

THE DARK SIDE OF SCHOOL LIFE: AN ANALYSIS OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENT BEHAVIOR THAT THREATENS THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Deviant behavior in elementary schools such as bullying, harassment, and verbal or physical aggression reflects a moral crisis and weak social control within the learning environment. This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with a qualitative approach to analyze forms of deviant student behavior that threaten the school climate, identify their causal factors, and formulate effective prevention strategies. Thematic analysis of national and international studies reveals that such behavior is influenced by internal factors, including low emotional intelligence, empathy, and learning motivation, as well as external factors, such as authoritarian parenting, negative peer environments, and weak school supervision. These behaviors negatively impact academic achievement, psychological well-being, and students' social adjustment. Effective prevention requires collaboration among schools, families, and communities through social-emotional learning programs, teacher training in behavior management, safe reporting mechanisms, and strict anti-bullying policies. The findings have practical implications for teachers and policymakers in Indonesia to strengthen character education, empathy, and moral reasoning within the curriculum and to promote a safe, inclusive, and supportive school environment.

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INTRODUCTIONS

Elementary school is the first place where children learn to socialize and recognize moral values, including rules that create an orderly, disciplined, and comfortable atmosphere for students (Maisaroh & Jannah, 2025). Schools also serve to guide, educate, and shape students' behavior so that they develop good character (Pebrianti, 2025). However, not all interactions at school are positive. Many studies show the emergence of bullying, harassment, and aggressive behavior from elementary school age, known as the "dark side of school life" (Listiani, et al., 2024; UNICEF, 2023). Information about violence in schools is often disseminated through social media and television, but tends not to receive serious attention (Maulida, et al., 2022). In fact, actions that are considered "playful" by children,

such as bullying friends, stealing, lifting up friends' skirts, or talking dirty to teachers, are social deviations that reflect a moral crisis and weak self-control (Sunanih, et al., 2022). Rude behavior towards teachers is also a disciplinary violation that disrupts the effectiveness of learning (Yang et al., 2020), and one student's negative behavior can reduce the motivation and comfort of the entire class (Fikriyyah, et al., 2024).

Although studies on bullying and violence in schools have been widely conducted at the junior and senior high school levels, deviant behavior in elementary schools is often dismissed as mere "childish mischief" (Sumardi, et al., 2020). In reality, aggressive behavior that is left unaddressed at an early stage can develop into more serious forms of violence during adolescence (Asnia & Muthohar, 2024). Schools play a crucial role in responding to this phenomenon by fostering a positive school culture, maintaining social control, and promoting active collaboration with parents (Kisda et al., 2024; Ramonita, 2025).

Family factors also constitute a fundamental basis for character development; children who experience or witness violence at home are more likely to replicate aggressive behavior at school (Putri et al., 2023; Jaya & Ariyati, 2024). In addition, peer influence significantly contributes to this problem, as negative group norms can normalize deviant behavior (Lena et al., 2023; Rambaran et al., 2020). An unfavorable school climate, unresponsive teachers, weak disciplinary enforcement, and inadequate supervision further aggravate the situation (Yang et al., 2020).

However, a research gap remains in achieving a comprehensive understanding of deviant behavior at the elementary school level. Most previous studies have tended to focus on isolated aspects such as bullying or physical violence without systematically integrating individual, family, and school environmental factors within a unified analytical framework. Therefore, this study addresses the gap by conducting a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of research published between 2020 and 2025, examining deviant behavior among elementary school students in a global context and discussing its implications for educational policy in Indonesia.

