



Scoping Review of Methodologies and Topics in Social Science Research on Children’s Sexuality 2000–2024

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Abstract

The conjunction between Childhood and Sexuality in Social Science research constitutes a rather peculiar topic. While it can be traced back to early twentieth century, it was not until the 1970s and 80s that it became a consolidated topic. While different types of review exist in specific sub-fields of Children’s Sexuality research, no one has yet attempted to examine the trends of the field as a whole. As a result, we are left with a fragmented view of it that limits the identification of much-needed perspectives and topics. Therefore, conducting a review aimed at understanding the main characteristics of this research field—i.e. topic trends and methodological approaches—to assess its overall health, becomes urgent. Via a scoping review, we find that publications in the field have grown since the turn of the century but remain concentrated in topics that prioritize adult’s perspectives over children’s realities. Additionally, they are primarily based on survey and discursive methodologies, while ethnographic and observational methods are largely overlooked. Therefore, we conclude that while the research field is in good health in terms of publication volume, it is both important and urgent to address these limitations.

Keywords Scoping review · Children’s sexuality · Social sciences

Introduction

The conjunction between Childhood and Sexuality in Social Science research constitutes a rather peculiar topic. It can be traced back to the early twentieth century with figures such as Sigmund Freud (1977 [1905]) and Albert Moll (1908), followed later

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by anthropologists Bronislaw Malinowski (1927) and Margaret Mead (1928), who were among the first to analyse the social and cultural influences on children's way of living sexuality. However, it was not until the 1970s and 80s that Childhood Sexuality became a consolidated topic of social inquiry (Jackson & Scott, 2015). Even then, it remained a small field with only a few researchers involved, particularly when compared to the already meagre field of sexuality studies. The under-researched and underdeveloped state of this field may be due to two related factors that may be drawn from the analysis of childhood sexuality itself (Robinson, 2013; Moore & Reynolds, 2018): the cultural production and reproduction of childhood as a stage of innocence in which sexuality ought to play a limited or inexistent role, and the self-censorship of research on this matter, due to the risk of moral panics as evidenced by several cases (Robinson, 2008).

The underdeveloped state of this field also informs the ebb and flow of the methodologies employed. While in the 70s and 80s the methodological approach in Children's Sexuality studies had a strong focus on ethnographic methodologies (Jackson & Scott, 2015; Thorne & Luria, 1986), nowadays this tendency may have changed. In 2012, Paul Flanagan conducted a review on ethics and reflexivity within children's sexuality studies and presented two main trends that he considered relevant. In both cases, the default methodology used was interviews (Flanagan, 2012, p. 529, 541). Furthermore, when analysing two key contemporary publications on the topic, such as Robinson's "Innocence, Knowledge, and the Construction of Childhood" (2013) and Moore & Reynolds' "Childhood and Sexuality" (2018), we find that they have few references to direct observations and ethnography or works based on them. The overabundance of discursive methodologies and approaches in both childhood sexuality and gender and sexuality research, as highlighted by Jännäri and Kovalainen (2015), signals towards an apparent dissonance: on the one hand, the aforementioned reviews and primary research show that at least apparently interviews and other discourse-based approaches are the main tools of trade in the field; on the other hand, however, both empirical and theoretical research has shown that talking about children sexuality is an often hidden and silenced topic (Surtees, 2005), and that what children actually say or think about sexuality may not be trusted due to the dual expectations of innocence and corruption (Philo, 2011). This apparent trend results from a long-standing tendency that has favoured interviews rather than observation for family and sexuality research due to the "private nature of the family" (Gelles, 1978, p. 409), and self-reporting for any particularly sensitive topic (Johnson & Richter, 2004).

In order to respond to this apparent dissonance, between an overabundance of discursive approaches and a lack of consideration of what children actually think and do about sexuality, this paper argues for the need to conduct a novel systematic review of the state of Childhood Sexuality as a field. Despite remaining a fairly small field, studies on Children's Sexuality have steadily grown since the turn of the century, making it more difficult to grasp the overall paths and trends it has been following. While different types of reviews exist in specific sub-fields of Children's Sexuality research, no one has yet attempted to examine the trends of the field as a whole, and no single review has approached the issue of discursive abundance and lack of actual children in action, play, and talk. As a result, we are left with a

fragmented and limited view of the field, from the partial perspectives of specific disciplines and approaches. For example, while discourse analysis methodologies may be useful to understand “language as a text” and “language in use” (Bhatia et al., 2007, p. 1), they become limited on the event of understanding material aspects of reality (Reed, 2000, p. 529), and the actual behaviours of people, for as what people say they do and what they actually do may differ enormously, making ethnography and observation a more desirable approach (Howell, 2017, p. 17) in such contexts, particularly when what children say may not be trusted due to the fear of both innocence and corruption (Philo, 2011). Consequently, the aforementioned reviews signal towards a preliminary need for further systematic reviews aimed at understanding the main characteristics of this research field—i.e. topic trends and methodological approaches—to assess the field’s health. This would not only allow for further insight into what researchers are focusing on, but also lay the groundwork for future studies on how methodologies might influence results. In particular, this systematic review would allow for the identification of specific methodological and thematic needs and challenges, so that the field and its researchers may benefit from them and overcome them.

To achieve this, we consider the Scoping Review to be the most suitable approach due to its comprehensive and systematic nature. This kind of review has been considered by Munn et al. (2018) as the best methodology to “identify and analyse knowledge gaps” and “key characteristics or factors related to a concept”, and by Logan et al. (2024) as the one to be used when one’s aims are to “to identify the types of available evidence in a given field” and “to identify key characteristics or factors related to a concept.”, or mostly used “to explore the breadth of research” (Tricco et al., 2016, p. 5). We argue that in order to ascertain whether there is an overabundance of discursive approaches that limit the understanding of children sexuality, a Scoping Review offers a privileged vantage point into the ebb and flow of methodological approaches and research topics, as well as a significant tool for the identification of needs and challenges. Whereas a Systematic Review would be more adequate for a well-established research field or for the analysis of specific issues, concepts or procedures, we posit that a Scoping Review is a more productive approach for an exploratory review that seeks to map a broad topic and break ground for future research. Besides producing a large-scale view of Childhood Sexuality as a research field, our Scoping Review aims in particular to identify the relationship between methodological approaches and topics and, specifically, to identify whether there is what we understand as a *discourse fetishism*, or an overabundance of discursive approaches that do not take into account the dissonant understanding of children sexuality as a topic both silenced and panicked about (Philo, 2011; Robinson, 2008), while, as is often the case with such methods (Prior, 2018), neglecting to critically analyse and reflect upon the specific and contextual conditions under which these discourses are produced. Our review’s starting hypothesis is that the moral understanding of children sexuality as both salient and hidden, relevant and dangerous, drawing from Gayle Rubin’s (2002, 2011) understanding of a sexuality hierarchy and normativity, impacts how it is researched. Following this introduction, the paper explores the Scoping Review methodology employed, the review’s results, and then it concludes with a discussion of the results against the background of previous research.

Methods

Therefore, with our aims aligned with those purposes, we proceed to conduct a Scoping Review. To do so, we built an a priori protocol (to be found at osf.io/d3mg9), which adheres to the JBI Scoping Review Methods (Logan et al., 2024), and the PRISMA statement for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR), published by Tricco et al. (2018). The overall process for this scoping review can be seen in Fig. 1.

This search was conducted within the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) in the Web of Science Core Collection Database on November 15th, 2024. Although it is generally recommended to use at least two databases (Peters et al., 2024), we followed Tricco et al.'s (2018) consideration that one database can suffice. This decision was made after much consideration with the aim of reducing bias. Since this Scoping Review was aimed at understanding publications within Social Sciences, it was highly important to use a standardized definition of what constitutes a Social Science that could ensure replicability. Because of this, we decided that it was best to use a classification already provided by a database. However, while this allows

