

IMPROVING THE EMOTIONAL REGULATION ABILITY OF FATHERLESS ADOLESCENTS WITH AN INDIVIDUALIZED COUNSELING APPROACH: A LITERATURE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of fatherlessness among adolescents has become an increasing concern in education and mental health due to its significant psychological impact on emotional development. The absence of a father, either physically or emotionally, contributes to various emotional regulation problems, such as anxiety, anger, sadness, and difficulties in building healthy social relationships. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of individual counseling approaches in improving emotional regulation among fatherless adolescents through a systematic literature review. The research employed a qualitative method using the PRISMA approach, with six journal articles selected from Google Scholar publications between 2019 and 2025. The review findings indicate that individual counseling, particularly using the client-centered technique, is effective in helping adolescents recognize, express, and manage their emotions more adaptively. Additionally, techniques such as ego strength and emotion-focused coping strategies contribute to enhancing emotional resilience and self-awareness in fatherless adolescents. These findings affirm that individual counseling is a relevant and impactful intervention to improve emotional regulation and prevent more serious psychosocial issues. Therefore, it is crucial for counseling practitioners to implement such approaches systematically and consistently in supporting adolescents who experience the loss of a father figure.

Keywords:

Fatherless, Emotional Regulation, Individual Counseling, Adolescents, Literature Review

INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of *fatherlessness* in Indonesia is an urgent social problem characterized by various socio-cultural factors that contribute to the increasing number of *fatherless* families. Indonesia ranks among the countries most affected by the absence of a father's role, as noted in the *Global Fatherhood Index Report*, which highlights that Indonesia is one of the top three *fatherless* countries in the world (Mariam & Rewindinar, 2023). The term "*fatherless*" refers to children who have lost their paternal role or have minimal involvement with their father due to a variety of circumstances, including socioeconomic challenges, cultural beliefs (patriarchy), and societal norms (Utami et al., 2023). This situation raises serious concerns regarding child development and emotional well-being, leading to adverse psychological impacts for affected children (Rahmah, 2020).

Research shows that Indonesia is currently labeled as "*fatherless*" which highlights the systemic problem in which many fathers are perceived as mere breadwinners, failing to meaningfully engage in the emotional and psychological development of their children. Indonesia's Minister of Social Affairs, Khofifah Indar Parawansa, has shown that this perception largely limits the involvement of fathers in the lives and development of their children (Utami et al., 2023). In addition, cultural expectations often discourage fathers from fulfilling parenting roles, (which are traditionally given to mothers)

exacerbating the problem of paternal absence and leaving children without critical paternal guidance during the formative years (Nasution et al., 2023).

Research shows that adolescents without a father figure have a greater chance of engaging in *self-harming* behaviors and have low self-esteem (Culpin et al., 2021). Such challenges represent a unique intersection of emotional and social issues that typically arise during adolescence, as individuals seek to refine their self-identity. When fathers are not involved, adolescents may experience feelings of abandonment and neglect, leading to feelings of worthlessness or inadequacy (Knapp et al., 2023). These emotional experiences highlight the need for the active involvement of support figures whether fathers, mentors, or counselors in adolescent life, as these relationships can serve as a buffer against the mental health challenges posed by the father's absence (Knapp et al., 2023).

The emotional upheaval associated with the absence of the father's role can lead to a variety of emotional and behavioral problems especially adolescent girls. They have a higher susceptibility to developing unhealthy relationship patterns. Research shows that the lack of a father figure exacerbates difficulties in forming healthy peer and romantic relationships, which often leads to *toxic dynamics* during the developmental phase especially among adolescent girls (Zuroida & Agustin, 2025). This is exacerbated by emotional dysregulation, which is significantly affected by the quality of the father-adolescent relationship (Chiang et al., 2024). Adolescents who experience instability in father-child closeness are more likely to show increased emotional dysregulation over time. In addition, the psychological impact of *fatherlessness* can have dire consequences for young women. Studies show that such losses affect not only emotional well-being but also cognitive and behavioral function, leading to problems such as anxiety and depression (Farooqi & Khan, 2021). This disorder results in lower self-esteem and a widespread sense of emotional distress, making it a challenge in adolescence. These findings are in line with the literature that highlights that paternal involvement is directly linked to adolescents' emotional health, which affects outcomes such as academic performance and social relationships (Jeyaseeli & Edwin, 2024).

