



Adolescent Aggression in Orphanage Settings: A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Aggression among adolescents living in orphanages is a relatively specific topic that has not yet become a major focus in research, despite the abundance of literature discussing adolescent aggression in general. This study aims to fill that gap by conducting a systematic review of the factors influencing aggression in adolescents residing in orphanages. Using the PICO framework, this study applies the principles of a systematic review, with article selection carried out through literature searches across several online databases. Keywords used in Bahasa Indonesia included "remaja" (adolescents), "agresi" (aggression), "agresivitas" (aggressiveness), and "panti asuhan" (orphanage). English keywords included "adolescents," "teenagers," "aggression," "violent behavior," "hostility," and "orphanage." The inclusion criteria for this review were: (1) the study participants were adolescents, (2) the articles were written in either Indonesian or English, and (3) the articles were published between 2014 and 2024. A total of 10 articles that met the criteria were analyzed based on their focus, research design, variables studied, and main findings. The review results indicate that adolescents in orphanages tend to exhibit higher levels of aggression compared to those living with their parents. Factors such as self-concept, loneliness, low self-esteem, poor emotional regulation, and lack of social support play a significant role in increasing aggressive behavior. In conclusion, adolescent aggression in orphanages is a complex issue influenced by both internal and external factors, highlighting the need for comprehensive and context-based interventions.

INTRODUCTION

Humans are beings who undergo continuous development throughout their lives. In this process, they pass through several stages, one of which is adolescence. The term adolescence comes from the Latin word *adolescere* (with its noun form *adolescencia*, meaning adolescence), which means “to grow” or “to grow into maturity” (Hurlock, 1980). According to Hurlock (1980), early adolescence occurs approximately between the ages of thirteen and sixteen or seventeen, while late adolescence begins at sixteen or seventeen and lasts until eighteen—the legally recognized age of adulthood. Therefore, the late adolescence stage is considered a relatively brief period.

Adolescence is a transitional period that bridges childhood and adulthood. During this stage, individuals experience various changes, including biological, cognitive, and socio-emotional transformations. Moreover, adolescence is often referred to as a period of *storm and stress* due to the rapid increase in emotional intensity, particularly in early adolescence. This stage is also considered vulnerable to social problems, as adolescents typically undergo significant physical and psychological changes. The psychological changes arise because adolescents are expected to take on responsibilities similar to those of adults. According to Hurlock (1980, as cited in Putra & David, 2023), when adolescents’ physical and psychological functions have not yet reached full maturity, they may feel compelled to meet all social demands placed upon them. This pressure can lead to failure and foster a sense of internal distress. Such pressure tends to cause frustration among adolescents, and at times, they may release their emotions through aggressive behaviors directed at those around them.

Family circumstances have a significant impact on children at every stage of life. Family structures may become disrupted for various reasons, such as financial problems, marital separation, migration, or death. As a result of these disruptions, the living conditions and needs of children may no longer be adequately met. This uncertainty and insufficiency in fulfilling children's basic needs often lead them to rely on child protection and care institutions. Children who lose their parents face various challenges, including psychological, physiological, social, and quality-of-life issues, along with other health-related concerns. When orphaned children are unable to achieve their goals, they tend to feel incompetent, and when confronted with failure, they are more likely to exhibit violent behavior (Satish, Singh, & Chauhan, 2023). Several studies have found that orphaned children display more aggressive behavior compared to non-orphaned children. As noted by Qamar et al. (2022), orphans residing in institutional care settings are more prone to developing anger, which may escalate into aggression and hostility due to the lack of proper medical care, nursing, as well as psychological and emotional support from caregivers.

A study conducted by Dey et al. (2013) on 120 adolescents living in orphanages, aged between 10 and 18 years, concluded that male adolescents exhibited significantly higher levels of aggressive behavior compared to female

adolescents. Additionally, adolescents residing in urban orphanages displayed more aggressive behavior than those living in rural orphanages. Furthermore, the study revealed a positive correlation between stress and aggressive behavior. The same journal also mentioned that orphans may sometimes engage in misconduct due to anger, stress, and a lack of self-awareness, all of which threaten their self-esteem and developmental progress. As a result, they may become involved in drug abuse or antisocial behaviors that are considered unacceptable in society (Dey et al., 2013).

