

The Impact of Bullying Victims' Forgiveness on Early Childhood Learning Achievement

Doi: 10.23917/blbs.v8i1.16787

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Keywords: Bullying Forgiveness Bullying victims Early childhood Learning achievement.	<i>The phenomenon of bullying in early childhood impacts emotional disturbances and learning engagement because early childhood is still in the immature phase of social-emotional development. Although there has been a lot of research discussing the impact of bullying, those that link forgiveness with learning achievement in early childhood are still limited. This study aims to analyze the role of forgiveness as a psychological mechanism in supporting the learning achievement of early childhood victims of bullying. This study was conducted with a quantitative approach using a correlation design at a PAUD institution in Banda Aceh City. The study subjects were 40 children aged 5-6 years who experienced mild to moderate bullying. They were selected using a criterion-based purposive sampling technique and identified as victims of bullying. Data were collected using forgiveness observation sheets completed by teachers and assessments of learning achievement based on the Child Development Achievement Level Standards (STPPA). The results of this study indicate that forgiveness plays a role as a positive psychological factor related to increased learning engagement and learning achievement in early childhood. Children with better forgiveness skills show more stable emotional conditions and more optimal learning readiness. These findings confirm the novelty that forgiveness functions not only as an emotional response but also as a protective factor supporting academic functioning in early childhood. This study recommends the integration of forgiveness-based interventions into social-emotional learning and guidance and counseling services in early childhood education.</i>

INTRODUCTION

Current cases of bullying in school environments are a serious problem that impacts children's social-emotional development and learning engagement, including in Early Childhood Education (PAUD) environments. Ideally, PAUD environments should be safe, supportive, and conducive spaces for early childhood development. However, in reality, bullying practices are still frequently found in PAUD environments, such as teasing, exclusion, and social rejection, which have the potential to disrupt a sense of security and participation in learning, thus hindering learning achievement. Globally, approximately one in three children experience bullying in school environments, while in Indonesia approximately 36% of children are at risk of experiencing bullying in educational environments. Conditions such as this indicate that bullying is not only an individual problem, but a systematic problem in educational environments. The impact is widespread, not only on children's psychological well-being, but also on engagement and learning outcomes. This is supported by research results that show that bullying cases pose a serious threat to a person's development (Syarifah & Indriana, 2018). In early childhood education (PAUD) settings, the impact of bullying is even more complex because young children are still in a highly sensitive phase of social-emotional development. An unsafe environment can reinforce bullying and hinder the learning process. Therefore, comprehensive and collaborative approaches are needed to create a safe and inclusive learning environment.

Bullying in early childhood education (PAUD) environments is currently receiving increasing attention in educational studies and developmental psychology. This phenomenon is not only a local concern but also a global one. International reports have shown that bullying can begin in early childhood and has long-term impacts on the social, emotional, and academic development of victims. UNESCO data shows that approximately 1 in 3 children worldwide have experienced bullying in school, whether verbal, physical, or social. Early childhood does not yet have mature emotional regulation skills, so bullying can disrupt a child's sense of security, comfort in learning, and age-appropriate developmental milestones (Auriza et al., 2025; Ragusa et al., 2023; Septiyani et al., 2023). Early children who are victims of bullying will affect the child's sense of security, self-esteem and involvement in learning activities (Maulida & Alam, 2025). This is also proven by the results of several previous studies which show that victims of bullying have a tendency to decline in academic achievement and learning involvement due to emotional pressure experienced in the social environment at school (Murphy et al., 2022).

Research shows that victims of bullying often experience social isolation, lack of self-confidence and stress which interferes with their focus on learning, so they tend to isolate themselves from the social environment and are reluctant to actively participate in the learning process (Yuliani et al., 2025). The impact of bullying is not only a serious problem in Indonesia, but also globally. This is proven

by cross-national research showing that victims of bullying tend to have higher absenteeism rates, difficulties in social settings at school, and low motivation to learn, all of which ultimately result in decreased academic achievement (Yu & Zhao, 2021). Given the urgency of bullying cases, which are extremely detrimental to victims, the concept of forgiveness has begun to receive attention in educational psychology studies as a way to help victims manage negative emotions related to bullying experiences. Forgiveness is not just an internal emotional process, but also a strategy that can improve victims' psychological well-being by reducing revenge and anger responses, and increasing mental resilience (Afdal et al., 2019; P. F. Sari & Afdal, 2020) and reduce emotional disturbances that can hinder the learning process. Literature reviews show that forgiveness in bullying victims has the potential to increase self-esteem, be key to long-term emotional recovery, and reduce victims' affective aggression (Feliana et al., 2023; Handayani et al., 2024).

