Cyberbullying in Adolescents, Associated Factors and Consequences: A Systematic Review

Rafael Emiliano Sulca Quispe [1], Victor Enrique Lizama Mendoza[2], Washington Lira Camargo [1], Sonia Vilchez Guzmán [2], Luisa Margarita Diaz Ricalde de Arenas [1]

[1] Universidad Nacional Federico Villarreal

[2] Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos

HOW TO CITE:
Rafael Emiliano Sulca Quispe, Victor Enrique Lizama Mendoza, Washington Lira Camargo, Sonia Vilchez Guzmán, Luisa Margarita Diaz Ricalde de Arenas (2026). Cyberbullying in Adolescents, Associated Factors and Consequences: A Systematic Review. International Journal of Special Education, 41(7s), 1260-1268

COPYRIGHT STATEMENT:
Copyright: © 2026 Authors.
Open access publication underthe terms and conditions of the Creative CommonsAttribution (CC BY) license (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).

ABSTRACT:
Cyberbullying among adolescents is currently a problem linked to the excessive use of social media, which triggers negative effects on mental health. The objective was to analyze the available scientific evidence on cyberbullying in adolescents, the risk and protective factors associated with related psychosocial problems. A systematic review was conducted according to the PRISMA guidelines. The literature search was carried out in the Scopus, PubMed, ScienceDirect, SciELO, and Redalyc databases, and included studies published between 2019 and 2025. Of a total of 90 scientific articles identified, 18 were selected that met the established inclusion and exclusion criteria. The results showed that the risk factors were excessive internet and social media use, inadequate emotional regulation, low parental control, and exposure to aggressive content. Protective factors were identified, such as communication, family support, responsible digital education, and the strengthening of socio-emotional skills. Related psychosocial problems include suicidal ideation or behavior, and social conflicts that affect academic performance and the socio-emotional well-being of adolescents.

Keywords: cyberbullying, risk factors, protective factors, psychosocial problems, adolescents.

1. Introduction

Cyberbullying is a form of intentional and repeated digital violence characterized by its persistence and broad reach in the virtual environment (Bansal et al., 2024). Adolescents are the most vulnerable group to this phenomenon due to their high exposure to technology (Hinduja & Patchin, 2025). It is linked to the intensive use of technology and social media, which impacts emotional, social, and academic well-being. Constant exposure to digital platforms increases the risk of cyber victimization due to continuous contact among peers (Nobakht et al., 2025).

According to Anders et al. (2025), 1 in 6 adolescents has experienced cyberbullying, while Al-Salam et al. (2023) found a prevalence of 42.8%, associated with self-harm, mental health

problems and poor academic performance, highlighting the need for preventive strategies. In addition, Orosco et al. (2024) found that 27.7% of high school students were victims of cyberbullying, with exclusion, harassment and identity theft being frequent.

In Peru, SOS Children's Villages Peru (2024) reported that 54% of the children and adolescents surveyed experienced some form of cyberbullying, while 98% publicly share personal information on their social media profiles, increasing their risk of online exposure. Similarly, the Ministry of Education reported 702 cases of cyberbullying through the SíseVe platform, highlighting the significance of the problem within the Peruvian school context (Minedu, 2022).

Cyberbullying is exacerbated by a lack of parental supervision, which leads to widespread use of technology and social media (Guo et al., 2025). Adolescents with limited family and school support are at greater risk of becoming victims or perpetrators (Shao et al., 2024; McVay et al., 2025). Furthermore, protective factors have been identified, such as family involvement and communication, responsible digital education, the development of socio-emotional skills, and the promotion of positive school climates (UNICEF, 2021).

Cyberbullying can manifest in various ways, including sending offensive messages, threats, spreading rumors, identity theft, social exclusion on digital platforms, and publishing images or videos without consent (Ray et al., 2024; Singh et al., 2024). The virtual nature of cyberbullying has been shown to make it difficult to detect and control, which exacerbates its negative effects (Barbosa-Santillán et al., 2025).

