objective of understanding how Forgiveness Therapy can assist bullying victims in alleviating the pain of emotional wounds. A case report is a research method that presents a detailed description of one or more cases that have been or are currently being handled. This method enables researchers to provide a comprehensive picture of the situation and interventions undertaken.<sup>36</sup>

In this study, the reported case is that of a client who has been a victim of bullying. The client experienced anxiety whenever they encountered the senior who bullied them, client with the initials "DL," a 21-year-old student at Higher Education Institution X. The client experienced verbal bullying during Orientation Week in their first semester. This bullying took the form of insults, intimidation, mockery, and threats. The situation was exacerbated by the laughter of others who witnessed the bullying, further adding to the client's emotional distress. Forgiveness Therapy is a therapeutic approach that helps individuals cope with emotional wounds and trauma by forgiving others. In this study, Forgiveness Therapy was applied directly to the client using a series of questions directed towards the client.

This study has obtained ethical approval from the client who is the research subject. This consent was obtained directly from the client. The client has given permission to the researcher to record therapy activities. These recordings are in audio format only and do not include video. The client has also agreed to the use of their name

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<sup>35</sup> Watson, Rapee, and Todorov, "Forgiveness Reduces Anger in a School Bullying Context."

<sup>36</sup> Karen E Johnson and Paula R Golombek, *Teachers' Narrative Inquiry as Professional Development* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).

with initials in scientific publications and research. This is done to protect the confidentiality of the client's personal data.

This study employs a qualitative approach to collect and analyze data. Data is gathered through the Forgiveness Therapy process applied to the client. During the Forgiveness Therapy process, the researcher conducts a thematic assessment of the client's progress. This assessment is carried out by observing and recording changes in the client's behavior, emotions, and cognition during therapy. The collected data is then analyzed thematically. Thematic analysis is a qualitative analysis method used to identify patterns and themes within the data obtained during the Forgiveness Therapy process.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Forgiveness Therapy process is conducted in four stages.<sup>37</sup>

**Table 1. Forgiveness Therapy Process**

No	Stage	Intervention
1	Recognition	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Retreating into the client's inner self.</li> <li>2. Observing oneself with mindfulness.</li> <li>3. Recognizing that self-forgiveness is a choice.</li> <li>4. Understanding that self-forgiveness can release pent-up painful emotions and negative beliefs about oneself</li> </ol>
2	Responsibility	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Readiness and willingness to take responsibility for the incident that necessitates forgiveness.</li> <li>2. Assuming responsibility for personal actions and/or omissions that may have contributed to the offense, even when in a position of forgiving others.</li> </ol>
3	Expression	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Active and authentic expression of emotions that have emerged as a result of reflection.</li> <li>2. Avoiding retreating into unproductive and blaming rumination.</li> <li>3. Refaxing difficult emotions from a more conscious, responsible, and compassionate place.</li> </ol>
4	Re-creating	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Active development of a renewed and redefined self-image.</li> <li>2. Rebuilding relationships with others.</li> <li>3. Releasing emotional wound pain and trauma</li> </ol>

The analysis of research findings reveals that the client experienced a fear of humiliation, as exemplified by their participation in freshman orientation activities during their first year. They had negative feelings whenever others were watching them, fearing they would be judged based on their appearance and words. Consequently, the client

<sup>37</sup> George A Jacinto and Beverly L Edwards, "Therapeutic Stages of Forgiveness and Self-Forgiveness," *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 21, no. 4 (2011): 423–37.

preferred to avoid social gatherings. This is evident in the following excerpt from a therapy session:

*“...I still often remember that incident. I feel hurt and ashamed of how I was treated. ... I feel traumatized and anxious whenever I meet new people ...”* (Line 8)

*“... I don't know what to do to overcome this pain? ...”* (Line 20)

The client recognized that they were experiencing trauma and anxiety as a result of the bullying they had endured. They felt hurt, angry, and ashamed of the treatment they had received. Consequently, the client was unable to take a firm stance on their own behalf, unable to choose among the many alternatives for how to live their life, and unable to take responsibility for directing their life and setting clear goals. This is evident in the following excerpt from a therapy session with the client:

*“... I realize that I am not entirely to blame for that incident...”* (Line 40)

*“... I could have been braver in fighting back or reporting it to the authorities...”* (Line 42)

*“... I want to learn from this experience and become a stronger person...”* (Line 45)

The client understood that the bullying they experienced was not entirely their fault. They also recognized that they played a role in the situation by not being brave enough to fight back or report it to the authorities. Furthermore, the client's condition indicated that they were experiencing significant social anxiety. On a scale of inner wound pain from 0 to 10 (0 = no pain at all; 10 = very painful), the client was at a score of 8, meaning they were experiencing severe inner wound pain. This is evident in the following excerpt from a therapy session with the client:

Counselor:

*“...How severe is your inner wound pain? Can you measure the level of your inner wound pain on a scale of 0 to 10? 0 means no pain at all and 10 means very painful?...”* (Line 61)