In recent years, researchers have begun to focus on positive psychological factors that can help victims of bullying overcome their negative experiences, one of which is forgiveness. Forgiveness is a psychological process that allows a person to release negative emotions such as anger, hatred, and the desire for revenge against a person or group that has harmed them. Previous research has shown that the ability to forgive plays a role in improving psychological well-being, reducing emotional stress, and helping someone develop more adaptive emotional regulation in dealing with social conflict (Handayani et al., 2024). Research on the impact of forgiveness on learning achievement among victims of bullying is currently limited. Several previous studies have shown that forgiveness interventions can increase academic hope and positive emotions. Indirectly, forgiveness is linked to learning achievement, which requires further investigation through this research. Therefore, this study is crucial to provide an empirical basis for the role of forgiveness in supporting learning engagement and learning achievement in young children who are victims of bullying, and is crucial for developing more child-friendly educational strategies.

This study is expected to provide a strong theoretical basis for the development of child-friendly educational intervention strategies and counseling in early childhood education (PAUD) settings. Several previous studies have shown that bullying significantly impacts children's psychological well-being and learning engagement. For example, research conducted by Septiani showed that bullying in children impacts social-emotional development, which has implications for learning activities (Septiyani et al., 2023). Furthermore, Maulida and Alam conducted research that revealed that bullying practices in elementary schools influence students' decreased participation and enjoyment in learning (Maulida & Alam, 2025).

Another study conducted by Yuliani and her team revealed that bullying impacts low learning motivation and a tendency to withdraw from academic environments (Yuliani et al., 2025). Furthermore, Swit also conducted research that showed that negative social interactions in early childhood are associated with low engagement in classroom activities (Swit et al., 2023). On the other hand, research on forgiveness demonstrates its role in helping individuals manage negative emotions and can improve psychological well-being. Research conducted by Mutmainna and Murdiana showed that forgiveness-based interventions can improve the emotional regulation skills of bullying victims (Mutmainna & Murdiana, 2024). However, most of this research focuses on psychological aspects or is conducted at a higher age group, so there is no specific research examining the relationship between forgiveness and learning achievement in early childhood.

Based on this, it can be identified that research on the role of forgiveness in supporting the learning achievement of early childhood victims of bullying is still limited. However, in early childhood, emotional regulation and social conflict resolution skills are still developing, so painful experiences like bullying can have different impacts than those in other age groups. Therefore, this research is important to provide empirical evidence regarding the impact of forgiveness on the learning achievement of early childhood victims of bullying.

Bullying not only impacts the victim's psychological well-being but can also affect their learning engagement in classroom activities. In early childhood education (PAUD) settings, children's learning engagement is a crucial factor supporting the success of the learning process because children learn through social interactions, play activities with peers, and emotional experiences. When a child is bullied, it can reduce their sense of security, hinder their participation in learning activities, and impact their social-emotional development. Therefore, psychological mechanisms are needed to help children manage their negative experiences more adaptively, one of which is forgiveness. Therefore, a more in-depth study of the relationship between forgiveness and learning achievement in early childhood is crucial, so that the world of education focuses not only on bullying prevention but also on the psychological recovery of victims so they can re-engage in the learning process optimally.

This research is novel in that it quantitatively examines the relationship between forgiveness and learning achievement in young children who are victims of bullying. Several previous studies have shown that forgiveness plays a role in improving psychological well-being and emotional regulation, which impacts academic engagement. Research conducted by Datu & Restubog indicates that forgiveness is related to learning engagement through emotional regulation mechanisms (Datu & Restubog, 2022). Furthermore, Rapp's research found that forgiveness-based interventions are effective in reducing negative emotions in children and adolescents (Rapp et al., 2022). Meanwhile, Zhu has conducted research that found forgiveness contributes to school adjustment through improved emotional control (Zhu et al., 2021). However, most of these studies have focused on adolescents and adults and placed forgiveness within the context of psychological well-being and social adjustment, rather than directly impacting learning achievement, particularly in young children (Oliveira et al., 2024). This indicates a research gap that requires further and in-depth study, considering that at an early age, children's emotional regulation and social conflict resolution skills are still developing. Based on initial field observations at several early childhood education institutions, bullying behaviors in the form of exclusion, teasing, and social rejection among children were found, impacting learning engagement, decreased learning motivation, such as a reluctance to attend school, and children's social-emotional development. Therefore, based on this, research is needed to examine the role of forgiveness of children who are victims of bullying on learning achievement in early childhood education environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grand Theory: Theory of Social-Emotional Development and the Ecology of Child Development

This research is based on the theory of social-emotional development of children and the theory of developmental ecology proposed by Urie Bronfenbrenner. Developmental ecology theory explains that child development is influenced by interactions between individuals and various environmental systems, such as family, school, and community. In this regard, the school environment, including early childhood education (PAUD), is a crucial system that can influence a child's social, emotional, and academic development. Furthermore, the theory of social-emotional development emphasizes that early childhood is in a phase of development where emotional regulation and social skills are still limited or immature, thus significantly increasing the risk of negative experiences such as bullying. Children's ability to manage their emotions at this stage is still limited and impacts their learning engagement and academic achievement (Denham, 2023).

Therefore, social experiences in the school environment, both positive and negative, play a significant role in shaping a child's learning readiness.

