




## Forgiveness as a Mediator between Peer Conflict and Emotional Wellbeing in Adolescents

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aimed to examine the mediating role of forgiveness in the relationship between peer conflict and emotional wellbeing among adolescents in Indonesia.

**Methods and Materials:** A descriptive correlational research design was employed with a sample of 391 secondary school students selected using stratified random sampling based on the Krejcie and Morgan table. Emotional wellbeing was measured with the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS), forgiveness with the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS), and peer conflict with the Peer Conflict Scale (PCS). Data were analyzed using SPSS version 27 to compute descriptive statistics and Pearson correlations, and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS version 21 to test the hypothesized mediation model. Model fit was assessed using  $\chi^2$ , df,  $\chi^2/df$ , GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI, and RMSEA indices.

**Findings:** Results indicated that peer conflict was negatively correlated with emotional wellbeing ( $r = -.36, p = .003$ ) and forgiveness ( $r = -.29, p = .006$ ), while forgiveness was positively correlated with emotional wellbeing ( $r = .42, p = .001$ ). The SEM results showed a good model fit ( $\chi^2 = 114.27, df = 58, \chi^2/df = 1.97, GFI = .94, AGFI = .91, CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .049$ ). Direct effects revealed that peer conflict significantly predicted lower emotional wellbeing ( $\beta = -.29, p = .001$ ) and forgiveness ( $\beta = -.31, p = .002$ ). Forgiveness significantly predicted higher emotional wellbeing ( $\beta = .36, p = .001$ ). Importantly, forgiveness mediated the relationship between peer conflict and emotional wellbeing with a significant indirect effect ( $\beta = -.11, p = .007$ ), confirming partial mediation.

**Conclusion:** The findings highlight forgiveness as a crucial psychological mechanism that reduces the detrimental effects of peer conflict on adolescent emotional wellbeing. Incorporating forgiveness-focused interventions in schools may help adolescents manage conflicts constructively and maintain healthier emotional outcomes.

**Keywords:** Adolescents; Peer Conflict; Forgiveness; Emotional Wellbeing

## 1. Introduction

Forgiveness has been conceptualized as a voluntary, prosocial process that entails reducing negative emotions such as anger, resentment, and hostility while cultivating positive feelings such as empathy, compassion, and benevolence toward the transgressor (Hinduja, 2021). Unlike reconciliation, which requires mutual effort, forgiveness is an intrapersonal process that does not necessarily depend on the offender's apology or change of behavior. Prior research highlights forgiveness as a multidimensional construct encompassing forgiveness of self, others, and situations beyond one's control (Ho et al., 2020). By transforming the emotional and cognitive appraisal of interpersonal harm, forgiveness allows individuals to disengage from cycles of retaliation and emotional rumination, thereby reducing stress and enhancing wellbeing (Cornish et al., 2022).

Adolescents, given their heightened sensitivity to peer evaluation and belongingness, may particularly benefit from developing forgiveness skills. Studies demonstrate that adolescents with greater forgiveness capacities exhibit lower levels of depressive symptoms, anxiety, and interpersonal aggression (Şahan & Ceyhan, 2025; Yuniardita, 2024). Moreover, forgiveness contributes to the cultivation of positive emotions, empathy, and relational satisfaction, which are essential for emotional adjustment during adolescence. For example, research indicates that forgiveness mediates the relationship between emotion regulation difficulties and relational aggression, suggesting that forgiveness acts as a protective mechanism against maladaptive interpersonal behaviors (Şahan & Ceyhan, 2025). In addition, forgiveness has been linked with emotional maturity in adolescents, providing evidence of its developmental significance (Yuniardita, 2024).

