

## Anger Management Program to Overcome Anger and Aggression: A Meta-Analysis Study

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### Abstract

This research aims to investigate the effectiveness of an anger management program in reducing feelings of anger and aggression in individuals. The meta-analysis research method was used to see the effect size of anger management programs in 11 previous experimental studies, with a total of 501 participants with different demographic backgrounds. Effect size can be analyzed from the number of research participants (N), average score (mean), and standard deviation (SD) of each experimental and control group. The research results show a large effect size (Hedges' *g* equals -1.44; *g* greater than .8) and 95 percent CI equals -2.658 to -.219) from implementing the anger management program in reducing individual anger and aggression. There is publication bias (Egger's regression equal to -5.419; *p* less than or equal to .001), which is a weakness in this research, so that it can be a concern for future research.

### Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menginvestigasi efektivitas dari *anger management program* dalam menurunkan perasaan marah dan agresi dalam diri individu. Metode penelitian meta-analisis digunakan untuk melihat *effect size* dari penggunaan *anger management program* pada 11 penelitian eksperimen terdahulu, dengan total 501 partisipan yang memiliki latar belakang demografis yang berbeda-beda. *Effect size* dapat dianalisis dari jumlah partisipan penelitian (N), skor rata-rata (mean), dan standar deviasi (SD) dari setiap kelompok eksperimen dan kontrol. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya *effect size* yang besar (Hedges' *g* sama dengan -1,44 (*g* lebih besar dari 0,8) dan 95 persen CI sama dengan -2,658 sampai dengan -0,219) dari penerapan *anger management program* dalam menurunkan marah dan agresi individu. Terdapat bias publikasi (Egger's regression sama dengan -5,419; *p* kurang dari atau sama dengan 0,001) yang menjadi kelemahan dalam penelitian ini, sehingga dapat menjadi perhatian untuk penelitian-penelitian selanjutnya.



## INTRODUCTION

Anger is one of the basic emotions closely related to aggression, even violent behaviour. Anger can range from temporary irritation to full anger (Shahsavarani & Noohi, 2015). Anger can be

considered a necessary way for humans to express their negative feelings. However, high levels of anger can lead to various problems.

Aggression is not a thought or feeling but an observable behaviour (Allen & Anderson, 2017). The most common definition of aggression is behaviour aimed at harming another person motivated to avoid that harm. Based on the General Aggression Model (GAM), aggressive behaviour arises from the influence of individuals or external situations on internal conditions, which produce cognitive, affective and impulse processes related to anger, giving rise to judgment and decision-making in the form of aggressive behaviour aimed at the surrounding environment (Allen et al., 2018).

Based on reporting data by the Ministry Of Women Empowerment And Child Protection, as many as 3,149 complaints related to violence against children were received from the beginning of the year to May 2021 (Puspa, 2021). From 2011 to 2019, 37,381 violence cases against children were reported, while cases of bullying reached 2,473 and are still increasing (Abdussalam, 2020). Developments in technology and social media support this condition.

Problematic Social Media Use (PSMU) appears to be an essential contributor to the risk of cyber aggression (Borraccino et al., 2022). Anonymity in social media appears to increase levels of aggression. However, paradoxically, while aggression provides an opportunity to appear morally good, anonymity may be inversely related to aggression (Ferguson, 2021). Some aggression is also reactive in that the individual responds to criticism or loses face online. Not only that, teenagers at risk of developing social media addiction tend to use social media more often at night and, therefore, have poorer sleep quality, which can further increase their likelihood of engaging in aggressive behaviour (Lin et al., 2023).

The phenomenon of global warming, which continues to increase, is also one of the triggers for increasing aggressive and violent behaviour worldwide. Miles-Novelo and Anderson (2019) found that global warming can increase the risk of aggressive and violent behaviour in individ-

uals based on frustration with high temperatures, decreased agricultural and livestock yields, and others. There is also increasing evidence that the tendency for interpersonal violence can increase in uncomfortably hot temperatures (Chersich et al., 2019). Kim et al. (2023) prove that there is a positive relationship between environmental temperature and aggression. However, this relationship is complex and influenced by temperature levels, time of year, and individual differences in cognitive and physiological responses to heat stress. This situation requires handling so that it does not spread further and cause various conflicts and violence in communities from various corners of the world.