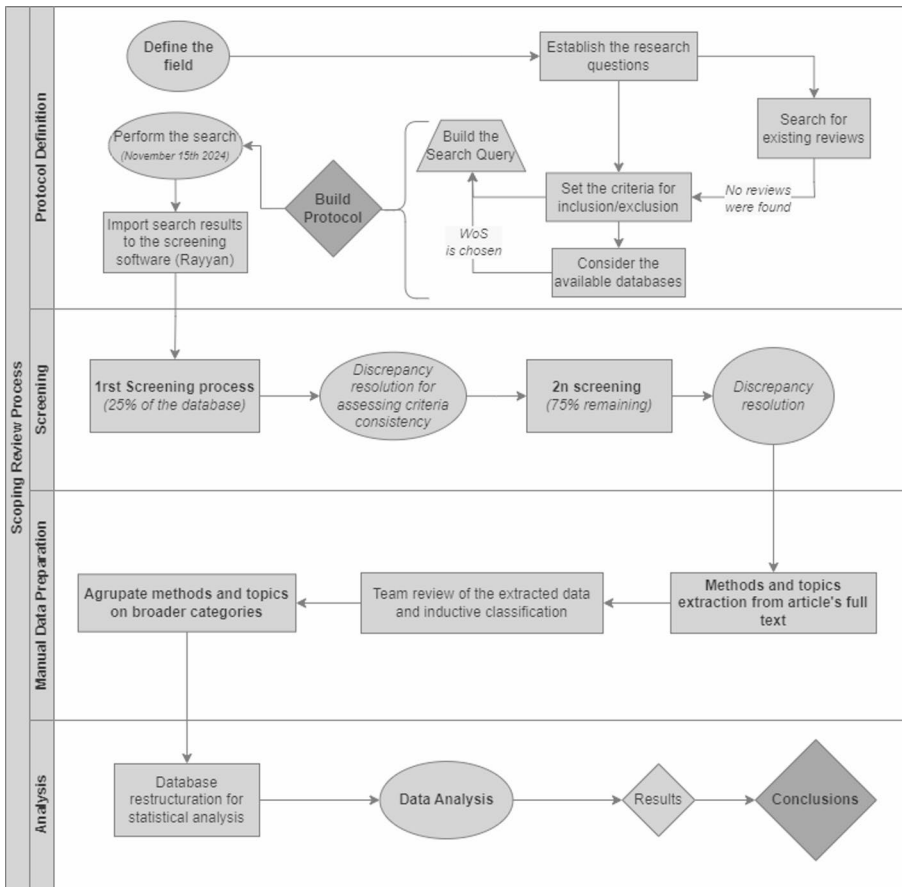


Fig. 1 Diagram of the scoping review process step by step

for future replications of our protocol, it presents a challenge in incorporating other databases; since coverage and disciplinary definitions vary across databases, they are not directly comparable. To do so, there are two possibilities. The first would be to conduct two parallel analyses and compare the results, and the second would be to first compare Social Sciences definitions and coverage and build a protocol that considers both. As this paper presents an innovative and exploratory review that seeks to open a topic or field, a single-database approach was followed. Following the results, our discussion of the paper's limitations includes a reference for the need for and potential of multi-database reviews.

While we could have chosen the Scopus database, which is also found to offer extensive coverage of Social Sciences (Norris & Oppenheim, 2007), we ultimately decided to use the Web of Science. While Scopus's broader coverage of Social Sciences (Gerasimov et al., 2024) would have been a better option if we were to synthesize data results, we ultimately considered that Web of Science's robust editorial system (Logan et al., 2024, p. 4) and careful selection of the most impactful publications (Singh et al., 2021) would render a better mapping of what is being produced and deemed relevant on Sexuality and Childhood. Following the previous argument regarding the single-database approach, this exploratory research will also pave the way for further more detailed and complex reviews.

For this Scoping Review, a search query was constructed to retrieve articles containing "sexuality" or "sexualities" and "child*" in the title, KeyWord Plus,¹ or Author Keywords, and was filtered to exclude non-social sciences articles.

The term selection stems from thorough critical reflection on its meaning and usage in Social Sciences. First, following Foucault's (1978) interpretation, "sexuality" and "sexualities" are concepts used not merely to discuss sex but to refer specifically to its social and cultural meanings. Moreover, in a more or less explicit way, its post-Foucauldian usage tends to align closely with the definition offered by the World Health Organization, which considers sexuality to be.

“a central aspect of being human throughout life encompasses sex, gender identities and roles, sexual orientation, eroticism, pleasure, intimacy and reproduction. Sexuality is experienced and expressed in thoughts, fantasies, desires, beliefs, attitudes, values, behaviours, practices, roles and relationships. While sexuality can include all of these dimensions, not all of them are always experienced or expressed. Sexuality is influenced by the interaction of biological, psychological, social, economic, political, cultural, legal, historical, religious and spiritual factors.” (WHO, 2006)

Therefore, based on its holistic and widely accepted definition among researchers, we considered these concepts to be aligned with the purpose of the review. The exploratory nature of this review, furthermore, seeks to unravel whether the use of “sexuality” and “sexualities” in scientific literature corresponds to a wide range of topics that

¹ Keyword Plus are algorithm generated Keywords that use the most frequently appeared words or phrases of the cited references, excluding the ones that appear on the article (Clarivate, 2022). It is designed in this way in order to return important terms not included by the author.

may be understood from an ample theoretical and conceptual perspective or, rather, to a narrower sense that may limit what we think and research about.

At the same time, we considered the use of the “child*” root as the most general yet unbiased way to approach childhood and children. While other terms could also refer to this life stage, they often carry specific connotations that “child*” does not. For example, “infancy” and “young people” could also refer to children; however, the former could introduce a bias toward early childhood stages, while the latter could lean toward the later stages of childhood. Moreover—and this is the main reason for our selection—“child*” (i.e., children or childhood) are the concepts historically used in discussions of Children’s Sexuality, as seen in the works of early and late 20th-century authors cited above.

Before starting the main search, a preliminary search for Scoping and Systematic Reviews on the topic was conducted. The same parameters were applied, with the only difference being the inclusion of review articles instead of research articles. A total of six relevant reviews were found: three Scoping Reviews and three Systematic Reviews. All of these reviews (see Table 1) discuss sex/sexuality education programs for children and young people with disabilities (McCann et al., 2019; Michielsen & Brockschmidt, 2021; Randall et al., 2024; Stoffers et al., 2023; Strnadova et al., 2022; Wu & Zeng, 2020). While these subfield-specific reviews have already been conducted, no general reviews aimed at understanding the broader topic of Childhood and Sexuality were found.

Aim and Review Question

The aim of this Scoping Review is to investigate the most common approaches (i.e., research topics and methodologies) used to understand the relationship between children and sexuality.

To achieve this, the review addresses the following research questions:

1. How are studies about sexuality and childhood conducted within social sciences?
 2. Which are the main research topics?
 3. Which are the main methodologies?

No systematic or scoping reviews on this topic have been found in the existing literature. Therefore, we developed a new protocol.

Scoping Review Method

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

The criteria for conducting this scoping review include:

- Only research articles were considered. Book Chapters, Review Articles, Edito-

Table 1 Table displaying the characteristics of the existing reviews compared to the present one

References	Review typology	Subfield	Topic
Randall et al. (2024)	Systematic review	Education & Disability studies	Explore menstrual education programs for girls and young women with intellectual disabilities
Stoffers et al. (2023)	Scoping review	Education & Disability studies	Identify the characteristics of School-base sexuality education programs for children with disabilities
Strnadova et al. (2022)	Scoping review	Education & Disability studies	Educative agents attitudes and experiences towards sex education for high-school students with intellectual disabilities and/or autism spectrum
Michielsen and Brockschmidt (2021)	Scoping review	Education & Disability studies	Understand the barriers children and young people with disabilities find in the WHO European region to access Sexuality Education
Wu and Zeng (2020)	Systematic review	Education & Disability studies	Sexuality education for children and Youth with disabilities in China
McCann et al. (2019)	Systematic review	Education & Disability studies	Understand the experiences of people with intellectual disabilities on their participation on Sex education programs
This review	Scoping review	None/General	Understand topics that are being addressed and methods used within the field

rial Material, and other types of publications were excluded.

- Only studies within the Social Sciences were included. A&HCI, ESCI and SCI-EXPANDED were excluded: Following the approach of Logan et al. (2024), this Scoping Review considered only articles published in journals classified under the Social Sciences category according to the Web of Science definition. We not only refined the search using these parameters, as Logan et al. (2024) did, but also directly excluded journals that also fell into other categories to ensure the retrieval of exclusively “pure” Social Science research. However, it is important to note that the Web of Science classification applies to the journal level rather than the individual article level.

Table 2 Table displaying the grouping of topics and methodology categories, and the rationale behind each group

Method	Rationale	Categories integrated
Discursive methodologies	This category includes methods where the main aim is to gather and analyse a structured discourse	Focus Group, Interview, Discourse Analysis, Conversations
Observational/Ethnography	This category comprises methods with focus on analysing social life as it unfolds	Observation, Ethnography
Survey	Research techniques focused on gathering information through forms and similar methods, typically used for quantitative analysis	Survey
Other Methodologies	This category includes non-canonical and marginal methods within Social Sciences. This includes new methods, methods which include the participation of the subject, experimentation, and methods that do not engage directly with the people being studied	Elicitation, Biographical, Relief Map, Archive, Participatory, Secondary Data, Experimental
Topic	Rationale	Categories integrated
Care providers	Covers topics related to individuals who provide care for children, both professional and non-professional	Parents, Care Professionals, Family
Educative aspects	Includes topics related to education, such as the education, educational professionals, and educational spaces	Teachers, Education, School
Social problems	Encompasses topics typically considered social issues that need to be addressed, either by public institutions or private entities	Abuse/Risk Prevention/ Effects, Teen Parenthood, Racialisation, Sex Work, Sexualisation, Porn, Child Marriage, Bullying
Childhood specific	Focuses on aspects directly related to children's behaviours or practices	Children Agency, Practices, Sexuality Expression, Peers
Demographics	Covers topics that explore the relationship between sexuality, childhood, and broader sociological aspects of social placement	Disability, Religiousness, Class, Multicultural
Gender issues	Includes topics directly related to gender aspects	LGBTQ, Gender, Normativity
Biological	Covers categories referring to the biomedical aspects of sexuality	Health, Reproduction, Body Changes
Knowledge and communication	Comprehends aspects related to the way sexual knowledge is constructed and/or communicated	Communication, Sexual Knowledge

- From the returned results, only articles written in languages the reviewers can read were included: English, Italian, French, Portuguese and Spanish.
- The study must directly address sexuality or gender-related sexuality issues as a primary focus or key variable.
- The research must be about children, regardless of whether the study is conducted with children or not, as long as this focus is explicitly stated. This includes:
 - Things children do
 - Children's life experiences
 - Childhood as a social category in relation to sexuality
- Following the UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child* definition (UNICEF, 1989), children are defined as individuals under 18 years old (0–17 years).
- Timeframe: Only research published between January 1, 2000, and November 15, 2024, was included, as this was the period covered during data extraction. The year 2000 was chosen as the starting point to align with the beginning of the century. The cut-off date of November 15, 2024 was selected because publishers often reassign volumes and issues to “pre-published” articles at the end of the year. By mid-November, such changes are unlikely to significantly impact the 2024 search results.