The topic of adolescent aggression in orphanages is quite specific and may not have been the primary focus of many studies. Numerous studies tend to address adolescent aggression in general, without the specific context of orphanage care, or focus on aggression within orphanages but centered on younger children. For instance, a systematic review conducted by Satish et al. (2023) summarized various contributing factors—including biological, social, and environmental aspects—that are believed to influence aggressive behavior in orphaned children. Although their study highlighted aggressive behavior among orphans, it primarily addressed unique risk factors associated with aggression across different life stages, including childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and later life. However, their systematic review did not specifically focus on adolescent aggression within orphanage settings.

Research on adolescent aggression in orphanages remains very limited, even though adolescent aggression in general has been widely discussed in existing literature. Most previous studies have focused on factors influencing adolescent aggression within broader social contexts. In Indonesia, a systematic review was conducted by Wangsa & Tobing (2024) on the factors affecting adolescent aggression in the country, highlighting internal factors such as emotional intelligence and self-control, as well as external factors such as peer conformity, parenting styles, parent-child communication, and online gaming intensity. However, the systematic review by Wangsa & Tobing (2024) examined adolescent aggression within a broad social context, not specifically in the orphanage setting. This systematic review aims to fill that gap by analyzing and summarizing various studies that have examined adolescent aggression in orphanage settings. It is expected that this review will provide deeper insights into the factors influencing aggressive behavior among adolescents in orphanages and offer recommendations for prevention efforts and intervention strategies within such care environments.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Berkowitz (1993, as cited in Huesmann, 2018) defines aggressive behavior as a form of social behavior intended to harm or disturb others. Early theories from social psychologists (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995, as cited in Hastuti, 2018) categorize aggression into two components: physical aggression and non-physical aggression. Physical aggression refers to actions that cause bodily harm (e.g., hitting, kicking, slapping), while non-physical aggression includes verbal

aggression (e.g., yelling, mocking, harassing) and relational/social aggression (e.g., gossiping, social exclusion, discriminatory sarcasm). In line with the advancement of technology, aggressive behavior has evolved and increasingly occurs through electronic media (Hinduja & Patchin, 2009, as cited in Hastuti, 2018).

Buss and Perry (1992) proposed four dimensions to explain aggressive behavior: physical aggression, verbal aggression, anger, and hostility. Physical and verbal aggression represent the affective and cognitive components of aggressive behavior. *Physical aggression* refers to aggressive acts carried out through physical attacks against a person or object, with the intent to harm or injure the target. *Verbal aggression* is a form of aggressive behavior expressed through verbal means—attacking others using words such as insults, sarcasm, slander, and mockery. *Anger* represents a form of indirect aggression, characterized by feelings of hatred toward others or certain situations, often triggered by frustration or the inability to achieve a goal. Lastly, *hostility* is the cognitive component of aggressive behavior, involving the desire to hurt someone or something, along with a sense of perceived injustice regarding certain events or experiences.

A study conducted by Simsek et al. (2007) revealed that children and adolescents raised in institutional care (orphanages) exhibit significantly higher rates of emotional and behavioral problems compared to their peers who are raised in family environments. Teachers who participated as respondents reported that children in orphanages tend to show elevated levels of aggressiveness, externalizing behavior problems, and difficulties in social relationships. Furthermore, a study by Hermenau et al. (2011) emphasized that adverse childhood experiences—such as violence, parental loss, and emotional neglect—are strongly associated with mental health disorders and aggressive behavior among children living in institutional settings. In this study, trauma-focused therapy approaches and the implementation of new educational systems in orphanages showed significant results in reducing adolescent aggressiveness. These findings highlight that aggressiveness among children in orphanages is not merely a matter of individual character but also a response to unresolved trauma.