From a developmental ecology perspective, interactions between children and the school environment directly influence the formation of their social behavior and emotional responses. An unsafe environment, such as one involving bullying, can disrupt the balance of a child's development and reduce the quality of learning engagement. Conversely, a supportive and inclusive school environment can strengthen the development of social competence and improve a child's academic readiness. Furthermore, the theory of social-emotional development emphasizes the importance of emotional regulation, empathy, and social skills as the primary foundations of early childhood learning. Children who are able to manage their emotions well will adapt more easily to their social environment, have positive relationships with peers, and demonstrate more active involvement in the learning process.

Based on the focus of this research, the concept of forgiveness can be understood as part of an adaptive emotional regulation mechanism. Forgiveness allows children to reduce negative emotions such as anger and resentment and rebuild positive social interactions after experiencing conflict or bullying. Thus, forgiveness is not only relevant psychologically but also has direct implications for early childhood learning readiness and academic achievement.

By integrating the two theories above, this study positions the experience of bullying as an environmental factor that has the potential to disrupt children's development, while forgiveness is positioned as a protective mechanism that can help children recover their emotional condition and increase their involvement in the learning process.

Bullying in Early Childhood

Bullying is an aggressive behavior carried out by an individual or group intentionally and repeatedly against another individual who is in a socially or psychologically weaker position. This behavior is usually characterized by an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim, making it difficult for the victim to defend themselves and resulting in the victim being intimidated and harmed by the perpetrator, both physically and psychologically. In developmental psychology studies, this power imbalance can appear in the form of social dominance, physical strength, and psychological pressure that makes the victim feel vulnerable in social interactions in the school environment. In the world of education, cases of bullying not only occur at the elementary and secondary levels, but also begin to appear in early childhood education (PAUD) environments. Bullying that occurs in PAUD environments is usually evident in children's daily social behavior, such as frequently teasing friends, ostracizing other friends or groups, refusing to interact, and even taking friends' belongings by force or stealing. Although this is considered a common conflict that often occurs in PAUD environments, several studies show that this behavior can have a significant psychological impact on victims. Children who are victims of bullying tend to show symptoms of anxiety, decreased self-confidence, difficulty in establishing social relationships with peers and even have an impact on their academic achievement (Ragusa et al., 2023; Swit et al., 2023).

Bullying in early childhood education (PAUD) settings is often not readily identifiable due to its subtlety in everyday play interactions. Early childhood children are not yet fully able to differentiate between playful behavior and behavior that is intended to hurt others, so actions such as teasing or excluding friends are often considered part of the dynamics of play. This often causes bullying practices in PAUD to be overlooked and not optimally handled by teachers. One study showed that bullying experiences in early childhood are closely related to the emergence of short-term and long-term behavioral and emotional problems. Early childhood children who experience social rejection, such as victims of bullying, tend to exhibit withdrawn behavior and have difficulty building healthy social interactions in the school environment (Ambarita & Gampu, 2025). Other research also shows that someone who experiences bullying from an early age can affect the development of self-concept and reduce their involvement in classroom learning activities (Almaziyah et al., 2025). This is also in line with an international study which confirms that the experience of bullying at an early age has a long-term impact on children's psychosocial development. Children who are victims of repeated bullying are at risk of experiencing emotional regulation disorders, increased anxiety and obstacles in the development of social competence (Lavner et al., 2023).

The explanation above demonstrates that bullying in early childhood is not simply a simple conflict, but rather a matter that requires serious attention in the context of education and child development. This means that teachers and parents need a more comprehensive understanding of the characteristics of bullying in early childhood, so that interventions are not merely reactive but also preventative and oriented toward strengthening children's social-emotional development.

Impact of Bullying on Learning Engagement and Achievement

Children who are victims of bullying will experience negative social experiences, such as decreased motivation to learn, difficulty concentrating, and withdrawal from learning activities. These conditions indicate that bullying experiences not only impact emotional aspects but also affect victims' academic engagement in the learning process. This is in line with research findings showing that victims of bullying have higher absenteeism rates and lower academic achievement. Furthermore, victims also lack mature emotional regulation skills, so bullying experiences can cause significant emotional distress. If this condition is not immediately addressed, it can hinder children's social development and disrupt the learning process (Septiyani et al., 2023; Yu & Zhao, 2021).

Bullying also impacts the quality of children's involvement in the learning process in depth, such as active participation, courage to express opinions and interactions with teachers and peers such as simply following instructions without initiative, even avoiding group activities due to feelings of insecurity in their social environment. This is in line with research results showing that a person's experience of bullying is significantly correlated with low school engagement, which includes behavioral, emotional and cognitive involvement in the learning process, aspects of active participation and social interaction, and impacts the victim's learning outcomes (Nurlianti & Gunawan, 2026). In addition, emotional stress due to bullying can disrupt children's cognitive functions, such as attention and memory, these 2 things are important components in learning achievement, such as this disruption certainly makes it difficult for children to understand learning materials optimally, thus impacting learning achievement (Amelia & Lianawati, 2025).

