

Literature Review

Adolescent Premarital Sexual Behavior: A Narrative Review of Challenges, and the Vital Role of Comprehensive Sex Education in Promoting Health and Well-being in Islamic Countries

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Abstract

Introduction: Adolescents, comprising 1.2 billion globally, face unique challenges during the transformative phase of sexual maturation. This review emphasizes the prevalence of premarital sexual behavior among adolescents, with a focus on Southeast Asia, Indonesia, and Arab nations. The vulnerable nature of this age group is underscored, considering the risks of unsafe abortions, unintended pregnancies, and sexually transmitted diseases. **Objective:** The primary objective is to offer a comprehensive understanding of premarital sexual behavior in adolescents. By synthesizing recent developments and key findings, this review aims to inform specialists and non-specialists, foster societal dialogue, and serve as a resource for scholars and practitioners interested in adolescent sexual health. **Methods:** Utilizing PubMed and Google Scholar, an extensive literature search spanning 2018 to 2023 focused on keywords such as “adolescent AND sex” The inclusion criteria involved articles directly aligned with the review’s scope, leading to the identification of 20 relevant articles. **Results:** Factors influencing adolescent sexual behavior, and the impact of cultural, religious, and societal norms were explored. The importance of sex education, particularly comprehensive sexuality education, in addressing premarital sexual behavior emerged as a critical theme. The impact on adolescent health, both physical and mental, was also highlighted. **Conclusions:** Premarital sexual behavior among adolescents is a complex issue influenced by various internal and external factors. Comprehensive sexuality education, incorporating cultural and religious teachings, is crucial in promoting healthy decision-making and preventing negative consequences. The review emphasizes the need for ongoing discussions, further research, and improved sexual health education globally.

Keywords: Adolescent, Premarital, Sex, Education.

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Introductions

Adolescents, comprising a staggering 1.2 billion worldwide, with half concentrated in Asia and 282 million in Southeast Asia, represent a significant demographic [1]. Defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as individuals aged 10 to 19, this phase, marked by the transition from immaturity to sexual maturity, necessitates attention and guidance due to the myriad changes adolescents undergo [2]. As a pivotal stage from childhood to adulthood, adolescence introduces challenges, notably premarital sexual behavior, with its potential consequences for teenage pregnancies and STDs. Adolescents grapple with developmental shifts, experiencing preferences for the opposite sex, encountering difficulties, and often engaging in risky behaviors, underscoring the vulnerability of this age group [3]. Sexual health, encompassing physical, mental, emotional, and social well-being, is crucial during this transformative phase. Contemporary adolescents face heightened risks of unsafe abortions, unintended pregnancies, and sexually transmitted diseases [4]. Today, taking care of one's health and the factors that influence it has become crucial because of technological advancements and their impact on quality of life. Every nation views the provision of health care for its populace as a primary concern. One may find information regarding an adolescent's sexual orientation on the Internet. Through online searches. The incidence of premarital sexual conduct in adolescents is a result of reading and viewing pornographic media, which in turn creates a desire to engage in It [5].

Adolescents sexual and reproductive health in Arab nations is frequently a delicate subject surrounded by social, political, and cultural hurdles. Young individuals have premarital sex in several Arab nations, especially in those where the average age of marriage is higher. Religious and societal norms consider having sex outside of marriage as fornication (zina in Arabic), mak-

ing it illegal, particularly in nations with a large Muslim Arab population [6]. One may always get information regarding pornography and sexuality. As technology becomes more sophisticated and contemporary, information may travel quickly and easily in both beneficial and harmful ways. An individual's sexual conduct may be impacted by the knowledge highlighting the significance of understanding premarital sex [7]. The number of teenagers who dominate the world population should be given attention because teenagers are assets of the state and the next generation, where the future of the nation is laid. Understanding sexual behavior before marriage is relatively rare in the East, especially in Islamic societies, because sexuality is a sensitive subject. We aim to promote understanding of sexuality in adolescents and premarital relationships, fostering societal dialogue and consideration. The purpose is to serve as a comprehensive and accessible resource for scholars, practitioners, and individuals interested in adolescent sexual health. By offering a synthesis of recent developments and key findings, the review aims to inform both specialists and non-specialists about the challenges and implications surrounding premarital sexual behavior among adolescents. Ultimately, the review seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions, stimulate further research, and advocate for improved sexual health education for the global adolescent population.