Another study conducted by Eltink et al. (2018) demonstrated that aggressiveness among adolescents living in residential youth care is dynamic, with the potential to change over time depending on environmental contexts and the interventions provided. This longitudinal study emphasized that while some adolescents exhibited relatively stable patterns of aggressive behavior, others experienced an increase or decrease in aggressiveness during their stay in care institutions. These findings reinforce the perspective that aggressiveness is not a fixed trait but is shaped by the social environment and the support adolescents receive in their daily lives. Based on these three studies, it can be concluded that aggressive behavior in children and adolescents raised in institutional care is a complex issue influenced by various internal and external factors.

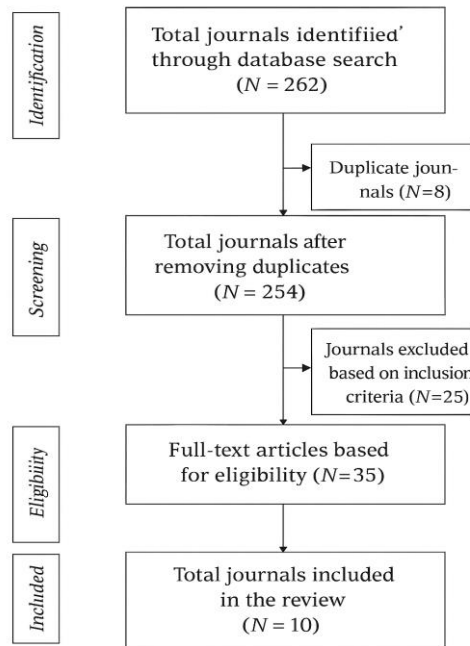
METHOD

In this systematic review, the PICO approach (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome) was used to formulate research questions that focus on analyzing relationships between variables or comparisons between groups. By applying the PICO framework, this study aims to investigate the level of aggression among adolescents living in orphanages and compare it with adolescents raised in family environments, as well as to examine the relationship between aggression and specific psychological aspects of adolescents residing in orphanages. The formulated research questions are: (1) Is there a difference in aggression levels between adolescents living in orphanages and those living with their parents? and (2) What factors influence the level of aggression among adolescents in orphanage settings?

In compiling this review article, a literature study method was employed by identifying relevant journal articles through search engines such as Scopus, JSTOR, SAGE Journals, and Google Scholar. The keywords used in Indonesian were “remaja” (adolescents), “agresi” (aggression), “agresivitas” (aggressiveness), and “panti asuhan” (orphanage). Meanwhile, the English keywords included “adolescents,” “teenagers,” “aggression,” “violent behavior,” “hostility,” and “orphanage.”

The inclusion and exclusion criteria in this systematic review were formulated to ensure the relevance and quality of the journals analyzed. First, the selected study subjects were limited to adolescents, in accordance with the research focus on adolescent aggression in orphanages. Second, both Indonesian and English-language journals were included to broaden the scope of the literature. Third, the reviewed journals were restricted to publications from the past ten years (2014–2024) to ensure that the studies reflected up-to-date data and findings relevant to current conditions. After applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria using the Rayyan application—by reviewing titles, abstracts, and checking for duplicates or overlapping journals—relevant articles were selected for analysis. These articles then underwent an eligibility screening through full-text review, resulting in ten journals that met the established criteria and were deemed suitable for inclusion in this study.

Figure 1.
PRISMA Flow Diagram of Journal Selection Process



RESULTS

Based on the findings obtained through a literature review method – by analyzing previous studies consisting of three national journals and seven international journals sourced from various online databases – the results of this study are presented as follows:

Table 1. Summary of Studies on Adolescent Aggression in Orphanages

Title	Authors	Participants	Findings
Self-Concept and Aggression among Institutionalised Orphans of Kashmir	Rakshanda Ahad, Shabnum Ara, Shawkat Ahmad Shah (2016)	88 adolescents (47 males & 41 females) aged 15–17 years from several orphanages in Kashmir, India	Aspects of self-concept showed no significant correlation with aggression, except for two dimensions – temperamental self-concept and educational self-concept – which showed a positive correlation with aggression.
The Influence of Loneliness on Aggressive Behavior among Male Adolescents	Vinny Tashpiatul Farah, Dwi Nur Rachmah, Marina Dwi	30 male adolescents living in an orphanage in Indonesia	Loneliness was found to influence aggressive behavior; the higher the level of loneliness, the higher the aggressive behavior, and vice versa.