The influence of fatherlessness does not only impact adolescent girls, as evidenced by variability in emotional responses and attachment styles based on father-son relationships, research shows that fathers' psychological control can negatively affect their boys' subjective well-being, which is mediated by factors such as internalized shyness (Kim & Lee, 2023). It is important to recognize that the literature shows clear gender differences in the impact of father's absence on girls often show higher levels of emotional distress compared to boys (Peng et al., 2021).

Research shows that ineffective regulation of emotions can lead to a variety of emotional disorders, including depression and anxiety. In particular, research shows that adolescents who do not have good emotional regulation have an increased chance of experiencing depressive symptoms, especially in challenging family situations such as parental divorce (Rania & Roswiyani, 2024). This correlation highlights the need for emotion regulation skills, as the capacity to navigate complex emotional landscapes directly affects adolescent mental health outcomes. Additionally, when adolescents develop the ability to adequately express and manage their emotions, they show increased resistance to stressors, thereby improving their overall emotional stability (Mandagi et al., 2023).

Adolescents with emotional dysregulation often exhibit aggressive behavior in response to their inability to manage emotions effectively. Research findings suggest that emotional dysregulation is closely related to aggressive behavior among adolescents, suggesting that teaching adolescents efficient

emotion regulation strategies can help reduce aggressive tendencies (Darmadi & Badayai, 2021). These findings underscore the importance of equipping adolescents with emotion regulation skills as a preventive measure against aggression and unhealthy conflict resolution methods.

Research shows that parental conflict can significantly increase emotional reactivity in adolescents when they encounter peer conflict (Chiang & Bai, 2024). A high baseline rate of parent-adolescent conflict correlates with an increase in symptoms of depression and anxiety over time. This relationship illustrates the idea that ongoing family conflict can create a chain effect, which affects adolescents' interactions with their peers and reinforces feelings of helplessness and emotional distress (Wang et al., 2024). If examined further, it is emphasized that peer relationships are formed in the context of family ties, which shows that negative experiences at home can foster harmful peer relationships (Basuki et al., 2024).

Based on *fatherless* issues that negatively impact adolescent psychology, guidance and counseling play an important role in effectively addressing the psychological impact of father's absence by increasing the success of guidance and counseling efforts, especially individual counseling in helping adolescents manage their emotions. The age range of adolescence is characterized by a number of physical, emotional, and social changes that can cause difficulties in managing emotions. Guidance and counselling services provide much-needed support to improve the emotional health and psychological well-being of adolescents. One of the main functions of individual counseling is to help youth understand and express their emotions. Research shows that counselors can be a significant agent of change in helping students identify and cope with feelings such as anxiety, anger, and sadness. Through a qualitative design approach taken by (Damanik, 2024), it was found that counseling guidance programs in child-friendly schools are effective in helping students manage their emotions, especially in stressful situations such as exams. This intervention allows students to learn how to deal with their emotions constructively, which is crucial in developing healthy emotion management skills.

Additionally, individual counseling offers a safe space where teens can share and explore their feelings without fear of feeling judged. This creates opportunities for them to develop emotional skills such as empathy and self-care. By providing emotional support in times of crisis, individual counseling helps students to face life's challenges better (Suryati & Salehudin, 2021). Research shows that students who receive counseling services tend to have higher emotional well-being and better coping strategies when dealing with stress and pressure.

