



School-based psychological interventions for cyberbullying prevention and adolescent mental well-being: A Scopus-based systematic review

Phí Thị Hiếu

Thai Nguyen University of Education, Thai Nguyen, Vietnam

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Abstract

Cyberbullying is a growing public health concern for adolescent mental well-being worldwide. School-based programs are widespread, yet many prioritize behavioral deterrence over the psychosocial mechanisms (coping, emotion regulation, help-seeking) through which harm may be reduced. This systematic review, reported in accordance with PRISMA 2020, synthesizes recent Scopus-indexed evidence (2015–2026) on school-based psychological interventions for cyberbullying prevention and adolescent mental well-being. A title-field search retrieved 218 records. After removal of records before screening, title/abstract screening, full-text retrieval, and eligibility assessment, five peer-reviewed articles (two meta-analyses, one pilot trial, one cross-sectional survey, and one narrative review) were retained and synthesized thematically. Three themes emerged. (1) Meta-analytic evidence suggests that multicomponent programs combining cognitive-behavioral techniques (CBT), social-emotional learning (SEL), and empathy training are associated with reductions in cyber-perpetration and cyber-victimization, although the durability of effects remains uncertain. (2) A single pilot study suggests that an online, self-guided CBT-based module may strengthen adolescents' confidence in handling cyberbullying and their willingness to seek help; evidence on mental-health outcomes is still preliminary. (3) Family and cultural context, including parental stress, digital mediation styles, and stigma surrounding counseling, appears to condition implementation, particularly in the Vietnamese context. Because the evidence base is small, heterogeneous in design, and rarely reports mental-health outcomes directly, conclusions are tentative. The review offers a research agenda and preliminary implications for educational psychologists and policymakers designing school-based mental health support.

Keywords: Cognitive-behavioral therapy, cyberbullying, mental well-being, Prisma, psychological interventions, school counseling, social-emotional learning

Introduction

The rapid proliferation of digital communication technologies has transformed adolescent social interaction, expanding interpersonal connection while introducing new psychosocial vulnerabilities. Among these, cyberbullying, commonly defined as willful, repeated, and hostile harm inflicted through computers, mobile phones, and other electronic media (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015; Smith *et al.*, 2008) ^[23], has become a pervasive concern among school-aged youth. Unlike traditional peer victimization, cyberbullying transcends temporal and physical boundaries and is characterized by potential anonymity, wide audience reach, and the lasting digital trace of hurtful content (Kowalski *et al.*, 2014; Slonje & Smith, 2008) ^[13, 23]. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that, on average, roughly 15% of adolescents are involved in cyberbullying as victims, perpetrators, or bully-victims (Modecki *et al.*, 2014) ^[16], although reported rates vary considerably across studies and populations.

The consequences of cyberbullying for adolescent psychological well-being are well documented. General Strain Theory (Agnew, 1992) ^[1] and Social-Ecological Systems Theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) ^[3] offer useful lenses for understanding how exposure to digital hostility can generate chronic interpersonal stress that undermines an adolescent's sense of safety and belonging. Empirically, cyber-victimization is linked to internalizing problems, including depressive symptoms, anxiety, low self-esteem, social withdrawal, and non-suicidal self-injury (Bottino *et al.*, 2015; Moore *et al.*, 2017) ^[2, 18], and peer victimization is

associated with suicidal ideation and attempts among youth (van Geel *et al.*, 2014) ^[26]. Cyber-perpetration, in turn, is frequently accompanied by externalizing behaviors, moral disengagement, and reduced affective empathy. Because these manifestations disrupt academic engagement and school climate, addressing cyberbullying has shifted from a purely disciplinary matter to a core priority for school-based psychological support.

Schools have therefore become the primary arena for prevention and intervention. Over the past two decades, interventions have ranged from digital citizenship lessons and restrictive administrative policies to comprehensive whole-school approaches (Salmivalli *et al.*, 2011; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011) ^[21, 25]. More recently, programs have moved from informational lectures toward psychological and social-emotional learning frameworks (Durlak *et al.*, 2011) ^[8], incorporating cognitive-behavioral techniques, emotion regulation training, empathy cultivation, peer counseling, and restorative practices intended to strengthen resilience and non-aggressive conflict resolution in digital spaces.