This problem leads to serious psychological and social consequences, such as anxiety, depression, stress, low self-esteem, suicidal thoughts, and social isolation. Furthermore, it negatively affects academic performance and quality of life, constituting a public health problem that requires priority attention (World Health Organization, 2022).

This study is justified by the significant increase in the use of digital technologies and social media in recent years, which has fostered the emergence and spread of cyberbullying, primarily affecting the psychological and social well-being of the adolescent population (Schulz et al., 2025; Guo et al., 2025). Furthermore, there is a limited number of studies that rigorously integrate and systematize the existing scientific information on cyberbullying in adolescents, as most research focuses on traditional bullying.

This research aims to organize, systematize, and analyze current scientific evidence, contributing to the academic, educational, and health sectors to inform decision-making in these areas and serving as a foundation for future research. It also seeks to analyze the phenomenon of cyberbullying among adolescents, identifying protective and risk factors, as well as the psychosocial consequences it has on their mental health and overall performance, and thereby enabling the development of mechanisms for preventing these effects.

2. Methodology

Design

The present study is a systematic review, developed underPRISMA 2020 guidelines for systematic and organized work developing a routerigorous methodology that identifies, critically evaluates and synthesizes in an orderly manner the updated scientific evidence on the topic raised (Page et al., 2021).

Eligibility criteria

The following criteria were considered: study topic, publication date (2019-2025), study population, and language. Scientific articles directly related to cyberbullying in adolescents, no more than six years old, published in Spanish and English, and clearly specifying the adolescent population as the object of study were included.

Regarding the exclusion criteria, articles older than 6 years were discarded, as well as those that did not clearly specify the study population. Articles whose titles and contents did not have a

direct relationship with cyberbullying in adolescents were also excluded.

Research strategy

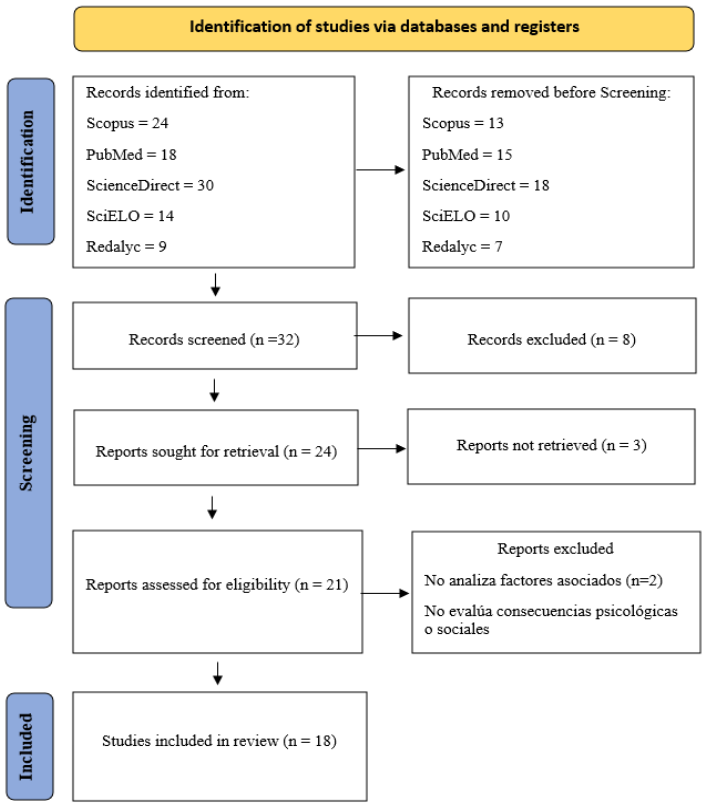
The search was conducted in recognized academic databases, such as Scopus, PubMed, ScienceDirect, SciELO, and Redalyc. The following search strategy was used to identify the studies: ("Cyberbullying" OR "Cyber victimization" OR "Cyberbullying") AND ("Adolescent" OR "Teenager" OR "Youth" OR "Adolescents") AND ("Risk factors" OR "Associated factors" OR "Associated factors") AND ("Consequences" OR "Mental health" OR "Depression" OR "Anxiety" OR "Consequences").