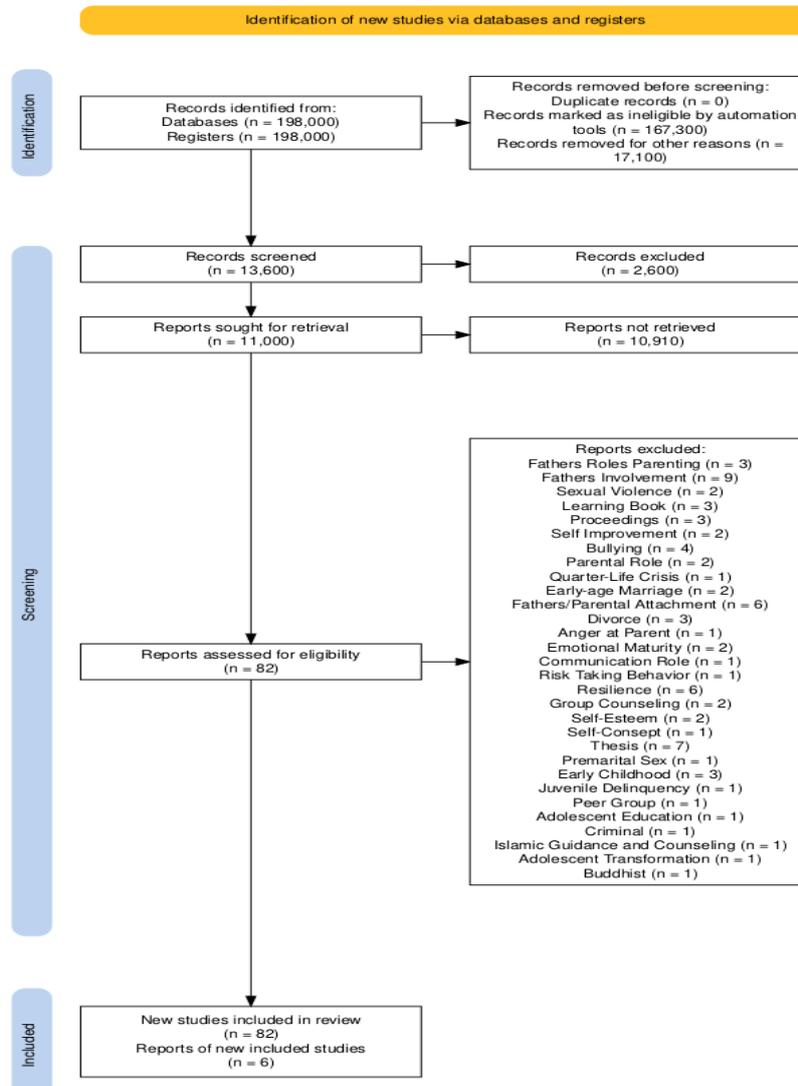
This literature study research aims to review and analyze various scientific literature that discusses the effectiveness of individual counseling approaches in improving the ability to regulate emotions in adolescents who experience fatherless conditions. Teenagers who grow up without a father face many complicated challenges that are very different from their peers who are raised in a stable parental framework. Research shows that this absence has a profound effect on their emotional regulation and overall psychological well-being (Ismail et al., 2024; Hadebe & Adanlawo, 2024). These challenges manifest in many forms, including difficulties in recognizing, managing, and expressing emotions in a healthy way. For example, studies have shown that adolescents without fathers are more likely to exhibit aggressive behaviors, often as a conduit for their uncontrollable emotions due to a lack of a father figure (Ismail et al., 2024). By systematically reviewing the literature, this research aims to identify individual counseling techniques that have been proven to help adolescents develop adaptive emotion regulation strategies.