Search Strategy

The search was conducted on November 15th, 2024, using the following query:

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AK=("sexualities" AND "child*") OR KP=("sexualities" AND "child*") OR TI=("sexualities" AND "child*") OR AK=("sexuality" AND "child*") OR KP=("sexuality" AND "child*") OR TI=("sexuality" AND "child*").
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This query allowed us to search within Author Keywords (AK), KeywordPlus (KP) and Titles (TI) for either “sexualities” or “sexuality” in combination with any word starting with “child” (eg. Children, childhood).

Screening

After exporting the Web of Science search, the database—containing 364 articles—was uploaded to Rayyan.ai for screening.

A randomly selected 25% of the documents were used for an initial screening process:

- The titles, abstracts, and keywords were reviewed by two independent reviewers (the authors), who included or excluded articles based on the pre-established criteria.
- After the initial screening, the two reviewers resolved any discrepancies by consensus, ensuring a shared understanding of the inclusion criteria.
- The remaining 75% of the articles were then screened.
- Again, any disagreements were resolved through consensus.

The inter-reviewer agreement during the screening process was 87.36%, indicating a high level of consensus in the inclusion/exclusion decisions. Following this process, a total of 137 articles ($n=137$) remained, forming the final database for coding and analysis.

Data Coding and Analysis

After the completion of the screening process, a three-step data coding was conducted. Firstly, the articles were divided into two groups, with each reviewer independently extracting the topics and methods used in the articles of one group. Secondly, upon completion, both reviewers collaboratively created broader and non-exclusionary classification codes (articles can be found in more than one category) for methods and topics through an inductive process based on the extracted data, then classified the articles accordingly. Thirdly, the reviewers grouped those codes in broader categories using a dialogical process between inductive and deductive coding methods.

The rationale behind this was the consideration that, for data extraction and the first code classification, the mediation between the codes and the data, was to be minimal. Therefore, it was decided to base it on the data-driven nature of the inductive coding, opposed to the theory-driven coding of the deductive coding – as explained by (Boyatzi, 1998).

However, for data analysis, it was considered necessary to 1) group categories with similarities and 2) create groups while keeping in mind the scoping review aims. Therefore, this third step, or second coding, was conducted using a dialogical process between inductive and deductive coding. To do so, we started from the methods and topics the authors stated, and then we grouped them following social theory approaches.²

There is not a clear consensus on how to classify and differentiate research methods within the social sciences. For example, Guthrie (2025) distinguishes between Case Studies, Survey Methods, Experimental Methods, Observation, Interviews, and Questionnaires. Meanwhile, Lune and Berg (2012) differentiate Focus Groups Interviewing, Ethnographic research, Participatory Action Research, and Social Historical Research. Bryman (2012) bases his classification on whether the methods are quantitative or qualitative, focusing on Interviews, Focus Groups, and Ethnography. Similarly, May and Perry (2022) distinguish between Interviewing methods, Surveys, Participant Observation and Digital and Case study methods. Within Interviewing methods, they include Focus groups and other interviewing techniques.

As can be seen, there are significant differences among these manuals in how research methods are classified. These variations stem from the authors' perspectives and offer no unified approach to grouping different techniques. However, we believe that their shared elements reveal underlying tendencies and points of consensus. It is within these tacit agreements that we construct our own classification, organized into four categories. The first two encompass the vast majority of qualitative research while being distinguished by substantially distinctive characteristics; the

²The established grouping methods and topics along with their rationale are summarized on (Table 2).

third includes most quantitative research; and the fourth situates the non-mainstream approaches.

The first category, Discursive Methods, brings together approaches that rely on participants producing discourse during the investigation, which is then analysed. To elaborate on this grouping, we draw from Bourdieu's and linguistic anthropologists' definition of discourse (Hanks, 2005), which understands it as a form of linguistic production shaped by the context of social interaction—where what is said is closely tied to power relations, symbolic violence, censorship and the expectations between interlocutors.

The second category, Observational/Ethnography, combines both methods named—observation and ethnographic research. They are grouped together due to their shared emphasis on distinguishing between action and discourse. Both approaches consider not only what people say but also what they do, which is a cornerstone of observational and ethnographic research (Howell, 2017, p. 17).

The third category is Survey. Due to its characteristics, the Survey method is commonly used in quantitative social research (as seen in Guthrie, 2025; May & Perry, 2022), and it differs significantly in its application compared to other methodologies.

The fourth category is an aggregate of non-hegemonic methods. The previous three categories cover what people say, what people do, and quantitative analysis on behaviours—hence their prominence in the manuals cited above. However, other research methods are also used to understand social reality. Some are non-canonical, others marginal, and some are simply emerging. These are grouped under Other Methodologies. This grouping responds to inductive analysis of groupings and correlations between methods, but also to the distinct nature of experimental, hands-on, and other marginal approaches.

On the topics side, each grouping is built from specific theoretical backgrounds that furthers the robustness of the classification. The Care Providers concept stems from the feminist theory of care and care work. While multiple definitions of care coexist – some focussing on relationships between individual people, others on the act of repairing and engaging with the world, or even as a relationship between institutions and individuals (Baker & Burke, 2023, p. 22–23)—in our context, it can be understood as an individual-to-individual (Baker & Burke, 2023, p. 35) practice of physical, mental and emotional attendance aimed at nurturing, enabling growth, and fostering healing in another person (Davies, 1998, p. 126).

A broader group of Educative aspects was created under the consideration that articles that speak of Teachers, Education, and School tend to focus on the transmission of values and learning. While the Teachers category could have been included in Care providers instead of Educative aspects, we identified them with this second topic by considering that the main aim of Teachers is not care—that is, to seek children's well-being—but education: teaching. Even though school teachers, especially those from early education, do or should do both (Broström, 2006), their primary role remains educational. Besides the theoretical distinction, the actual analysis of publications and correlations further consolidated this difference.

A Social problem is defined by Spector and Kitsuse (2017, p. xi) as “perceived social conditions which they [individuals or groups] consider unjust, immoral, or harmful, and that should be addressed”. Following this definition, this category

includes those issues understood by adults of Western societies as having negative impacts on children, and that need to be addressed in order to avoid and prevent them. Among what we have grouped under Social problem we have identified issues such as teen parenthood, sex work, sexualisation, porn, child marriage, and bullying.

Since most of the topics declared by the authors relate to broader elements concerning sexuality, we considered the need to include those that refer explicitly to children's realities. That is, to focus on what children do and how this has effects on their lives and on society, whether interacting among themselves, or through their ability to act or express within broader social contexts. We follow James and Prout (1997, p. 8) paradigm, in which they understand childhood as a social construction, and a specific variable for social analysis. They view children's perspectives, social relationships, and cultures as worthy of study in their own right—not as an appendix to adult realities—and as active subjects in the construction and determination of their lives.

Demographics is a topic that includes those categories that usually refer to socio-demographic profiling (Hoffmeyer-Zlotnik & Warner, 2018). That is, this category refers to research that addresses broader aspects of cultural and social positioning that affect how the relationship between sexuality and childhood is constructed.

At the same time, the Gender issues topic integrates those categories that directly refer to gender aspects. Here, we understand gender as a non-binary and complex category defined through the sex/gender concept (Lancaster et al., 2023). In doing so, we place within the Gender issues topic the research that addresses the expressions, identities, and social norms that are built, applied, contested, and lived. Therefore, it integrates the categories LGBTQ, Gender, and normativity.

Regarding the Knowledge and Communication topic, we formed it by the agglutination of both categories present in the name because we considered them to form an indissociable dyad. This position comes from understanding Robinson's (2013) work in relation to Foucault's (1978) definition of sexuality and its communicative control. Robinson's work focuses on understanding the relationship between children and sexuality through how knowledge is transmitted or concealed from adults to children, in relation to children's condition of innocence. She argues that the social positioning of children, and their characterization as innocent and vulnerable, exacerbates and makes particularly sensitive the intersection with sexuality. Therefore, it becomes highly relevant to understand not only sexual knowledge in the abstract but also how it is displayed and transmitted through communication, since this is the way to understand the social relations that allow for the flow and control of information and knowledge.

Much has been discussed about the relationship between sex, sexuality, gender, biology and culture. The first researchers within social sciences to deal with sex and sexuality considered it a biological aspect of life that could only be regulated afterwards by culture (Malinowski, 1927; Mead, 1928). Nowadays, following Beauvoir's (1949) and Foucault's (1978) work, we have come to understand that we cannot consider the culture-nature dichotomy as a firm framework for understanding those concepts (Lancaster et al., 2023). However, in Western societies Reproduction and Body changes are understood as body functions and processes, which are part of the human maturation (Robinson, 2013, p. 13). At the same time, the prevailing health

regime is that of biomedicine. Therefore, all those aspects are confined and understood within the realm of biology.

After the groupings were established, the database was transformed using one-hot encoding for the inductive categories and subsequent groupings. It was then imported into Jamovi (version 2.6.25), an R language-based software, for data visualization and analysis.