Client:

*“...I think I'm at level 8. The pain is very real and it's interfering with my daily life...”* (Line 63)

Next, the client expressed their pain, fear, and anger to the therapist. The client recounted their childhood experiences that made them feel ashamed and worthless. The client expressed their desire to heal from social anxiety. This is evident in the following excerpt from a therapy session with the client:

*“... I feel angry at the people who bullied me and I feel sad and hurt by their treatment...”* (Line 72)



*"... I want them to know how their actions have hurt me..."* (Line 74)

The client expressed their feelings of hurt, anger, and sadness to the therapist. They also recounted their bullying experiences in detail. Finally, the client began to forgive themselves for their past mistakes. They began to build a more positive self-image and started learning to be more confident and brave in socializing with others. The client also began to develop strategies to cope with their social anxiety. This is evident in the following excerpt from a counseling session with the client:

*"... I am starting to forgive the people who bullied me, and I no longer want to hold grudges against them..."* (Line 80)

*"... I want to live a more peaceful and happy life..."* (Line 86)

The client has begun to forgive the people who bullied them. They are also rebuilding their self-image and relationships with others. The results of the Forgiveness Therapy assessment indicate that the client has gained new understanding. They understand that Forgiveness Therapy is not about condoning the actions of those who have hurt them, but rather about releasing the pain and resentment within themselves. The client realizes that self-forgiveness is just as important as forgiving others. They are learning about various strategies to cope with inner wound pain and social anxiety. This is evident in the following excerpt from a counseling session:

*"... Alhamdulillah! I used to think that forgiving meant forgetting what happened. But now I understand that forgiving is about letting go of the pain and resentment within myself..."* (Line 88)

The client felt a sense of relief and peace after undergoing Forgiveness Therapy. They began to feel a sense of peace and compassion towards themselves and others. They felt more confident and optimistic about their future. This is evident in the following excerpt from the client:

*"... I feel much more relieved and calm after undergoing Forgiveness Therapy. I no longer dwell on the past... I am starting to feel a sense of peace and compassion towards myself and others. I no longer feel angry and resentful..."* (Line 90)

Counselor:

*"... How do you feel now after undergoing Forgiveness Therapy? On what scale are you now?..."* (Line 92)

Client:

*"... Alhamdulillah now it feels like my inner wound pain is on a scale of three... it feels relieved and released..."* (Line 95)

The client's actions following Forgiveness Therapy include continued practice of the Forgiveness Therapy techniques they have learned. The client will strive to be more

open and courageous in forming friendships and social relationships. This is evident in the following excerpt from a conversation with the client:

“... I will continue to practice the Forgiveness Therapy techniques that I have learned. I want to make sure that I don't go back to my old negative thinking patterns...” (Line 96).  
“... I want to be more open and courageous in forming friendships and social relationships. I want to build a more meaningful life full of people I love...” (Line 100).

Forgiveness Therapy has demonstrated positive outcomes for the client. The client exhibited enhanced knowledge, positive shifts in emotional states, and a commitment to incorporating Forgiveness Therapy techniques into their daily lives. Following bullying experiences in their early college years, the client presented with symptoms of social anxiety, depression, and trauma. Anxiety disorders in bullying victims typically fall into four categories: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), generalized anxiety disorder, panic attacks, and social anxiety disorder.<sup>38</sup> Individuals with social anxiety disorder are susceptible to experiencing negative emotions when engaging in interactions and communication with others.<sup>39</sup> They often hold the belief that others perceive and judge them negatively and tend to assume that their interlocutors will recognize their flaws or awkwardness during communication. This leads to feelings of being ostracized, ignored, criticized, or rejected due to behaviors deemed unacceptable by others.<sup>40</sup>

Prior research suggests that individuals with a history of bullying are susceptible to social anxiety, characterized by behavioral manifestations such as nervousness, shyness, silence, and social withdrawal to avoid interactions and negative judgments from others.<sup>41</sup> This aligns with the findings in the case of client (DL), who exhibited symptoms of social withdrawal from interactions in the campus environment. This withdrawal stemmed from the client's negative perceptions of others, where the client generalized that everyone has a bad personality and the potential to humiliate them in public. These feelings of social anxiety emerged as an adaptive response to bullying experiences, which caused feelings of discomfort and threat.

Bullying trauma is a significant issue with long-lasting effects on individuals' mental health and well-being. Research indicates that exposure to bullying, whether in school or through cyberbullying, can lead to adverse psychological and somatic outcomes, including anxiety, depression, and somatic symptoms.<sup>42</sup> The impact of

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<sup>38</sup> Rizal Fadli, “Bullying Memicu Gangguan Kecemasan, Ketahui Faktanya,” halodoc, April 2021, <https://www.halodoc.com/artikel/bullying-memicu-gangguan-kecemasan-ketahui-faktanya>.

