

Cultural Impact on Adolescent Behavior Advancing Health, Gender: A Scoping Review

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ABSTRACT

Background: Sexual and reproductive health is critical to the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Various factors contribute to premarital sexual behaviour among adolescents, with culture being a pervasive influence in many countries. Adolescents in mountain communities are particularly vulnerable to engaging in premarital sexual behaviour. **Objective:** This review aims to explore research findings related to the cultural factors influencing premarital sexual behaviour among adolescents in general and specifically in mountain communities, contributing to the achievement of the SDGs. **Methodology:** This study employs a scoping review methodology. Search terms used in the articles include MeSH terms ["Adolescent" or "Teen"], ["Cultural impact" or "Cultural Role"], ["Premarital sex" or "Premarital sexual intercourses"], and ["Highland Communities" or "Mountain Communities"]. Databases utilised for article search include Science Direct, Proquest, and PubMed. Five journals published between 2019 and 2023 that meet the inclusion criteria were selected. **Results:** This review synthesises findings from 5 articles, narrowed down from an initial pool of 10,923 articles. All selected papers employ quantitative methods and originate from Ethiopia (3 articles), Nepal, and Tanzania. **Conclusion:** The review highlights the social, economic, and environmental influences on mountain communities, emphasising the cultural roles of alcohol consumption, social norms (customs), and family culture in shaping premarital sexual behaviour among adolescents. Education on the consequences of adolescent sexual behaviour is crucial, especially in cultures that tolerate such behaviours.

Keywords: Cultural Role, Sexual Behaviour, Adolescents, Scoping Review

INTRODUCTION

One of the targets to be achieved in SDGs In 2015, the United Nations replaced the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as the new development agenda until 2030. Sexual and reproductive health were initially omitted from the MDGs but were later included following joint advocacy by women's health activists (Newman *et al.*, 2014). Unlike the MDGs, criticised for their reductionist approach to women's health, evident in their narrow goal and target coverage, the SDGs were embraced as an opportunity to achieve a broader healthcare agenda emerging from United Nations conferences in the 1990s (Razavi, 2016).

Adolescent reproductive health and sexual behaviour play a central role in

achieving the SDGs, particularly within Goal 3, which targets health and well-being, and Goal 5, which emphasises gender equality (Alisjahbana and Murniningtyas, 2018). Adolescent sexual and reproductive health is closely tied to the practice of child marriage. Globally, the incidence of child marriage continues to decline. One in every five women aged 20 to 24 marries as a child, compared to nearly one in four a decade ago. This decline is primarily influenced by progress in India, despite having the highest number of child brides globally. Progress is also observed in Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Maldives, and Rwanda (UNICEF, 2021). Although there have been advancements in certain regions, progress has stalled in others. West and Central Africa, known for having the highest prevalence of child marriage, have not achieved significant

progress over the past 25 years (UNICEF, 2023).

This year marks more than halfway towards the deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and in the context of eliminating child marriage, we face substantial challenges. Despite some positive global progress, it is not occurring quickly enough to achieve the goal of ending child marriage by 2030. At the current rate of progress, an additional 300 years would be required to put an end to child marriage. India alone contributes to one-third of the global number of child brides. Approximately 45 percent of child brides are in South Asia, with sub-Saharan Africa contributing 20 percent, East Asia and the Pacific at 15 percent, and Latin America and the Caribbean at 9 percent (UNICEF, 2023).

The culture or customs of a region, religion, and beliefs can influence the age of marriage. In various developing countries, including Indonesia, there are regions with customs that require young girls to marry older men, leading to many teenage girls getting married. While marrying men may be considered mature, the negative consequences extend to various aspects for young women who are still minors (Rofika and Hariastuti, 2020).

Negative impacts of early marriage are also found in Nepal, where the primary cause of school dropout among children is early marriage (Sekine and Hodgkin, 2017). As for the adverse effects of early marriage on sexual and reproductive health, they manifest after the married couple engages in sexual relations at a young age. Adolescent sexual behaviour is not confined to post-marriage scenarios; premarital sexual behaviour among adolescents also has adverse effects on health (Achen *et al.*, 2021).