Study selection procedure

For the development of this research, 95 scientific articles related to cyberbullying in adolescents were initially identified. These were retrieved from searches in the Scopus, PubMed, ScienceDirect, SciELO, and Redalyc databases. The previously established inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied to select studies relevant to the research objectives. Following the PRISMA 2020 protocol guidelines, 63 records were removed before the screening phase due to duplication, non-compliance with publication period requirements, and language limitations.

In the title and abstract screening stage, 32 articles were reviewed, of which 8 were excluded for not addressing the adolescent population or the issue of cyberbullying. Subsequently, an attempt was made to retrieve the full text of 24 studies, of which 3 could not be obtained due to full-text access restrictions. Finally, 21 articles were fully evaluated for eligibility, with 3 studies excluded for not explicitly analyzing the associated factors or consequences of cyberbullying in adolescents. After this systematic selection process, the final analysis consisted of 18 scientific articles.

Figure 1



PRISMA flowchart with the analysis unit selection procedure

Data analysis

The analysis was conducted descriptively and qualitatively using the selected articles. The information was organized in a database, and the PRISMA protocol was used to identify patterns and trends in cyberbullying among adolescents.

3. Results

Of the 18 articles selected according to the research parameters, all mention different consequences of cyberbullying in adolescents. Approximately 45% of the studies report that adolescent victims experience psychological distress, such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, isolation, insecurity, and mistrust. Twenty-five percent of the articles link cyberbullying to suicidal thoughts or behaviors, demonstrating a high risk of extreme mental health consequences. Furthermore, 20% highlight the increase in harassment, violence, and interpersonal conflicts as a result of cyberbullying. Finally, 10% associate cyberbullying with social exclusion, identity theft, and reputational damage, demonstrating its impact on the social and digital lives of adolescents.

Table 1 Author, year, title and reasons for the selected articles

Author/Year	Qualification	Causes
Zhu et al., (2021)	Cyberbullying and psychosocial problems in adolescents	They reported that intensive use of social media, lack of parental supervision, and the age and gender of teenagers were factors that increase the likelihood of being victims of cyberbullying.
Santre (2023)	Cyberbullying and psychosocial factors	They noted that a history of victimization, conflictive family relationships, and problems in social interaction were relevant causes of cyberbullying.
Pacheco (2022)	Variables associated with cyberbullying in Colombian adolescents	They indicate that age, internet usage time, and cell phone availability are predominant factors for victimization.
Al-Salam et al. (2023)	Prevalence and risks related to cyberbullying	Reports indicate that increased internet exposure and frequent use of social media raise the risk of cyberbullying.
Arnon et al. (2022)	Experiences of cyberbullying and suicide risk	Frequent exposure to cyberbullying was associated with a higher risk of suicidal ideation in adolescents.
Buelga et al. (2020)	Cyberbullying and suicidal behavior	Psychosocial factors such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem increase the likelihood of becoming a victim.

Author/Year	Qualification	Causes
Marpatmawati et al. (2024)	Literature review: Cyberbullying in adolescents	Age, gender, online behavior, and mental health were identified as key risk factors for cyberbullying.
Xie et al. (2025)	Psychosocial dynamics and cyberbullying	Loneliness and social isolation are considered vulnerability factors in the face of cyberbullying.
MadridLópez et al. (2020)	Long-term cybervictimization	Peer pressure and poor emotional regulation increase the likelihood of cyberbullying.
MadridLópez et al. (2020)	Factors associated with cyberbullying in adolescents: an ecological-social perspective	They pointed out that low parental supervision, family communication problems, and intensive use of social networks increase the likelihood of becoming victims of cyberbullying.
CassianiMiranda et al. (2021)	Factors associated with cyberbullying victimization in Colombian high school students	They identified that excessive time spent on social media, exposure to violent content, and low self-esteem are risk factors for becoming a victim of cyberbullying.
Comas Sánchez et al. (2025)	Cyberbullying among adolescents in the context of social media use	They reported that the frequency of social media use, lack of parental control, and peer pressure contribute to cyberbullying among teenagers.
Zhu et al. (2021)	Cyberbullying among adolescents and children: a global review, risk factors and preventive measures	They revealed that intensive use of social media, exposure to aggressive content, and sociodemographic characteristics such as age and gender increase the likelihood of cyberbullying.
Sorrentino et al. (2023)	Initial risk factors for participation and victimization in youth cyberbullying	They pointed out that impulsivity, poor emotional regulation, and the influence of friends who practice cyberbullying are key factors in participation in and victimization by cyberbullying.
Kowalski et al. (2019)	Risk factors associated with cyberbullying, cyber-victimization and "bully-victims"	They identified that anxiety, low self-esteem, and prolonged exposure to the internet increase vulnerability to cyberbullying.
Alvites (2024)	Adolescence, cyberbullying and depression: risks in a globalized world	They pointed out that social isolation, academic stress, and excessive use of social media contribute to victimization and the development of depression associated with cyberbullying.