In addition, this study aims to summarize models of individual counseling interventions that are relevant and have proven effective based on previous studies. This knowledge is expected to make a theoretical contribution to the development of guidance and counseling practices and become a practical reference for counselors in designing individual counseling services that are responsive to the emotional needs of *fatherless* adolescents, because the right guidance and counseling program also has a broad impact on the development of adolescents' character and personality. Thus, the results of this study not only enrich the academic literature, but also support efforts to improve adolescent psychological well-being through targeted counseling approaches. As Nurhayati and Rozikan Eva et al. (2020) highlight the importance of social support and positive personality development achieved through guidance and counseling services. This shows that when adolescents are equipped with good emotional skills, they are not only able to cope with their personal problems, but also make a positive contribution to their environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study uses a qualitative approach with a systematic literature study method based on the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) procedure. This study aims to identify, review, and synthesize the results of previous research relevant to the theme "Improving the Emotional Regulation Ability of Fatherless Adolescents with an Individual Counseling Approach". The researcher used this theme because it is an urgent social issue in Indonesia which is highlighted as one of the top three *fatherless* countries in the world (Mariam & Rewindinar, 2023). The data collection procedure is carried out through searching for scientific journal articles available on the Google Scholar platform with a publication time span of the last 5 years starting from 2019 to 2025. Article search uses keywords tailored to the topic, such as: individual counseling, emotion regulation, teens, and *fatherless*. All articles found were then systematically selected through the PRISMA stage, namely identification, screening, eligibility, and *final inclusion*.

The inclusion criteria in this study consist of: 1). Scientific articles published in the last 5-year span (2019–2025); 2). Discuss topics related to adolescents experiencing *fatherlessness*, emotion regulation, and individual counseling; 3). Available in full text of the article (open access); and 4). Written in Indonesian. Meanwhile, such unqualified articles, including non-scientific articles, not available in full text, or irrelevant to the focus of the research, are excluded from the analysis process. Articles that passed the selection were then analyzed thematically to identify effective individual counseling approaches as well as the emotional characteristics of fatherless adolescents based on the results of previous research. The results of this analysis are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the contribution of individual counseling in helping *fatherless* adolescents develop adaptive emotional regulation which, if not yet achieved emotional well-being, will affect cognitive and behavioral dysfunction such as anxiety and depression (Farooqi & Khan, 2021).



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RESULT AND DISCUSSION

No.	Author (Year)	Article Title	Research Methods	Key Findings	Relevance to the Theme
1.	Titin Kartini et al. (2023)	<i>Individual Counseling Guidance Overcomes Negative Emotion Regulation in Fatherless Adolescents</i>	Descriptive Qualitative	Individual counseling services with a Client-Centered Therapy approach are effective in overcoming negative emotions in	Demonstrate the effectiveness of individual counseling in helping emotion regulation.

				fatherless adolescents.
2.	Nadia R. Febrianti et al. (2025)	Individual Counseling Client-Centered Techniques in Improving Emotional Regulation in Fatherless Adolescents	Case Studies	Four client-centered individual counseling sessions improve emotional expression and positive coping. Provide evidence of direct application of client-centered techniques.
3.	Anggun Imaniar et al.	The Role of Ego Strength Techniques in Improving the Emotional Regulation of Fatherless Children	Descriptive Qualitative	Ego Strength techniques strengthen personality and emotion management. Providing an alternative counseling approach for fatherless
4.	Diana Rahmasari et al. (2024)	Coping Strategies for Late Teens Experiencing Fatherlessness	Qualitative (in-depth interviews)	Adolescents use emotion-focused coping strategies such as social support and self-recognition. Giving an Overview of the Natural Emotional Regulation Mechanism of Fatherless Adolescents
5.	Ghina Hanifah et al. (2024)	Analysis of the Impact of Fatherlessness on Adolescent Socio-Emotional Conditions	Systematic Literature Review	Fatherless triggers symptoms of loneliness, anxiety, depression, and social-emotional disorders. Reinforcing the importance of counseling interventions for emotion regulation
6.	Marisa Theofani & Hani Rohayani (2025)	Fatherless in Christian Families: Implications for Child Development in Emerging Adulthood	Qualitative Phenomenology	Father's absence triggers emotional difficulties, anger, and trust issues. Broadening understanding of the impact of Long Fatherless on emotion regulation

DISCUSSION

Based on the results of a literature study of six selected articles, it was found that the condition of adolescents who experience *fatherlessness* is very closely related to various problems of emotion regulation. The phenomenon of absenteeism from the role of fathers both physically and emotionally causes adolescents to be prone to deep feelings of anxiety, anger, sadness, and loneliness. This is in line

with the results of research by Hanifah et al. (2024) which show that fatherless adolescents often experience socio-emotional disorders such as difficulty forming healthy social relationships, feelings of worthlessness, and tendencies to depression and social isolation. This condition emphasizes the importance of psychological intervention, especially in the form of counseling.

