



Sexuality and Reproductive Health in Adolescence: An Integrative Review

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Adolescence is a phase characterized by physical and behavioral changes that impact the sexual and reproductive health of individuals of both genders. While the World Health Organization (WHO) defines adolescence as the period from 10 to 19 years old, in Brazil it is recognized as the age range from 12 to 18 years old. This distinction is important for epidemiological investigations, as well as the development of public policies, social programs, and targeted interventions. This work is grounded in an Integrative Review conducted from August 2019 to October 2019, utilizing electronic databases available in Portuguese, English, and Spanish, including the Latin American and Caribbean Literature on Health Sciences (LILACS), Scientific Electronic Library Online (SCIELO), Nursing Database (BDENF), and PubMed. The review process involved several stages: formulating the main research question, selecting articles based on inclusion criteria, excluding irrelevant studies, evaluating the selected articles, interpreting the results, and presenting the integrative review. Through critical analysis of the literature, relevant information was extracted and validated by a researcher. A total of 10 articles were included in this study, sourced from various databases: 5 from VHL, 2 from SciELO, 2 from LILACS, 3 from PubMed, and 3 from BDENF. This study underscores the importance of adopting a clinical practice approach to enhance professional resourcefulness and suggests avenues for future research.

Keywords: Adolescence; sexuality; sexual health; reproductive health; sexual abuse; virtual health; legal system.

1. INTRODUCTION

Sexuality is a part of life. It typically begins in adolescence (12-18 years) with the onset of hormones at the start of puberty. Sexuality in adolescence is a matter of great concern for parents, educators, the legal system, and society at large. Each of these parties has its own interests and plans, but it is a natural behavioral expression of the physiological phenomenon of the young person's physical and emotional development [1].

Adolescents are in a phase of changes and adaptations and have the desire/impulse to discover new things and absorb them very quickly [2].

Sexual initiation is seen as a rite of passage from childhood to adolescence and youth, involving a phase of exploration that encompasses not only genital pleasure but also social, affective, loving, erotic aspects, as well as cultural, moral, and religious values of each individual [3].

However, in our country (Brazil), we know that childhood and adolescence have been distorted and exploited prematurely. Many children, aged 5 or younger, have already experienced sexual abuse, whether by parents, relatives, or education workers (daycares, schools, babysitters, etc.) [4].

Cases of abuse mark the child's life, even into adulthood, as the essence of childhood is lost prematurely, leading to traumas such as fear of darkness, "empty" or crowded places, older people talking to or observing them, etc [4].

Melo (2010) considers that discussing rights, sexuality, and childhood/adolescence from an emancipatory perspective is a challenging task, given the reactions that the topic elicits and the scant theoretical reflections. The same author points out that the number of Brazilian girls between 10 and 14 years old giving birth in public hospitals increased from 24.8 thousand in 2005 to 26.3 thousand in 2007, highlighting the importance of addressing the topic and its challenges [5,6,7].

The onset of sexual activity among adolescents currently occurs early, linked to lack of knowledge about sexuality and contraceptive methods, low level of education, resulting in the frequency of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and unwanted pregnancy [8,9,10].

Today, there is a lot of information about sexual orientation, and the vast majority of parents provide guidance on sexual life to their children, but myths and taboos persist in our society [11-14]. Today's youth are increasingly initiating sexual life at an early age, learning about 'sex'

through the media, peer groups, and sexuality classes in schools, where they are taught about the human body and prevention methods. Although some parents resist open dialogue with their children, well-guided sexual orientation prevents young people from starting their sexual life prematurely; that is, young people who had a foundation on the subject even as children view sex in a healthy and natural way [15,16-18].

Due to the rates of factors related to sexuality in this age group, it is necessary to orient adolescents on the correct information regarding sexuality, risks, precautions, and care, mainly to enable them to make healthy choices, to decide when they want to start their sexual life or not (SILVA, 2015).