Despite the growing number of evaluations, the literature has three gaps. First, prior systematic reviews and meta-analyses have mainly treated reductions in bullying or victimization as the primary indicator of efficacy (Gaffney *et al.*, 2019) ^[9]; less is known about how interventions relate to adolescent mental-health indicators such as subjective well-being, depressive affect, anxiety, and psychological distress. Second, evaluations differ substantially in theoretical foundations, intervention modalities, and follow-

up duration. Third, much of the earlier synthesis predates 2020 [20], whereas the post-pandemic period has seen increased digital dependence and a new wave of studies, including work from non-Western settings, that has not yet been brought together.

This study addresses these gaps through a systematic review of recent literature indexed in Scopus. It is guided by the following research questions:

RQ1: Which psychological and psychoeducational intervention approaches (theoretical basis, components, delivery mode) have been examined in recent Scopus-indexed studies of school-based cyberbullying prevention?

RQ2: What outcomes are reported, both cyberbullying behaviors and mental well-being-related indicators, and how consistent are the findings?

RQ3: Which contextual factors (family, school climate, culture) are reported to shape the implementation and effectiveness of these interventions?

RQ4: What are the theoretical and practical implications for designing culturally attuned, sustainable school-based psychological support, and what research gaps remain? Basic bibliometric characteristics of the included studies (publication year, journal, country, citations) are reported descriptively to contextualize the evidence rather than as a separate research question.

Related Work

School-based cyberbullying interventions have been examined extensively. Foundational programs such as the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program and the Finnish KiVa program established the value of whole-school approaches that combine classroom rules, school-wide monitoring, and teacher training (Salmivalli *et al.*, 2011; Ttofi & Farrington, 2011) [21, 25]. While these models reduced on-campus physical and verbal aggression, their transferability to the covert digital domain has produced mixed results (Gaffney *et al.*, 2019) [9].

Scholars have consequently turned to psychological and psychoeducational interventions that target the socio-cognitive antecedents of cyber-behavior. Durlak *et al.* (2011) [8] showed that universal SEL programs enhance positive social behavior and reduce emotional distress among school children. CBT-based approaches have likewise been adapted to cyber-conflict, coaching adolescents in cognitive reframing, emotion regulation, and assertive help-seeking, and the ViSC Social Competence Program is one evaluated example (Grading *et al.*, 2015) [10]. Challenges remain regarding the long-term sustainability of interventions, the role of parental supervision, and the adaptation of anti-bullying frameworks to cultural environments in which mental health stigma persists.

Methodology

This review followed the PRISMA 2020 guideline (Page *et al.*, 2021; see also Moher *et al.*, 2010) [17, 20, 22], which provides transparent standards for conducting and reporting systematic reviews. The review protocol was not prospectively registered.

1. Eligibility Criteria

Inclusion criteria: Articles were eligible if they:

Were written in English;

Were published between 2015 and 2026 in a peer-reviewed journal;

Focused on school-aged adolescents (primary, lower-secondary, or upper-secondary education);

Investigated school-based psychological, psychoeducational, or counseling interventions for cyberbullying prevention and adolescent mental well-being, or contextual factors directly relevant to such interventions;

Used experimental, quasi-experimental, meta-analytic, systematic or structured narrative review, or cross-sectional survey designs with extractable findings; and

Were accessible in full text.

Exclusion criteria: Articles were excluded if they:

Were not in English, not published between 2015 and 2026, or not published in a peer-reviewed journal (e.g., conference proceedings, books, dissertations, book chapters);

Focused exclusively on university students, adults, or clinical psychiatric inpatients;

Addressed solely technical device blocking, software filters, or legal penalties without psychological or educational components;

Were purely theoretical, opinion, or editorial pieces without extractable findings; or

Were not accessible for full-text extraction.

Because the eligible designs differ, the criteria were applied by study type. Experimental, quasi-experimental, and meta-analytic studies were required to evaluate a school-based psychological, psychoeducational, or counseling intervention and to report behavioral or psychological outcomes. Cross-sectional surveys and structured narrative reviews were eligible only as contextual evidence directly relevant to implementation (for example, family or cultural factors) and are interpreted in the synthesis as such, not as evidence of intervention effectiveness.