Methods

To compile this narrative review, we executed an extensive literature search using PubMed and Google Scholar. Our quest spanned from the year 2013 to 2023 and was driven by targeted keywords, including "adolescent AND premarital AND sex" AND behavior." A meticulous examination was undertaken for both article titles and abstracts, with a strict criterion to include only those papers directly aligned with the scope of our review. After filtering out duplicate articles and non-relevant publications,

a total of 85 articles initially met our selection criteria. A subsequent screening led to the exclusion of 59 papers that did not align with our review's objectives. Consequently, 26 articles were identified as meeting the final inclusion criteria, forming the basis for our primary assessment based on their scientific content. The inclusion criteria are as follows: Adolescents who are not married yet have a partner and have sexual behavior with their partner. Assessment of the quality of each article in this literature review used the standard format of the Joanna Briggs Institute (JBI) Critical Appraisal Checklist for Qualitative Studies.

Results

Premarital sex

Pre-marital sexual activity is any conduct between a woman and a man that is motivated by sexual desires to stimulate and enjoy their reproductive system without any formal agreements or commitments to one another as husband and wife [8]. People's reactions to their sexual conduct reveal premarital sexual behavior. Teenagers have a range of ways to express their urges for pre-marital sexual activity, starting with socializing with people of different sexes, which can lead to pre-marital sexual activity. When an individual has a positive attitude toward premarital sexual behavior, the individual will tend to engage in premarital sexual behavior [9]. Premarital sex behavior in adolescents is all adolescent behavior that is driven by desire, both with the opposite sex and with the with the same sex committed before marriage. You might be the sexual object, someone else, or someone who is delusional. Premarital sexual behavior can be defined as any behavior motivated by sexual desire with the same sex or the opposite sex that is carried out outside of the legally recognized marriage ceremony [9]. Adolescents are characterized in religious terms as having achieved puberty, at which point they must adhere to Islamic morality and ethics found in the Qur'an and hadith and conduct

obligatory acts of devotion. Muslim adolescents engage in identity negotiations, showcasing their Islamic principles by dressing modestly, praying, abstaining from alcohol, and having premarital relationships [10].

Among other negotiation techniques, they interact with their surroundings. Additionally, they employ class negotiation to restrict relationships based on gender and social norms, upholding patriarchal power structures and enforcing moral boundaries, especially when it comes to sexuality. This emphasizes how crucial it is to recognize and value the distinctive experiences of Muslim adolescents [11].

Prevalence of Premarital Sex

The Nigerian Demographic and Health Survey reveals that 7.9% of boys and 9.6% of girls aged 15–19 have engaged in sexual intercourse with non-married individuals. The Federal Ministry of Health survey shows that 46.2% of females and 22.1% of males have engaged in sexual intercourse. Traditional Nigerian society, influenced by moral principles, culture, and religious beliefs, created a culture of silence and prevented open discussion of sexuality between adolescents and adults [5]. The prevalence of premarital sex varies greatly based on the particular culture, community, and people under consideration. Premarital sex may be more acceptable or even expected in some cultures and communities, while it may be completely prohibited and taboo in others. Nandhiro's research revealed that 4.9% of Indonesian adolescents engaged in early sexual intercourse. However, the incidence of premarital sex in Indonesia is almost twice as large as in other Muslim-majority countries, such as Malaysia, where it was 2.8% [12]. It is important to note that these statistics may vary based on factors such as gender, race or ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Therefore, it is essential to identify students' dangerous sexual activity based on their location, as students' sexual and reproductive health has an impact on both

their academic performance and the general health of our society [13].

Factors Influencing Adolescent Sexual Behavior

Adolescent sexual behavior is strongly influenced by internal and external factors; internal comes from within the adolescent itself, and external is the physical and non-physical environment. Factors that influence adolescent sexual behavior focus on peers, parents and family, rural and urban adolescence, media, and parenting styles [14]. Adolescents' sexual curiosity can lead to exposure to pornography and risky sexual behaviors. Early exposure to vaginal sex during adolescence increases the risk of sexually transmitted diseases. Lack of proper sex education often leads to unprotected sex and unintended pregnancy. Poor parent-child communication related to sexuality hampers healthy sexual development in adolescents [15]. Every student brings their unique sociocultural background to the universities and institutions. Due to the multicultural and social makeup of higher education institutions, students may be exposed to harmful behaviors on a daily basis, such as unsafe sexual behavior [16]. As a result of being relatively free from family supervision in higher education facilities, students have the opportunity to forge their own path in life. This is because they are somewhat removed from parental guidance. Unfortunately, they are forced to participate in unsafe sexual activities by their friends or adults on campus [17].