Title	Authors	Participants	Findings
Living in Orphanage X	Mayangsari (2018)		
Prevalence And Determinants of Behavioral Problems Among Adolescents Living in Orphanage Facilities of District Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan	Faiza Khurshid, Naheed Mahsood, Zeeshan Kibria (2018)	360 adolescents (334 males & 26 females) aged 10–19 years living in orphanages in Peshawar, Pakistan	Among behavioral problems, aggression had the highest prevalence (33.9%), followed by emotional problems (18.6%), peer problems (18.1%), hyperactivity (8.3%), and prosocial behavior (8.9%). Cross-tabulation analysis showed that age, gender, type of orphanage, and parental status were significantly associated with behavioral problems.
An Analysis of the Relationship between Aggression and Anger Levels of The Adolescents Living in Orphanages	Emine Balci, Kamil Arif Kirbic (2019)	133 adolescents (72 females & 61 males) aged 15–18 years living in orphanages in Istanbul, Turkey	The levels of anger, anger expression, and physical aggression were significantly higher among adolescents living in Child Support Centers compared to those in Children’s Homes (orphanages).
Social Undermining and Aggression of Adolescents	Biplob Kumar Dey, Abdur Rahman, Mst. Sabiha Sultana, Md. Rezuatul	144 adolescents aged 10–18 years (72 orphans living in orphanages, 72 adolescents living with parents) in Bangladesh	The social undermining scores were significantly higher among orphans living in orphanages compared to adolescents living with their parents. Orphans also showed significantly higher aggression levels than those raised in family settings.

Title	Authors	Participants	Findings
	Haque (2020)		
Association Among Self-Esteem, Aggression and Psychological Adjustment of Orphans and Family-Reared Children	Nahida Sultana, Mahfuza Khanam (2020)	160 adolescents (80 living in orphanages, 80 living with parents) aged 13–16 years in Bangladesh	Adolescents living with parents had higher self-esteem than those living in orphanages. Orphaned adolescents were more prone to aggression, hostility, and psychological problems compared to those living with parents. They also showed lower levels of personal adjustment.
Temperament And Behaviour Problems of Orphan Adolescents	Rajnish Meena (2020)	200 adolescents consisting of 50 males and 50 females from orphanages and 50 males and 50 females living with parents, aged 14–19 years in Jaipur, India	Significant differences were found in behavioral problems (aggression) and temperament, with orphans in orphanages scoring higher than those living with parents.
Psychological Causes of Cyber-Aggression In Orphaned Adolescents	Svetlana Antipina, Elena Bakhvalova, Anastasia Miklyaeva (2020)	223 adolescents aged 10–17 years (48 living in orphanages, 175 living with parents) in Saint Petersburg and Leningrad Region, Russia	Orphans living in orphanages showed a higher tendency toward cyber-aggression compared to their peers living with parents.
Self-Esteem and Aggressive Behavior and Its Relationship with Anger in Adolescents	Agnes Mariana Mayangsari, Umbu Tagela, Setyorini (2022)	115 adolescents aged 12–20 years living in an orphanage in Salatiga, Indonesia	A significant negative relationship was found between self-esteem and anger, and a strong, significant positive relationship between aggressive behavior and

Title	Authors	Participants	Findings
The Relationship Between Emotional Regulation and Aggressive Behavior in Adolescents at Al-Amin Orphanage, Sidoarjo District	Mujiadi, Lailatul Fitriyah (2024)	34 adolescents aged 10–15 years living in an orphanage in Sidoarjo, Indonesia	anger among adolescents in the orphanage. A relationship was found between emotional regulation and aggressive behavior. The relationship was of medium strength and positive direction, meaning the better adolescents' emotional regulation, the lower their aggressive behavior, and vice versa.

DISCUSSION

This systematic literature review analyzed ten journal articles focusing on adolescent aggression in orphanage settings. Although all ten studies examined aggression, they employed different approaches and variables. Some studies used correlational methods to investigate the relationship between aggression and other variables, such as self-esteem, loneliness, anger, self-concept, and emotional regulation. The findings generally indicate that certain psychological aspects have a significant influence on the aggressive behavior of adolescents living in orphanages.