Limitation and Replication Assessment

The first limitations are those directly related to the selection of the database. As explained within the Methods section, this Scoping Review was designed to allow for a mapping of the most impactful trends, using Web of Science and its definition of Social Sciences to the detriment of using Scopus's broader coverage. This stemmed from the fact that the classification of disciplines and journals within the Social Sciences may vary across databases, as seen in the significant coverage differences across different scientific fields (Mongeon & Paul-Hus, 2016), making it difficult to compare two of them in a single article. In addition, those databases already induce linguistic and geographic bias, over-representing Europe and North America (Asubiaro et al., 2024). However, due to this research being an exploratory one that breaks ground from a wide perspective on sexuality topics and research topics, this caveat serves to fuel further reviews that take into account this paper's results.

Furthermore, it should also be considered as a limitation the inclusion/exclusion criteria. Since this scoping review focuses exclusively on published journal articles, excluding books and book chapters, we cannot identify any content differences across publication types, should they exist. Additionally, while both reviewers are able to read and understand in several languages—including English, Italian, French, Portuguese, Galician and Spanish—we had to exclude 12 articles that were not in any of those languages. Although this is a small number, it could potentially impact the findings.

Finally, limitations in the analysis should be considered. Any coding process inherently involves a subjective component. While this does not undermine the study, as it is essential for this type of analysis, it should be noted that a margin of variation may be encountered if the protocol is replicated, and a larger pool of reviewers could be recommended for further analyses. Whereas a large pool of independent reviewers is in fact advisable, valid scoping reviews may only require two reviewers (Peters et al., 2015) and in systematic reviews in general the use of a second reviewer already involves a significant and necessary improvement of the review's validity and quality (Stoll et al., 2019). The exploratory nature of this review due to the novelty of the topic-methodology intersection allows us to argue that a two-reviewer scoping review, while improvable, may still comply with rigour and quality standards and procedures in this review technique (Pham et al., 2014; Tricco et al., 2016).

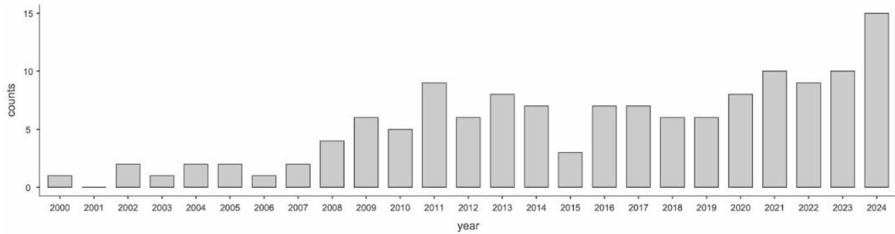


Fig. 2 Bar plot displaying the counts of articles for each year between 2000 and 2024

Table 3 Table displaying counts and percentages of the total for each methodology group

Methodology groups	Count	% of the total
Discursive methodologies	84	61.30
Survey	48	35.0
Other methodologies	33	24.10
Observational/Ethnography	13	9.50

Results

The resulting database contained 137 articles ($n = 137$), distributed irregularly across the years. As shown in Fig. 2, there was little growth in publications until 2006. However, since then—except for a brief decline around 2015—there has been a significant increase.

Methods Analysis

When examining the methodological groups, as shown in Table 3, we observe a clear predominance of Discursive methodologies, which are used in 61.3% of the articles. This category appears more frequently than the next two combined—Survey and Other methodologies. Meanwhile, Survey and Other methodologies hold a relatively strong position. Although there is almost a 10 percentage points difference in their usage, the former accounts for more than a third of the entire database, while the latter represents almost a quarter. The least utilized methodologies, by far, are Observational/Ethnographic approaches, which do not even reach one tenth of the total.

However, examining total usage alone provides little insight into how these methodologies evolve over time. Therefore, to analyse the trends of each group over time, we performed a linear regression for each category. The dependent variable was the percentage of articles in a given group per year, while the independent variable was the year. We chose 2008 as the starting point due to the low number of articles in earlier years, which could have led to unreliable results. This analysis enabled us to determine whether the prevalence of each methodology group increased or decreased over time. The results, along with the trend lines from the regression model, are presented in Fig. 3.

As shown in Fig. 3, the different methodological groups exhibit distinct patterns of usage over time. Firstly, there has been an increasing use of Survey methodologies, without corresponding a decrease in the other groups. Secondly, Discursive meth-

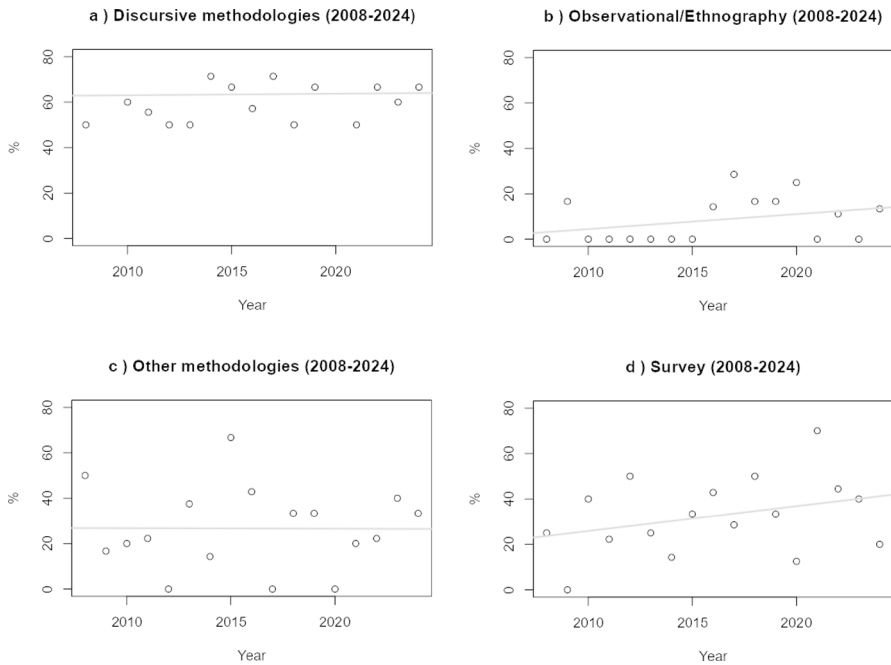


Fig. 3 Linear regressions based on the percentage of use of the different methodology groups per year, between 2008 and 2024

Table 4 Table displaying the counts, percentage of the total, and percentage of the categories that form the group discursive methodology

Methodology categories	Counts	% of the total	% of discursive
Interview	55	40.1	65.5
Focus group	34	24.8	40.5
Discourse analysis	8	5.8	9.5
Conversations	3	2.2	3.6

odologies and Other methodologies have remained relatively stable over the years, with the former showing a more consistent distribution—which is expected given that the Other methodologies category is an aggregate of distinct methods. Thirdly, Observational/Ethnography approaches began to appear only in the last decade, with virtually no presence between 2008 and 2015, except 2009. Starting 2016, they have been reported every year except for 2021 and 2023. Starting in 2015, however, this grouping shows a timid growth trend, which merits further reviews in the future.

To further understand how the groups may be influenced by trends within their constituent categories, we considered it relevant to explore some of their characteristics.

As shown in Table 4, within Discursive methodologies, Interview represents the largest share, being reported in more than half of the articles in this group. This is followed by Focus Group, which also hold a considerable share, appearing in 4 out of 10 articles within the Discursive methodologies group. Notably, both methods maintain a significant presence in the overall database, with Interviews accounting for 2 out of every 5 articles and Focus group comprising nearly a quarter of the total.

Table 5 Table displaying the counts, percentage of the total, and percentage of the categories that form the group other methodologies

Methodology categories	Counts	% of the total	% of other methodologies
Elicitation	12	8.8	36.4
Participatory	8	5.8	24.2
Experimental	6	4.4	18.2
Biographical	5	3.6	15.2
Archive	4	2.9	12.1
Secondary data	2	1.5	6.1
Relief map	1	0.7	3.0

Table 6 Table displaying the counts, percentage of the total, and percentage of the categories that form the group observational/ethnography

Methodology	Counts	% of the total	% of discursive
Ethnography	11	8.0	84.6
Observation	4	2.9	30.8

In contrast, Discourse Analysis and Conversations are marginal, appearing only in 8 and 3 articles respectively.

When examining the group of Other methodologies, as shown in Table 5, we observe that Elicitation methods hold the largest share (36.4%), followed by Participatory (24.2%). These are followed by Experimental (18.2%), Biographical (15.2%), and Archive (12.1%) methods, all of which also constitute a significant portion of the Other methodologies group. Beyond these, the remaining categories – Secondary Data and Relief Map – have only marginal representation within this group.

While the categories within Discursive methodologies had a substantial presence in the overall database, this is not the case for Other methodologies. Although the prevalence of its categories is notably within the group, their overall representation in the entire database remains low. None surpass a tenth of the total database, and most do not even reach five percent.

Regarding the Observational/Ethnography group, as shown in Table 6, we observe significant differences. Similar to Discursive methodologies, there is a clearly predominant category. Observational studies are present in only four of the thirteen articles to be found within the Observational/Ethnography group, whereas Ethnography is reported in eleven. Thus, Observational studies are not only marginal within the entire dataset—where they account for less than three percent of the articles—but also within this specific group.