The beneficial effects of forgiveness extend beyond adolescence into adulthood. Brudek, Steuden, and Kaleta (Brudek et al., 2023) revealed that forgiveness mediates the association between wisdom and wellbeing in older adults, underscoring its role in psychological health across the lifespan. Similarly, Paleari et al. (Paleari et al., 2022) found that self-forgiveness is positively related to wellbeing in prison inmates, with mindfulness serving as a mediator. These findings confirm that forgiveness contributes to resilience in diverse populations, whether facing normative developmental challenges or extreme circumstances such as incarceration. Furthermore, Cornish and colleagues (Cornish et al., 2022) highlighted forgiveness as an important factor

in adaptation following spinal cord injury, where it mediated the relationship between stress and wellbeing outcomes. Such evidence supports the generalizability of forgiveness as a protective psychological construct.

At the same time, the pathways through which forgiveness exerts its influence on wellbeing are nuanced. Research demonstrates that forgiveness interacts with other variables such as religiosity, self-compassion, and adverse childhood experiences (Mróz et al., 2024), emotional intelligence and psychological resilience (Li et al., 2023), and peer victimization (Liu et al., 2023). For instance, Liu and colleagues (Liu et al., 2023) showed that forgiveness moderated the impact of peer victimization on subjective wellbeing among adolescents, demonstrating its capacity to reduce the harmful effects of social stressors. Similarly, Li, Mi, and Wang (Li et al., 2023) revealed that forgiveness functions as a mediator in the association between emotional intelligence and depressive symptoms, further emphasizing its relevance in adolescent populations vulnerable to emotional challenges. Collectively, these findings underscore forgiveness as a key psychological resource in promoting wellbeing.

Peer conflict is one of the most pervasive challenges in adolescence, as young people frequently navigate competitive, emotionally intense, and status-driven relationships. Unresolved peer conflict may result in bullying, victimization, or social exclusion, which can significantly damage emotional wellbeing (Liu et al., 2023). Russell (Russell, 2023) pointed out that conflicts are not only relational disturbances but also philosophical and ethical challenges that require adolescents to engage in value-laden decision-making. Koch (Koch, 2023) similarly emphasized the role of anger and reconciliation in understanding conflict, noting that the capacity to move from resentment toward reconciliation is essential for emotional growth. Thus, investigating how adolescents manage peer conflict is critical for understanding their wellbeing trajectories.

The consequences of peer conflict extend to emotional health, self-esteem, and academic outcomes. Kane and colleagues (Kane et al., 2023) demonstrated that peer-related stress and lack of adequate support are strongly associated with diminished wellbeing, highlighting the importance of fostering coping strategies within peer networks. Davison, Bunting, and Stewart-Knox (Davison et al., 2023) further identified the role of lifestyle behaviors, including social media use, in shaping adolescent wellbeing, demonstrating that environmental and interpersonal factors jointly affect emotional health. In this light, peer conflict represents not

only an interpersonal challenge but also a contextual factor influencing a range of adolescent health outcomes.

Forgiveness offers a promising pathway for addressing the detrimental effects of peer conflict. Evidence suggests that forgiveness is linked to conflict resolution and relational satisfaction (Jain & Arya, 2024). For example, Jain and Arya (Jain & Arya, 2024) demonstrated that forgiveness contributes significantly to marital satisfaction, underscoring its potential to improve relational dynamics in contexts of conflict. Extrapolating these findings to adolescents, it is reasonable to propose that forgiveness can help young individuals manage peer disputes, reduce hostility, and maintain emotional stability. Furthermore, Khalid and colleagues (Khalid et al., 2025) showed that forgiveness and emotional empathy influence teachers' conflict resolution styles, suggesting that forgiveness is an essential component of constructive interpersonal interactions across different social roles. Gao and Lee (Gao & Lee, 2023) also highlighted forgiveness motives as moderators in the context of abusive supervision, indicating that forgiveness can buffer individuals from the harmful effects of relational conflict in organizational settings.