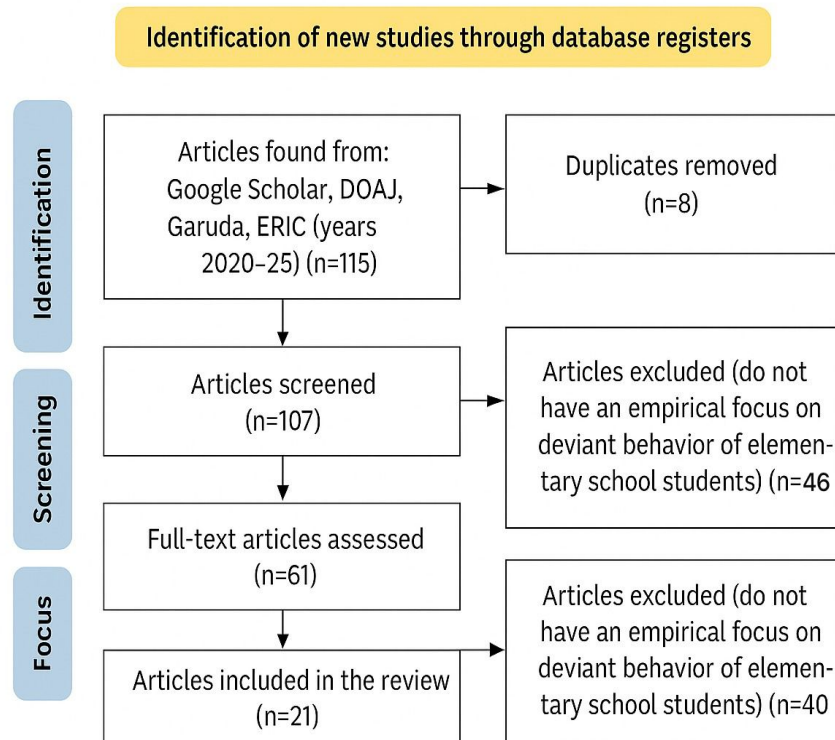
This article begins with a description of the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method employed in the study, followed by a presentation of the main findings concerning the forms, causes, and impacts of deviant behavior in elementary schools. The subsequent section discusses effective prevention and intervention strategies, and the paper concludes with practical implications and recommendations for teachers, schools, and policymakers in Indonesia's basic education system.

METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) with a qualitative approach to examine deviant behaviors among elementary school students that threaten the learning climate. Relevant literature was collected from national and international journals published between 2015 and 2025, using the keywords "aggressive behavior of elementary school students," "bullying in elementary schools," "misbehavior of elementary school children," and "dark side of school life". The inclusion criteria comprised empirical research articles or literature reviews in Indonesian and English that discussed the forms, causes, and impacts of negative student behavior at the elementary school level. The exclusion criteria involved non-scientific publications and studies conducted outside the elementary education context.

The SLR procedure followed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines, consisting of the stages of identification, screening, quality assessment, data extraction, and thematic synthesis. Data analysis was carried out inductively using NVivo 14 through open coding to identify major themes, which were refined through researcher consensus. The results were synthesized into a comprehensive conceptual framework describing the "dark side of school life" and its practical implications for teachers, schools, and parents.

Figure 1. PRISMA flowchart (Syahrir et al., 2024)



Focus: deviant behavior of students; bullying in elementary schools; social and academic impacts; educational interventions; parenting patterns

RESULT AND DISCUSSIONS

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) using a qualitative approach to analyze elementary school students' deviant behaviors that disrupt and threaten the learning environment. Relevant studies were collected from national and international journals published between 2020 and 2025 using the keywords “*aggressive behavior of elementary school students*,” “*bullying in elementary schools*,” “*misbehavior of elementary school children*,” and “*dark side of school life*”.

Table 1. Article Review Results

No	Article Title & Author	Article Summary (Brief Summary)	Results & Findings	Relevance to the Topic
1.	Bullying Behavior in Elementary School Children. Listiani et al. (2024)	Researching the forms of bullying that occur in elementary schools and their triggering factors.	Verbal, physical, and social bullying is often found in elementary schools due to a lack of emotional control and weak teacher leadership.	Highly relevant; reinforces the identification of deviant behavior in elementary schools and the need for