Studies conducted by Ahad et al. (2016), Farah et al. (2018), Khurshid et al. (2018), Mayangsari et al. (2022), and Fitriyah (2024) revealed that adolescent aggression in orphanages is influenced by various psychological factors. Farah et al. (2018) stated that aggression among adolescents in orphanages is affected by loneliness, with their analysis showing that the higher the level of loneliness, the higher the aggressive behavior exhibited by male adolescents living in orphanages. This finding is consistent with the study by Khaliq et al. (2020), which examined the relationship between loneliness and aggression among orphaned adolescents in a care institution in Pakistan. The results showed that adolescents with high levels of loneliness tended to display more physical aggression. Moreover, loneliness was found to be a predictor of verbal aggression and hostility among female adolescents, although this correlation was not observed among male adolescents.

Meanwhile, the study by Ahad et al. (2016) indicated that self-concept is not entirely correlated with aggression among adolescents in orphanages. Furthermore, there were no significant correlations between aggression and four aspects of self-concept (physical, social, moral, and intellectual self-concept). However, a significant negative correlation was found between the temperament dimension of self-concept and aggression. Additionally, this study revealed no significant difference in aggression levels between male and female adolescents. This finding appears to contrast with the study by Khurshid et al. (2018), which reported a higher prevalence of behavioral problems among female adolescents compared to males in orphanage settings. The researchers suggested that this difference in prevalence might be attributed to the tendency of female adolescents to be more emotionally sensitive than their male counterparts.

The level of anger has been shown to influence adolescent aggression in orphanages, as indicated by the findings of Balci & Kirkic (2019) and Mayangsari et al. (2022). In the study conducted by Balci & Kirkic (2019), it was reported that as adolescents' anger expression subscale scores increased, so did their physical aggression scores. Thus, a significant positive relationship was found between the anger expression subscale scores and the overall aggression scale scores of adolescents living in orphanages, indicating that higher anger expression corresponded with higher overall aggression. Similarly, the study by Mayangsari et al. (2022) revealed that an increase in aggressive behavior was accompanied by higher levels of anger among adolescents in orphanages, while lower levels of aggression were associated with lower levels of anger.

Emotional regulation is also considered to have an influence on adolescents' aggression levels, as reflected in the study by Mujiadi & Fitriyah (2024). The respondents in their study revealed that, at times, they were able to control their emotions, while at other times, they were overwhelmed by them, making it difficult to regulate their emotional responses. According to Mujiadi & Fitriyah (2024), various factors contribute to the tendency of female adolescents to engage more frequently in verbal aggression, as they are generally more sensitive, have more delicate feelings, and are more prone to assumptions compared to male adolescents. The relationship between emotional regulation and aggression among adolescents aligns with the findings of Purwadi et al. (2023), who stated that emotional regulation is a crucial factor that may help control aggression in adolescents. The better an adolescent's ability to regulate emotions, the lower the likelihood of developing aggressive behavior. Conversely, poor emotional regulation skills increase the risk of aggression.

Studies conducted by Dey et al. (2020), Sultana & Khanam (2020), Meena (2020), and Antipina et al. (2020) reported similar findings, namely that the aggression levels of adolescents living in orphanages differed from those of adolescents living with their parents—with the former scoring higher on aggression scales. Dey et al. (2020) noted that aggression scores among orphaned adolescents were higher compared to their non-orphaned counterparts. Adolescents residing in orphanages were found to be at greater risk of

developing emotional and behavioral problems due to various factors, such as poverty, poor physical health, inadequate social skills, low-quality care services, exposure to threatening situations (such as risk of abuse), and living in overcrowded environments.

Sultana & Khanam (2020) stated that adolescents in orphanages tend to have lower self-esteem, exhibit higher levels of aggression, and experience more psychological adjustment problems compared to children living with both parents. This finding is consistent with the observations of Shekhawat & Gopalan (2023), who reported that non-orphaned children generally possess higher levels of self-esteem than orphans. This disparity is attributed to the fact that orphans lack regular contact with their mothers and do not receive the basic sense of security essential for social, cognitive, and language development. As a result, children in orphanages tend to display lower levels of empathy compared to children outside the orphanage setting.