The relevance of forgiveness to adolescent wellbeing has also been highlighted in studies examining its role during crises. Pushpalatha and colleagues (Pushpalatha et al., 2024) found that forgiveness, alongside hope and gratitude, contributed to college students' wellbeing in the aftermath of COVID-19, suggesting its resilience-promoting function during times of widespread stress. Similarly, Schuttenberg et al. (Schuttenberg et al., 2022) identified forgiveness as a mediator between brain structure and clinical symptoms in adolescents, demonstrating its neuropsychological underpinnings. Sun and colleagues (Sun et al., 2021) further emphasized that mixed emotions and goal conflicts do not necessarily undermine wellbeing if adaptive mechanisms, including forgiveness, are activated. These studies underscore the multidimensional impact of forgiveness on wellbeing and the importance of examining it in adolescent populations where developmental challenges are most pronounced.

Beyond psychological benefits, forgiveness contributes to social functioning. Oguegbe, Iloke, and Udensi (Oguegbe et al., 2021) showed that forgiveness is positively associated with resilience and emotional intelligence in the workplace, suggesting its role in adaptive interpersonal functioning. Similarly, research has pointed out that forgiveness not only aids in resolving interpersonal tensions but also promotes prosocial behaviors and relational harmony (Hinduja, 2021).

Such findings are directly applicable to adolescent peer relationships, where the capacity to forgive may mitigate relational aggression and foster positive peer cultures.

Despite growing recognition of its importance, research on forgiveness in the context of adolescent peer conflict remains underdeveloped. While prior studies have explored forgiveness in relation to emotional regulation (Aji, 2025), religiosity (Mróz et al., 2024), and wellbeing outcomes (Brudek et al., 2023; Paleari et al., 2022), relatively few have explicitly examined its mediating role between peer conflict and emotional wellbeing. This gap is notable given that adolescence is a period marked by heightened vulnerability to peer-related stressors and increased need for adaptive coping strategies. Russell (Russell, 2023) noted the complexity of addressing interpersonal transgressions, which often involve not only emotional but also ethical considerations. Therefore, investigating forgiveness as a mediator in the relationship between peer conflict and wellbeing provides a novel contribution to understanding adolescent adjustment.

In sum, peer conflict remains a pervasive challenge during adolescence, with significant implications for emotional wellbeing. Forgiveness, as a psychological mechanism, holds promise in mitigating the adverse consequences of conflict and fostering positive adjustment. Prior studies across diverse contexts—from clinical populations to educational settings—have consistently underscored the protective role of forgiveness (Cornish et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023; Pushpalatha et al., 2024). Yet, the mediating role of forgiveness in the relationship between peer conflict and adolescent wellbeing requires further empirical exploration, particularly in non-Western settings. This study addresses this gap by testing a mediation model that positions forgiveness as a crucial link between peer conflict and emotional wellbeing.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a descriptive correlational design to examine the mediating role of forgiveness in the relationship between peer conflict and emotional wellbeing among adolescents. The participants were 391 secondary school students recruited from several schools in Indonesia. The sample size was determined based on the Morgan and Krejcie (1970) table, which indicated that 391 respondents would be sufficient for a population of this size. A stratified random sampling approach was used to ensure

representation across gender and grade levels. All participants provided informed consent, and the study was conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines for research with human participants.

## 2.2. Measures

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS) was developed by Tennant and colleagues in 2007 as a comprehensive measure of psychological and emotional wellbeing. The scale consists of 14 positively worded items that capture aspects of positive affect, satisfying interpersonal relationships, and positive functioning. Respondents rate items on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“none of the time”) to 5 (“all of the time”), yielding a total score between 14 and 70, with higher scores reflecting greater emotional wellbeing. A shorter 7-item version (SWEMWBS) is also available for use in large surveys, but the full scale provides greater breadth of assessment. Numerous studies across different populations have confirmed the strong internal consistency, test–retest reliability, and construct validity of the WEMWBS, making it one of the most widely applied and psychometrically sound measures of emotional wellbeing.