Other studies also show that victims of bullying tend to have lower levels of academic self-efficacy, which results in decreased confidence in completing learning tasks, which can lead to victims becoming increasingly disengaged and falling further behind in academic achievement (Kezia & Basaria, 2025). The impact of bullying on victims' engagement and learning achievement is clear, not only directly, but also through psychological mechanisms such as decreased self-efficacy, impaired emotional regulation, and weakened interactions in the learning context.

The Concept of Forgiveness

Forgiveness is a psychological concept that refers to the process of changing a person's response to painful experiences caused by others. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting mistakes or justifying hurtful behavior, but rather a psychological process that involves releasing negative emotions such as anger, hatred, and the desire for revenge. From a positive psychological perspective, the ability to forgive is an adaptive strategy for managing painful interpersonal experiences, thereby maintaining psychological well-being. Previous research has shown that individuals with high levels of forgiveness tend to have better psychological well-being, lower stress, and more stable emotional regulation (Toussaint et al., 2015). In addition to being an intrapersonal process, forgiveness can also be an interpersonal mechanism that contributes to improving the quality of children's social relationships. In an educational context, forgiveness helps children rebuild positive interactions with peers after conflict, thus supporting a safe and inclusive learning climate (Rahmawati & Listiyandini, 2020).

Based on studies of early childhood development, forgiveness is closely related to the maturity of emotional regulation and the development of empathy. Children who demonstrate forgiveness tend to demonstrate the ability to recognize their own and others' emotions and are better able to control impulsive responses when facing unpleasant social situations (N. P. Sari & Wulan, 2022). Furthermore, forgiveness has been shown to have a positive relationship with children's social adjustment and psychological well-being, which ultimately impacts their readiness to learn and engagement in classroom learning activities (Rapp et al., 2022). Thus, conceptually, forgiveness plays a role not only in emotional aspects but also has direct implications for children's social aspects and readiness to learn, making it relevant to study in relation to early childhood learning achievement.

The Role of Forgiveness in Early Childhood Learning Achievement

In the context of bullying, forgiveness can help children release feelings of anger and resentment that could potentially disrupt the learning process. When children who are victims of bullying can manage these negative experiences more adaptively, they can refocus on learning activities and actively participate in classroom activities. Good emotional regulation skills are associated with increased academic engagement and learning motivation in children. Forgiveness indicates a child's emotional well-being, reduces aggressive behavior in the school environment, and improves the quality of social relationships between students (Rapp et al., 2022). Based on this explanation, it is understandable that forgiveness is a psychological mechanism that has the potential to help victims of bullying recover emotionally. A stable emotional state can help victims become active again in the learning process, thus positively impacting their academic achievement. Therefore, studying the impact of forgiveness on learning achievement in early childhood victims of bullying is important and deserves further investigation. Thus, conceptually, forgiveness is suspected to have a positive role in learning achievement in early childhood victims of bullying.

METHOD

This study used a quantitative approach with a correlation design and was conducted at an early childhood education institution in Banda Aceh City. The subjects in this study were children aged 5-6 years who experienced mild to moderate bullying based on initial observations with teachers. The sample was selected using a criterion-based purposive sampling technique of 40 children according to specific criteria relevant to the objectives of this study. The sample criteria in this study were children identified as victims of bullying, based on teacher observations, aged 5-6 years and actively participating in classroom learning activities. This technique was chosen because the study focused on subjects with specific characteristics. Data were collected using two instruments: children's forgiveness, which was measured using a forgiveness behavior observation sheet filled out directly by the class teacher and the assistant teacher, and learning achievement, which was measured using a child development assessment sheet referring to the Child Development Achievement Level Standards (STPPA). The forgiveness observation sheet in this study was compiled based on aspects of forgiveness behavior that can be observed in children's social interactions in and outside the classroom. The forgiveness indicators used in this study are presented in the following table.

Table 1. Observation Indicators of Forgiveness in Early Childhood Victims of Bullying

Aspect	Child Behavior Indicators	Examples of Observed Behavior	Skor
Emotional regulation	Children are able to control their emotions after receiving unpleasant treatment from friends	Children do not cry or get angry for a long time after conflicts with friends	1-4
Reduce negative emotions	Children show a decrease in feelings of anger, sadness or fear towards friends who have hurt them	Children no longer avoid friends who hurt them when playing in class	1-4
Social acceptance	The child is willing to return to playing and interacting with friends who have hurt him	The child rejoins group play with friends, especially friends who have hurt him	1-4
Empathy	Children begin to understand that friends can make mistakes	Children no longer blame or constantly antagonize their friends	1-4
Prosocial behavior	Children show positive behavior such as wanting to share or cooperate	Children want to share play equipment, share food or participate in group activities together	1-4
Learning engagement	Children are seen to be active again in learning activities in class	Children focus on following learning activities without being distracted by previous conflicts	1-4