The impact of absent fatherhood on adolescents is a multi-faceted problem that is significantly correlated with various difficulties in emotional regulation, mental health challenges, and overall well-being outcomes. Research consistently highlights that the phenomenon of *fatherlessness*, whether through death, divorce, or involvement, can have a detrimental impact on emotional states among adolescents, making it difficult for them to manage emotions effectively. The emphasized psychological consequences of *the fatherless phenomenon* show widespread effects on the emotional, social, and academic dimensions of a child's growth, which exacerbates the problem of emotional regulation (Zahra, 2024).

As research conducted by Farooqi & Khan (2021) related to the impact of *fatherlessness* on adolescent girls and it was found that this phenomenon causes emotional disorders, cognitive disorders, and behavioral problems. Their study shows that adolescent girls experience feelings of inferiority, anxiety, depression, and emotional distress stemming from significant life disruptions and financial challenges after the death of their father. Similarly, research conducted by Liu and his colleagues investigated how paternal absence affects the phenomenon of hostility in depressed adolescents, and showed that a lack of paternal involvement exacerbates feelings of frustration and lowers self-esteem, thereby increasing aggression behavior in adolescents (Liu et al., 2021).

The dynamics of attachment between father and son revealed that the father's emotional management strategy significantly affects adolescent mental health. Insecure attachments related to poor emotion regulation correlate with anxiety and behavioral problems in adolescents, suggesting that the way fathers handle emotions directly affects their children's emotional development (Smith et al., 2023). Sofrona and Giannakopoulos expand on this idea by exploring how parental mental health, especially anxiety and depression, directly affect adolescent mental health outcomes. Their findings suggest that parental rejection highlights the link between paternal absence, parenting quality, and adolescent emotional skills to be significant factors influencing emotional difficulties among adolescents (Sofrona & Giannakopoulos, 2024). Complementing this idea, Maglica et al. illustrate how family characteristics, including paternal educational status correlate with stress and emotional well-being in adolescents linking socioeconomic factors to mental health outcomes in the context of *fatherlessness* (Maglica et al., 2021).

Two studies that directly examined the effectiveness of individual counseling for *fatherless* adolescents, namely Kartini et al. (2023) and Febrianti et al. (2025), showed that individual counseling approaches with *client-centered* techniques have proven to be effective in improving emotional regulation. Counselors show improvements in the ability to recognize, express, and manage emotions more adaptively after undergoing several counseling sessions. This approach provides a safe space without judgment, allowing counselors to explore their emotional experiences and find positive ways to cope with psychological distress.

The existing evidence surrounding individualized counseling approaches that use client-centered techniques shows its effectiveness in improving emotional regulation among clients. This effectiveness is illustrated through a variety of therapeutic modalities, particularly in the context of emotion regulation, where client-centered techniques facilitate a therapeutic environment that supports the understanding and processing of emotions. Client-centered therapy, rooted in the principles established by Carl Rogers, prioritizes therapeutic alliances and fosters an environment of unconditional positive empathy and appreciation, which is especially important for individuals seeking to improve their emotional regulation. Self-regulation training focused on emotional management has been shown to reduce negative emotions and promote higher levels of emotional well-being among individuals, demonstrating benefits for emotional growth within the framework of counseling (Purwadi et al. 2020).

This client-centered aspect of the technique encourages clients to articulate and understand their feelings, which allows them to navigate their emotional landscape more effectively.