Forgiveness was measured using the Heartland Forgiveness Scale (HFS), developed by Thompson and colleagues in 2005. This instrument is designed to capture dispositional forgiveness and includes 18 items across three subscales: forgiveness of self, forgiveness of others, and forgiveness of situations beyond one’s control. Items are rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“almost always false of me”) to 7 (“almost always true of me”). Total scores can be derived for each subscale as well as an overall forgiveness score, with higher scores indicating greater forgiveness. The HFS has demonstrated robust psychometric properties, including high internal consistency, strong factorial validity, and evidence of convergent and discriminant validity in multiple cultural contexts. It is considered a standard tool in forgiveness research and is appropriate for adolescent and adult populations alike.

Peer conflict was assessed using the Peer Conflict Scale (PCS), developed by Marsee, Kimonis, and Frick in 2004. The PCS is a 40-item self-report instrument designed to

measure different forms of aggression and conflict among peers, with subscales capturing overt and relational aggression, each divided into reactive and proactive functions. Items are rated on a 4-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (“not at all true”) to 3 (“definitely true”), with higher scores representing greater levels of conflictual or aggressive peer interactions. The PCS provides a nuanced understanding of the type and function of peer conflict, which is especially valuable in adolescent research. Multiple validation studies have confirmed its strong internal reliability, factorial validity, and construct validity, demonstrating its utility in both community and clinical samples.

## 2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using both SPSS version 27 and AMOS version 21. First, descriptive statistics were calculated to summarize participants’ demographic characteristics. Pearson’s correlation coefficient was then applied to examine the bivariate relationships between peer conflict, forgiveness, and emotional wellbeing. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to test the hypothesized mediation model, allowing simultaneous examination of direct and indirect effects. Model fit was evaluated using conventional indices, including the Chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2$ ), Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR).

## 3. Findings and Results

The final sample consisted of 391 adolescents, of whom 201 (51.4%) were female and 190 (48.6%) were male. Participants ranged in age from 13 to 18 years, with a mean age of 15.42 years ( $SD = 1.27$ ). A total of 112 students (28.6%) were in grade 7, 127 (32.5%) in grade 8, and 152 (38.9%) in grade 9. In terms of socioeconomic background, 145 participants (37.1%) reported that their families had a monthly income below the regional average, 168 (43.0%) were around the average, and 78 (19.9%) were above average. These frequencies and percentages indicate a balanced representation across key demographic variables.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables (N = 391)*

Variable	M	SD	Min	Max
Emotional Wellbeing	47.86	8.72	22	69
Forgiveness	83.41	11.58	45	119
Peer Conflict	42.27	9.34	21	70

As shown in Table 1, adolescents reported moderate to high levels of emotional wellbeing, with a mean score of 47.86 (SD = 8.72) out of a possible 70. Forgiveness also showed a relatively high average, with participants scoring 83.41 (SD = 11.58) out of 126, suggesting that adolescents in the sample were generally forgiving. Peer conflict was reported at a mean of 42.27 (SD = 9.34) out of 120, indicating a moderate level of conflict experiences. The variability across all measures suggests sufficient spread to perform correlational and structural equation modeling.

Prior to conducting the main analyses, statistical assumptions were examined and confirmed. Normality was

assessed through skewness and kurtosis values, which ranged from -0.72 to 0.64 for skewness and -0.81 to 0.89 for kurtosis, all within the acceptable range of -2 to +2. Linearity and homoscedasticity were verified by inspecting scatterplots, which indicated evenly distributed residuals without systematic patterns. Multicollinearity was assessed using Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values, which ranged between 1.21 and 1.48, well below the critical cutoff of 10. Additionally, tolerance values ranged from 0.67 to 0.83, exceeding the recommended minimum of 0.10. These results confirmed that the assumptions for Pearson correlation and SEM analyses were satisfactorily met.