The basic effort that can be made to reduce aggressive and violent behaviour is to invite individuals to understand the emotions or feelings that arise within themselves and learn effective ways to manage them well. Low emotional management has a negative influence on the individual and others. Majali and Ashour (2020) stated that negative emotions such as stress, anger, anxiety, fear, and others that appear continuously can cause problems such as psychosomatic disorders, sleep disorders, chronic diseases, and hormonal disorders. The negative effects of emotions that appear with high intensity can also affect the brain, including prolonged headaches, interference with the ability to concentrate, short-term memory, and learning ability.

An individual's ability to control negative emotions is essential to avoid negative consequences (Majali & Ashour, 2020). Individuals need to confront and manage it before physiological effects emerge. Some things that can be done are educating people about recognizing, understanding and managing negative emotions. Furthermore, psychological training can be carried out to help individuals understand ways that can be done to manage these negative emotions. One of the training that can be applied is anger management. Anger management is a technique that is usually applied individually. It aims to help control inappropriate reactions to stimuli

that trigger anger, correctly express these feelings of anger, and still respect other people around them (American Psychological Association, 2020). Anger management techniques include relaxation to reduce physiological reactions to anger and replace excessive thoughts with more rational thoughts.

Good anger management skills can reduce the risk of aggressive and violent behaviour, both verbal and physical, thereby preventing conflict and various losses that will occur in society. Two previous studies also tested the effectiveness of anger management. Candelaria et al. (2012) found a small to medium effect size for implementing anger management to reduce negative emotions and behaviour in children, including anger, aggression and loss of self-control. Lee and DiGiuseppe (2018) conducted a meta-analysis study on a similar topic and found consistent results regarding anger treatment, which had moderate effectiveness in overcoming anger, both in non-clinical and psychiatric populations, while aggression treatment showed less consistent results.

Based on the explanation above, this research aims to re-examine the effectiveness of anger management in dealing with feelings of anger and aggression. Researchers used article references that differed from those used in the two previous studies. Researchers also involved several research articles conducted after 2018 to see the consistency of results from meta-analyses regarding the effectiveness of anger management.

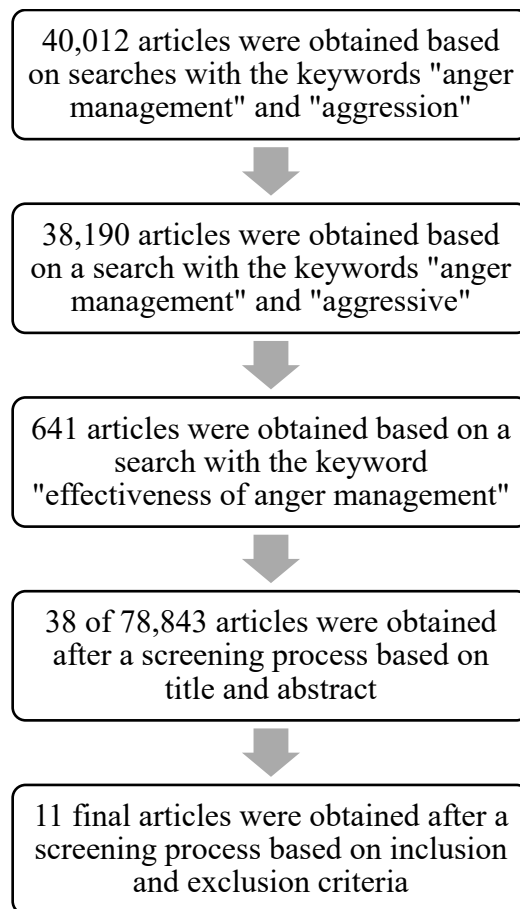
## **METHODS**

In this research, the meta-analysis method was chosen to explain the influence or effectiveness of anger management programs on feelings of anger or aggressive behavior. Meta-analysis is a

set of statistical techniques used to unify the results of various studies, focusing on quantitative conclusions (Pigott & Polanin, 2020). Meta-analysis concludes multiple research results, allowing researchers and policymakers to understand the average effect size across studies and its variability, resulting in more informed decisions about important policy issues. In other words, meta-analysis supports the desire to increase the power to detect the effects of a treatment/intervention (Jackson & Turner, 2017). The effect size from the meta-analysis results will explain the estimated magnitude and variation of the effect of the treatment/intervention in a group of similar experimental studies.