Further support came from Litendahl et al. showing that emotional intelligence (EI) can significantly improve counselor-client interaction. Their research highlights that counselors who manage their emotions effectively can facilitate better emotional outcomes for clients, demonstrating how client-centered techniques leverage EI to foster stronger therapeutic relationships (Litendahl et al., 2025). This results in more tailored interventions that can directly address the client's problems related to emotional dysregulation. In addition, the integration of *Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy* (REBT) techniques as discussed by 'Aliyah et al. demonstrates the adaptability of a client-centered approach in group counseling settings. Their findings shed light on how cognitive debate techniques can improve group dynamics and support emotional regulation among participants ('Aliyah et al., 2023). This flexibility reinforces the client-centered notion that therapy methodologies should be aligned with the client's needs, thereby promoting better emotional health outcomes.

In addition to *client-centered techniques*, a study by Imaniar et al. (2025) highlights the effectiveness of *the Ego Strength technique* as an alternative in strengthening the psychological resilience of *fatherless* children. These techniques help individuals build self-awareness, recognize emotional stressors, and develop healthy coping skills. Meanwhile, Rahmasari et al. (2024) found that adolescents naturally develop *emotion-focused coping* strategies, such as seeking social support or reinterpreting negative experiences, in response to *fatherless conditions*. While not all of these strategies are effective in the long term, these findings are important for understanding the context and potential direction of individual counseling. A study conducted by Kim et al. (2024) revealed a significant negative correlation between Ego Power and psychological trauma in abused children. Their findings suggest that a strong Ego Power can reduce the adverse effects of psychological trauma, implying that reinforcing this trait can be especially beneficial for children who experience stress due to father's absence.

Studies on the developmental aspects of *Ego-Strength* also show that it involves important components such as resilience, initiative, and competence. Kim and Choi's research by KIM & Choi (2020) underscores the multidimensional nature of Ego functioning, which consists of aspects that play an important role in the way children process fear and tolerate academic failure. By cultivating these attributes through targeted interventions, counselors can help children manage their emotional responses and foster a sense of responsibility for dealing with the difficulties that come from fatherless households.

Interventions that leverage the *principles of Ego-Strength* may include narrative therapy, strength-based approaches, and play therapy, all of which focus on strengthening the child's sense of self and agency. Hartwig and Taylor Hartwig & Taylor (2022) affirm that solution-focused play therapy can help children recognize their innate abilities and strengths, which can be important in building a solid foundation for emotional resilience. The act of setting achievable goals within the framework of therapy strengthens the child's confidence in their ability to make changes, which is important for those facing the implications of the father's absence.

The various dimensions of psychological resilience evidenced in children who do not have fathers underscore the importance of using Ego Power techniques. Research by Wahyudi et al. (Wahyudi et al., 2024), for example, discusses how fatherlessness affects children's self-image and their relational abilities, suggesting the long-term impact of such absence on psychological health. Interventions focused on increasing Ego Power can ultimately counteract these negative effects, allowing children to thrive in their social contexts.

The psychological challenges faced by children without fathers, including problems with emotional regulation, can be exacerbated by feelings of inadequacy and fear. The absence of a father figure often leads to gaps in the support system, resulting in emotional fragility. Research by Utami et al. (2023) highlights that children from fatherless backgrounds show difficulties in controlling their

emotions, which exacerbates their stress and maladaptive behavior. Thus, Ego Power techniques can offer a structured approach to increase the emotional and psychological resilience these children need to manage their feelings and experiences effectively.

A quantitative assessment conducted by Vameghi et al. revealed that domestic conflicts, including those arising from the absence of fathers, are significantly correlated with deteriorating adolescent mental health, thus giving rise to a tiered effect that complicates emotional regulation skills (Vameghi et al., 2020). In particular, the role of fathers in their children's lives—especially during adolescent development—remains indispensable, as illustrated by how the mental health of mothers and fathers uniquely affects adolescent outcomes; research by Lee et al. underscores a stronger relationship between adolescent mental health and maternal stress versus paternal stress, but also suggests paternal involvement remains important (Lee et al., 2023).

Research from Theofani & Rohayani (2025) also makes an important contribution in expanding the understanding of the impact of fatherlessness in the next stage of development, namely *emerging adulthood*. They highlight that paternal absence has long-term emotional impacts such as difficulties in building trust and emotional stability, which indicates the need for long-term support, including through ongoing counseling.