No	Article Title & Author	Article Summary (Brief Summary)	Results & Findings	Relevance to the Topic
				supervision and character education.
2.	The Urgency of Social Emotional Development of Elementary School Children in Improving Character Education. Alfath, Wantini & Diponegoro (2025)	Examining the importance of social-emotional development in shaping the character of elementary school children	Social-emotional development has been shown to play an important role in reducing deviant behavior and increasing empathy among students.	Relevant to factors that prevent deviant behavior and the need for social-emotional learning (SEL).
3.	Student Misbehavior in Elementary School. Gularso & Indrianawati (2022)	Discussing forms of delinquency and their causes in elementary schools.	Misbehavior arises due to weak discipline, social control, and an unfavorable school climate.	Relevant to exposure to deviant behavior such as bullying and refusal to learn.
4.	Analysis of Student Bullying Behavior in Elementary Schools. Maisaroh & Jannah (2025)	Examining the characteristics, causes, and effects of bullying behavior in elementary schools.	Family factors, social environment, and weak character education are the main triggers of bullying.	Strengthens the discussion on external factors that cause deviant behavior.
5.	Sex Education in the Prevention of Sexual Abuse in Elementary Schools. Amalina & Masyithoh (2024)	Assessing the effectiveness of early childhood sex education in preventing abuse in elementary schools.	Early sex education can reduce the risk of abuse and increase children's awareness of their bodily boundaries.	Relevant to strategies for preventing and intervening in deviant behavior.
6.	School Bullying Behavior among Elementary School Students. Dewi (2020)	Describing the types, causes, and effects of bullying on elementary school students.	Bullying is often not handled properly; many victims are reluctant to report it because they are afraid.	Relevant to the section on "Barriers to reporting" and the importance of a secure reporting system.
7.	Theoretical Review: Internal and External Factors of Academic Problems in Elementary Schools. Tondang et al. (2025)	Explaining internal and external factors that influence elementary school students' behavior and learning achievement.	Internal factors (low motivation, emotions) and external factors (parenting style, social environment) both have an influence.	Relevant to the section on "Causes" of deviant behavior.
8.	The Psychological Impact of Bullying on Student Motivation and Academic Achievement at SDN 1 Mindahan. Ummah et al. (2025)	Investigating the relationship between bullying and elementary school students' motivation and academic achievement.	Bullying significantly reduces students' motivation to learn and their academic achievement.	Supports the section on "The Impact of Bullying" in the discussion.

No	Article Title & Author	Article Summary (Brief Summary)	Results & Findings	Relevance to the Topic
9.	Analysis of the Impact of Bullying Behavior on the Learning Outcomes of Fifth Grade Students at Kayuapu Elementary School. Zahra, Ariyani & Riswari (2024)	Analyzing the relationship between bullying and elementary school students' learning outcomes.	Victims of bullying show declining academic performance and low self-esteem.	Relevant to the explanation of the effects of bullying on cognition and motivation.
10.	The Impact of Bullying on the Psychological, Physical, and Social Well-being of Elementary School Students. Rahman & Moulana (2025)	Explaining the overall impact of bullying on students' psychological, physical, and social aspects.	Bullying causes trauma, low self-esteem, emotional distress, and poor social interactions.	Directly relevant to the long-term impact of deviant behavior on children.
11.	Juridical Study of Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology Number 46 of 2023 concerning the Prevention and Handling of Violence in the Environment of Education Units. Julista, Hakim & Hasibuan (2024)	Reviewing the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology's new regulations on preventing violence in schools.	Regulations provide guidelines, but their implementation is still hampered by a lack of awareness and a culture of silence.	Relevant to the section on "Challenges in handling cases."
12.	Bullying is Never Ending: Construction of Reporting on Cases of Bullying in Schools. Hardyanti (2023)	Media analysis of reporting on bullying cases in schools.	The media tends to be sensationalist, thereby exacerbating the stigma and fear of whistleblowers.	Relevant to the discussion of barriers to reporting bullying cases.
13.	Barriers to Reporting Teachers' Abuse of Students. Sharpe (2024)	Menjelaskan hambatan dalam pelaporan kekerasan oleh guru terhadap siswa.	Unclear procedures and lack of institutional support are major obstacles.	Supports discussion of structural and cultural barriers to reporting cases.
14.	Bullying Reporting Concerns as a Mediator between School Climate and Bullying Victimization. Zhang et al. (2021)	Examining the relationship between school climate, reporting, and victimization rates.	Schools with a positive climate have better reporting and lower rates of bullying.	Relevant to solutions based on strengthening a positive school climate.
15.	How Can Bullying Victimization Lead to	Meta-analysis on the relationship between	Cognitive-motivational factors mediate the	Relevant to the section on "The Impact of