**Table 2**

*Pearson Correlations Among Variables (N = 391)*

Variable	1	2	3
1. Emotional Wellbeing	—		
2. Forgiveness	.42** (p = .001)	—	
3. Peer Conflict	-.36** (p = .003)	-.29** (p = .006)	—

Table 2 displays the Pearson correlation coefficients among the study variables. Emotional wellbeing was positively and significantly correlated with forgiveness (r = .42, p = .001), suggesting that higher forgiveness is associated with greater wellbeing. Peer conflict was negatively correlated with emotional wellbeing (r = -.36, p = .003), indicating that adolescents experiencing greater peer

conflict reported lower wellbeing. Peer conflict was also significantly and negatively correlated with forgiveness (r = -.29, p = .006), suggesting that adolescents with higher conflict experiences were less forgiving. These findings support the hypothesized model that forgiveness may mediate the link between peer conflict and wellbeing.

**Table 3**

*Goodness-of-Fit Indices for the Structural Equation Model*

Fit Index	Value	Recommended Threshold
$\chi^2$	114.27	—
df	58	—
$\chi^2/df$	1.97	< 3.00
GFI	.94	≥ .90
AGFI	.91	≥ .90
CFI	.96	≥ .95
TLI	.95	≥ .95
RMSEA	.049	≤ .08

As indicated in Table 3, the SEM demonstrated an acceptable to excellent model fit. The chi-square statistic

was 114.27 with 58 degrees of freedom, yielding a  $\chi^2/df$  ratio of 1.97, well within the recommended range below 3.00.

Incremental indices such as GFI (.94), AGFI (.91), CFI (.96), and TLI (.95) all exceeded the recommended thresholds, indicating strong model fit. The RMSEA value of .049

further confirmed the adequacy of the model, suggesting that the hypothesized mediation model provides a valid representation of the observed data.

**Table 4**

*Total, Direct, and Indirect Path Coefficients in the Structural Model*

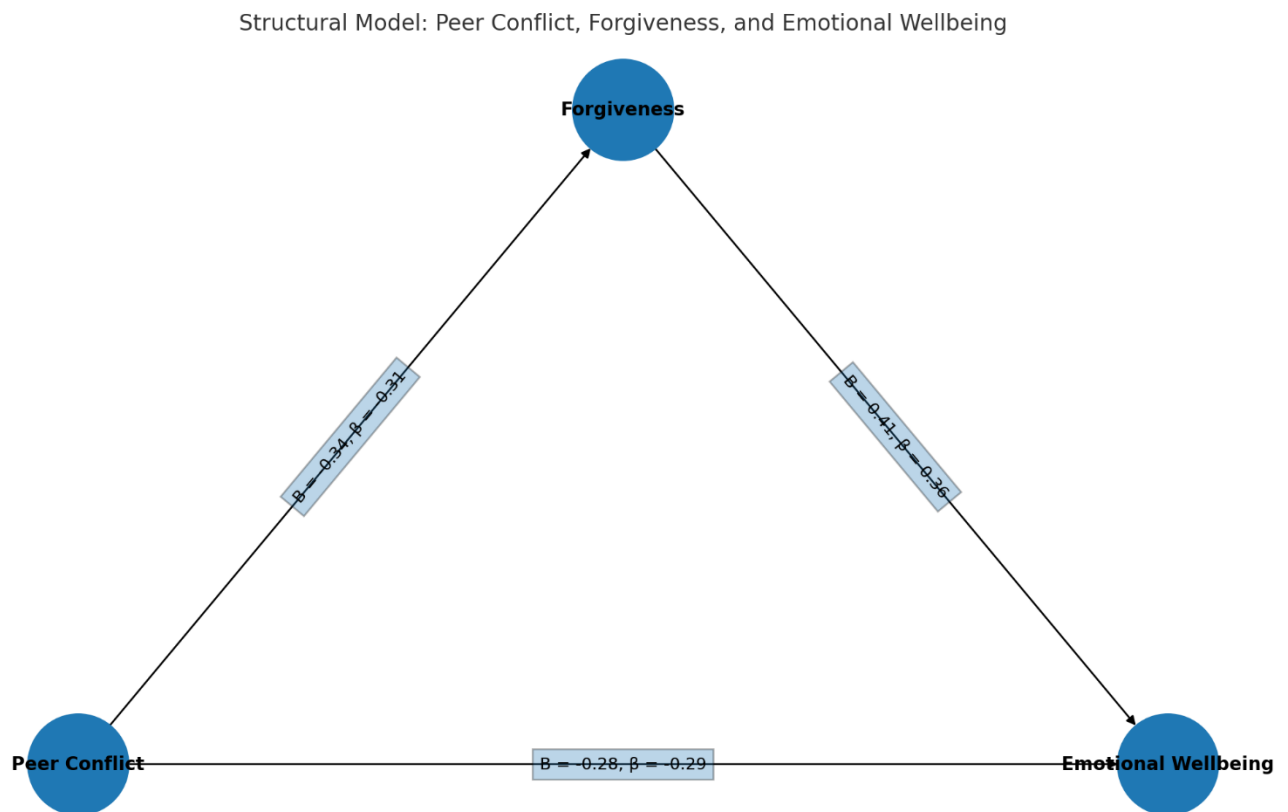
Path	b	S.E.	$\beta$	p
Peer Conflict → Emotional Wellbeing (Direct)	-0.28	0.07	-.29	.001
Peer Conflict → Forgiveness	-0.34	0.06	-.31	.002
Forgiveness → Emotional Wellbeing	0.41	0.08	.36	.001
Peer Conflict → Emotional Wellbeing (Indirect via Forgiveness)	-0.14	0.05	-.11	.007
Peer Conflict → Emotional Wellbeing (Total)	-0.42	0.09	-.40	.001