The forgiveness instrument was developed based on 6 aspects according to the table that were measured quantitatively and arranged in the form of an observation sheet using a 4-point Likert scale (1 = never, 4 = always). Each indicator was given a score to produce a total score of the child's forgiveness. Meanwhile, the data analysis technique was carried out through 3 stages. The first stage, descriptive statistical analysis was used to describe the forgiveness data and early childhood learning achievements, this analysis aimed to see the general picture of the research variable scores such as the average value, standard deviation and data distribution. In the second stage, an analysis assumption test was conducted which included a normality test and a linearity test with the aim of determining whether the research data was normally distributed and ensuring that the relationship between variables was linear so that it met the requirements for regression analysis. Then in the third stage, what was carried out was a hypothesis test using a simple linear regression analysis to determine the effect of forgiveness on the learning achievements of early childhood victims of bullying, this aimed to see how much the forgiveness variable contributed in explaining variations in children's learning achievements. The data that had been obtained was then analyzed with the help of statistical software (SPSS). In this study, approval from the school and class teachers before the data collection process was also obtained, considering that ethical aspects need to be considered in a research. The confidentiality of the child's identity as a research subject is also maintained and all data obtained is used only for academic purposes and is not published in a form that can identify the child.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Descriptive Analysis

This study involved 40 children aged 5-6 years who were identified as victims of mild to moderate bullying based on initial teacher observations. The characteristics of the respondents indicated that all children were of approximately the same age, but differed in how they responded socially and emotionally to the bullying experience. The results are shown in the following table.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Research Variables

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Category
Forgiveness	40	76.25	8.40	Medium-High
Learning Achievements	40	71.10	9.15	Varies

Based on the table, it is known that the forgiveness variable in early childhood is in the moderate to high category, while learning achievement shows variation between individuals. This finding indicates that, in general, children have initial abilities in managing emotions and responding to negative social experiences, although this is not uniform across all study subjects. Some children easily return to playing and interacting as usual, while others remain quiet, gloomy, avoid friends, or lack confidence during learning activities. This difference indicates that despite their similar ages, their abilities to manage emotions and deal with social experiences vary. This variation in responses reinforces the descriptive results that learning achievement is influenced not only by cognitive aspects but also by the child's emotional and social conditions. This underpins the importance of further study, particularly in examining how forgiveness skills can help children readjust and engage in the learning process in the classroom.

Based on initial teacher observations, 40 children aged 5-6 years who participated in this study were identified as having experienced mild to moderate bullying. Data collection was obtained from forgiveness behavior observation sheets completed by class teachers and assistant teachers, as well as child development assessment sheets referring to the Child Development Achievement Level Standards (STPPA). The results of the descriptive analysis showed that forgiveness was in the moderate to high category, which was evident in the children's ability to manage emotions, reduce negative feelings, and re-interact with peers who had hurt them. These findings indicate that children with high levels of forgiveness tend to be more active in learning activities, better able to concentrate, and show more positive engagement in classroom interactions, while children with lower levels of forgiveness appeared to still experience emotional barriers that impacted their learning engagement.

Furthermore, the results of early childhood learning achievement show variations in developmental aspects, particularly in social-emotional aspects and children's learning engagement. Thus, these descriptive findings provide an initial indication that forgiveness has the potential to be a psychological factor related to children's readiness and engagement in the learning process. A more detailed examination based on the indicators in Table 1 above reveals that children's forgiveness abilities are evident in two main aspects, namely: (1) Emotional Regulation, after the activity, it was apparent that most children were able to control their emotions after experiencing unpleasant treatment, such as not showing prolonged anger. This was supported by teacher interviews, which stated that "children usually cry for a while, then after being directed, they can return to playing." This indicates that most children do not maintain negative emotional reactions for long; (2) Reducing Negative Emotions, children were seen to have begun to show a decrease in anger, fear, and sadness toward friends who had hurt them. They no longer consistently avoided social situations. Interviews with teachers revealed that "children who previously avoided them are slowly starting to want to be around their friends again." These observational findings also indicated a reduction in avoidance behavior in most children; (3) Social Acceptance, children were willing to return to play and interact in groups, including with friends who had previously been involved in conflict. This was supported by teacher interviews, which stated that "children usually return to play during group activities." Observational data also showed that children were re-engaged in activities with their peers; (4) Empathy, after the activities, it was apparent that children began to understand that friends can make mistakes and no longer displayed persistent hostility. This indicates a development in empathy. Interviews indicated that "children began to understand that their friends didn't do it on purpose." Observations also showed a decrease in repeated blaming behavior; (5) Prosocial Behavior, children began to demonstrate sharing, cooperation, and helping friends in play and learning activities. This was reinforced by the teacher's statement that "children who previously fought were now willing to share again." Observation data also showed an increase in sharing and cooperation behavior; (6) Learning engagement, children returned to actively participating in learning activities, were able to focus and were not distracted by previous conflict experiences. This indicates better learning engagement. The class teacher stated that "children who feel comfortable will return to active learning." Observations also showed that children were more focused and engaged in class activities.