No	Article Title & Author	Article Summary (Brief Summary)	Results & Findings	Relevance to the Topic
	Lower Academic Achievement? Samara et al. (2021)	bullying and declining academic achievement.	decline in achievement of bullying victims.	Bullying on Achievement.”
16.	The Influence of Bullying on Positive Emotions. Ragusa et al. (2023)	Investigating the relationship between bullying, positive emotions, and academic performance.	Positive emotions decrease in victims, which affects learning achievement.	Relevant to the relationship between bullying, emotions, and achievement.
17.	School-Based Nursing Interventions for Preventing Bullying. Yosep et al. (2023)	Review of school nursing interventions in preventing bullying.	Collaboration among school health workers effectively reduces bullying cases.	Relevant to collaborative school intervention strategies.
18.	Exploration of Child Bullying Cases and School-Based Anti-Bullying Interventions. Melawati (2024)	Exploring school interventions and community empowerment in bullying prevention.	Collaboration between schools and communities has successfully reduced student violence rates.	Relevant to collaborative bullying prevention strategies.
19.	Enhancing Social-Emotional Skills in Early Childhood. Hosokawa et al. (2024)	Researching the effectiveness of SEL programs in early childhood.	The SEL program improves empathy, emotional control, and prosocial behavior.	Relevant to SEL-based prevention strategies.
20.	The Effects of a Cyberbullying Intervention Programme among Primary School Students. Lukács et al. (2023)	Evaluating anti-cyberbullying intervention programs in elementary schools.	Peer-education interventions significantly reduce the incidence of online bullying.	Relevant to modern technology-based prevention strategies.
21.	Parenting Styles: Factors and Implications for Child Character Development. Subagia (2021)	Discussing the relationship between parenting styles and children's characters.	Positive parenting shapes good character and prevents deviant behavior.	Relevant to external family factors in character building and bullying prevention.

To provide a clearer focus for this study, twenty selected articles were categorized based on their dominant themes related to deviant student behavior in elementary schools. The results of this thematic classification are presented in Table 2, titled “Classification of Articles Based on the Theme of Elementary School Student Behavior That Threatens the Learning Environment.” This classification identifies four main themes, namely:

Table 2. Classification of Articles Based on Theme

No	Main Theme	Number of Articles	Percentage %	Main Focus
1.	Forms and Factors of Deviant Behavior/Bullying in Elementary Schools.	7	33,3%	Identify types of deviant behavior (bullying, harassment, delinquency, disengagement) and their internal and external causes.
2.	Psychological, Social, and Academic Impacts of	5	23,8%	Analyzing the effects of bullying on students' self-confidence, academic achievement,

No	Main Theme	Number of Articles	Percentage %	Main Focus
3.	Bullying on Elementary School Students. Challenges in Reporting and Handling Cases of Violence in Schools.	4	19,0%	motivation, and emotional well-being. Highlighting structural, cultural, and communication barriers in the reporting system as well as weak implementation of school regulations.
4.	Prevention and Intervention Strategies in Elementary School Environments.	4	19,0%	Developing prevention strategies through social-emotional learning (SEL), school-based interventions, community collaboration, and anti-cyberbullying programs.
5.	The Role of Families and Parenting Styles in Shaping Children's Character.	1	4,9%	Demonstrating the importance of positive parenting in preventing deviant behavior and supporting children's character development.
Total		21	100%	