2. METHODS

This is an Integrative Review research, which refers to a method that allows the synthesis of multiple published studies and enables general conclusions regarding a particular area of study [19]. The integrative review consisted of six stages: Phase 1 - Identification of the theme and research problem hypothesis for the elaboration of the integrative review; Phase 2 - Establishment of criteria for the inclusion and exclusion of studies found in the literature

search; Phase 3 - Categorization of studies and data collection; Phase 4 - Evaluation of studies included in the integrative review; Phase 5 - Interpretation and discussion of results; Phase 6 - Presentation of the integrative review. After delimitation, the evaluation of the research problem followed, and its stratification followed the PVO strategy (Population / Problem, Variable, and Outcomes) [20]. The research was conducted from August to November 2019, including publications such as scientific articles, selected in the Virtual Health Library (VHL) in the referred databases: Latin American and Caribbean Literature in Health Sciences (LILACS), BDNF (Nursing Database), MEDLINE (International Literature in Health Sciences), and in the Scientific Electronic Library (SCIELO) database, published from 2014 to 2018, electronically available in full text, using the boolean operator AND between the descriptors, in Portuguese, Spanish, and English languages, according to the Health Sciences Descriptors - DeCS.

The flowchart in Fig. 1 depicts the schedule of a semi-structured interview, addressing topics related to academic background, professional activities, and the proposed research theme. The questions are organized in an interconnected and structured manner.

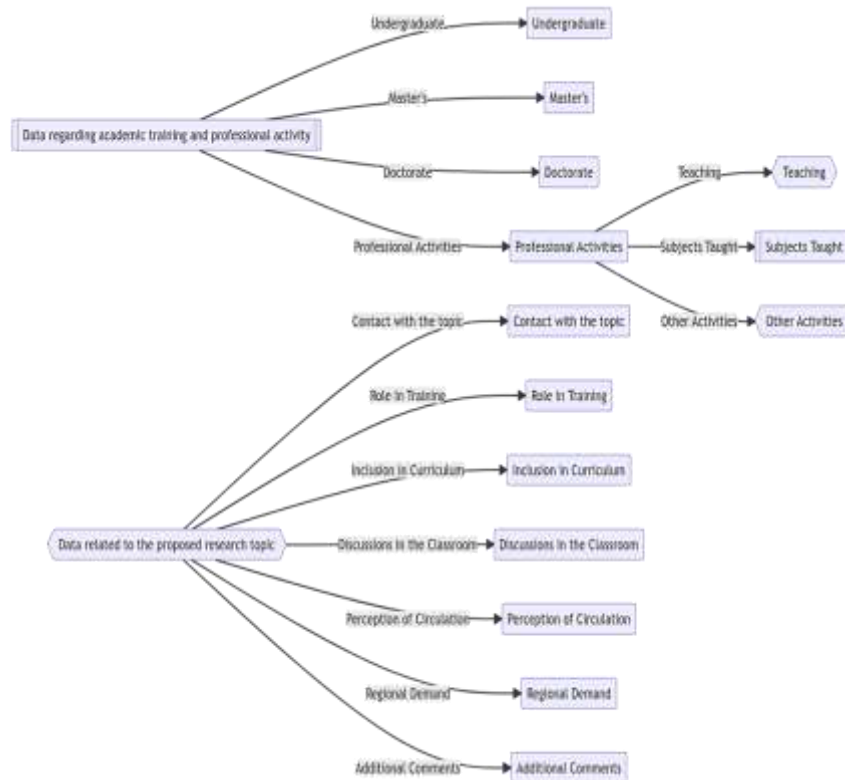


Fig. 1. Flowchart of the semi-structured interview schedule

3. RESULTS

Table 1. Distribution of the number of studies found and selected in the SciELO Database, according to the search strategies using boolean operators. São Paulo, 2019

Search term		Total articles without filter	Total articles with filter
Sexuality and adolescence		217	29
Sexuality and reproductive health	SciELO	149	44
Reproductive health and sexuality and adolescence		32	6
Total articles		398	79

Table 2. Distribution of the number of studies found and selected in the LILACS Database, according to the search strategies with boolean operators. São Paulo, 2019

Search	LILACS	Total articles without filter	Total items with filter
Sexuality and adolescence		1292	709
Sexuality and reproductive health		283	201
Reproductive sexuality and health and adolescence		132	73
Total articles		1707	983

Table 3. Distribution of the number of studies found and selected in the BDEF Database, according to the search strategies with boolean operators. São Paulo, 2019

Search	BDEF	Total articles without filter	Total items with filter
Sexuality and adolescence		272	50
sexuality and reproductive health		66	15
Reproductive sexuality and health and adolescence		37	10
Total articles		375	75