As presented in Table 4, peer conflict had a significant direct negative effect on emotional wellbeing ( $\beta = -.29, p = .001$ ), indicating that greater conflict was associated with reduced wellbeing. Peer conflict also significantly predicted lower levels of forgiveness ( $\beta = -.31, p = .002$ ). In turn, forgiveness positively predicted emotional wellbeing ( $\beta = .36, p = .001$ ), supporting its role as a protective factor.

Importantly, the indirect effect of peer conflict on wellbeing through forgiveness was significant ( $\beta = -.11, p = .007$ ), demonstrating partial mediation. The total effect of peer conflict on emotional wellbeing ( $\beta = -.40, p = .001$ ) was stronger than the direct path alone, highlighting the importance of forgiveness as a mechanism that explains part of this association.

**Figure 1**

*Structural Model of The Study*



#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the mediating role of forgiveness in the relationship between peer conflict and emotional wellbeing among Indonesian adolescents. The results provided empirical support for the hypothesized model, demonstrating that forgiveness significantly mediated the association between peer conflict and emotional wellbeing. Specifically, higher levels of peer conflict were associated with lower emotional wellbeing, but this effect was attenuated when forgiveness was taken into account. Adolescents who demonstrated a greater capacity to forgive reported better emotional wellbeing, even when exposed to peer conflict. This finding underscores forgiveness as an essential protective factor in adolescent development and aligns with previous research emphasizing its role in reducing negative affect and enhancing psychological adjustment (Hinduja, 2021; Ho et al., 2020).

The direct relationship between peer conflict and emotional wellbeing corroborates prior evidence that interpersonal disputes during adolescence can generate substantial stress and hinder healthy adjustment. For instance, Liu et al. (Liu et al., 2023) showed that peer victimization is strongly linked to diminished subjective wellbeing in adolescents, with forgiveness serving as a moderator of this relationship. Similarly, Kane et al. (Kane et al., 2023) highlighted that peer-related stress can lead to compromised mental health and increased vulnerability to emotional problems. The present findings extend this literature by emphasizing not only the negative impact of peer conflict but also the importance of forgiveness as a mediating pathway that enables adolescents to maintain wellbeing despite relational stress.

Forgiveness as a mediator was strongly supported by the current results, aligning with prior studies that highlight its crucial role in emotional regulation and resilience. Aji (Aji, 2025) emphasized that adaptive emotion regulation plays a mediating role between forgiveness and depressive symptoms, illustrating how forgiveness enhances emotional processes that protect against psychological distress. In line with this, Şahan and Ceyhan (Şahan & Ceyhan, 2025) demonstrated that forgiveness mediates the relationship between difficulties in emotion regulation and relational aggression in high school students, showing its capacity to transform maladaptive responses into more constructive outcomes. The present findings support these perspectives by indicating that forgiveness helps adolescents navigate peer conflicts by minimizing negative rumination and

fostering positive emotional states, thereby sustaining wellbeing.

