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EFFECTIVENESS OF COUNSELING INTERVENTION TO REDUCE
STUDENT AGGRESSION: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The rise in aggressive behavior in schools requires counseling interventions aimed at reducing aggressive behavior in students. This article reports the results of a systematic review of articles published between 2020 and 2025 that specifically examined various interventions that can be used to reduce aggressive behavior in students. The search for articles was conducted through the Google Scholar database using the Publish or Perish search engines. The selection of articles for review used the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. The analysis of the five selected articles revealed that schema therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Behavioral Therapy (ACT), reality therapy, and mindfulness have been proven effective in reducing aggressive behavior in students. Each of these interventions has unique characteristics that can be adapted to suit the needs and developmental stage of the student. Overall, the selection of the appropriate intervention method must consider the short-term and long-term goals, individual characteristics, and the adolescent's social and environmental context. The results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for counseling practitioners and guidance and counseling teachers in selecting appropriate interventions to help students reduce their aggressive behavior.

Keywords: intervention, aggression, counseling

INTRODUCTION

Aggressive behavior among students is one of the challenges facing the modern education system. Aggression is a form of emotion and response in which a person unconsciously manifests stress, inadequacy, and failure through aggressive reactions, violence, and harmful behavior (Saliminezhad et al., 2022). In addition, aggression can be explained as cognitively defective behavior in the process of evaluating and solving problems. (Feizi Lafmajani et al., 2023).

Aggressive behavior has significant negative impacts on both the perpetrator and the victim in the short and long term. Students who are victims experience more mental health difficulties in adulthood than those who have never experienced bullying, increasing their risk of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Adolescents who are perpetrators of aggression are more likely to develop substance abuse problems, show signs of depression, and engage in criminal behavior (Ananta et al., 2025; Castillo-Eito et al., 2020).

One type of aggression that appears in schools is hostile aggression, which includes two types of aggression (overt aggression and relational aggression) (Feizi Lafmajani et al., 2023). Overt aggression (physical and verbal) includes hostile behavior, such as hitting, pushing, kicking, and threatening. Relational aggression is a form of aggression used by an aggressive person to disrupt the victim's friendships and interpersonal relationships, spread rumors or slander, and force people to cut off communication with them, resulting in isolation for the victim.

In the school environment, aggressive behavior is related to low academic engagement, friendship relationships in class, perceptions of support from teachers, and positive attitudes towards school. (Estévez et al., 2018). Based on research results (Saputra et al., 2017), male students tend to engage in physical and verbal aggression, while female students tend to engage in aggressive behavior in the form of anger and hatred. However, there is no significant difference in aggressive behavior between males and females.

Teenagers commit aggression due to the influence of peers and the environment, self-esteem, and to seek pleasure. (Febriana & Situmorang, 2019). In other research, it is stated that the factors that influence adolescent aggressiveness in Indonesia consist of internal factors and external factors (Wangsa & Tobing, 2024). Internal factors include emotional maturity, emotional intelligence, and self-control. External factors include peer conformity, parental communication style, parenting styles, and the intensity of online gaming.

Guidance and Counseling in schools plays a crucial role in helping students face various developmental challenges, including aggressive behavior. Guidance and Counseling services are expected to provide a platform for students to improve their emotional management skills, make informed decisions, and demonstrate adaptive, prosocial behaviors in an effort to reduce aggression. Early detection and the active role of teachers, parents, and school counselors in preventing and addressing aggression in schools through communication skills education, psychological interventions, and strengthening school policies are crucial to creating a safe learning environment that supports the social-emotional development of children and adolescents (Ananta et al., 2025).

The rise of aggressive behavior in schools demands counseling interventions aimed at reducing aggressive behavior in students. These include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), schema therapy, mindfulness therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), reality therapy, and Acceptance and

Commitment Therapy (ACT) (de Almeida et al., 2024; Feizi Lafmajani et al., 2023; Garivani et al., 2021; Govarthini & Devi, 2024; Masoumian et al., 2021; Razavi, 2023; Saliminezhad et al., 2022; Yazdani et al., 2021). Each of these interventions has unique characteristics that can be adapted to suit the needs and developmental stage of the student.