<sup>39</sup> Fatih Azka, Dendih Fredi Firdaus, and Elisa Kurniadewi, “Kecemasan Sosial Dan Ketergantungan Media Sosial Pada Mahasiswa,” *Psymphatic: Jurnal Ilmiah Psikologi* 5, no. 2 (2018): 201–10, <https://doi.org/10.15575/psy.v5i2.3315>.

<sup>40</sup> Annette M La Greca and Nadja Lopez, “Social Anxiety among Adolescents: Linkages with Peer Relations and Friendships,” *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 26, no. 2 (1998): 83–94.

<sup>41</sup> Aynur Kolburan Geçer and Aynur Eren Gümücs, “Prediction of Public and Private University Students' Communication Apprehension with Lecturers,” *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences* 2, no. 2 (2010): 3008–14.

<sup>42</sup> COCA Carmen Elena, “Bullying,” *Instrumental Bibliometric National*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.52507/2345-1106.2022-1.20>; Yutong Pan, “Effects of Childhood Trauma--Being Bullied

bullying on individuals can be profound, affecting their self-esteem, interpersonal relationships, and cognitive abilities.<sup>43</sup> Studies also suggest that bullying victimization can mediate the relationship between exposure to community violence and somatic symptoms, highlighting the complex interplay between traumatic experiences and psychological outcomes.<sup>44</sup> Understanding the internal and external factors contributing to bullying behaviors and its consequences is crucial for developing effective prevention strategies and interventions to address the pervasive issue of bullying trauma.

Forgiveness therapy is a valuable approach in mental health treatment, especially for individuals dealing with psychological trauma and substance abuse disorders.<sup>45</sup> It aims to address persistent anger, anxiety, and depression stemming from past injustices, offering a path to forgiveness and healing.<sup>46</sup> While research indicates success in Western countries, cultural differences play a significant role in the effectiveness of forgiveness therapy, necessitating adaptations for specific cultural contexts like China.<sup>47</sup> Studies on forgiveness therapy's impact on different populations, such as adolescent victims of divorce and families of chronic illness patients, have shown mixed results, with some indicating significant improvements in forgiveness ability and subjective well-being post-treatment.<sup>48</sup> Overall, forgiveness therapy emerges as a promising intervention for enhancing mental well-being and fostering forgiveness in various populations facing challenging circumstances.

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study conclude that the client experienced deep inner wounds following bullying by their seniors. The client exhibited symptoms of social anxiety, depression, trauma, negative perceptions of their seniors, anger, non-acceptance of their reality, and social withdrawal. The implementation of Forgiveness Therapy demonstrated a significant reduction in inner wound symptoms, resulting in the client feeling relieved and calm, and free from excessive anxiety. This highlights the potential of Forgiveness

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or Bullied--On Behaviors in Adulthood," *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences* 8 (2023): 586–90; Timothy I Lawrence et al., "The Association between Exposure to Community Violence and Somatic Symptoms through Bullying Victimization among African American Adolescents in Chicago: A Developmental Trauma Approach," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 79, no. 5 (2023): 1280–92.

<sup>43</sup> Sandra Dornonville La Cour, Birgit Bonde, and Bent Rosenbaum, "Bullying as a Traumatizing Process: An Investigation of the Phenomenology of the Bullying Experiences and Their Dynamic Effects," *British Journal of Psychotherapy* 38, no. 3 (2022): 572–88; Nekane Balluerka et al., "Association between Bullying Victimization, Anxiety and Depression in Childhood and Adolescence: The Mediating Effect of Self-Esteem," *Revista de Psicodidáctica (English Ed.)* 28, no. 1 (2023): 26–34.

<sup>44</sup> Hengki Yandri et al., "The Impact Of Using Existential Therapy To Build Awareness Of Death For Victims Of Bullying," *TERAPUTIK: Jurnal Bimbingan Dan Konseling* 6, no. 3 (2023): 369–78, <https://doi.org/10.26539/teraputik.631394>.

<sup>45</sup> John M Schibik, "Forgiveness Therapy in Psychological Trauma and Chemical Abuse Treatment," *Journal of Chemical Dependency Treatment* 8, no. 2 (2006): 227–53.

<sup>46</sup> Marina Cantacuzino, *Forgiveness: An Exploration* (Simon and Schuster, 2022).

<sup>47</sup> Rina Rifayanti et al., "Forgiveness Therapy: Improving Parents' Forgiving Ability in Adolescent Divorce Victims in Orphanages," *Jurnal Aisyah: Jurnal Ilmu Kesehatan* 8, no. 2 (2023).

<sup>48</sup> Cantacuzino, *Forgiveness: An Exploration*; Raden Rachmy Diana et al., "Forgiveness Therapy to Improve Subjective Well-Being Among Families of Patients with Chronic Illness," *International Journal of Islamic Educational Psychology* 4, no. 1 (2023): 122–35.

Therapy in aiding bullying victims in recovering from their inner wounds. Further research is warranted to investigate the effectiveness of Forgiveness Therapy in addressing different trauma cases, such as sexual assault and domestic violence.

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