Descriptive statistics show that the distribution of scores across subjects varies, indicating that levels of forgiveness and learning achievement are not homogeneous. This variation is important considering that each child has a different response to the bullying experience they experience and their psychological selection process. This finding indicates that some children have demonstrated the ability to forgive despite having experienced bullying, which has the potential to support their engagement in the learning process.

Analysis Assumption Test

Before conducting a simple regression analysis, this data was tested for normality and linearity to ensure the suitability of the research data.

a. Normality Test

The results of the normality test using Kolmogorov-Smirnov are presented in the table below.

Table 3. Normality Test Result

Variable	N	Sig. (p)	Information
Forgiveness	40	0.200	Normal
Learning Achievements	40	0.178	Normal

Based on the table above, the results obtained show that the data is normally distributed ($p > 0.05$), of course this result fulfills one of the main requirements for conducting a simple regression analysis.

b. Linearity Test

The following are the results of the linearity test presented in the table below.

Table 4. Linearity Test Results

Variables	Sig. Linearity	Sig. Deviation	Information
Forgiveness-Learning Achievement	0.000	0.312	Linear

The results of the linearity test indicate that the relationship between forgiveness and early childhood learning achievement is linear, with a significance value of less than 0.05 ($p < 0.05$). This means there is a linear relationship between the two variables, allowing for a simple linear regression analysis.

Results of Simple Regression Analysis

A simple linear regression analysis was conducted to determine the relationship and influence between forgiveness and early childhood learning achievement. This analysis also provides an overview of the strength of the relationship and the extent of forgiveness's contribution to explaining children's learning achievement. The results are presented in the table below:

Table 5. Result of Simple Regression Analysis of Forgiveness on Learning Achievement

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	F	Sig.
1	0,480	0,230	0,210	11,250	0,002

Table 5 shows a coefficient (R) value of 0.480, indicating a positive relationship between forgiveness and learning achievement. The R² value of 0.230 indicates that forgiveness contributes 23% to the variation in learning achievement of early childhood victims of bullying, while the remaining 77% is likely influenced by other factors outside this study. The F value of 11.250 with a significance level of 0.002 ($p < 0.05$) indicates that the regression model is significant, making it suitable for use to explain the relationship between variables.

Table 6. Regression Coefficient of Forgiveness on Learning Achievement

Variables	B	SE	β	t	Sig.
Konstanta	32,150	4,820	—	6,670	0,000
Forgiveness	0,540	0,161	0,480	3,354	0,002

Information:

B = unstandardized regression coefficient

SE = standard error

β = standardized regression coefficient

Based on Table 6, forgiveness has a regression coefficient of B = 0.540 with a t-value of 3.354 and a significance level of 0.002 (< 0.05). The standardized beta value ($\beta = 0.480$) indicates that forgiveness has a positive effect on learning achievement. This indicates that forgiveness has a positive and significant effect on early childhood learning achievement. This means that every increase in forgiveness scores will be followed by an increase in learning achievement scores.

General Interpretation of Research Results

This study demonstrates that forgiveness is a significant variable contributing to the learning achievement of 5-6 year old children who are victims of mild to moderate bullying at a PAUD (Early Childhood Education) institution in Banda Aceh City. Children who possess forgiveness skills tend to be better able to manage their emotions, avoid becoming involved in social conflicts, and focus more on learning activities. This environment supports optimal learning engagement, thus positively impacting children's learning achievement. More specifically, the results of this study indicate that each aspect of forgiveness plays a crucial role in helping children overcome the emotional impact of bullying they have experienced. Young children who are able to reduce negative emotions and accept their social environment tend to have more stable psychological well-being, making them better prepared to engage in the learning process.

The findings of this study indicate that forgiveness functions not only as an emotional response but also as an adaptive mechanism that can assist children in adjusting to the school environment. Based on these findings, forgiveness is related to the emotional stability and psychological well-being of victims, thus supporting learning engagement and learning achievement. This means that forgiveness is a recovery strategy for victims in the educational environment, which can reduce feelings of anger and resentment that have consumed their energy and psychologically disturbed them, allowing them to focus on achieving their learning.

Research shows that forgiveness can be viewed as a protective factor that not only plays a role in emotional recovery but also in improving children's readiness to learn in early childhood education settings. This role is especially crucial for young children who have experienced negative social experiences such as bullying, as it helps children feel safe, engaged, and focused in the learning process.

Discussion

Research findings based on fieldwork indicate that young children who are victims of bullying and have higher levels of forgiveness demonstrate better learning outcomes, particularly in the social-emotional and learning engagement aspects. Consistent with research findings that show that children aged 5-9 years already understand the concept of forgiveness, they will choose to forgive in resolving social conflicts emotionally, which can create a conducive learning environment and improve learning outcomes (McLaughlin et al., 2025; Toda et al., 2024). Apart from that, forgiveness is also a coping strategy that can support the emotional balance of victims. A stable emotional condition will encourage their ability to concentrate and participate in academic activities optimally. Of course, this will have a positive impact on learning achievement at school (Arumsari et al., 2025; Feliana et al., 2023).