Several factors determine the choice of techniques/interventions used by the guidance counselor, namely the counseling techniques used are in accordance with their personal values, are logically reasonable, and the guidance counselor's preference for certain techniques/interventions (Petko et al., 2016). Ideally, the counseling techniques/interventions that will be provided by the guidance and counseling teacher are based on the type of problems faced by the student and are in accordance with the student's own needs.

This situation indicates the urgency of developing a counseling intervention map that not only reflects the diversity of existing methods but also provides information on their outcomes and effects. In this way, guidance and counseling teachers are expected to develop more flexible, responsive services that align with student developmental principles and address students' psychosocial challenges in a more effective and sustainable manner (American School Counselor Association, 2025). Based on the above explanation, this study will focus on analyzing the literature on various interventions that can be used to reduce aggressive behavior in students. The results of this study are expected to serve as a reference for counseling practitioners and guidance counselors in selecting appropriate interventions to help students reduce their aggressive behavior.

METHOD

This research used a systematic literature review method. The selection of articles for review was based on the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines. Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) is a widely accepted guideline for performing a systematic review (SR) in clinical journals (Mishra & Mishra, 2024). The PRISMA process consists of four steps: first, defining the topic and criteria. second, determining information sources. third, selecting relevant literature. fourth, collecting articles. The final stage is analyzing the articles.

The systematic literature review in this study was conducted by collecting articles published between 2020 and August 2025. Article searches were conducted through the Google Scholar database with the help of the Publish or Perish search engine. To search for related articles, keywords were used in the article titles in English combined with the Boolean operator, namely "aggression AND intervention OR therapy AND adolescent OR student". The AND and OR operators were used to narrow and expand the search on the topic being collected. The use of English keywords was due to find articles that may be researched by international researchers or have been disseminated through international publications.

Researchers used three main criteria in selecting articles. First, the articles were published within the last five years (2020-2025). It is expected that the articles found would still be relevant within this timeframe. Second, the participants in the study were students and/or adolescents. Third, quantitative studies that produced data measured aggression. Furthermore, three criteria were used to eliminate articles

from the selection process. First, the participants were clinical patients (of all types of disorders). Second, the research was in the form of a systematic review or meta-analysis. Third, the intervention was conducted online.

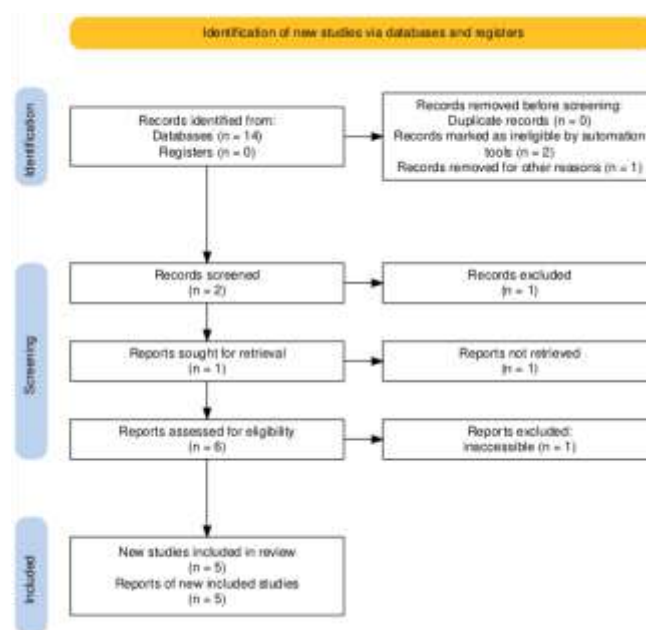


Figure 1. Article search stages (PRISMA)

The article analysis was conducted in three stages. The first stage involved reading the complete article and understanding its overall content. The second stage involved extracting the reading results and summarizing them in tabular form. Table 1 presents information regarding the research identity, research objectives, research sample, data collection methods, and key findings. In the third stage, the researchers analyzed the research results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

RESULT

Of the 14 articles examined for duplication, nine articles did not meet the established inclusion and exclusion criteria based on their titles. The remaining five articles were then reviewed for quality and compliance with the objectives of this literature review. The interventions identified include schema therapy, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), reality therapy, and mindfulness. The summary of each study is presented in Table 1.