2. Information Sources

Scopus was used as the sole information source. It indexes peer-reviewed literature across educational psychology, behavioral sciences, and social sciences and supports precise, reproducible queries (Singh *et al.*, 2021) [22]. Its journal coverage substantially overlaps with that of Web of Science (Singh *et al.*, 2021) [22], and several published reviews have relied on Scopus alone (Chamorro-Atalaya *et al.*, 2023; Hong *et al.*, 2024; Zainal Abidin *et al.*, 2023) [12, 27]. Single-database searching is nevertheless a recognized limitation, discussed in Section 5.3.

3. Search Strategy

The search targeted terms for cyberbullying, interventions, and school-aged populations in the article title field. The following query was applied:

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TITLE (("cyberbully*" OR "cyber-bully*" OR "cyber victim*" OR "cyber-victim*" OR "online harassment" OR "electronic bullying") AND ("intervention*" OR "program*" OR "prevent*" OR "counseling" OR "training") AND ("school*" OR "student*" OR "adolescent*" OR "youth*" OR "teen*" OR "pupil*")) AND PUBYEAR > 2014 [16] AND PUBYEAR < 2027 AND (LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "PSYC") OR LIMIT-TO (SUBJAREA, "SOC")) AND (LIMIT-TO (DOCTYPE, "ar")) AND
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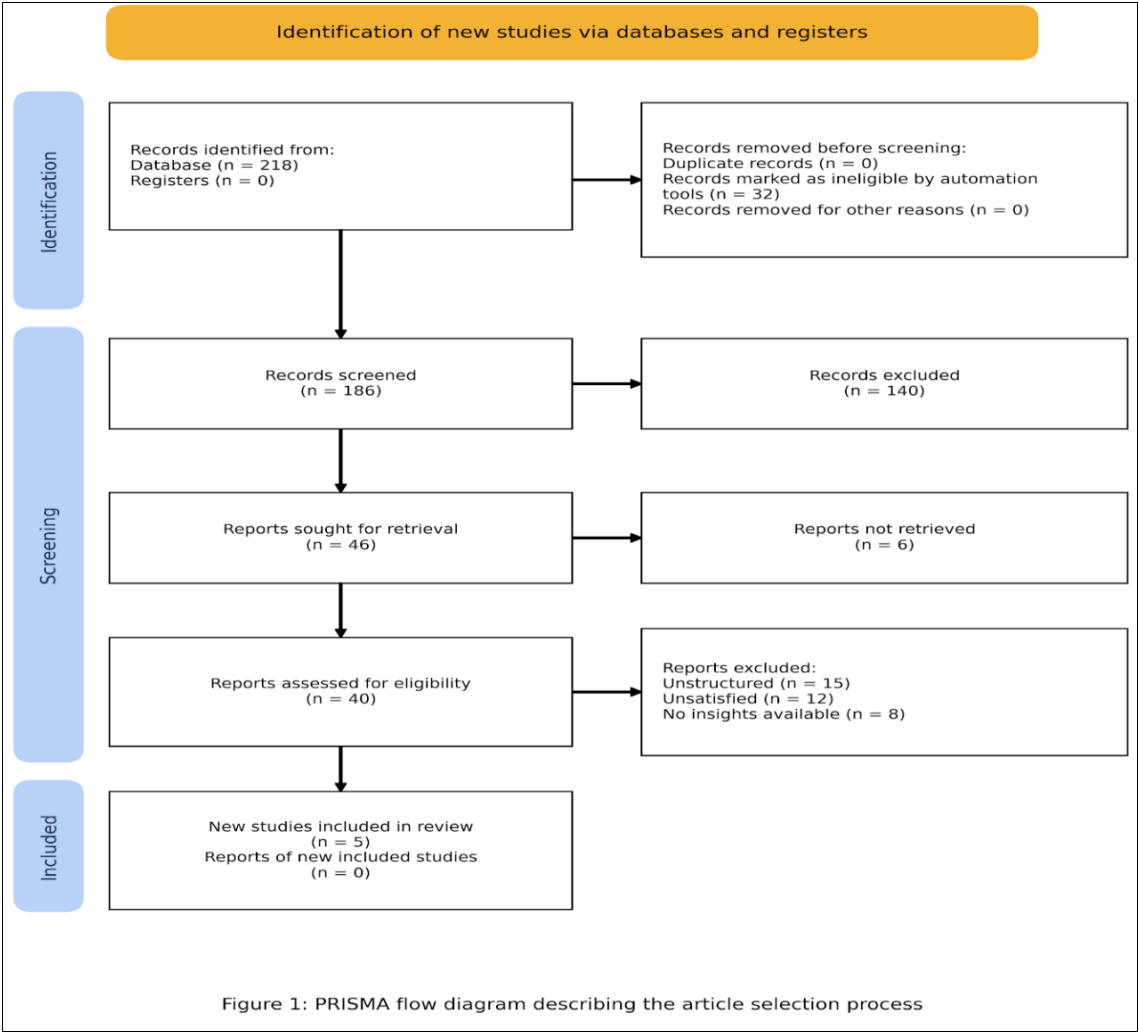
(LIMIT-TO (SRCTYPE, "j")) AND (LIMIT-TO (LANGUAGE, "English"))
The search was run in March 2026 [6] and returned 218 records.