Before carrying out the meta-analysis, researchers searched for previous research articles that focused on testing anger management interventions for anger and aggression. Researchers conducted a search using one or a combination of several keywords, including: “anger management”, “aggression”, “aggressive”, and “effectiveness of anger management”. Searches were carried out on several databases or research portals, namely Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Taylor & Francis, Sage, and JStor, and obtained a total of 78,843 research articles. In this search, researchers conducted filtering based on inclusion criteria, including: (1) using anger management intervention; (2) anger and/or aggression as the dependent variable; (3) using an experimental method with two groups (experimental and control); and (4) containing information regarding the mean, standard deviation, and number of participants in each treatment group. The exclusion criteria applied were articles included in two previous meta-analysis studies. The following chart illustrates the search flow for articles in this research.

Figure 1.  
Flowchart of Searching Research Articles for Meta-Analysis Studies



Researchers succeeded in obtaining 40,012 research articles based on the keywords “anger management” and “aggression” (Google Scholar = 35,500; Science Direct = 1,330; Taylor & Francis = 1,484; Sage = 966; and JStor = 732), 38,190 research articles with keywords “anger management” and “aggressive” (Google Scholar = 33,700; Science Direct = 1,328; Taylor & Francis = 1,419; Sage = 906; and JStor = 837), and 641 articles based on the keyword “effectiveness of anger management” (Google Scholar = 586; Science Direct = 24; Taylor & Francis = 19; Sage = 6; and JStor = 6). After that, the screening process was carried out by examining the title and abstract so that 38 research articles were found that matched the focus of the study. Researchers continue the screening process by reading the entire article to review compliance with predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria. A total of eleven research articles were

successful and can be used in meta-analysis studies.

In the next step, researchers conducted different tests on the available data using the help of Jamovi application. Cohen’s *d* coefficient is used to define the effect size through the difference in the average results of the two groups, divided by the standard deviation so that a continuous picture of the results is obtained (Kim, 2015). Based on the interpretation guidelines explained in Kim (2015), *d* or *g* values of 0.2, 0.5, and 0.8 represent small, medium, and large effect sizes.

## RESULTS

A total of eleven previous research articles related to the application of anger management programs in reducing individual anger and aggression are listed in Table 1. Measuring tools used to measure anger and aggression in previous research include the Aggression General

Scale (AGQ), the Physical Aggression Behavior Scale (AGF), The State-Trait Expression Inventory (STAXI), the Anger Management Assessment Questionnaire (AMA), Dimensions of Anger Reactions (DAR5), Minnesota Multiphase Personality Inventory-Adolescent (MMPI-A), and several other questionnaires or inventories.

The results of meta-analysis calculations on the 11 articles show heterogeneity in results with  $I^2 = 97.27\%$ , so the random-effects model is the most appropriate. The results show a large effect

size, with Hedges'  $g = -1.44$  ( $g > .8$ ) and 95% CI = -2.658 to -.219.

The assessment showed publication bias with Egger's regression score = -5.419 ( $p \leq .001$ ). This needs to be improved in research on the application of anger management programs in reducing individual anger and aggression. The existence of publication bias gives rise to doubtful results. Based on the eleven research articles used in this calculation, ten showed positive findings in reducing anger or aggression.

Table 1.

Anger Management Research Articles for Overcoming Anger and Aggression (N = 11)

Researcher	Country	Participants		Instruments	Intervention Methods	Effect Size	
		N	Age Mean			g	95% CI
Mohammadiarya et al. (2012)	Iran	30	13	AGQ	Anger Management Training (6 sessions)	-4.35	-5.67 to -3.04
Son and Choi (2010)	South Korea	53	49	STAXI	Anger Management Program (8 sessions)	0.36	-0.19 to 0.91
Saliha et al. (2021)	Indonesia	14	13–15	AGF Scale	Cognitive-Behavioral Anger Management (5 sessions)	-1.47	-2.65 to -0.29
Lotfalizadeh et al. (2020)	Iran	30	40–60	STAXI-II	Anger Management Skills Training (4 sessions)	-5.42	-6.96 to -3.87
Ireland (2004)	United Kingdom	87	18-19	AMA	Brief Group-based Anger Management Intervention (12 sessions)	-0.54	-0.98 to -0.11
Siddiqah (2010)	Indonesia	24	16	DAR5	"Stay Cool" Anger Management (8 sessions)	-0.44	-1.25 to 0.37