Table 4. Distribution of the number of studies found and selected in the PUBMED Database, according to the search strategies with boolean operators. São Paulo, 2019

Search	PUBMED	Total articles without filter	Total items with filter
Sexuality and adolescence		40502	4383
sexuality and reproductive health		8270	1296
reproductive sexuality and health and adolescence		7462	981
Total articles		56234	6660

Table 5. Characterization of selected articles according to title, year of publication, study location, design, and level of scientific evidence. São Paulo-SP, Brazil, 2019

N.º	Article title	Again	Study location	Design
1	Risk behaviors of Portuguese adolescents and the influence of the environment	2014	SciELO	Cross-sectional study
2	Accessibility of adolescents to sources of information on sexual and reproductive health	2015	Lilacs	Descriptive study of quantitative nature
3	Sexual behavior of school adolescents	2015	Bdef	
4	Sexism and sexual risk behavior in adolescents: Gender differences.	2018	Pubmed	Cross-sectional study of descriptive type
5	Factors that hinder communication between parents and adolescent children about sexuality	2014	Bdef	Investigative study
6	Adolescents' perception of the life activity "expressing sexuality"	2017	Bdef	
7	Sexual behavior in Brazilian adolescents, National School Health Survey (PeNSE 2012)	2014	SciELO	Approach study qualitative
8	Adolescents in the school space and knowledge about sexual and reproductive health	2018	Lilacs	Approach study qualitative
9	Psychiatric Impact of Organized and Ritual Child Sexual Abuse: Cross-Sectional Findings from Individuals Who Report Being Victimized.	2018	Pubmed	Research Study-action
10	Analysis of sexual and reproductive health indicators of Brazilian adolescents, 2009, 2012 and 2015.	2018	Pubmed	Cross-sectional study

4. DISCUSSION

Evidence showed that according to the results obtained, female adolescents (55.6%) are aged between 16 and 19 years, while male adolescents (44.4%) range from 17 to 18 years old, in a study involving 60 participants. (66.7%) of the participants fall within the adolescence age range according to the WHO, as this organization defines adolescence as the age range from 10 to 19 years [21].

Family members are the primary regulators of sexuality, and the information parents pass on to their children usually consists of dictating behavioral rules and is related to values for maintaining the family system [22].

Attention is drawn to the necessity for adolescents to have a social network for relationships with family, school, and health services so that they (adolescents) can receive accurate information and have their doubts clarified [23].

Based on this study, the field of sexual and reproductive health indicates that the main sources of information about sexuality are friends, family, school, magazines, and the internet. To address these adolescents' sexuality needs, it is necessary for schools to be a privileged place for socialization, as well as a location for numerous sexual and reproductive guidance projects and programs [24].

According to the Ministry of Health, many young people think they know everything about sex, but often they have inadequate information or do not know how to apply it in practice, showing one of the main reasons adolescents do not seek information about sexual and reproductive health [25].

Considering the average age of the adolescents in the study, which was 16.8 years with a standard deviation of 7.17, the finding that 38 (42.2%) of the adolescents had initiated sexual activity confirms precocity.

Early initiation of sexual activity raises concerns about adolescents' sexual and reproductive health, exposing them to the risks of unplanned pregnancy and STDs. Contraceptives and/or other methods to prevent and protect against pregnancy or STDs were only used by 14 (36.9%) of the adolescents, indicating a significant number of adolescents were exposed

to pregnancy and STDs. Fertility decreased in all age groups except among adolescents, thus requiring efforts to develop programs and projects in the field of sexual and reproductive health, as sexually active adolescents using some form of contraception reduce risks by 42%, according to the studies conducted. It is observed that school was the main venue for participation in educational activities on sexual and reproductive health among the adolescents studied.

5. CONCLUSION

Given the current representation of sexuality among adolescents, the studies presented contain data that can guide the prioritized needs in guiding the services and health professionals working not only with this target population but also contributing to the management of STDs within the Brazilian population. Through "schools," adolescents have information indicators generated from various sources, enabling them to act and develop, aiming at enhancing this information, thus effectively and efficiently contributing to clarifying the doubts of this age group as they seek knowledge to lead more preventive and healthy sexual lives.

CONSENT

It is not applicable.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

It is not applicable.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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