Restricting the search to the title field and to two Scopus subject areas (Psychology and Social Sciences) favors precision over sensitivity and may have excluded relevant records; this limitation is discussed in Section 5.3.

4. Study Selection

Selection comprised a screening phase and an eligibility phase. In the screening phase, the author screened the titles, abstracts, and keywords of all records against the eligibility criteria. In the eligibility phase, the author read the full texts

and applied the same criteria.
Figure 1 illustrates the process. The search returned 218 records, of which 32 were removed before screening (duplicate records and records flagged as ineligible by automated tools). The remaining 186 records were screened by title and abstract, and 140 were excluded as not relevant. Of 46 reports sought for retrieval, 6 could not be accessed in full text. The remaining 40 reports were assessed against the eligibility criteria and 35 were excluded for the following reasons: no structured psychological or psychoeducational intervention component (n = 15), target psychological outcomes not addressed (n = 12), and no extractable findings relevant to the review questions (n = 8). Five studies were retained.



5. Data Collection Process

Data were extracted by the author using a standardized form. Extracted variables were: author(s), title, year, journal, citation count (Scopus, at the time of data collection), country/affiliation, author keywords, design and intervention methodology, target population, and key psychological and behavioral outcomes.

6. Synthesis Methods and Critical Appraisal

Extracted data were stored in comma-separated values (.csv) format and organized in Microsoft Excel. Because the included studies differ in design and outcome measures, no quantitative

pooling was attempted. Findings were synthesized through descriptive tabulation and thematic clustering of intervention frameworks, behavioral effects, and socio-ecological mediators. No formal risk-of-bias or quality appraisal (e.g., MMAT or AMSTAR 2) was undertaken, which is acknowledged as a limitation; findings should therefore be read as a map of recent evidence rather than a graded assessment of effectiveness.

Results

1. Characteristics of the Included Studies

Table 1 presents the characteristics and Scopus citation counts of the five publications at the time of data collection.

Table 1: Characteristics and citation counts of the five included studies

No.	Author(s) & year	Article title	Journal	Citations	Methodological approach
1	Chillemi <i>et al.</i> (2020) ^[5]	A pilot study of an online psychoeducational program on cyberbullying that aims to increase confidence and help-seeking behaviors among adolescents	Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking	20	Pilot experimental trial; online CBT-based psychoeducation
2	Kurnaz & Koçtürk (2025) ^[14]	Addressing cyberbullying in adolescents: A comprehensive meta-analytic evaluation of intervention programs	Aggression and Violent Behavior	5	Quantitative meta-analysis of intervention effects on victimization and perpetration
3	Liu <i>et al.</i> (2025) ^[15]	The effectiveness of longitudinal intervention programs for adolescent cyberbullying and its influencing factors: A three-level meta-analysis	Journal of Affective Disorders	2	Three-level meta-analysis of longitudinal trials, based on the General Aggression Model (GAM)
4	Cosgun Demirdag & Kucuk (2026) ^[6]	The impact of parental behaviour in the digital age on awareness of cyberbullying prevention: the role of technological literacy and parental stress	BMC Psychology	1	Cross-sectional survey; serial mediation modeling (PROCESS Model 6)
5	Duc (2026) ^[7]	Cyberbullying and adolescent mental health: a narrative review and implications for prevention and response in the Vietnamese educational context	Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties	0	Narrative review with scoping elements; educational policy and school climate framework