The significant role of forgiveness in adolescent wellbeing also aligns with evidence from diverse contexts and populations. Brudek, Steuden, and Kaleta (Brudek et al., 2023) revealed that forgiveness mediated the relationship between wisdom and wellbeing in older adults, while Paleari et al. (Paleari et al., 2022) found that self-forgiveness was associated with improved psychological wellbeing among prison inmates through mindfulness. Similarly, Cornish et al. (Cornish et al., 2022) highlighted forgiveness as a mediator in the relationship between stress and wellbeing outcomes following spinal cord injury. These findings suggest that forgiveness functions as a universal psychological resource across different life stages and contexts, further validating the current results in adolescents.

The relationship between forgiveness and wellbeing can also be understood through the lens of interpersonal and intrapersonal processes. Jain and Arya (Jain & Arya, 2024) established that forgiveness contributes to marital satisfaction, demonstrating its role in fostering relational harmony. Extrapolating this to adolescents, forgiveness likely enhances peer relationships by reducing resentment and promoting reconciliation, thereby improving emotional wellbeing. Khalid and colleagues (Khalid et al., 2025) provided further support by showing that forgiveness and emotional empathy shape conflict resolution styles among university teachers, suggesting that forgiveness enhances constructive conflict management strategies. In this study, adolescents who forgave peers likely approached conflicts with more adaptive strategies, contributing to better emotional outcomes.

Additionally, forgiveness has been shown to moderate the impact of interpersonal and contextual stressors, a mechanism consistent with the current findings. Gao and Lee (Gao & Lee, 2023) demonstrated that forgiveness motives moderated the effects of abusive supervision on work–family conflict, while Pushpalatha et al. (Pushpalatha et al., 2024) found that forgiveness, along with hope and gratitude, contributed to the wellbeing of students during the COVID-19 pandemic. In a similar vein, Schuttenberg et al. (Schuttenberg et al., 2022) identified forgiveness as a mediator between neurological structures and clinical symptoms in adolescents. Together, these studies show that forgiveness is a flexible and powerful coping resource that mitigates the harmful effects of conflict and stress, resonating with the findings of the current study.

The philosophical underpinnings of forgiveness also provide insight into the present results. Russell (Russell, 2023) conceptualized forgiveness as a complex moral and philosophical phenomenon that enables individuals to transcend interpersonal grievances. Koch (Koch, 2023) similarly emphasized the importance of moving from anger to reconciliation as part of forgiveness, suggesting that such a transition is essential for emotional growth. The adolescents in this study who engaged in forgiveness may have experienced a similar moral transformation, allowing them to release negative emotions and foster a sense of reconciliation, which in turn enhanced their wellbeing.

Beyond philosophical accounts, psychological models clarify the regulatory mechanisms through which forgiveness enhances wellbeing. Ho, Tongeren, and You (Ho et al., 2020) proposed a regulatory model of forgiveness, describing how self-regulation capacities enable individuals to forgive by reducing hostility and maintaining prosocial goals. This framework helps explain the findings of the current study, as adolescents who demonstrated forgiveness may have drawn upon self-regulatory skills to manage conflictual emotions, thereby preserving emotional wellbeing. Similarly, Li, Mi, and Wang (Li et al., 2023) showed that forgiveness mediates the relationship between emotional intelligence and depression, with resilience serving as a chain mediator. Such findings highlight the multi-layered psychological mechanisms that underpin the mediating role of forgiveness, consistent with the results of the present study.