Author/Year	Qualification	Causes
Marín et al. (2019)	Risk and protective factors related to cyberbullying among adolescents: a systematic review	They reported that low parental supervision, social media use, peer cyberbullying, and a lack of social skills are risk factors for cyberbullying.
Tokunaga (2019)	Cyberbullying and adolescents: biopsychosocial effects and risk considerations	They revealed that psychological factors such as low self-esteem, depression and anxiety, and social factors such as school group dynamics, increase the likelihood of being a victim or perpetrator of cyberbullying.

4. Discussion

The results obtained in this research show that adolescents are exposed to multiple risk factors that increase the likelihood of experiencing cyberbullying, such as intensive use of social media, low parental supervision, impulsivity, poor emotional regulation, and peer influence (Zhu et al., 2021; Santre, 2023; Lee et al., 2025). Likewise, protective factors, such as family communication, responsible digital education, and the promotion of positive school climates, play a significant role in reducing the incidence of cyberbullying (UNICEF, 2021; Marín et al., 2019).

Regarding the psychological consequences, the collected data show that approximately 45% of the studies report anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and isolation, while 25% show evidence of suicidal ideation or behavior. These results coincide with those reported by Alvites (2024), who associates digital victimization with serious emotional problems. Likewise, the level of harassment and exposure to interpersonal conflicts reported in 20% of the articles supports the findings of Orosco et al. (2024), who highlight the psychosocial effects on mental health, psychosocial well-being, and academic performance of adolescents. Comparison with reported research demonstrates that cyberbullying is an emerging phenomenon, present in both local and international contexts, that urgently requires appropriate prevention strategies.

5. Conclusion

Cyberbullying in adolescents has as its main risk factors intensive use of social networks, low parental control, inadequate emotional regulation, making adolescents a highly vulnerable group to this type of technological violence

Protective factors such as family communication, digital education, and the strengthening of socio-emotional skills were identified, which contribute to the decrease in the frequency of cyberbullying, highlighting the need for preventive strategies in the family and school environment.

The consequences of cyberbullying in adolescents are mainly seen in the psychological and mental health field, such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, isolation and, in severe cases, suicidal ideation and attempt, also affecting interpersonal relationships and academic performance.

The systematic review made it possible to identify characteristic patterns and trends of cyberbullying in adolescents in Peru and Latin America, fulfilling the objective of the research by providing scientific evidence on causes, risk and protective factors and consequences of this form of digital violence.

Author Declaration

I confirm that this manuscript is an original work, has not been published previously, and is not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

The authors of this article declare that they have no conflict of interest in its development.

References

SOS Children's Villages Peru. (2024). Survey on digital perceptions and experiences: cyberbullying, grooming and online risks (Report). Doi:https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-023-04542-0

Al-Salam, S., et al. (2023). Prevalence and related risks of cyberbullying and its effects on adolescents. BMC Psychiatry, 23, 39. Doi:https://doi.org/10.1186/s12888-023-04542-0

AlvitesHuamaní, R. (2024). Adolescence, cyberbullying and depression: risks in a globalized world. Etic@net Journal of Ethics and Education, 15(1), 23–39.Doi: https://doi.org/10.30827/eticanet.v19i1.11867