The findings of this study can be explained through the perspective of social-emotional development theory, which emphasizes that emotional regulation is crucial for early childhood learning readiness. Children who are able to manage negative emotions caused by bullying experiences will be better prepared to re-engage in learning activities optimally. Thus, forgiveness is one adaptive emotional regulation mechanism that supports children's academic engagement.

This finding is unique because, in general, victims of bullying tend to respond with negative emotions, such as withdrawing from playgroups, becoming quiet in class, or even refusing to attend school, exhibiting fear, and hindering academic achievement (Widyastuti & Pratiwi, 2023). However, in this study, some children were able to develop a positive response through forgiveness (Pratiwi & Kurniawan, 2022). This suggests that early childhood has the potential for strong psychological recovery when supported by a conducive environment. This finding also provides a novel contribution by examining the role of forgiveness specifically in young children who are victims of bullying, a finding that has been limited in previous research that focused more on adolescents or adults.

In relation to Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory of development, a child's ability to develop forgiveness is inseparable from the influence of their immediate environment, such as interactions with teachers and peers at school. A supportive early childhood education environment can facilitate a child's emotional recovery, enabling them to respond more adaptively to bullying experiences. Conversely, an unsafe environment can exacerbate the negative impact of bullying on a child's development.

Forgiveness shows that victims who can manage their emotions will have a healthy impact on their lives, they will reduce anger and forgive, so this can affect the psychological condition of victims that supports better learning engagement at school. Forgiveness has a significant influence on improving emotional well-being, social well-being, and long-term psychological recovery for victims of bullying, which is an important foundation for more positive academic engagement and having consistent learning motivation (Rapp et al., 2022b; Theodora et al., 2023). This means that children are able to regulate their emotions, as evidenced by their ability to forgive more quickly, reducing the intensity of negative emotions so they don't interfere with their cognitive functions, such as attention and concentration. This proves that victims of bullying learn forgiveness, or they choose to forgive and accept the bullying experience. This makes it easier for victims to maintain their mental health, which of course can support academic achievement. This means that forgiveness not only impacts the emotional aspect but also directly influences children's readiness to learn in the classroom. Within the framework of social-emotional theory, this suggests that the ability to regulate emotions through forgiveness not only impacts intrapersonal aspects but also has implications for cognitive and behavioral aspects of children's learning. This means that good emotional management serves as a bridge between social experiences and success or learning achievement in early childhood.

Based on the results of previous research, which shows that forgiveness plays a significant role in supporting the learning achievement of early childhood victims of bullying by improving the child's emotional stability and learning engagement, this study shows that forgiveness has a strong influence in helping victims of bullying overcome negative emotional impacts that hinder learning achievement. This finding aligns with research showing that emotional regulation and positive social relationships contribute to early childhood learning engagement (Winata et al., 2022). The regression results, which showed a 23% contribution, confirm that forgiveness is an important factor, but not the sole factor in determining children's learning success. Indirectly, this indicates that there are other influential factors such as the family environment, the quality of teacher interactions, and classroom climate that can also play a role in children's learning achievement (Nurdiana, 2023). This is highly relevant to the theory of developmental ecology, which states that child development is the result of interactions within an environmental system. Thus, forgiveness can be positioned as an internal factor, while the family and school environments act as external factors that interact with each other in influencing children's learning achievement.

This finding aligns with the research objective, which is to examine the influence of forgiveness on learning achievement in victims of bullying. Bullying experiences often give rise to prolonged negative emotions such as anger, anxiety, resentment, and stress, which hinder concentration, motivation, and academic engagement in victims of bullying. In early childhood development, a child's emotional state is closely linked to their readiness to learn. Therefore, even the slightest emotional disturbance will result in decreased engagement in learning activities. In early childhood education settings, learning success is strongly influenced by a child's sense of security and emotional comfort, making forgiveness a socio-emotional development mechanism that can assist and support a child's academic functioning (Datu & Restubog, 2022; UNESCO, 2023).

Forgiveness serves as an alternative way to reduce the impact of stress and trauma, allowing victims to release their emotional burdens, allowing psychological energy to be redirected to their learning activities. This is in line with previous research showing that forgiveness can improve the emotional well-being and social interactions of bullying victims, thus assisting them in the learning process, preventing prolonged stress and deep trauma from the bullying experience. This process suggests that children who experience a shift from negative emotions to positive ones are better able to adapt, leading to more active learning activities. Indirectly, this can help them focus on their studies, which can impact their academic achievement (Abdusshomad, 2024). This finding is in line with international research which suggests that forgiveness is an adaptive psychological process that helps a person reduce anger and emotional stress and restore psychological functions that are disrupted due to negative interpersonal experiences, including bullying experiences (Akhtar et al., 2019; Enright & Fitzgibbons, 2022; Wohl et al., 2020).

