

# Supporting Left-Behind Children in China: A Systematic Review of Literature on Library Services

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## ABSTRACT

Left-behind children are minors under the age of sixteen whose parents migrate elsewhere for work or whose sole guardian lacks the ability to provide adequate care. They represent a unique yet vulnerable population group in China. Libraries play a vital role in serving left-behind children by ensuring equal access to information and promoting educational equity and social inclusion. Following a systematic literature review approach, we analyzed 31 relevant articles from four major Chinese academic databases: CNKI (China National Knowledge Infrastructure), Wanfang, VIP (Chinese Science and Technology Journal Database), and DuXiu. Based on content analysis of the included literature, we identified the following key findings: (1) The included articles primarily focus on left-behind children's interpersonal and socioeconomic vulnerabilities that lead to deficits in family education and limitations in school education; (2) Left-behind children's library needs center on space accessibility, reading resources, emotional support, and information literacy development; (3) Current library services for this group face challenges such as low public awareness of library services, inadequate resources and collections, and ineffective service delivery; (4) Rural libraries should not operate alone but collaborate with schools, village reading centers, public libraries, publishers, government agencies, and social organizations to build integrated educational systems for left-behind children; and (e) It is important to activate rural communities' internal dynamics by encouraging knowledgeable left-behind youth to provide intergenerational knowledge exchange with younger peers and senior populations, thereby elevating rural cultural ecosystems. This systematic review

offers practical implications for improving library services for left-behind children and advancing information equality in China.

## **ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS**

Education; Information needs; Information Literacy; Reading and reading practices; Specific populations.

## **AUTHOR KEYWORDS**

Systematic literature review; Left-behind children; Library services; Rural China.

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