A study conducted in Uganda revealed that local culture plays a significant role in premarital sexual behaviour, particularly among adolescent girls in vulnerable communities, with a focus on the pastoralist community in this research (Achen *et al.*, 2021). Adolescents in mountain communities also constitute a vulnerable group engaging in early sexual behaviours. Mountainous regions allow for cultural and geographical isolation, intensifying the influence of local culture compared to lowland communities. Research in Thailand found that culture

has a substantial impact on adolescent sexual practices (Aurpibul *et al.*, 2016).

Therefore, this scoping review aims to provide an overview of the role of culture in premarital sexual behaviour among adolescents in general and in mountain communities, contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This research aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the cultural influences on premarital sexual behaviour among adolescents and to offer insights for professionals, as well as for future research and interventions.

METHODS

This research employs a scoping review method to explore research findings related to the role of culture in premarital sexual behaviour among adolescents and mountain communities for the achievement of SDGs. The scoping review methodology involves five key steps: (1) Identifying research questions, (2) Identifying relevant studies, (3) Selecting appropriate studies, (4) Organizing and recording collected data, and (5) Summarizing findings and drawing conclusions.

2.1. Identifying Research Questions

In the first step, two research questions related to the role of culture in adolescent sexual behaviour and mountain communities were identified for this scoping review. Articles were selected and searched to address these questions.

2.2. Identifying Relevant Studies

In this step, a systematic search was conducted on three electronic databases - Science Direct, ProQuest, and PubMed - to identify potentially relevant analyses. The search was conducted from November 23 to 24, 2023. The keywords used for this search included MeSH terms ["Adolescent" or "Teen"], ["Cultural impact" or "Cultural Role"], ["Premarital sex" or "Premarital sexual intercourse"], and ["Highland Communities" or "Mountain Communities"].

2.3. Selecting Appropriate Studies The third step involves selecting suitable studies.

Journal articles that complied with the following inclusion criteria

were considered: (1) studies published between 2019 and 2023, (2) original research articles, (3) articles with free access, and (4) studies published in journals. Studies that did not meet these criteria were excluded from consideration—the next phase involves organising the collected data.

2.4. Organizing and Recording Collected Data

Titles and abstracts of articles that met the inclusion criteria were then extracted. A comprehensive evaluation included the title, abstract, research objectives, research methodology, and study findings.

2.5. Summarizing Findings and Drawing Conclusions

The final stage involves presenting the main findings from the reviewed literature and formulating conclusions. This stage includes summarising key findings, organising

them into logical categories, drawing conclusions related to research questions, highlighting research limitations and gaps, discussing practical implications, and providing recommendations for future research. This is a crucial phase in the scoping review as it synthesises the collected information and contributes to a deeper understanding of the reviewed topic. The researchers identified seven relevant articles selected for this scoping review.

Relevant studies were found using search strings and keywords in three online databases: ScienceDirect, ProQuest, and PubMed. To refine the search string, Boolean OR and AND operators were utilised. Table 1 shows the search string and keywords used.

Table 1. Search string/keyword

Database	Search string/keyword
ScienceDirect	["Cultural impact" OR "Cultural Role"] AND ["Premarital sex" OR "Premarital sexual intercourses"] AND ["Adolescent" OR "Teen"] AND ["Highland Communities" OR "Mountain Communities"]
ProQuest	(Cultural impact OR Cultural Role) AND (Premarital sex OR Premarital sexual intercourses) AND (Adolescent OR Teen) AND (Highland Communities OR Mountain Communities)
Pubmed	["Cultural impact" OR "Cultural Role"] AND ["Premarital sex" OR "Premarital sexual intercourses"] AND ["Adolescent" OR "Teen"] AND ["Highland Communities" OR "Mountain Communities"]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The search yielded 10,923 articles based on predefined keywords, comprising 5,036 from Science Direct, 5,820 from ProQuest, and 67 from PubMed. These articles underwent a systematic screening process. In the initial screening, articles published within the last five years were retained, excluding 8,937 articles. Subsequent screening involved the removal of 836 inaccessible articles, 703 non-journal articles, 110 review articles, and one duplicate, leaving 336 articles eligible for further assessment.

During the subsequent screening of titles and abstracts, 326 articles were excluded due to their limited relevance to the research topic. Additionally, five

additional articles were excluded because their content did not align with the research questions. Therefore, only five articles met the criteria for the research and the posed research questions. All five articles shared a quantitative research design.