The protective influence of forgiveness is also consistent with findings on its role in resilience and adaptation in challenging contexts. Oguegbe, Iloke, and Udensi (Oguegbe et al., 2021) demonstrated that forgiveness was positively associated with resilience and emotional intelligence in the workplace, suggesting that it contributes to adaptive functioning under stress. Pushpalatha et al. (Pushpalatha et al., 2024) similarly showed that forgiveness contributes to wellbeing during crises. These findings reinforce the idea that forgiveness acts as a psychological buffer that enables individuals to adapt constructively, a mechanism that explains the observed mediation effect between peer conflict and wellbeing in this study.

The current findings also resonate with research on cultural and contextual factors in forgiveness. Davison, Bunting, and Stewart-Knox (Davison et al., 2023) emphasized that wellbeing is shaped by lifestyle, social media use, and abstinence from risky behaviors, while Sun et al. (Sun et al., 2021) noted that goal conflicts do not

necessarily undermine wellbeing if adaptive mechanisms such as forgiveness are employed. This aligns with the current findings by suggesting that adolescents in collectivist cultural settings such as Indonesia may draw on forgiveness as a culturally congruent coping strategy to manage peer conflicts and maintain wellbeing.

Taken together, the findings of this study reinforce the importance of forgiveness as a mediator in the link between peer conflict and emotional wellbeing. By integrating evidence across psychological, philosophical, and applied perspectives, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of forgiveness as a developmental resource for adolescents. It extends prior literature by situating forgiveness in the context of peer conflict—a salient challenge of adolescence—and highlights its potential as a target for interventions to promote wellbeing in school and community settings.

## 5. Limitations & Suggestions

Despite its contributions, the study is not without limitations. First, the use of a cross-sectional design limits causal interpretations of the relationships among peer conflict, forgiveness, and emotional wellbeing. Longitudinal studies are needed to determine the temporal ordering of these variables. Second, data collection relied exclusively on self-report measures, which may have introduced biases such as social desirability or recall errors. The inclusion of peer or teacher reports, or behavioral observations, could provide more objective assessments. Third, the sample was limited to Indonesian adolescents, which restricts the generalizability of findings to other cultural contexts. Cultural norms regarding forgiveness, conflict, and wellbeing may differ across societies, and future research should examine the model in diverse cultural groups. Finally, while the study employed well-validated scales, it did not account for potential confounding variables such as family environment, religiosity, or personality traits, which may influence forgiveness and wellbeing.

Future studies should employ longitudinal or experimental designs to establish causal pathways between peer conflict, forgiveness, and emotional wellbeing. Such designs would allow researchers to determine whether forgiveness training directly reduces the negative impact of peer conflict over time. Researchers should also explore potential moderators such as gender, age, religiosity, or cultural background to identify for whom and under what conditions forgiveness is most effective in promoting



wellbeing. Additionally, future research could incorporate multi-method approaches, including qualitative interviews or observational data, to enrich understanding of the forgiveness process in adolescents. Exploring the neurobiological correlates of forgiveness, as suggested by previous studies, may also provide insights into its mechanisms. Finally, intervention-based research is needed to evaluate whether forgiveness-focused programs can be systematically implemented in schools to reduce peer conflict and enhance adolescent wellbeing.

In terms of practice, the findings highlight the importance of incorporating forgiveness education into school-based programs to promote emotional wellbeing in adolescents. Educators and school counselors can design workshops that help students understand forgiveness, practice empathy, and develop constructive conflict resolution skills. Parents and teachers should be trained to model forgiveness and encourage adolescents to apply it in everyday peer interactions. Policymakers and curriculum developers could also integrate forgiveness-based social-emotional learning into national education frameworks to foster resilience and wellbeing among youth. Finally, mental health professionals working with adolescents should consider incorporating forgiveness-focused therapeutic strategies to support clients dealing with peer conflict and related emotional difficulties.

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### Declaration of Interest

The authors of this article declared no conflict of interest.

### Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

### Transparency of Data

In accordance with the principles of transparency and open research, we declare that all data and materials used in this study are available upon request.

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### Authors' Contributions

All authors equally contributed to this article.

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