The included set comprises one pilot trial, two meta-analyses, one cross-sectional survey, and one narrative review. Only the first three speak directly to intervention effects; the latter two address contextual factors. Citation counts depend strongly on publication date and are not used here as indicators of study quality. The 2020^[20] pilot study has the most citations (20), and the 2025–2026^[6, 15] articles have had little time to accumulate citations. The two meta-analyses may draw on overlapping primary trials, an overlap that was not quantified (see Section 5.3).

2. Journals and Geographic Settings

The five articles appeared in five different international journals covering affective disorders, cyber-behavior, aggression research, psychology, and emotional and behavioural difficulties.

By author affiliation, the studies originate from Australia (Chillemi *et al.*, 2020)^[5], Türkiye (Cosgun Demirdag & Kucuk, 2026; Kurnaz & Koçtürk, 2025), China (Liu *et al.*, 2025), and Vietnam (Duc, 2026)^[6, 7, 14, 15]. Affiliation does not necessarily reflect where the underlying data were collected; in particular, the meta-analyses synthesize primary studies from multiple countries. With five studies, no inference about regional patterns can be drawn, but the inclusion of a review focused on Vietnam indicates emerging scholarly attention to local resource constraints and cultural barriers.

3. Thematic Synthesis

Three themes were identified across the five studies.

Theme 1: Multicomponent psychological interventions and behavioral change (RQ1, RQ2): The meta-analyses by Liu *et al.* (2025) and Kurnaz and Koçtürk (2025)^[14, 15] indicate that school-based interventions are associated with reductions in both cyber-perpetration and cyber-victimization, with efficacy varying by program

composition. Programs incorporating SEL, CBT skills, empathy cultivation, and emotion regulation tended to produce larger effects than stand-alone technical or digital-literacy instruction. Because Liu *et al.* (2025)^[15] examined longitudinal trials, durability of effects is an open question that future trials with booster sessions should test directly.

Theme 2: CBT psychoeducation and help-seeking self-efficacy (RQ1, RQ2): Chillemi *et al.* (2020)^[5] demonstrated the feasibility of an online, self-guided psychoeducational program. Adolescents who completed the CBT-based modules showed improved confidence in handling cyberbullying and greater willingness to seek help. Encouraging assertive problem-solving in place of maladaptive rumination is a plausible pathway to reduced depressive symptoms and social anxiety, but this pathway was not established by the included evidence. As a pilot study, these findings require confirmation in larger controlled trials with mental-health outcomes as endpoints.

Theme 3: Family–school ecology and contextualized implementation (RQ3): Cosgun Demirdag and Kucuk (2026) and Duc (2026)^[6, 7] suggest that school-based programs should not operate in isolation. Serial mediation modeling indicated that parental technological literacy alone does not ensure protective awareness; its association with awareness operates through parental stress and parenting styles. Duc (2026)^[7] further argues that, in the Vietnamese context, intense academic competition, parental expectations, and mental health stigma may deter adolescents from using school counseling. Both studies are cross-sectional or narrative in design, so these relationships should be treated as hypotheses about implementation rather than established causal effects. Taken together, they point to the potential value of psychologically safe school climates, trained counselors, and parental stress-reduction components.

Discussion

Earlier reviews of cyberbullying interventions focused largely on reductions in the frequency of aggressive acts. The studies synthesized here suggest growing attention to the socio-emotional and cognitive mechanisms that underpin peer aggression and victim vulnerability. This direction is consistent with the General Aggression Model (GAM) adopted by Liu *et al.* (2025) ^[15], which holds that modifying affective states, cognitive appraisals, and moral disengagement may yield more durable change than punitive measures alone. The two meta-analyses (Kurnaz & Koçtürk, 2025; Liu *et al.*, 2025) ^[14, 15] support the broader conclusion that multicomponent programs are associated with behavioral gains, but neither is a direct test of mental-health outcomes, so the review's central question about adolescent well-being can be answered only partially.