The findings show that schema therapy helps adolescents reduce their aggression by replacing ineffective emotional management strategies with adaptive coping strategies (Yazdani et al., 2021). This intervention improves emotional regulation, psychological capacity, and problem-solving skills through cognitive, experimental, and behavioral interventions. However, The effectiveness of schema therapy cannot last long in reducing aggression and is not maintained during follow-up (Yazdani et al., 2021).

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) indicate effectiveness in decreasing physical aggression, specially among adolescent boys. Moreover, the reduction in aggression is continuous over time, represent long-term effectiveness (Govarthini & Devi, 2024).

ACT is more effective in reducing aggressive behavior when compared to CBT (Feizi Lafmajani et al., 2023). In ACT therapy sessions, students are encouraged to acknowledge and express feelings of anger, hostility, and physical and verbal aggression, then adjust these feelings through group feedback. By softening negative emotions, recognizing personal values, and transforming them into positive behaviors, students can achieve inner peace, which helps reduce aggression and hostility (Feizi Lafmajani et al., 2023).

ACT and reality therapy have the same effectiveness in reducing aggression in high school students because both have a structure and a planned mental health concept that can improve sustainable well-being over time (Razavi, 2023). In both interventions, students learned that even when they faced environmental, family, academic, and social challenges, they still had the freedom to choose and control themselves. They were taught to stop trying to control things beyond their control and focus on the actions and decisions they could control. Both interventions also emphasized intelligent planning for changing circumstances and engaged students in discussions about values and the meaning of life. Mindfulness helps individuals reduce the tension of aggression mentally through breathing and thinking. However, the impact is less significant compared to ACT in improving wisdom and social adjustment (Saliminezhad et al., 2022).

Table 1. Summary table

Research Identity	Research Sample	Research methods	Key Findings of the Research Results
Mozhgan Yazdani, Fariba Hafezi, Parvin Ehtesham Zadeh, Zahra DashtBozorgi. (2021). <i>Efficacy of Group Schema Therapy on Difficulty in Emotion Regulations and Aggression in Adolescent Girls</i> . Psychological Studies, 16(4): 1-5	40 female high school students in Tehran	A quasi-experimental study using a pre-test, post-test, and two-month follow-up with a control group. The instruments used were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotion Regulation Difficulty Questionnaire Aggression questionnaire Schema Therapy Group Sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schema therapy is effective in treating aggressive behavior. The effectiveness of schema therapy is not maintained for two months after the intervention. Schema therapy reduces aggression in adolescents by focusing on multidimensional, cognitive, experiential, and individual behavior. Therapy is conducted over eight weekly sessions, each lasting 90 minutes.
Dr. R. Govarthini, Dr. N. V. Amudha Devi. (2024). <i>Efficacy Of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) In Managing Smartphone Addiction, Insomnia and Aggression Among Adolescent Boys</i> . Afr. J. Biomed. Res., 27(4): 6636-6647	58 male students	A pre-test-post-test-follow-up design with one intervention group. CBT was delivered in 2-hour sessions every other day for 1 month. The following instruments were used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aggression Questionnaire Insomnia Inventory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CBT is effective in reducing physical aggression among adolescent boys, with sustained reductions over time. The significant reduction in physical aggression scores from the pre- to post-phase indicates that CBT has a strong immediate effect. CBT has a lasting impact on reducing levels of

