

A Rapid Review of Literature on Developmental Forgiveness in Adolescent Survivors of Family Violence.

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INTRODUCTION

This paper critically reviews research on developmental forgiveness as a therapeutic approach for adolescent survivors of family violence, emphasising its intricate connection to psychological well-being, resilience, and recovery. Research reveals that adolescents who have experienced family violence often present with enduring symptomatology, including difficulties in emotional regulation, impaired sense of self, relational difficulties, dangerous risk-taking behaviours, and even suicidality. These findings highlight the urgent need for timely, developmentally appropriate interventions that support the resolution of familial trauma and promote a healthy path of psychological growth.

Although forgiveness has been widely studied, there is a notable gap in research specifically addressing adolescent survivors of family violence. This limits evidence-based understandings of how forgiveness contributes to emotional and psychological development in this important client population. Unresolved trauma and developmental fixation may impair an adolescent's capacity to forgive those who harmed them, consequently precluding them from a healthy developmental trajectory. A synthesis of quantitative and qualitative findings reveals that forgiveness, while sometimes contested, is increasingly recognised as a valuable therapeutic pathway when aligned with adolescents' developmental readiness. Studies highlight that forgiveness in this context is shaped by psychological mechanisms, offense type, and family dynamics. Effective interventions must therefore consider underlying cognitive schemas, offense characteristics, and cultural context to support adaptive functioning and emotional recovery in adolescent survivors of family violence.

While methodological strengths for reviewed studies include large samples and validated measurement tools, limitations such as sampling bias, cross-sectional design, and reliance on self-report restrict generalisability and causal claims. This review concludes with highlight of clinical implications for treatment of affected adolescents. The review also concludes with a call for further research to facilitate psychological growth, emotional insight and relational healing through practice of forgiveness among adolescent survivors of family violence.

METHOD

DESIGN: This Rapid Literature Review (RLR) follows the methodological guidance of the Cochrane Rapid Reviews Methods Group and PRISMA reporting framework. These guidelines support the efficient synthesis of high-quality evidence under time constraints, ensuring both speed and scientific rigor. By combining RRMG's streamlined review strategies with PRISMA's emphasis on transparency and completeness, this review maintains methodological integrity. A narrative synthesis approach is used to interpret and organize findings, allowing for a clear thematic understanding of the literature.

DATA SEARCH: The PICO strategy was utilised to identify specific search terms. A comprehensive search was conducted across five electronic databased to identify relevant studies published between-