Anders, M. (2025). One in six school-aged children experiences cyberbullying, finds new WHO/Europe study. World Health Organization (Europe). Available in:https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/27-03-2024-one-in-six-school-aged-children-experiences-cyberbullying--finds-new-who-europe-study World Health Organization

Arnon, S., Brunstein Klomek, A., Visoki, E., Moore, TM, Argabright, ST, DiDomenico, GE, Benton, TD, & Barzilay, R. (2022). Association of cyberbullying experiences and perpetration with suicidality in early adolescence. JAMA Network Open, 5(6), e2218746. Doi:https://doi.org/10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2022.18746

Bansal, S., Garg, N., Singh, J., & Van der Walt, F. (2024). Cyberbullying and mental health: Past, present, and future. Frontiers in Psychology, 14, Article 1279234. Doi:https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1279234

Barbosa-Santillan, LI, Guzmán-Velázquez, BP, Orozco-Aguilera, MT, & Flores-Pulido, L. (2025). Unraveling cyberbullying dynamics: A computational framework empowered by artificial intelligence. Information, 16(2), Article 80. Doi:https://doi.org/10.3390/info16020080

Buelga, S., Postigo, J., Martínez-Ferrer, B., Cava, M.-J., & Ortega-Barón, J. (2020). Cyberbullying among Adolescents: Psychometric Properties of the CYB-AGS Cyber-Aggressor Scale. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 17(9), 3090. Doi:https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph17093090

CassianiMiranda, CA, Rincón, D., Salas, C., & Restrepo, M. (2021). Factors associated with cyberbullying victimization among Colombian highschool adolescents. BMC Public Health, 21, 1857. Doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-021-00355-z

CDC. (2023). Frequent social media use and bullying victimization among US high school students. MMWR.https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/73/su/su7304a3.htm

Comas Sánchez, V., Martínez López, E., & Rodríguez Pérez, M. (2025). Cyberbullying in adolescents in the context of the use of social networks. Venezuelan Journal of Social Sciences, 12(2), 45–60.https://ve.scielo.org/scielo.php?pid=S2610-80382025000200103&script=sci_arttext

Espino, E., Veiga Simão, AM, CostaFerreira, P., SánchezJiménez, V., & Del Rey, R. (2025). Long-term cyberbullying victimization: Peer pressure and anger dysregulation. Res. Child Adolesc. Psychopathol.Doi: https://doi.org/10.1007/s10802-025-01339-5

Gómez Tabares, AS, Restrepo, JE, & ZapataLesmes, G. (2024). Bullying, cyberbullying and suicide risk: Depression as mediator. Psychiatry Res. Doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychres.2024.115968

Guo, Y., Li, S., Zhang, H., et al. (2025). Focus on psychological well-being and cyberbullying among adolescents and young adults: A systematic literature review. BMC Psychology, 13, Article 1284. Doi:https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-025-03520-3

Hinduja, S., & Patchin, J.W. (2025). Cyberbullying through the lens of trauma: An empirical examination of US youth. BMC Public Health, 25, Article 1709.Doi:https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-025-22692-6

Kowalski, R.M., & Limber, S.P. (2022). Cyberbullying and adolescent adjustment: Demographic and parental influences. Nat. Human Behav. Doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2012.09.018

Kowalski, RM, Giumetti, GW, Schroeder, AN, & Lattanner, MR (2019). Risk factors associated with cyberbullying, cybervictimization and bully-victims. Journal of Adolescence, 73, 13–26.https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/20603453/

Sorrentino, A., Esposito, A., Acunzo, D., Santamato, M., & Aquino, A. (2023). Onset risk factors for youth involvement in cyberbullying and cybervictimization: A longitudinal study. Frontiers in Psychology, 13, 1090047. Doi:https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1090047

MadridLópez, C., GámezGuadix, M., & Calvete, E. (2020). Factors associated with cyberbullying in adolescents: an ecological-social perspective. Latin American Journal of Psychology, 52(3), 187–199.https://www.redalyc.org/journal/132/13271607005/