For further insight into the interaction between Observation and Ethnography, we analysed them using a Venn diagram, as shown in Fig. 4. In this analysis, we also included Discursive methodologies to determine whether Ethnography was more closely associated with these than to Observation. This data visualization revealed a notable commonality between both categories—Observation and Ethnography— independently with Discursive methodologies. In both cases, the vast majority of articles also employed some form of Discursive methodology. Furthermore, only two articles classified as Ethnography were also considered to be using Observation.

We then considered the need to examine the interaction between method groups, which was conducted through an Upset diagram, as shown in Fig. 5. The diagram further highlighted the dominance of Discursive methodologies and Survey methods,

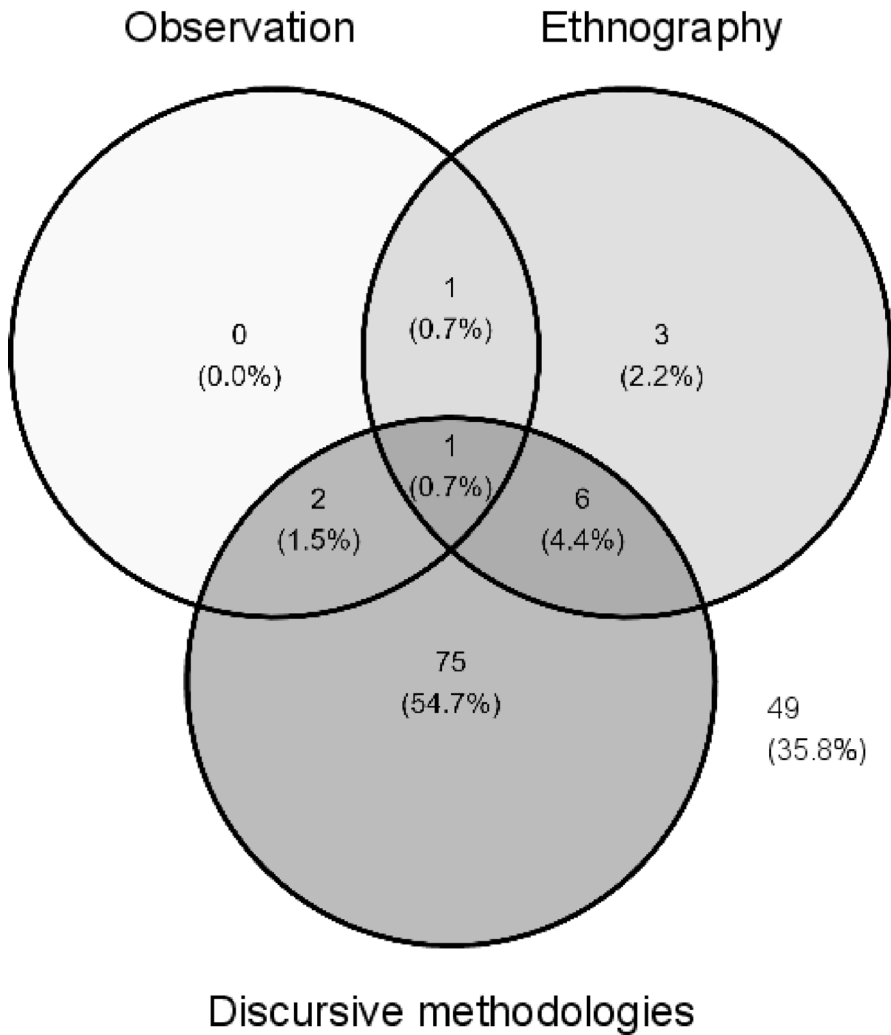


Fig. 4 Venn diagram displaying the intersections between observation, ethnography, and discursive methodologies

showing that their usage often implies the use of only one methodological group. In fact, 99 of 137 (72.3%) articles use only one methodological group. However, the two categories are not equally isolated, with Survey being the least likely to combine with other methods. Only 15 of 49 (30.6%) that use this method report an additional one. In contrast, Discursive methodologies, while still primarily “pure” (with only 33 out of 84, or 39.3%, mixing with other methods), show a slightly higher percentage of methodological overlap. At the same time, Other methodologies demonstrate that the techniques within this group are often used in combination with other methods. As shown, 19 out of 31 articles (61.3%) classified under Other methodologies also

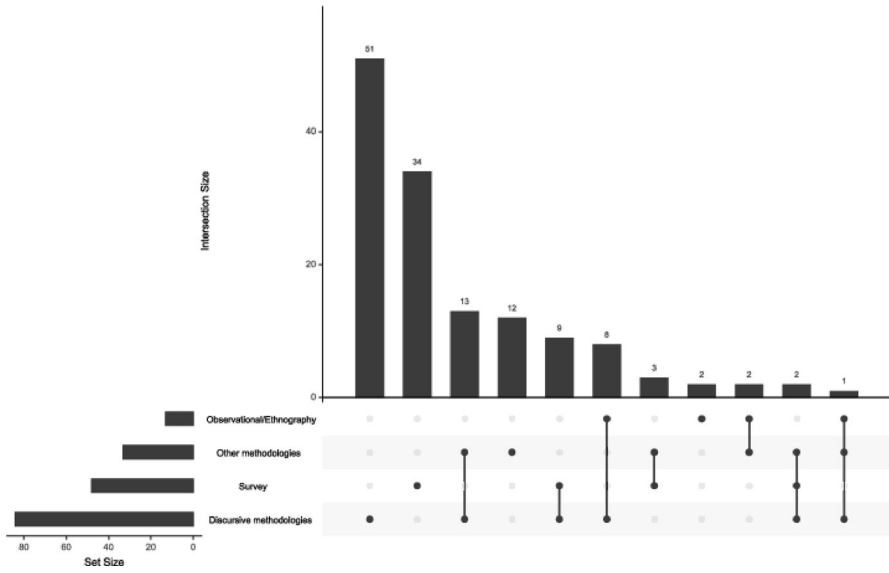


Fig. 5 Upset diagram displaying the intersections between the different methodology groups

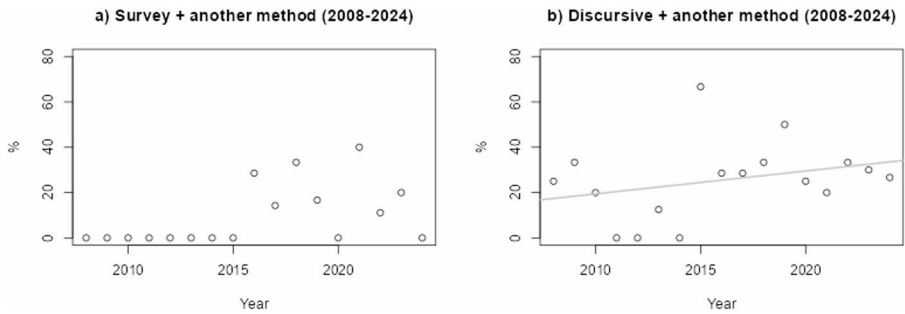


Fig. 6 Linear regressions based on the percentage of use of Survey with Another Method per year and Discursive methodologies with another method between 2008 and 2024

report using another method from one of the other three categories, with Discursive methods being the primary option.

However, while the absolute percentage of methodological overlap remains low, we observe a growing trend in both cases since 2008 (as shown in Fig. 6). Notably, since 2016—when there were no prior cases— Survey has been used alongside other methods. In contrast, the use of Discursive in combination with other methods shows a more distributed prevalence, with a relative increase over the years.

Topics Analysis

Among the topics, we observe varying degrees of prevalence. As presented in Table 7, there is a clear predominance of Educative aspects group, which appears in nearly

Table 7 Table displaying counts and percentages of the total for each topic group

Topic category	Count	% of total
Educative aspects	51	37.20
Childhood specific	47	34.30
Care providers	44	32.10
Knowledge and communication	38	27.70
Social problems	36	26.30
Gender issues	33	24.10
Biological	24	17.50
Demographics	16	11.70

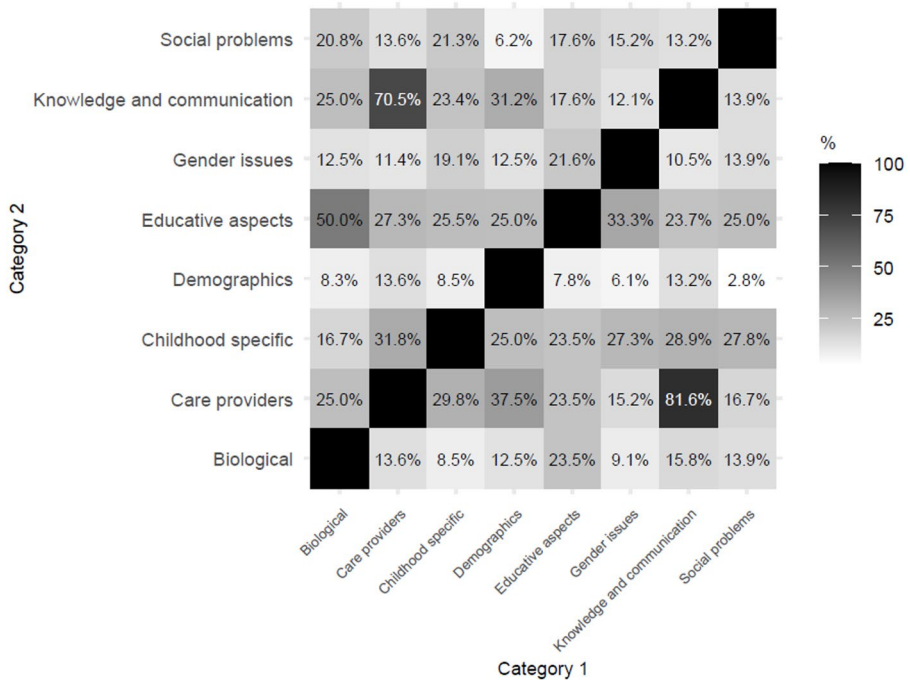


Fig. 7 Co-occurrence matrix of topic groups showing the percentage of articles in each Category 1 (columns) that also belong to each Category 2 (rows)

4 out of every 10 articles. This is followed closely by the Childhood specific and Care providers groups, each accounting for more than 3 out of 10 articles. Those groups are then followed by Knowledge and communication, Social problems and Gender issues, each representing nearly a quarter of the entire database. The Biological follows them relatively closely, appearing in 17.5% of the articles. The Demographics group rounds out the list at the lower end, being present in slightly more than a 10% of the articles in the dataset.