Research Identity	Research Sample	Research methods	Key Findings of the Research Results
F. Razavi. (2023). <i>Comparing the Effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment-based Therapy and Reality Therapy in Aggression, Psychological Flexibility, and Career Decision-Making Self Efficacy among Adolescents</i> . Avicenna Journal of Neuro Psycho Physiology, 10(3): 96-102	15 selected cases of second-year high school students in two districts of Yazd in the 2022-2023 academic year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smartphone Addiction Scale Quasi-experimental pretest-posttest control group design. Instruments used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buss-Perry Aggression Questionnaire The Hayes Psychological Flexibility Questionnaire The Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (CDESES) 	aggression among adolescent boys. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACT and reality therapy were effective in improving aggression and self-efficacy in career decision-making, with a significance level of less than 1%. However, ACT and reality therapy did not significantly affect psychological flexibility compared to the control group. ACT and reality therapy were administered in a group setting (in the form of training and skills training) for two months (eight sessions each, one 60-minute session per week).
Samira Saliminezhad, Akbar Rezaei, Masumeh Azmudeh. (2022). <i>Comparing the Effectiveness of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and Mindfulness Therapy on Wisdom and Social Adjustment among Aggressive Female Teenagers</i> . Int J Behav Sci. 2022; 16(1): 76-81	45 aggressive students were randomly assigned to three groups of 15 each	Quasi-experimental study with pre-test, post-test, and control group. Instruments used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Buss-Perry Aggressiveness Questionnaire (BPAQ) Fundamental Value Scale (FVS) Matson Social Skill Questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ACT is more beneficial than Mindfulness on the wisdom and social adjustment of aggressive adolescents. Mindfulness practices are implemented in eight sessions; one session per week, each session 1,5 to 2 hours long. ACT is carried out over 10 sessions; one session per week, 1,5 to 2 hours each session.
Feizi Lafmajani, M. R., Farzad, V., Delavar, A., & Khodabakhshi Kolaei, A. (2023). <i>Comparison of the effectiveness of two methods of treatment based on acceptance and commitment and Beck cognitive therapy on aggression and irresponsibility of students</i> . jayps, 4(1): 61-71	45 students were selected using the purposive sampling method.	A quasi-experimental study with a pre-test and post-test design and follow-up with a control group. Instruments used: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minnesota Multifaceted Personality Questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Group therapy using ACT was effective in improving students' aggression, and cognitive therapy improved their sense of irresponsibility. Both interventions were implemented over 10 sessions, held twice a week, each lasting 90 minutes.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study highlight that interventions addressing emotional regulation and self acceptance (ACT, mindfulness, reality therapy) provide stronger and more sustainable results in reducing aggression than interventions focused primarily on cognitive restructuring (schema therapy). This finding is

in line with previous studies showing that aggression is closely related to deficits in emotion regulation and coping strategies (Castillo-Eito et al., 2020). Schema therapy was effective but limited in its long-term effect. This may be due to the intervention's structure, which emphasizes short-term emotional modification without sufficient reinforcement strategies during follow-up (Yazdani et al., 2021). Otherwise, CBT provides a structured framework that maintain long-term behavioral change, which explains its sustained effectiveness (Govarthini & Devi, 2024).

ACT consistently surpass CBT in several effect. This advantage may lie in ACT's emphasis on acceptance, mindfulness, and value clarification, which support adolescents' psychological flexibility (Razavi, 2023). Previous meta-analyses have shown similar results, recommend that third-wave behavioral therapies tend to produce broader psychosocial benefits compared to traditional cognitive therapies (de Almeida et al., 2024). ACT and reality therapy divide similar effectiveness suggest a conceptual overlap. Both interventions focus on strengthening autonomy, responsibility, and self-control (Razavi, 2023). These are important developmental needs in adolescence, where identity formation and independence are raised. This implies that future interventions should combine elements of value-based decision-making and self-regulation to ensure sustainable effects. Finally, mindfulness plays an important complementary role. Although less intense than ACT, mindfulness provides adolescents with practical tools for stress an aggression management, which can be integrated with other approaches for holistic intervention (Saliminezhad et al., 2022).

CONCLUSION

Based on research from five articles that met the specified criteria, it can be concluded that various interventions differ in their effectiveness in reducing aggressive behavior among adolescents. Schema therapy has been shown to be effective in reducing aggression by replacing less effective emotion management techniques with better coping strategies, thus helping to improve emotion regulation, psychological capacity, and problem-solving abilities. However, the results tend to be short-lived. Mindfulness functions by reducing mental tension caused by aggression through breathing techniques and thought regulation. Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) has been shown to be superior to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in reducing aggression by teaching acceptance of negative emotions, recognizing personal values, and redirecting attention to positive behaviors to achieve calm. Furthermore, the effectiveness of ACT and reality therapy is similar because both are built on a planned mental health structure and encourage independence in decision-making, as well as a focus on controllable issues and value-based change planning. On the other hand, CBT is considered to have stronger long-term potential for reducing aggression compared to schema therapy, despite the differences in intervention methods. Overall, selecting the appropriate intervention method must consider the adolescent's short- and long-term goals, individual characteristics, and social and environmental context. For practitioners and school counselors, this implies the importance of choose interventions not only to the immediate reduction of aggressive symptoms but also to the development of sustainable emotional and behavioral skills.

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