The study by Antipina et al. (2020) revealed that cyber aggression – aggressive behavior carried out in the virtual environment – was more prevalent among adolescents living in orphanages compared to those living with their parents. The researchers noted that orphaned adolescents tend not to recognize the risks associated with online communication and often underestimate the threats posed by the digital world due to their limited communication experience. They also tend to perceive online aggression as a normal behavior and have a lower awareness of behavioral norms and ethical standards for online interactions. Meanwhile, Meena (2020) reported that the higher aggression scores – representing one aspect of behavioral problems – among adolescents in orphanages compared to those living with their parents may be influenced by temperament. Anger may arise as a response to life stressors such as the loss of parents, leading some adolescents to adopt physical aggression as a means to achieve their desires.

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review analyzed ten journal articles concerning adolescent aggression in orphanages, with a focus on the variables that influence and differentiate aggression among adolescents in various contexts. The review findings indicate that adolescents living in orphanages tend to exhibit higher levels of aggression compared to those living with their parents. Factors such as self-concept, loneliness, anger levels, low social support, self-esteem, psychological adjustment, and emotional regulation were found to have a significant impact on the aggression levels of adolescents in orphanage settings.

The implications of this study highlight the importance of giving special attention to adolescent aggression in orphanage settings, considering the unique environmental factors and life experiences that differ from those of adolescents living with their parents. These findings may serve as a basis for orphanage administrators, educators, and psychologists to design more effective

intervention programs, such as emotional management training, social skills enhancement, or individual counseling.

This study has several limitations, such as the absence of a defined adolescent age range, the varied research settings, and a review process conducted by a single reviewer, which may affect the objectivity and generalizability of the findings. Therefore, future research is recommended to focus on a specific location, involve a team of reviewers, and employ more in-depth methods to explore adolescent aggression in orphanage settings. Such efforts would provide a stronger foundation for developing more effective interventions to address adolescent aggression in orphanages.

One of the limitations of this study is the absence of specific boundaries regarding the research settings or locations. The reviewed journals cover diverse geographical areas, including Russia (Antipina et al., 2020), Turkey (Balci & Kirkic, 2019), Pakistan (Khurshid et al., 2018), India (Ahad et al., 2016; Meena, 2020), Bangladesh (Sultana & Khanam, 2020; Dey et al., 2020), and Indonesia (Mayangsari et al., 2022; Farah et al., 2018; Mujiadi & Fitriyah, 2024). Differences in cultural, social, and economic values across these settings may influence research outcomes, particularly in understanding the factors that affect adolescent aggression. Another limitation of this systematic review lies in the lack of specific age boundaries for adolescents during the inclusion and exclusion process. The reviewed studies featured a wide variation in the age ranges of the adolescent participants, which may have contributed to the diversity of findings and interpretations.

Another limitation of this study is that the review process was conducted by a single reviewer, which may have resulted in less objective evaluations and assessments influenced by personal perspectives. This limitation is particularly evident when determining whether certain problematic behaviors could be categorized as aggressive behavior—an assessment that requires in-depth understanding and reviewer discussions. The absence of a review team may also have affected the quality of the analysis and interpretation, as there was no cross-checking mechanism to minimize potential bias or errors in the assessment process.

Based on the aforementioned limitations, it is recommended that future research establish a more specific age range for adolescents to ensure data consistency and reliable outcomes. Researchers may also consider dividing participants into specific age groups—such as early, middle, and late adolescence—to identify differences in aggression patterns according to developmental stages. Furthermore, it is advisable for future studies to focus on a specific geographical area, allowing the findings to be more targeted and contextually relevant. Cross-cultural research is also encouraged to explore how cultural differences influence adolescent aggression. Lastly, it is recommended that future systematic reviews involve more than one reviewer. Having a review team of at least two reviewers may enhance objectivity and improve the overall quality of the analysis.

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