Help-seeking self-efficacy and stress mediation emerge as plausible mechanisms. Because adolescents often conceal cyber-victimization out of shame or fear of losing device access, anonymous, self-guided CBT psychoeducation may offer an accessible entry point that lowers barriers to professional help (Chillemi *et al.*, 2020) ^[5]; however, this inference rests on one pilot study. The home environment also matters: the mediation findings of Cosgun Demirdag and Kucuk (2026) ^[6] suggest that parental stress may weaken the protective value of parental technological literacy, which supports the exploration of family-inclusive psychoeducational components.

Finally, Duc (2026) ^[7] addresses a gap in the international literature. Whole-school models developed in Western settings often assume the availability of professional school psychologists and open discussion of mental health. In Vietnam and comparable contexts, limited institutional funding and stigma around counseling may be formidable obstacles, which suggests that teacher training, institutional mandates, and the normalization of school counseling deserve attention when translating global practice to local settings. As this argument draws mainly on a single narrative review, it should be tested empirically.

1. Theoretical Implications

Read together, the included studies are compatible with combining Bronfenbrenner's Social-Ecological Systems Theory with the General Aggression Model: cyberbullying can be viewed as operating across intersecting online and offline microsystems and mesosystems, while GAM clarifies the individual affective and cognitive processes involved. This integration is proposed as a conceptual framework for future research rather than a conclusion tested by the present evidence. It suggests that adolescent online behavior is shaped not only by individual digital literacy but also by parental stress, classroom socio-emotional climate, and help-seeking self-efficacy.

2. Practical Implications

The following implications are tentative, given the limited and heterogeneous evidence base:

Curricular integration of CBT-based psychoeducation. Schools may consider structured modules teaching cognitive reframing, emotion regulation, and assertive reporting, ideally evaluated locally before scale-up.

Professionalization and destigmatization of school counseling. Educational authorities may consider resourcing trained school counselors and confidential psychological

first-aid pathways, particularly where stigma deters help-seeking.

School-family collaboration. Schools may consider parent workshops that address digital-related stress and promote constructive, non-punitive mediation at home.

3. Limitations

Several limitations should be noted. First, reliance on Scopus and a title-field search restricted to two Scopus subject areas (Psychology and Social Sciences) may have excluded relevant studies, including those whose titles lack the specified terms or that are indexed only in other databases (e.g., PsycINFO, PubMed, ERIC); the restriction to English-language articles may also have omitted regional evidence. Second, the final corpus of five studies is small and heterogeneous (two meta-analyses, a pilot trial, a cross-sectional survey, and a narrative review), which limits direct comparison and generalization; only one included study evaluated an intervention directly with adolescents, and the meta-analyses may overlap in their primary studies. Third, screening, eligibility assessment, and data extraction were carried out by a single reviewer without independent verification, which increases the risk of selection and extraction error; no formal risk-of-bias or quality appraisal was conducted, and the review protocol was not registered. Fourth, heterogeneous outcome measures precluded quantitative synthesis of secondary affective outcomes, and mental-health outcomes were rarely reported, which underlines the need for standardized measurement in future trials. Finally, citation counts reflect publication age and were reported descriptively only.

Conclusion and Future Work

This systematic review examined recent Scopus-indexed literature (2015 ^[2]–2026) on school-based psychological interventions for cyberbullying prevention and adolescent mental well-being. The evidence, though limited, suggests that prevention is more promising when it moves beyond behavioral sanctions toward multicomponent psychological interventions, including CBT-based psychoeducation, emotion regulation training, and structured help-seeking support, and that these efforts may depend on supportive family-school ecosystems and on reducing stigma around mental health. Direct evidence on adolescent mental-health outcomes remains scarce.

Future research should prioritize

Multi-year randomized controlled trials with booster sessions to assess the long-term persistence of CBT-based anti-bullying skills.

Standardized measures of depression, anxiety, and subjective well-being as primary endpoints alongside bullying frequency.

Culturally adapted, whole-school counseling frameworks, evaluated empirically in emerging and non-Western educational contexts.

Broader, multi-database systematic reviews (title-abstract-keyword search, protocol registration, formal quality appraisal) to extend and test the present findings.

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