Regarding the geographical focus of the research, one article was conducted in Asia, specifically in Nepal (Roxburgh *et al.*, 2021), while the remaining four articles were conducted in Africa, specifically in Tanzania (Marah *et al.*, 2023) and Ethiopia (Belay *et al.*, 2020; Mengistu *et al.*, 2022; Toru *et al.*, 2022). The search and literature selection process is visually represented in Figure 1. A summary of the five articles is presented in Table 2.

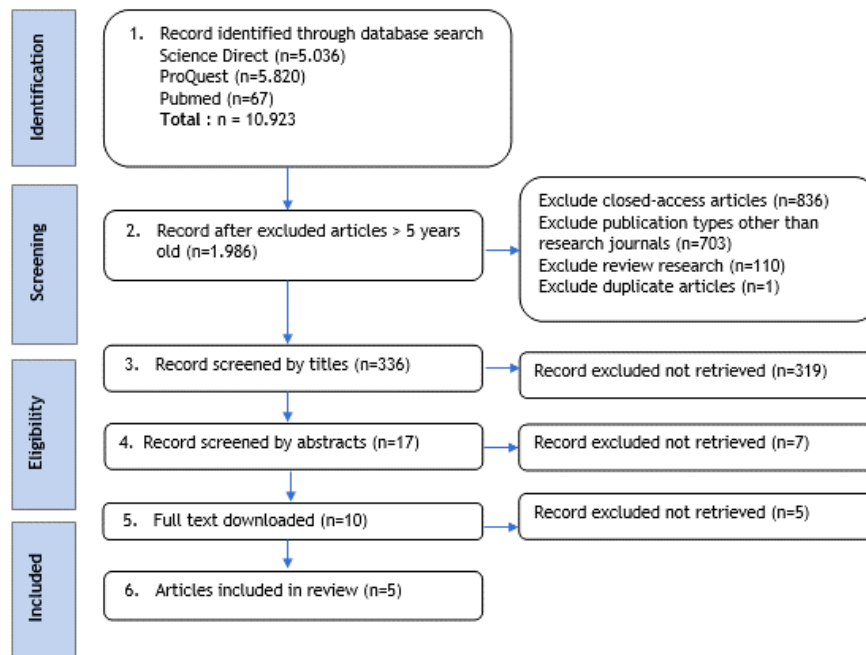


Figure 1. Flow diagram of scoping review

Table 1. Literature matrix of accepted articles

No	(Author., Year of publication)	Purpose	Sample	Result
1.	(Roxburgh et al., 2021)	To investigate the impact of various stress triggers on mountain communities.	Social, economic and environmental data are obtained from rural communities, especially mountain communities.	The results showed that mountain communities' social, economic, and environmental changes occur rapidly.
2.	(Mengistu et al., 2022)	To determine the factors of premarital sexual behaviour among students of social science streams in Ethiopia	Data was obtained by 414 students from the Department of Accounting and Finance, Department of Economics, Department of Management, and Department of Marketing.	Student majors, living arrangements, sexual health education, and alcohol consumption culture influence premarital sexual practices among students.
3.	(Marah et al., 2023)	To compare experiences of parental violence in childhood and sexual permissiveness in adolescence between adolescents raised by multiple parents and adolescents raised by single parents.	Data were obtained from 1037 students from different backgrounds (single-parent and multiple-parent families).	A significant and positive correlation was found between parental violence and sexual permissiveness. There were also significant average differences in experiences of parental violence and sexual permissiveness between adolescents from different family types. In addition, the average sexual permissiveness in men is higher than adolescent girls of the same family type.
4.	(Belay et al., 2020)	To assess unwanted pregnancies and related factors among	Data was obtained from filling out questionnaires by 389	In this study, the prevalence of unwanted pregnancies is relatively high among

	unmarried female students at Bahir Dar University, North West Ethiopia.	unmarried students.	unmarried female University students. Unwanted pregnancy is determined by the source of money, field of study and age of first having sexual intercourse.
5. (Toru <i>et al.</i> , 2022)	To assess parent-adolescent communication on sexual and reproductive health issues and related factors among high school and preparatory students in Arekit, southwestern Ethiopia.	A total of 522 participants were involved in this study. Study participants were selected using a multistage sampling procedure. First, children were divided into strata by grade (9-12).	Based on the findings of this study, although parents are aware of adolescent and even teen-friendly sexual and reproductive health services, adolescents and parents do not generally communicate about sexual and reproductive health issues.