To gain further insight into the relationships between these topics, as illustrated in Fig. 7, we used a co-occurrence matrix to calculate and visualize the percentage of articles in each category that were also classified under another. We chose this visualization instead of the Upset Diagram used in the previous section due to the

difference in groupings, having eight groups instead of four results in an exponential increase in possible combinations. As observed, the distribution across other categories is not uniform, indicating that some topics are more closely related to others.

Specifically, there are seven cases in which a category comprises more than 30% of the articles within another. The most notable is the relationship between Knowledge and communication and Care providers: 81.6% of the articles of the first category are also classified in the second, and, considering the inverse relationship, the percentage remains strong at 70.5%. Both categories are also strongly related to others, as 37.5% of the articles within Demographics are also classified under Care providers and 31.2% under Knowledge and communication. Moreover, 31.8% of the articles classified as Care providers are also classified as Childhood Specific.

The relationships between the groups of Care providers and Knowledge and communication suggest that research on how sexuality is communicated or understood often involves including Parents, families, and care professionals in the analysis. Their perspectives and/or experiences are therefore of great importance. Furthermore, considering the prevalence of Childhood specific within Care providers – an association that also seems significant when looking at the inverse – may further explain the importance of adult caregivers in interpreting children's actions and behaviors.

Among the other groups, it is worth noting that half of the articles classified as Biological and a third of the ones classified as Gender issues are also categorized under Educative aspects, indicating strong ties between both topics with Education. Moreover, while most categories do not exceed 30%, it is notable that Childhood Specific, Educative aspects and Care providers appear in more than 25% across most categories, suggesting their importance within the research field.

When examining the evolution of topics across the years through a regression line (Fig. 8), we observe that most topics remain relatively stable over time, including Care providers, Childhood specific, Demographics, Biological, and Knowledge and communication. However, a few topics exhibit notable changes. The most evident trends are an increase in Social problems and Educative aspects, while Gender issues shows a decline.

A closer examination of the groups displaying variations, conducted through specific regression lines (Fig. 9) and the counts and percentages they represent (Table 7), reveals that certain categories within them follow similar patterns. Within Educative aspects, there is a marked increase in the Education category, the largest within the Education aspects group (Fig. 9a). In the Social problems category, the primary driver of growth is the rise in research focused on Abuse/Risk Prevention/Effect, which constitutes more than a half of the Social problems group (Fig. 9b). In contrast, in Gender issues, there is a decline in the Gender category, which, with 25 articles, constitutes 75.8% of the overall Gender issues category.

When considering their share within the database, we found that out of 30 categories, only 10 surpassed a 10% of representativity of the total dataset, and 16 surpassed 5%. As shown in Table 7. Parents is the most prevalent category, followed by Communication and Education. Each of these three groups appears in nearly a quarter of the articles in the database. Slightly behind, with almost a fifth of the articles, are Sexuality Expression and Gender (18.2%). These are followed by Practices, Health and Abuse/Risk Prevention/Effects, each accounting for nearly 15%. LGBTQ fol-

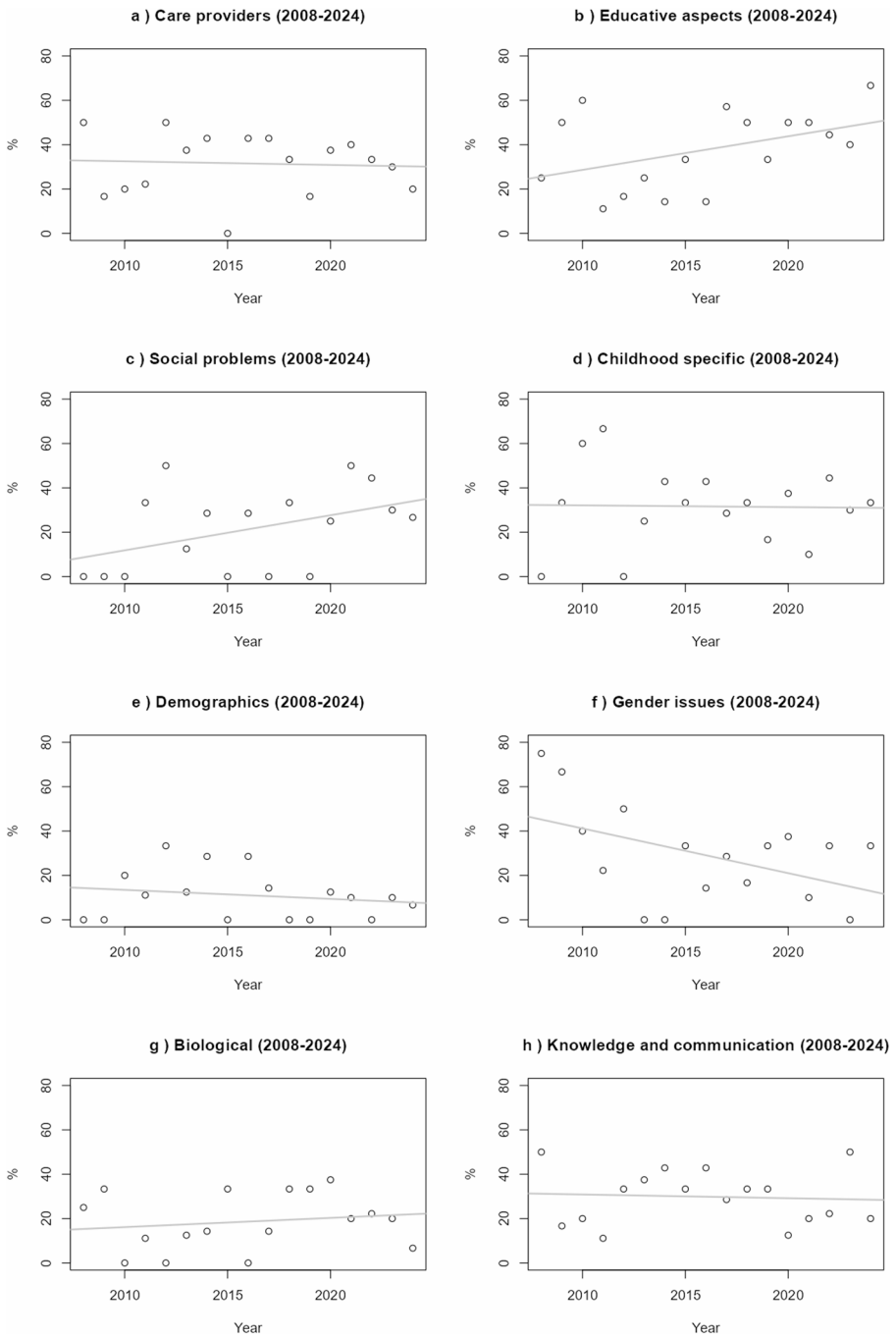


Fig. 8 Linear regressions based on the percentage of use of the different topic groups per year, between 2008 and 2024

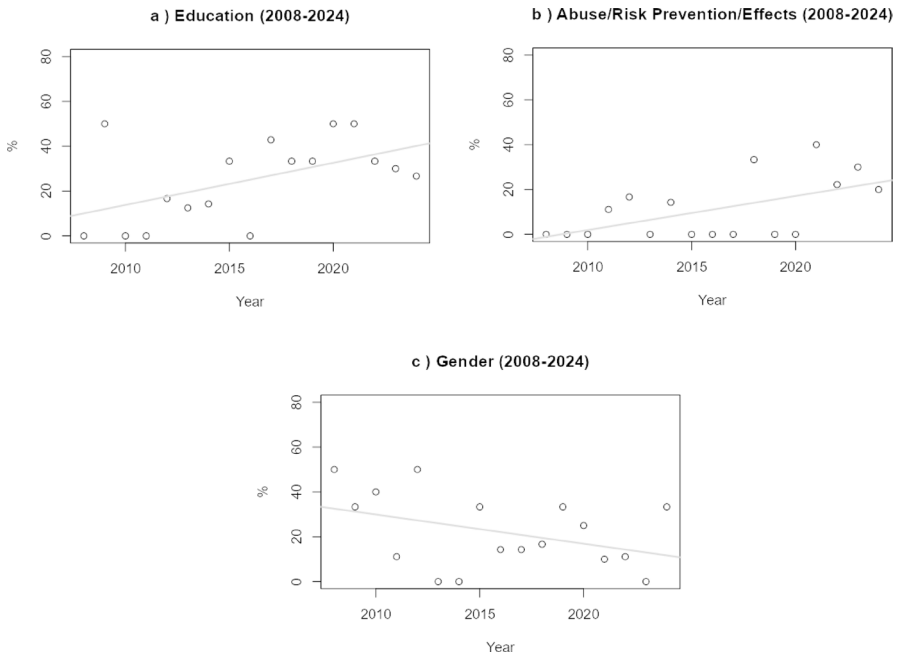


Fig. 9 Linear regressions based on the percentage of use of education, Abuse/Risk prevention/Effects, and Gender categories per year, between 2008 and 2024

lows with a 10.9% presence. Behind it, we find Disability and Family, being the last ones to surpass a 6%, followed by Children Agency, Racialisation, Care professionals and Sexual Knowledge.