Researcher	Country	Participants		Instruments	Intervention Methods	Effect Size	
		N	Age Mean			g	95% CI
Shokoohi-Yekta et al. (2011)	Iran	46	38.5	Anger Evaluation Inventory	Anger Management Workshops (7 sessions)	-0.55	-1.14 to 0.03
Yunere et al. (2019)	Indonesia	92	16	Violent Behavior Questionnaire	Anger Management	0.33	-0.08 to 0.74
Burt (2014)	United States of America	32	11-14	STAXI-2 C/A	Leadership-Driven & Traditional Anger Management (8 sessions)	0.44	-0.27 to 1.15
Yun and Yoo (2021)	Republic of Korea	43	32	Visual Analog Mood Scale	Anger Management Program (9 sessions)	-4.33	-5.42 to -3.24
Snyder et al. (1999)	United States of America	50	-	MMPI-A (Anger Content Scale)	Anger Management Group Training (4 sessions)	-0.67	-1.24 to -0.10

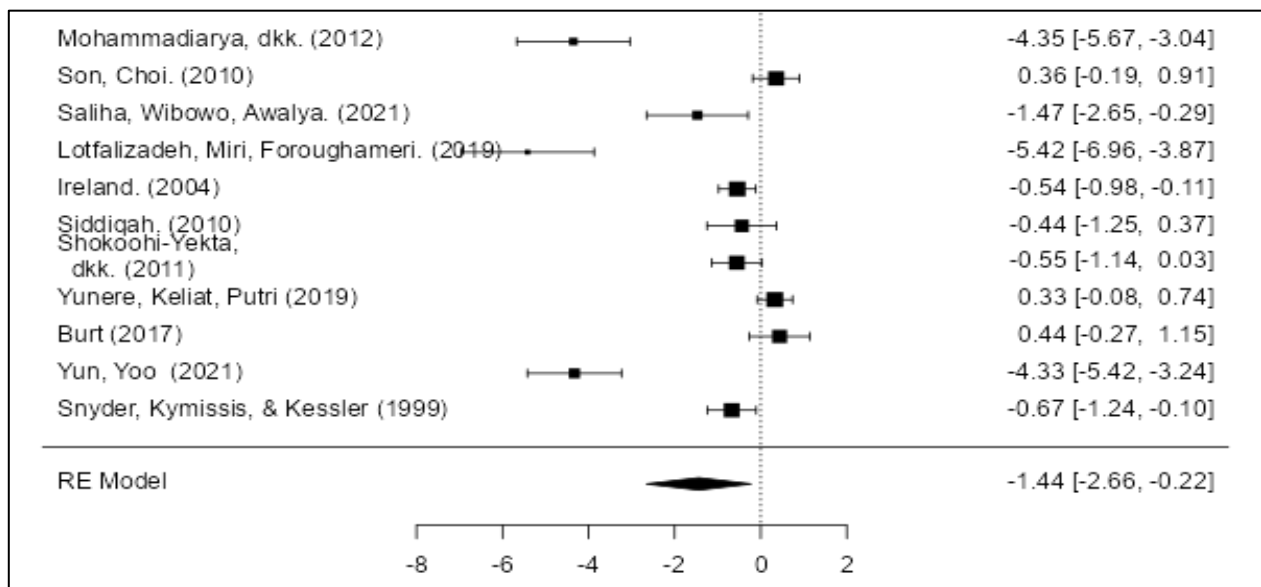


Figure 2.  
Forest Plot Random-Effect Model

## DISCUSSION

Based on the results obtained from the analysis process, high heterogeneity values indicate varying influences from each study. This condition

is a consideration for researchers to use a random-effect model to see the possibility of errors in the estimated results of each study (Jackson & Turner, 2017). This heterogeneity can be re-

viewed based on variations in the magnitude of the effect size, participant demographic data, or the intensity of the intervention implemented.

Variations in individual demographic characteristics and intervention choices, along with other reasons, lead to the assumption that studies will not have the same effect size but will have heterogeneous underlying effects (Barili et al., 2018). The variation in effect size for each research article can be seen in Figure 2, showing that research by Lotfalizadeh et al. (2020) has the most significant effect size. Meanwhile, research by Yunere et al. (2019) had the slightest effect size among other studies involved in this meta-analysis.