3.1. Sexual Behaviour in Mountain Communities

3.1.1. Social Change

Social change in mountain communities can change rapidly (Roxburgh *et al.*, 2021). Shifts in values or norms, such as views of social norms about adolescent sexual behaviour, can affect adolescent premarital sexual behaviour. Social views on dating culture are also very influential in adolescent premarital sexual behaviour. A study found that dating styles follow trends and can change following existing cultural cultures. Teenagers who do not follow the trending dating style will be considered crummy (Putri, 2016).

3.1.2. Economic Changes

Economic changes, such as increases or decreases in income, can create stresses or opportunities that can affect sexual behaviour. Economic uncertainty can trigger early marriage decisions or finding alternative sources of income, which in turn can affect sexual dynamics within society –in a study suggested that when the economic level of adolescents is very high, adolescents become accustomed to living luxuriously and enjoying everything quickly without restrictions from parents will result in adolescents likely to rebel. This rebellion can be a search for things that interest him. If adolescents have become antisocial and have a terrible environment, the possibility of engaging in premarital sexual behaviour is very high (Yani *et al.*, 2020).

3.2. The Role of Culture in Adolescent Premarital Sexual Behaviour

3.2.1. Drinking Culture

Adolescents who are being affected by alcohol cannot think long and control their behaviour, especially in this case, sexual behaviour. Premarital sexual behaviour of adolescents has a greater possibility if the teenager consumes alcohol (Putra, Cahyo and Widagdo, 2018). Research in Thailand has found that the culture of drinking alcohol is closely related to adolescent premarital sexual behaviour. Alcohol consumption allows people to more easily violate existing social and traditional norms (Aurpibul *et al.*, 2016).

3.2.2. Social Norms (Customs and Traditions)

The research conducted in rural areas of Uganda involves customary bridal capture, which allows for the possibility of premarital sexual engagement. Within their community, premarital sexual behaviour is perceived as acceptable. Marriage is the primary objective, as viewed by this community, making premarital sexual behaviour considered permissible and even seen as a form of engagement (Achen *et al.*, 2021). Social norms in Indonesia broadly do not endorse premarital sexual behaviour. Nevertheless, in certain regions, there remains a degree of acceptance towards premarital sexual behaviour, and this practice persists within society (Wahyuningsih *et al.*, 2019).

3.2.3. Family Culture

Family culture proved to be one of the most influential factors in adolescent premarital sexual behaviour. Adolescent attitudes towards premarital

sexual behaviour are shaped by family culture. Family cultures that reject premarital sex are less likely to engage in premarital sexual relations. Conversely, families that are more permissive to premarital sexual behaviour have a higher likelihood for adolescents in those families to engage in premarital sexual behaviour (Putri, 2016). The best information a teenager needs is sexual information that comes from the family. The correct information will have a positive impact because adolescents can avoid sexual behaviour if they understand the long-term impact that occurs due to premarital sexual behaviour (Fauzia and Taufik, 2022).

Families who communicate about sexual behaviour can also minimise the occurrence of premarital sexual behaviour in adolescents (Rusmilawaty *et al.*, 2016). In reality, parent-child communication about sexual behaviour is rare because it is associated with taboo terms. Shame about talking about sexual problems and parents' concern that information about sexual problems will be a way for adolescents to learn and practice sexual behaviour results in the absence of communication of sexual problems in the family (Isaksen *et al.*, 2020).

CONCLUSION

Sexual and reproductive health is one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Various cultural roles lead to adolescent premarital sexual behaviour. Social changes, including shifts in values and norms, can affect views on adolescent sexual behaviour. Economic changes, such as increases or decreases in income, can create pressures or opportunities that affect sexual behaviour. Culture also plays an important role, as does the drinking culture associated with adolescent premarital sexual behaviour. Social norms, such as customs in rural areas of Uganda that allow sex engagement, also play a role in shaping society's view of premarital sexual behaviour. Family culture proved to be a critical factor in shaping adolescent attitudes towards premarital sex, with family communication considered an essential element in minimising premarital sexual behaviour. However, this communication is often hampered by stigma and parental

concern about talking about sexual issues with their children. As necessary information, family communication can minimise the occurrence of premarital sexual behaviour in adolescents.

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