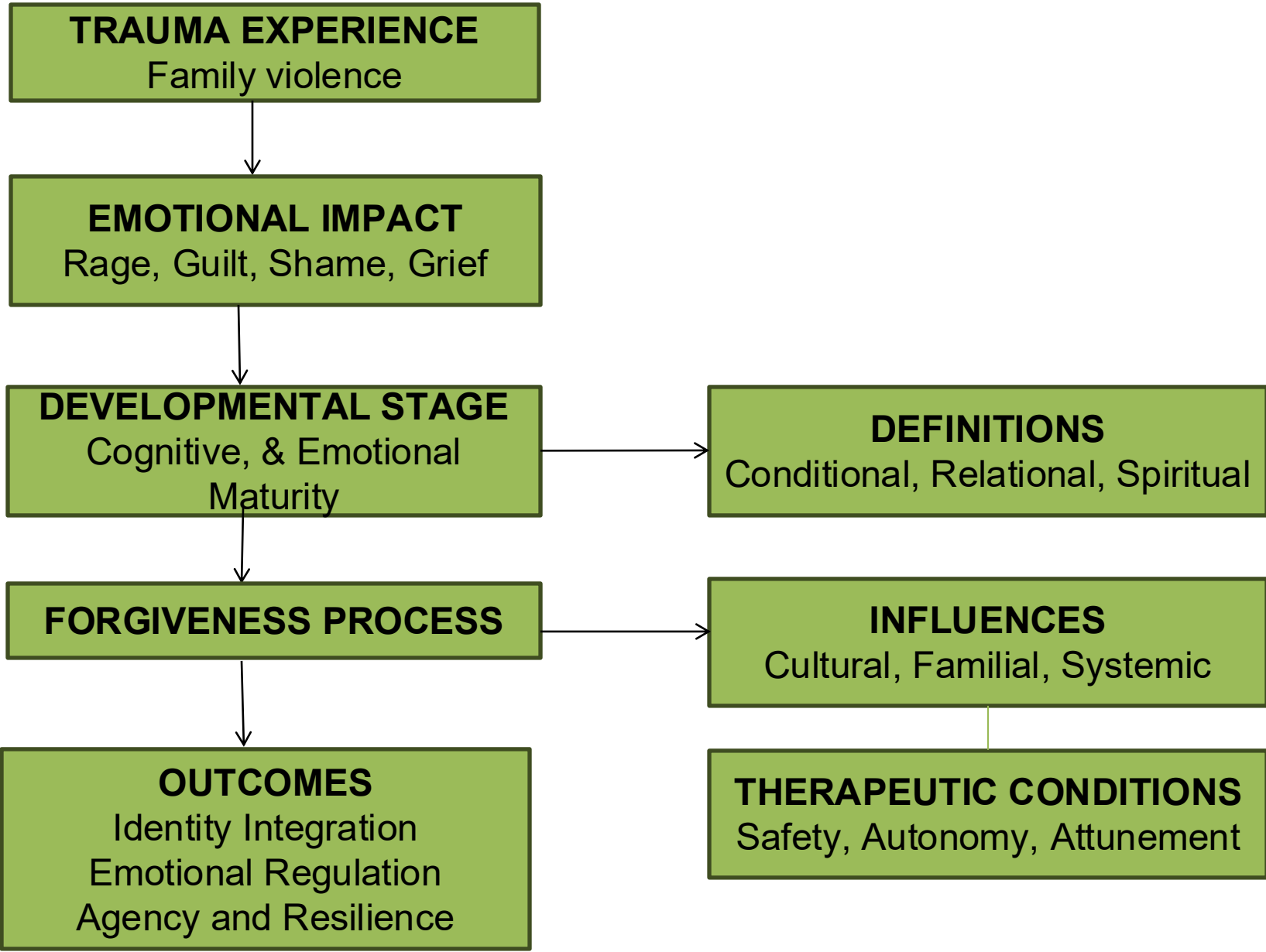


Figure 1: A conceptual model illustrating the developmental forgiveness process in adolescents with histories of family violence. It highlights evolving process where forgiveness is shaped by an interplay of developmental readiness, relational context, and trauma informed therapeutic support.

METHOD continued

2015 and 2025. Study search management and screening was completed using Covidence systematic review software and in consultation with research supervisor. A list of key words and search terms was included in the research paper for transparency and to aid replicability to confirm findings.

ANALYSIS: All included studies were appraised for methodological rigor, sample size, cultural relevance, and their applicability to trauma-informed practice. High-quality studies were characterised by robust research designs, such as experimental methods and SEM, as well as clear operational definitions of forgiveness and thoughtful consideration of mediating variables, including emotional regulation, maladaptive schemas, and social support.

RESULTS

A total of 13 studies met inclusion criteria for this rapid literature review. Most studies were conducted in Indonesia (38,6%), with the remainder spanning diverse cultural contexts including Iran, Netherlands, Hawaii, United States of America, and Poland. The majority of the studies (76.9%) focused explicitly on adolescents aged 11–19, while the remainder included adjacent populations.

A narrative synthesis approach is used to interpret and organise findings, allowing for a clear thematic understanding of the literature. The analysis reveal shared narrative themes of resilience, identity transformation/ integration, agency, hope, and continuity across various citation papers. Please refer to **Figure 1**. for conceptual framework of the study findings, and refer to **Table 1**. for overview of overarching themes.

Table 1. Thematic Connections Across Studies	
Forgiveness as a Developmental and Identity-Shaping Process	- Forgiveness is not static, it evolves with age, cognitive maturity, and emotional capacity (Garthe & Guz, 2020; Mulvey et al., 2022). - Adolescents often frame forgiveness as part of identity reconstruction, especially after maltreatment or family rupture (Manoa, 2025; Paljonano, et al., 2024). - Narrative agency and meaning-making are central: forgiveness becomes a way to reclaim self-worth and coherence (Manoa, 2025; Wijaya & Widjorini, 2023).
Forgiveness as a Protective Factor in Trauma Recovery	- Forgiveness consistently correlates with reduced emotional distress, including depression, anxiety, and aggression (Suparman & Huvae, 2023; Rahman et al., 2018; Sebastian Binyamin, 2024). - It functions as a buffer against the psychological impact of abuse, neglect, and family dysfunction (Fathi et al., 2025; Hafina et al., 2020). - When paired with emotional regulation and social support, forgiveness enhances resilience and relational stability (Lestari & Huvae, 2023; Gerisma & Lugtmeyer, 2018).
Contextual and Cultural Sensitivity in Forgiveness Practice.	- Cultural values such as honour, communal identity, and spiritual beliefs, shape how forgiveness is understood and practiced (Lander et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2018; Sebastian Binyamin, 2024). - Faith-based models (e.g., REACH, Enright's) are effective when adapted to local norms and relational dynamics (Wijaya & Widjorini, 2023; Sebastian Binyamin, 2024). - Forgiveness is often decoupled from reconciliation, especially in contexts of ongoing harm or systemic marginalization (Hafina et al., 2020; Paljonano, et al., 2024).
Interpersonal and Social Dimensions of Forgiveness.	- Forgiveness is shaped by relational factors: apology, empathy, group membership, and perceived remorse (Mulvey et al., 2022; Gerisma & Lugtmeyer, 2018). - Peer support, therapeutic dialogue, and validation play key roles in facilitating forgiveness (Manoa, 2025; Lestari & Huvae, 2023). - Social media and digital conflict introduce new arenas for forgiveness and emotional harm (Fathi et al., 2025).
Therapeutic Models and Mechanisms	- Structured interventions (e.g., Enright's model, REACH) show measurable benefits in emotional healing and behavioral regulation (Rahman et al., 2018; Sebastian Binyamin, 2024). - Forgiveness therapy is most effective when it includes narrative re-authoring, guided empathy, and boundary-setting (Wijaya & Widjorini, 2023; Lander et al., 2017). - Therapy outcomes are enhanced when forgiveness is framed as a personal journey rather than a moral obligation (Paljonano, et al., 2024; Hafina et al., 2020).

DISCUSSION

Forgiveness, across varied cultural and methodological contexts, consistently emerged as a dynamic, developmental process—deeply intertwined with trauma recovery, identity formation, and relational repair in adolescent survivors of family violence. Five core themes captured how forgiveness unfolds and functions in this population. Structured interventions, such as Enright's model and the REACH framework, were linked to improved emotional regulation and behavioral outcomes. However, integrating forgiveness into trauma-informed care demands ethical nuance and developmental pacing. A significant gap remains in addressing intersectional factors like gender, neurodiversity, and systemic oppression, highlighting the need for more inclusive, longitudinal, and context-sensitive research.