Several things that are different in the two studies are the age range, gender, and condition of the participants. Research conducted by Lotfalizadeh et al. (2020) involved 30 HIV-positive female participants aged 40–60 years and undergoing regular counseling every month. Yunere et al. (2019) used 92 students with an average age of 16 years as participants, and 96.7% were male. Most of the 92 participants also had a history of violent behavior as perpetrators, victims, or witnesses, respectively 42.4%, 45.7%, and 60.9%. Things that can be of concern are differences in age, gender, and physical and psychological conditions, which are very different from the characteristics of the participants in the two studies. Individuals at different stages of development have different characteristics, including anger management and aggressive behavior.

Individuals can better understand themselves and their emotions, including anger, as they get older. Zimmermann and Iwanski (2014) prove that adaptive emotional regulation abilities for angry emotions tend to decrease when entering adolescence, then increase when entering early adulthood, and continue to increase until middle adulthood. The decline in emotional regulation abilities in adolescence is also supported by Gini et al. (2014), which explains the possibility of increasing moral disengagement in ad-

olescence, which leads to the emergence of aggressive behavior carried out by individuals to achieve their desires. Aggressive behavior is common in childhood to adolescence, then becomes less common in later age development (Krahé, 2013). These things show that adult individuals will find it easier to implement what they have learned from the anger management program than those who are still teenagers.

Gender also influences the expression and management of anger and aggression. Women show more anger expressions while having better anger control than men (Burt, 2014). In addition, men are more likely to display aggressive behavior than women (Afdal et al., 2020). Burt (2014) also found that women showed an increase in anger control and a more significant decrease in angry expressions than men after receiving anger management intervention.

Participants' conditions and experiences also influence individual activities during the anger management program. Adult participants who are women living with HIV and undergoing regular counseling regarding their disease show individual commitment to overcoming psychological problems. Meanwhile, adolescent participants who are students, most of whom have experiences related to violent behavior, have a higher risk of anger, aggression, and violence.

The effectiveness of an anger management program also depends on the suitability of the approach used and the needs of the participants. One example is the need for full cognitive awareness in implementing cognitive-behavioral anger management, which will be challenging for individuals who experience intense emotional arousal for a long time (Short, 2016). Potter-Efron (2015) determined four main areas that can be focused on in anger management: behavior change, cognitive reformulation, affective modulation, and existential/spiritual growth. While most participants will benefit more from treatment in all four areas, many may only need help in one or two.

Based on the meta-analysis results obtained, the anger management program shows a significant influence in reducing emotions of anger and aggression. Anger management works to reduce anger and aggression by helping individuals to process learning, recognizing and realizing the signs that indicate the emergence of angry emotions, and taking action to calm themselves and deal with situations more productively. The results of this research can support previous research conducted by Candelaria et al. (2012) and Lee and DiGiuseppe (2018), who prove the consistency of results in testing the effectiveness of anger management in reducing anger and aggression.

In addition, this study contains publication bias. A total of ten out of eleven studies that tested the effectiveness of anger management in dealing with anger and aggression showed positive results, while one of them showed the opposite results. Publication bias is the selective publication of research based on the nature and direction of the findings, occurring when studies with significant or favorable results are more likely to be published than findings that are not significant or unfavorable (Marks-Anglin & Chen, 2020). The existence of publication bias is a severe problem in systematic reviews and meta-analyses, which can affect the validity and generalizability of conclusions (Lin & Chu, 2018). This condition shows the need to be careful in concluding the results of this meta-analysis because only some negative findings are needed to indicate the specifics of the weaknesses of anger management interventions. In future research, it is hoped that other researchers can replicate using different sample characteristics and conduct a more profound review regarding sample heterogeneity.

## CONCLUSION

The meta-analysis results show a large effect size and prove that anger management programs can effectively reduce feelings of anger and aggression. This shows the consistency of findings regarding tests of the effectiveness of anger

management, which were carried out in 2012 and 2018; both showed a medium effect size. However, publication bias was found because most of the studies in this research produced positive findings. Future meta-analysis research could consider using different samples, being more careful about differences in participant demographics, and using mediator variables to gain a more detailed understanding of specific demographic characteristics that support the effectiveness of anger management in overcoming feelings of anger and aggression. Apart from that, researchers also need to pay attention to inconsistent findings in the study references used to avoid publi

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