MarínCortés, J., LópezPérez, M., & TorresVargas, R. (2019). Risk and protective factors related to cyberbullying among adolescents: a systematic review. Electronic Journal of Educational Research, 21(2), 1–18.https://www.redalyc.org/journal/778/77864948004/movil/

Ministry of Education (Minedu). (2022). More than 49,000 cases of student violence were registered on the SíseVe portal. Government of Peru.https://www.gob.pe/institucion/minedu/noticias/664873-mas-de-49-000-casos-de-violencia-estudiantil-fueron-registrados-en-portal-siseve

McVay, S.S., Santo, J., & Lydiatt, H. (2025). The impact of cyberbullying victimization on adolescents' school-related distress across nine countries: Examining the mitigating role of teacher support. Social Sciences, 14(9), Article 559. Doi:https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci14090559

Nobakht, H.N., Wichstrøm, L., & Steinsbekk, S. (2025). Longitudinal relations between social media use and cyberbullying victimization across adolescence: Within-person effects in a birth cohort. Journal of Youth and Adolescence.https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-025-02205-9

Orosco, JR, Gómez, W. & Pomasunco, R. (2024). Cyberbullying among students from the victim's perspective in the context of the pandemic. Apuntes Universitarios, 12(3). Available at:https://apuntesuniversitarios.upeu.edu.pe/index.php/revapuntes/article/view/1112

Page, MJ, McKenzie, JE, Bossuyt, PM, Boutron, I., Hoffmann, TC, Mulrow, CD, … Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. BMJ, 372, n71.Doi: https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71

Polanin, JR, Espelage, DL, Grotpeter, JK, Ingram, K., Michaelson, L., Spinney, E., Valido, A., Sheikh, A.E., Torgal, C., & Robinson, L. (2022). A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis of Interventions to Decrease Cyberbullying Perpetration and Victimization. Prevention science: the official journal of the Society for Prevention Research, 23(3), 439–454. Doi:https://doi.org/10.1007/s11121-021-01259-y

Ray, G., McDermott, CD, & Nicho, M. (2024). Cyberbullying on social media: Definitions, prevalence, and impact challenges. Journal of Cybersecurity, 10(1), Article tyae026. Doi:https://doi.org/10.1093/cybsec/tyae026

Shao, IY, Al-Shoaibi, AAA, Testa, A., Ganson, KT, Baker, FC, & Nagata, JM (2024). The association between family environment and subsequent risk of cyberbullying victimization in adolescents. Academic Pediatrics, 24(6), 957–962. Doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.acap.2023.11.019

Singh, A., Rejeb, A., Nangru, H., & Pathak, S. (2024). Global research trends on cyberbullying: A bibliometric study. Cyber Behavior Review, 5, Article 100499. Doi:https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2024.100499

Schulz, P.J., Boldi, MO, & van Ackere, A. (2025). Adolescent cyberbullying and cyber victimization: Longitudinal study before and during COVID-19. Journal of Medical Internet Research, 27, Article e70508. Doi:https://doi.org/10.2196/70508

Tokunaga, R.S. (2019). Cyberbullying and adolescents: Biopsychosocial effects and risk considerations. The Journal of Adolescent Health, 65(6), 667–672.https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7864530/

UNICEF. (2021). Cyberbullying: What it is and how to stop it.https://www.unicef.org

Williams, K., & Guerra, N. (2025). Psychological well-being and cyberbullying: A systematic review. BMC Psychol.https://link.springer.com/article/10.1186/s40359-025-03520-3

World Health Organization. (2022). Adolescent mental health.https://www.who.int

Xie, Y., Zhang, M.M., Wang, C., et al. (2025). Bullying victimization and internet addiction: Mediation by cyberbullying. BMC Public Health.https://bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-025-23905-8

Zhu, C., Huang, S., Evans, R., & Zhang, W. (2021). Cyberbullying among adolescents and children: A review of risk factors and preventive measures. Front. Public Health, 9, 634909.https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpubh.2021.634909/full

Zhu, C., Smith, P.K., & Guo, J. (2021). Cyberbullying among adolescents and children: A comprehensive review of the global situation, risk factors, and preventive measures. Children and Youth Services Review, 120, 105726.https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33791270/