Elementary school children are at a crucial stage in developing character, morals, and self-confidence elements that form the foundation of their personality and socio-emotional competence (Listiani et al., 2024). However, the emergence of deviant behaviors such as bullying, petty theft, peer harassment, and learning refusal reflects serious challenges in character education (Alfath et al., 2025; Gularso & Indrianawati, 2022). This situation demonstrates weak supervision and ineffective behavioral norms within the school environment, thereby necessitating comprehensive preventive efforts through social-emotional learning, the strengthening of a positive school climate, and the active involvement of parents and teachers to create a safe, supportive, and developmentally appropriate learning environment (Maisaroh & Jannah, 2025; Amalina & Masyithoh, 2024; Dewi, 2020).

Deviant behavior among elementary school students is influenced by a combination of internal and external factors. Internal factors include low learning motivation, limited emotional intelligence, low self-confidence, and physical conditions such as malnutrition, which may reduce concentration and self-regulation (Tondang et al., 2025). Meanwhile, external factors consist of inappropriate parenting styles, excessive academic pressure, negative peer influence, unsafe school environments, and inadequate supervision (Listiani et al., 2024). Furthermore, media exposure and excessive gadget use also exert negative effects on children's behavior, attention span, and learning focus (Tondang et al., 2025).

Bullying has a significant impact on both victims and perpetrators, particularly in emotional and academic domains (Ummah, 2025). Victims often experience decreased self-confidence, heightened anxiety, trauma, and reduced learning motivation, all of which contribute to lower academic achievement (Zahra et al., 2024; Samara et al., 2021). Moreover, bullying undermines students' positive emotions and self-esteem, thereby diminishing their concentration and enthusiasm for learning (Ragusa et al., 2023). Therefore, fostering a safe and supportive school environment is essential to mitigate these adverse effects.

Cases of bullying and harassment in schools are often underreported due to structural, cultural, and psychological barriers, including social stigma, fear of blame, and low trust in reporting and handling mechanisms (Julista et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2021). Sensationalized media narratives further exacerbate the problem by instilling additional fear among victims and witnesses (Hardyanti, 2023). Moreover, a school culture that prioritizes maintaining its reputation over encouraging transparency combined with ambiguous procedures and limited awareness of official

reporting channels results in many cases remaining unaddressed (Sharpe, 2024). Therefore, without a strong school culture and institutional capacity, existing regulations alone cannot ensure effective case management.

The prevention and intervention of bullying must be carried out comprehensively through collaboration among schools, families, and communities (Amalina & Masyithoh, 2024). Teachers play a crucial role in developing adaptive learning approaches, while parents provide emotional support and supervision to help children understand empathy, bodily boundaries, and the ability to report inappropriate behavior (Hosokawa et al., 2024; Yosep, 2023). The involvement of school health professionals, community organizations, and peer education programs has also proven effective in reducing violence within learning environments (Melawati, 2024; Lukács et al., 2023). With strong family support, clear regulations, and consistent enforcement of consequences for perpetrators, schools can build a violence-free educational ecosystem that fosters children's character development and well-being (Subagia, 2021; Rahman & Moulana, 2025).

CONCLUSION

Character building and the prevention of deviant behavior in elementary schools require genuine collaboration among schools, families, and communities to establish a safe, inclusive, and empathetic educational ecosystem. Such efforts cannot be achieved solely through normative policies but must be practically embedded within learning activities and school culture. Therefore, it is recommended that the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) and school-based violence prevention programs into teacher professional development initiatives, while also fostering cross-sector collaboration with health centers, child protection agencies, and local communities to strengthen early detection and intervention systems.

The limitations of this study stem from its reliance on secondary literature sources and the absence of empirical data from the Indonesian school context, making the findings primarily conceptual. Future research is encouraged to conduct action-based studies in Indonesian elementary schools to examine the effectiveness of integrative approaches grounded in SEL and school culture in reducing deviant behavior and promoting character development in a contextual and sustainable manner.

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