Previous research also shows that forgiveness for bullying victims can help them develop an attitude of acceptance, forgiveness of themselves and others, and release negative emotions arising from their bullying experiences. Forgiveness in bullying victims is characterized by reduced levels of anger, anxiety, and emotional distress, potentially supporting their adaptation in social and academic contexts (Mutmainna & Murdiana, 2024). Similarly, the results of international research discuss the relationship between forgiveness and better emotional regulation skills, which enable a person to respond to bullying experiences adaptively and not continue to be mired in emotional stress that can hinder the learning process (Datu & Restubog, 2022; Toussaint et al., 2020; Zhu et al., 2021). This ability to adapt plays an important role in helping children remain involved in social interactions in the classroom without being overshadowed by previous negative or painful experiences.

The role of forgiveness in the learning achievement of bullying victims is also very clear. This is supported by previous research that suggests there is an emotional shift from negative to positive when bullying victims undergo the forgiveness process, marked by a decrease in the desire for revenge and a reduction in avoidance or hostility towards the bully. This change not only impacts the child's social relationships but also increases the sense of security in the learning environment, a key requirement for successful learning in early childhood education. The role of forgiveness is very clear in helping victims improve their emotional condition and create a balanced and healthy psychology (Rosita, 2018). On the other hand, previous research also discussed forgiveness in relation to increased psychological well-being and decreased negative emotions, so that this is an important factor in supporting academic engagement and social functioning at school (Barcaccia, 2023).

This implication is very much in line with the grand theory used, where a positive learning environment plays a role in strengthening children's social-emotional development, while the ability to forgive as an internal factor helps children adapt to negative social experiences such as bullying.

Based on the explanation above, forgiveness is a self-protection strategy and supports the success of bullying victims in educational settings. Furthermore, these findings also imply that forgiveness-based interventions can be an alternative preventive and curative approach to addressing bullying in schools. To reduce bullying cases and prevent them from disrupting learning outcomes, a comprehensive approach is required. First, teachers need to integrate social-emotional learning into daily classroom activities, such as practicing empathy, communication, and conflict resolution. Second, a child-friendly guidance and counseling approach should be implemented, emphasizing social recovery, not just punishment. Third, schools need to create a safe, enjoyable, and supportive classroom climate by fostering prosocial behavior. Fourth, parents play a crucial role in supporting children's emotional development at home. Overall, this discussion confirms that forgiveness is a crucial component in educational contexts, particularly in supporting the psychological recovery of bullying victims and helping optimize learning outcomes. The findings of previous research are highly consistent with the problem and objectives of this study and strengthen the argument that forgiveness-based interventions are worthy of consideration as part of a strategy for psychological support and mentoring in schools.

Theoretically, the findings of this study reinforce the developmental psychology perspective, which states that emotional regulation skills can be a crucial factor in supporting the learning success of early childhood. One emotional regulation skill that can help individuals restore psychological balance after experiencing social conflict, including painful experiences such as bullying, is forgiveness. This means that forgiveness can be a psychological mechanism that supports children's emotional stability, enabling them to re-engage optimally in the learning process. Practically, the findings of this study demonstrate the importance of developing socio-emotional education programs in early childhood education settings that focus not only on bullying prevention but also on the psychological recovery of victims. Teachers can implement learning processes by incorporating activities that foster empathy, conflict resolution skills, and forgiveness into daily learning activities. This approach is expected to create a safer, more supportive, and more conducive learning environment for socio-emotional development and early childhood learning achievement.

Thus, the novelty of this research lies in its assertion that forgiveness functions not only as an emotional response but also as a protective factor contributing to the learning achievements of early childhood victims of bullying. This research fills a gap in the literature by presenting empirical evidence in the context of early childhood education (PAUD), which has so far been dominated by studies of adolescents and adults.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research conducted, it can be concluded that forgiveness plays a significant role in supporting the learning achievements of early childhood victims of bullying. Children with higher levels of forgiveness exhibit more stable emotional states, reduced negative emotions, and a readiness to re-engage in classroom learning activities. This results in increased learning engagement, including participation, attention, and social interaction during the learning process. This also indicates that forgiveness contributes to learning achievement, although it is not the sole factor influencing children's learning success.

This study has several limitations, namely the relatively small sample size and the use of teacher observation as the primary source of measurement for forgiveness variables. Future researchers are advised to use a broader sample and combine measurement methods such as psychological scales and long-term studies to obtain a more comprehensive picture of the dynamics of forgiveness in young children who are victims of bullying at school.

Acknowledgement

The researcher would like to thank all parties who have supported this research, especially the early childhood education institutions and teachers who assisted in the data collection process, enabling this article to be successfully completed. The author also expresses appreciation to previous authors whose work served as primary references in the preparation of this research, enabling the author to gain a comprehensive understanding of the influence of forgiveness on learning outcomes for victims of bullying.

Funding Information

Not applicable

Research Ethics Statement

Not applicable

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