In Table 8, we see that the three most prevalent categories are closely related to adult perspectives, being Parents, Communication and Education. These categories focus on Parents' relationships with their child's sexuality, Communication about sexuality with children (as the co-occurrence matrix in Fig. 7. showed, this was highly related to Care providers) and sexuality education programs and practices. In fact, it is not until the fourth (Sexuality Expression) and seventh (Practices) categories that we encounter a focus directly on what children might actually do.

To better understand these issues we classified together, on one side, those groups that directly relate and represent adult perspectives on the relationship between children and sexuality—namely, Educative aspects, Care providers, and Social problems. On the other side, we considered the category Childhood specific, which directly reflects research focused on children's experiences, relationships, practices, and agency. We then compared the Adult perspectives group with Communication through a Venn Diagram (Fig. 10), which showed that 97% of articles within Communication were also classified within Adult perspectives.

Additionally, through an Upset diagram (Fig. 11), we analysed the relationship between the Adult perspectives grouping and Childhood specific. When comparing them, we found that only 16 articles being left out of both categories, and that Adult perspectives dominated the field with 105 out of 137 (76.6%) articles. Moreover,

Table 8 Table displaying counts and percentages of the total for each topic category that surpasses 5% of the total database

Topic category	Count	% of total
Parents	36	26.3
Communication	33	24.1
Education	33	24.1
Sexuality expression	25	18.2
Gender	25	18.2
School	23	16.8
Practices	21	15.3
Health	21	15.3
Abuse/Risk prevention/Effects	20	14.6
LGBTQ	15	10.9
Disability	12	8.8
Family	9	6.6
Children agency	8	5.8
Racialisation	8	5.8
Care professionals	7	5.1
Sexual knowledge	7	5.1

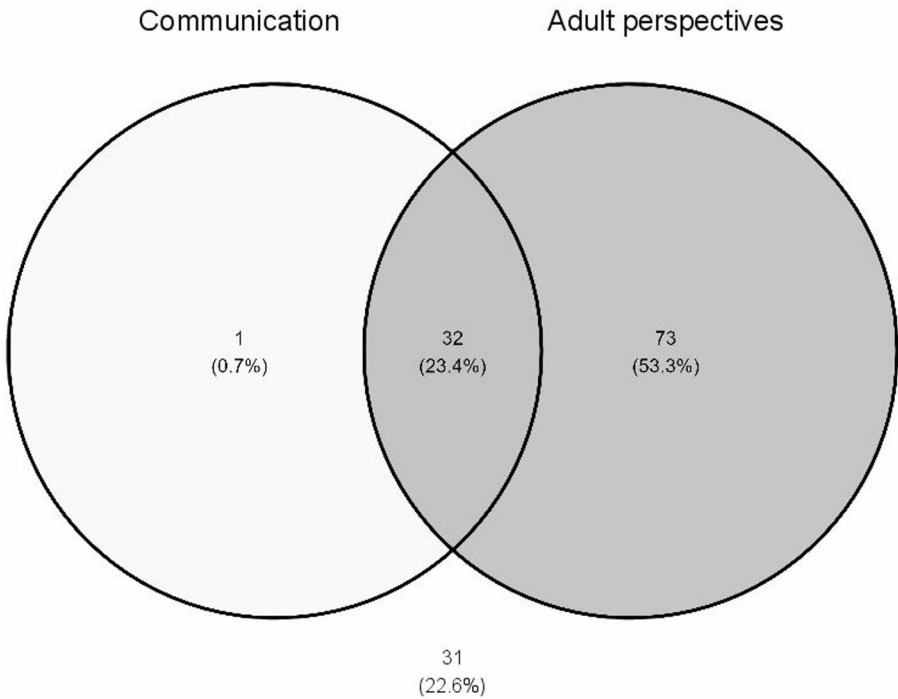


Fig. 10 Venn diagram displaying the intersection between the communication category and adult perspectives

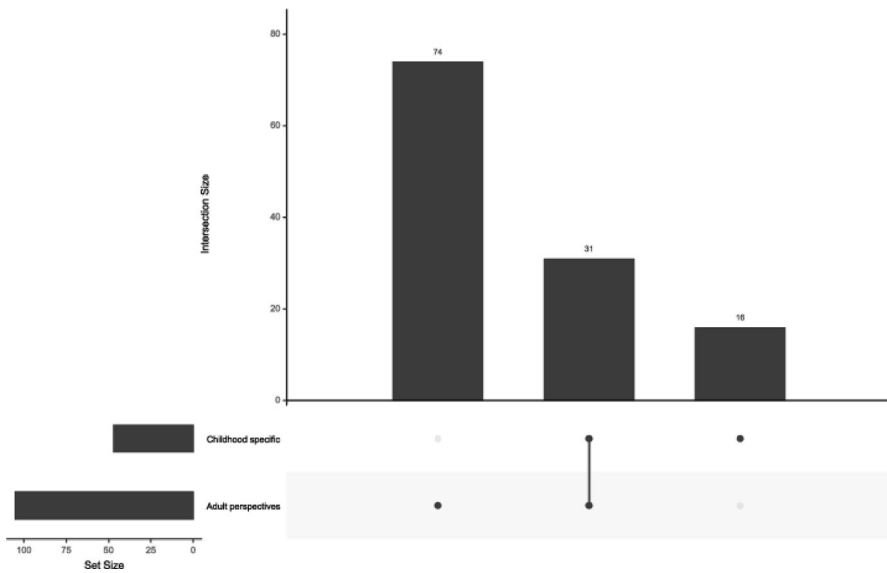


Fig. 11 Upset diagram displaying the intersection between the childhood-specific group and adult perspectives

from the 47 articles within the Childhood specific group, 31 fell into both categories—which represents a 66% of this later group.

Therefore, we can infer that Adult perspectives play a central role within the predominant topics of this field, while Children’s actions and experiences remain secondary.

Topics and Methodologies

After understanding how topics and methodologies behave, we used a co-occurrence matrix between those two aspects that would allow us to understand how they related among them (Fig. 12). As shown, the predominance of Discursive methodologies is not only evident over other methodologies but also across all topics. The topic that uses the lowest percentage of Discursive methods is Demographics,, which could be expected due to the frequently quantitative dimension of Demography, yet it still constitutes half of the articles.

Survey, in turn, shows a particular predominance among some specific topics, where it is the second most used methodology, with a 30% of share: Care providers, Social problems, Childhood Specific, Demographics and Knowledge and communication. Considering the inverse relationship—i.e. the main topics used within the articles classified as Survey—there is a softer co-occurrence, as only three topics surpass a 30% share: Care providers, Social problems and Childhood specific.

This suggests that Survey—which is the main methodology used for quantitative analysis within Social Sciences—is not primarily used, but when it is, it tends to focus on a narrow range of topics. Moreover, considering that the share of Survey and Discursive methodologies in the topics of Demographics and Social problems is

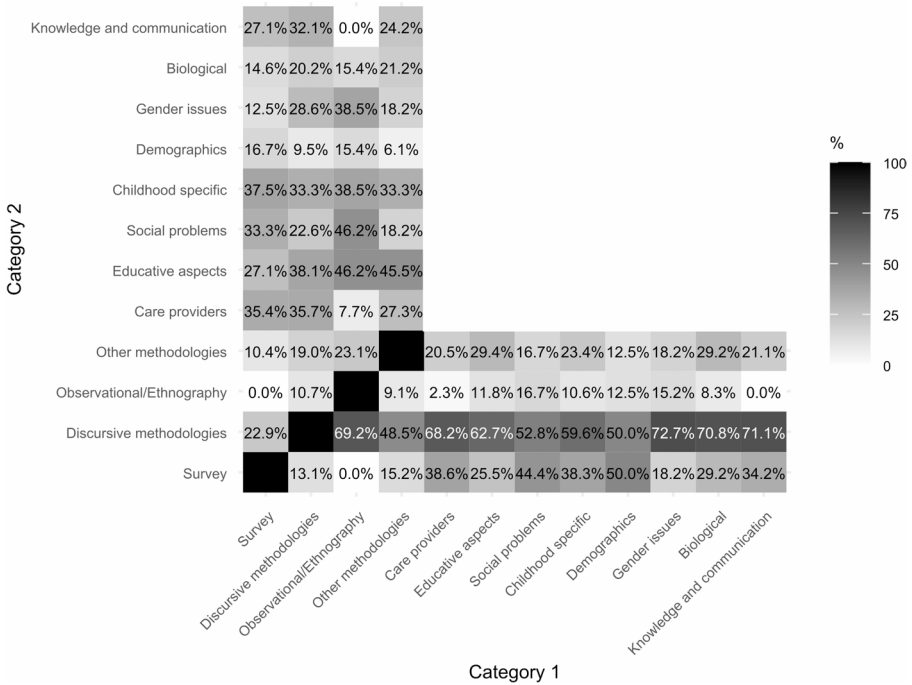


Fig. 12 Co-occurrence matrix of methodology and topic groups showing the percentage of articles in each Category 1 (columns) that also belong to each Category 2 (rows)

less than 10%, and both move around a 50%, we should also consider that both have a strong tie with quantitative approaches. It is worth noting that these two categories are also the ones with the lower percentage of Discursive methodologies' s usage.