The Importance of Sex Education in Addressing Premarital Sexual Behavior among Adolescents

Premarital sexual behavior encompasses a variety of behaviors and traits influenced by sexual desire. It refers to all behavior arising from sexual urges related to reproductive function and the pursuit of sexual pleasure among unmarried individuals [18]. However, premarital sex can lead to

unwanted pregnancies, abortions, and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Insufficient understanding of sex among teenagers can result in misconceptions and problematic behaviors. Premarital sex is considered socially and morally unacceptable, and it is also prohibited in Islam. To prevent these negative outcomes, sex education is crucial, and parents and close individuals must provide it to teenagers. Sex education aims to impart knowledge about the anatomy of male and female bodies, instill moral values, and educate about the reproductive organs' functions to prevent abuse [19]. It also involves teaching methods that help teenagers address their sexual concerns [20]. Sex education guides individuals to understand the meaning and function of their sexual lives correctly [21]. The objective of sex education for adolescents is to provide a comprehensive understanding of sexual issues. Currently, teenagers often have a shallow view of sex, associating it solely with intimacy or intercourse. This limited perspective arises from their inadequate knowledge and understanding of sex. Therefore, sex education for teenagers aims to provide accurate explanations and foster a proper perception of sex, preventing them from seeking information through inappropriate channels such as pornography or adult films [22]. By addressing these issues, sex education plays a vital role in promoting healthy and informed decision-making among teenagers.

Comprehensive sexuality education for Adolescents: A Multidimensional Approach

Comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) is a curriculum-based process that aims to provide children and young people with knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values related to sexuality. It covers a wide range of topics, including sexual and reproductive anatomy, puberty, contraception, pregnancy, childbirth, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), reproductive rights, as well as issues

like gender equality, violence, and harmful practices such as child marriage and female genital mutilation [23]. CSE is designed to be age-appropriate, gradually increasing the complexity of information as learners progress. It supports learners' empowerment by improving analytical and communication skills, promoting healthy family life, and addressing issues of consent and non-discrimination. In the Arab region, there is a particular need for culturally appropriate and rights-based sexuality education, especially for adolescent girls [24]. (UNESCO,2018) It can be used in accordance with the principles of the Islamic religion

Sex education plays a crucial role in providing comprehensive knowledge, instilling moral values, and preventing abuse. It aims to address teenagers' sexual concerns, provide accurate information, and discourage seeking knowledge from inappropriate sources [19]. Islam considers premarital sex morally unacceptable and emphasizes the importance of sex education to prevent such behaviors. Islamic guidelines promote a stage-based approach to sex education, tailored to the physical and psychological growth of children. This ensures effective knowledge transmission and fosters a positive mindset about sex [19].

Comprehensive sex education should incorporate religious teachings to preserve moral values, guide adolescents away from sinful acts, and promote sexual balance among male and female adolescents. By providing well-planned and comprehensive sex education, teenagers can develop informed thoughts and protect themselves from the risks associated with incorrect sexual behavior. Islam views sex education holistically, integrating physical, spiritual, and intellectual aspects, and aligning it with Islamic values [18].

Impact on adolescent health and reproductive health

In addition to being vital to teenagers' physical, mental, and social wellbeing,

sexual health is also a critical facet of public health. The sexual behavior of adolescents is shaped by a multitude of intricate elements and influences. Along with other social and environmental factors Adolescent health is significantly influenced by sexual behavior and risk factors, including risky sexual activities, substance misuse, and unwanted pregnancies. These habits can lead to long-term health issues like STIs and HIV, mental health issues like anxiety and depression, and impact physical health, social ties, emotional health, and educational performance. Community health is also affected, especially in areas with high HIV prevalence or limited resources [25]. And a crucial aspect of overall reproductive health, which includes social, emotional, and physical well-being, is adolescent reproductive health It is emphasized how crucial it is to treat teenage reproductive health, as it was not given enough attention in the past. As recommended by UNFPA, countries should remove social, legal, and regulatory barriers to adolescent reproductive health information and services [26].

Conclusions

Narrative review serves as a valuable resource, acknowledging the global significance of premarital sexual behavior among adolescents. With insights into the vulnerabilities of the 1.2 billion adolescents worldwide and the distinct challenges faced in Southeast Asia and Arab nations, the review highlights the multifaceted nature of this critical developmental phase. This comprehensive exploration lays the foundation for tailored interventions and emphasizes the pressing need for comprehensive sexual health education. Our synthesis aims to inform future research, guide policy development, and contribute to ongoing discussions, ultimately enhancing the understanding and support provided to adolescents during this transformative journey from childhood to adulthood.

This literature review explores the

global issue of premarital sexual behavior among adolescents, highlighting the complex factors influencing this behavior, including cultural norms, technological exposures, and socioeconomic conditions addressing distinct regional dynamics in Southeast Asia and Arab nations. From the prevalence of such behavior to the myriad influencing factors, including cultural, societal, and media-related elements, the review emphasizes the critical role of comprehensive sexuality education. The impact on adolescent health, both physical and mental, underscores the urgent need for a holistic approach to sexual health education. The review concludes by advocating for ongoing discussions, further research, and a global commitment to improved sexual health education that respects the unique experiences and values of diverse populations, ultimately empowering adolescents to make informed and healthy decisions about their sexual lives.

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Conflict of Interest

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