The impact of fatherlessness can extend significantly to the next stage of development, early adulthood, when individuals grapple with long-term emotional consequences and challenges in forming stable relationships. Research shows that the absence of a father figure during the formative years can lead to profound difficulties in things like trust, emotional regulation, and overall relationship stability. Understanding these impacts is critical to ensuring that the right support systems, such as ongoing counselling, are available and used effectively.

Terrance et al. highlight the life experiences of adolescent boys who do not have fathers, emphasizing the important role of father's involvement in the development of identity and moral values (Terrance et al., 2022). Their qualitative research illustrates that, without parental guidance, young people often struggle with trust and moral decision-making, which can carry over into adulthood. The emotional void left by fatherless fathers requires an ongoing support framework that can help today's youth navigate their interpersonal relationships and build resilience. They suggest that significant male figures, whether mentors or counselors, can help bridge some of these gaps and provide guidance to foster emotional stability. In addition, Ndereba explores the shared responsibility to nurture young individuals who do not have a father figure, particularly in the Kenyan context (Ndereba, 2022). The integration of community-based and faith-based support mechanisms can play an important role in strengthening the emotional resilience of these individuals as they transition into adulthood. This approach suggests that tailored social support to address the emotional deprivation stemming from father's absence is essential.

Evidence from the field of psychology suggests that a structured support system can result in better coping mechanisms for individuals facing family problems, including paternal absences (Junaidin et al., 2023). Junaidin et al. found that women in fatherless households often experience anxiety regarding intimate relationships and marital commitment, highlighting the need for counseling interventions that specifically address these fears and help improve their relational attitudes.

Furthermore, counseling frameworks such as Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) can effectively increase resilience through individual-focused therapeutic strategies, as noted by Yıldız and Aylaz (Yıldız & Aylaz, 2020). Techniques that encourage individuals to confront and understand their emotional experiences can foster greater psychological strength and adaptability in adults dealing with paternal absence.

Sweeney et al. emphasize that ongoing emotional support and structured therapeutic relationships can be vital in coping with the prolonged impact of paternal absence (Mai et al., 2021). They discussed the importance of providing different types of emotional and social support to increase resilience in young adults navigating their own identities and relational dynamics. Ongoing counseling

can help individuals process feelings about their father's absence, develop healthier relationship dynamics, and cultivate better emotion management skills.

The impact of fatherlessness extends to complex emotional challenges and relationship commitment. The existing literature describes the need for long-term support systems, including ongoing counseling, to mitigate the profound emotional impact of paternal absence. It is critical that counseling practices adapt to meet these needs, ensuring that individuals can address their developmental challenges with guidance and resilience. Other impacts of *the fatherless* phenomenon continue into early adulthood, which significantly affects confidence, emotional stability, and overall relational functioning. The timely need for mental health resources underscores the conclusion of Masud et al. regarding the importance of counseling specifically designed to help individuals cope with the emotional challenges associated with paternal absence (Masud et al., 2020). Ongoing counseling relationships can serve to stabilize these young adults as they deal with the complexities inherent in adult life, especially if these complexities are exacerbated by their past experiences.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of a literature review of six relevant articles, it can be concluded that *fatherlessness* in adolescents has a significant impact on their emotional stability and psychosocial development. The absence of the father figure, both physically and emotionally, contributes to the emergence of various emotional regulation disorders, such as difficulty controlling anger, feelings of loneliness, low self-esteem, and depressive symptoms. This situation confirms that *fatherless* adolescents are a group that requires special attention and psychological intervention. Individualized counseling approaches, especially with *client-centered techniques*, have been shown to be effective in helping *fatherless* adolescents recognize, express, and manage emotions more adaptively. This technique provides a safe space for teens to explore their feelings without fear of judgment. In addition, *ego strength techniques* and positive coping strategies also support strengthening personality aspects and emotional resilience. Therefore, individual counseling can be the right intervention to improve emotional regulation and quality of life for adolescents who have lost their father's role.

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