At the same time, while Observational/Ethnography is the least used methodology, it is relevant to observe that most of the research using these methodologies focuses specifically on Educative aspects, Childhood specific, Gender issues, and Social problems. Furthermore, Educative aspects and Childhood specific are also predominant in research conducted with other methodologies, which may indicate a higher use of Elicitation, Participatory and Experimental techniques within these topics.

It is important to note that Childhood Specific and Educative aspects are the topic groups with the most significant presence across different methodologies, each accounting for around 30–40% of the total in each methodology. Furthermore, Care providers and Social problems have also a strong presence within each methodology. However, it should be considered that the Care providers topic only surpasses the 30% with Survey and Discursive method and approaches this percentage with Other methodologies. Similarly, Social problems surpass 30% representation within the Survey and Observational/Ethnography methods but remains around a 20% with Discursive methodologies and Other methodologies.

This situation may indicate that those topics, due to being researched across multiple method groups, and sometimes using more than one simultaneously, are likely to present more varied data.

Discussion and Conclusions

While we could initially interpret the increasing publication count (as seen in Fig. 1) as indicative of growing research interest, we must also consider the broader trend of rising academic publications. As Larsen and Ins (2010) noted, from 1970 to 2007, the rate of academic publication has continuously risen, a trend that, at least for Web of Science collections in Social Sciences, has remained steady from 2001 to 2020 (Liu et al., 2024). Therefore, to determine whether there has been a genuine increase in scholarly focus on Children and Sexuality or if this trend simply follows the general growth in academic publishing identified by Liu et al., further analysis is required. In particular, comprehensive bibliometric analysis of several research fields should be conducted in order to ascertain whether this or other specific fields show singular growth. Nevertheless, we can reasonably conclude that research on this topic is in good health in terms of continuity. Besides this, the exploratory nature of this Scoping Review, in order to break ground in a seldom explored field and perspective, also merits the discussion of several limitations. First, and as explained above, the exploratory and introductory nature of this research explains the use of a single-database approach and two reviewers. Further research, following this paper's results and conclusions, would benefit from the use of more than one database and a larger pool of reviewers that can analyse publications in even more languages. Similarly, the aforementioned understanding of sexuality and social sciences as research or analytical labels also merits further research into how different databases understand a single topic, and how different scientific labels and categories intersect across different languages, publishers, and databases.

All in all, this Scoping Review's results show that beyond the growth in publications in the specific field of Children and Sexuality, certain limitations in research orientations, topic and methodology frequencies, and topic-methodology groupings remain may be identified, thus painting a picture of the current and recent state of Children and Sexuality Studies. One of the most notable methodological concerns is the imbalance in the use of Observational/Ethnography, Discursive and Survey methodologies (Fig. 5), with the later two dominating the field, while Observational/Ethnography remain marginal (accounting for only 9.5%). Furthermore, when examining the categories within this methodological group, we observe a significant discrepancy between Observation and Ethnography – the latter accounting for almost three times as many studies as the former (Table 6).

This discrepancy may stem from the varying definitions of Ethnography across disciplines. Anthropologists typically view Ethnography as a methodological practice encompassing multiple methods, often requiring long-term observational studies (Shah, 2017). It aims to understand what people do, rather than just what they say (Howell, 2017, p. 17). Conversely, non-anthropologists frequently equate Ethnography with a limited qualitative research (Howell, 2017, p. 16; Ingold, 2014, p. 384), often integrating it into discursive methodologies. This pattern is evident in our findings, as most articles categorized as Ethnographic also reported using Discursive methodologies (7 out of 11, a 63.6%), while only a small minority (2 out of 11, a 18.2%) included any form of observational research.

The lack of Observational studies is a critical concern. When applying observational techniques, results may differ from those obtained through discursive methods. This

issue becomes clear in Hall's (2018) research—one of the few studies in this review that employed such techniques—in which he analysed the implementation of a Gender and Sexuality education program in English primary schools. His study found that in formal settings, children's discourse aligned with school teachings and moral frameworks. However, in informal spaces, homophobic name-calling persisted. This suggests that relying solely on self-reported data or discourse analysis may obscure discrepancies between expressed beliefs and actual behaviour. It is therefore imperative that future research prioritizes Observational and rigorous Ethnographic methodologies to assess whether behaviours norms and real-world practices align. Without such approaches, we risk reinforcing biases inherent in the dominant methodological frameworks.

Additionally, Survey methodologies were found to be rarely used in conjunction with qualitative methods (Fig. 5), suggesting a strong division between qualitative and quantitative research. Only since 2016 does the combination of Survey and other methodologies appear (Fig. 6), thus showing a changing landscape that merits future reviews that update this image in order to ascertain whether this trend varies. Survey research is not alone in this isolationist approach: in 99 out of 137 publications only one methodological grouping was used (Fig. 5), this signalling towards a limited use of Mixed Methods designs. While Mixed Methods approaches introduce their own challenges (for a comprehensive discussion, see Timans et al., 2019), they do offer a valuable means of bridging methodological paradigms. By integrating findings from social and behavioural research across different traditions, Mixed Methods approaches facilitate dialogue between disciplines that might otherwise remain disconnected. We therefore recommend an increased emphasis on Mixed Methods research in this field.

In terms of thematic focus, our analysis indicates that research on Children and Sexuality is overwhelmingly shaped by adult perspectives. This is evident in the dominance of studies considering their topics to be Social problems, Care providers, and Educational aspects on one side, and Communication or even Childhood specific issues in the other. It should be noted how Communication was almost fully comprehended within the Adult's perspectives group (Fig. 10), and how most of the Childhood specific articles were also classified under Adult's perspectives (Fig. 11). Therefore, we can conclude that these findings suggest that the primary concerns in this field revolve around adult perceptions, interests, and anxieties regarding children's relationship with sexuality, instead of primarily focusing on children's realities.

While these perspectives are undoubtedly valuable—particularly shaping educational initiatives, preventive programs, and social policies—they should not overshadow other critical aspects of children's lived experiences. If we are to develop a comprehensive understanding of Children and Sexuality, research must extend beyond educational interventions and the perspectives of care providers. Instead, it should explore children's own experiences, agency, and everyday interactions with sexuality-related topics.

Another key concern is the decline in studies that explicitly address Gender issues as a primary focus (Fig. 8f). Given that sexuality and gender are closely interrelated in Social Sciences (for an overview, see Lancaster et al., 2023), this trend warrants further investigation. Several explanations are possible, First, Gender may no longer be treated as an independent topic but rather as a cross-cutting issue embedded within other research areas. In this case, while explicit studies on Gender have declines, the

concept itself may still be influencing analysis across various domains. Alternatively, this trend may reflect a shift away from research paradigms that consider gender as a fundamental variable in understanding Children and Sexuality. Further research is necessary to determine which of these explanations is more accurate.

This review's results indicate, in conclusion, that despite a significant growth and diversity in Children and Sexuality studies, the field shows relevant limitations that hinder the scope and potential of existing and future research. In particular, and as introduced above, these results signal towards what we understand as a *discourse fetishism*: drawing from Marxian understandings of *fetishism*, we posit that adultcentric discursive understandings of Childhood Sexuality do not take into account the socially or morally ambiguous, problematic, and almost impossible status of the issue that directly impact the possibility to produce and analyse discourse. In other words, due to the complex and morally ambiguous role of childhood sexuality in most societies, as something both silenced and panicked about (Philo, 2011), research into this topic favours discursive research without critically considering the fact that it is seldom discussed, or at least not openly or with the children's direct discourse nor contrasted with their practices. As previously explained, our results show that adult perspectives dominate the research and particularly in salient topics such as Social problems, Education, and even Childhood-specific issues. Sexual hierarchy, or the differential valuation of sexual practices and discourses, permeate the research approaches and possibilities, and the fact that childhood sexuality is broadly frowned upon in most sexual hierarchies (Rubin, 2002), it is thus understandably a topic whose inconvenient nature obscures and hinders methodological possibilities. In conclusion, research on Children and Sexuality has not yet reached full maturity as a field. The predominance of adult-centered perspectives, lack of methodological diversity—particularly the underutilization of Mixed Methods and Observational approaches—and the declining emphasis on Gender Issues represent significant limitations that should not be underestimated. Addressing these gaps will be essential in advancing a more comprehensive and child-centered understanding of sexuality research.

Author Contributions Both authors contributed to the study's conception, design, data collection, and analysis. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Declarations

Conflict of interest Authors declare that they have no conflict of interest to disclose.

Ethical Approval This research did not involve human participants; therefore, ethics approval was not required. All data used in this article were accessed through institutional subscriptions to academic databases. The dataset utilized is publicly available at <https://osf.io/d3mg9/>. This scoping review was conducted in accordance with the JIBI Scoping Review Methods (Logan et al., 2024) and follows the PRISMA-ScR guidelines (Tricco et al., 2018).

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