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ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION**Support** - China Scholarship Council.**Review Stage at time of this submission** - Formal screening of search results against eligibility criteria.**Conflicts of interest** - None declared.**INPLASY registration number:** INPLASY202450116**Amendments** - This protocol was registered with the International Platform of Registered Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis Protocols (INPLASY) on 24 May 2024 and was last updated on 24 May 2024.**INTRODUCTION**

Review question / Objective 1. What are the thematic topics or foci that have been addressed in the literature on higher education (HE) students in China in relation to SRHR and analyses of gender/ sex? 2. How do studies use the concept of gender and sex in the studies? 3. What are the research methods used in the studies? 4. What are the gaps of SRHR and gender/ sex in the available research evidence?

Background SRHR is the concept of human health and rights applied to sexuality and reproduction, including sexual and reproductive health (SRH) and sexual and reproductive rights (SRR). The ability for people to make decisions about their own sexual and reproductive lives and the respect for others' decisions are essential for improving not only their SRH but also their overall health and well-being. There has been remarkable progress and gains in SRHR during the past years, but the progress and gains have been inequitable among genders.

There is growing recognition of the importance of gender equality as a global priority. Gender equality refers to the equal rights, opportunities, and treatment of all individuals, regardless of their gender. Because China is a deep-rooted patriarchal society and influenced by Confucian culture deeply, women and non-binary people mostly do not have the same equal rights, opportunities, or freedoms as men in many aspects, including sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR).

Higher education (HE) in China is valued and developing. Chinese students enrolled in HE institutions have grown rapidly. However, less sexual education received before receiving HE leads them to not realize that they are facing significant risks related to SRH. They are also not conscious of their rights to SRH and lack the power to make informed sexual and reproductive choices. Hence, it is necessary to decrease SRH risks among HE students in China and help them achieve positive SRHR. The traditional Confucian values are rooted in Chinese thinking, but with modernizing and globalizing in China, this value

have begun to weaken and led to changing HE students' behaviours and attitudes about gender.

Therefore, this review is expected to collect all the data about SRHR and gender among HE students in China, to summarise the current situation, and to analyse the relationship or factors between SRHR and gender in this population.

Rationale At the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) in 1994, human's rights to decide if and when to reproduce were formally recognised and integrated with SRH for the first time. It underscored the significance of reproductive rights and its interlinkages between human health and rights. Over 30 years, SRHR are regarded by governments, UN agencies, World Health Organization (WHO), and non-governmental organisations as critical dimensions of the international development agenda and are a critical component of health and wellbeing of individuals. In order to ensure that sexual and reproductive rights (SRR) are respected, policies, programs, and interventions must promote gender equality.

METHODS

Strategy of data synthesis Six databases will be searched: MEDLINE (Ovid ver.), Embase (Ovid ver.), PsycINFO (Ovid ver.), Web of Science, CINAHL (EBSCO ver.), and Scopus.

Search date: from 2014.01.01 to 2024.03.16.

There is no language restriction.

The search strategy of the review will be combined with four search terms: SRHR (#1) AND gender (#2) AND higher education student (#3) AND China (#4). #1 SRHR: SRHR OR "sexual and reproductive health and rights" OR "sexual health" OR "reproductive health" OR "maternal health" OR "maternal welfare" OR "maternal mortality" OR "neonatal health" OR "newborn health" OR "perinatal care" OR "perinatal health" OR "prenatal care" OR "prenatal health" OR "antenatal health" OR "ante-natal health" OR "postnatal health" OR "post-natal health" OR post-part* OR "post part*" OR "family planning" OR contracepti* OR condom* OR pregnan* OR "induced abortion" OR abort* OR miscarriage OR "spontaneous abortion" OR birth OR stillb* OR "Minimum Initial Service Package" OR obsteric* OR gynecology OR gynaecology OR "safe motherhood" OR "safe delivery" OR "skilled birth attend*" OR "sexually transmitted infection*" OR "sexually transmitted disease" OR HIV OR "Human Immunodeficiency Virus" OR AIDS OR "Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome" OR PMTCT OR "genital trauma" OR "genital injury" OR "vaginal trauma" OR "vaginal injury" OR "gender-

based violence" OR "gender based violence" OR "partner violence" OR "family violence" OR "violence against women" OR "domestic violence" OR "sexual violence" OR "sexual abuse" OR "sex* crime" OR rape OR "intimate partner violence" OR "partner abuse" OR "sexual assault" OR "sexual harassment" OR "sexual coercion" OR "forced sex" OR "sexual slavery" OR "sexual exploitation" OR "coercive control" OR "child prostitut*" OR "child trafficking" OR "female genital mutilation" OR FGM OR "female genital cutting" OR FGMC OR "female circumcis*" OR fertile* OR infertil* OR (early AND marriage) OR (child AND marriage) OR (forced AND marriage) OR (arranged AND marriage) OR (abduction AND marriage)

#2 gender: gender OR equality OR gender equity OR transgender OR gender diverse OR m#n OR male* OR boy* OR father* OR masculin* OR manhood OR wom#n OR female* OR girl* OR mother* OR intersex OR non-binary

#3 higher education student: university student* OR college student* OR higher education student* OR third level education student*

#4 China: Chin*.

Eligibility criteria Inclusion Criteria:

1. Population are Chinese students who are studying in any higher education (HE) institution (i.e. third-level education, university) in mainland China. Where multiple regions are involved in study's sample at least 50% of sample should be Chinese.
2. Concepts of study referred to any SRHR outcomes, gender terms, and biological sex terms (male, female, and intersex).
3. Study is quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-method study, including experimental study, quasi-experimental study, or observational study.
4. Studies published in peer-reviewed academic journals in the past decade, from 2014.01.01 to 2024.03.16.

Exclusion Criteria:

1. Not a primary empirical study publication, such as literature review, systematic review, or guidelines.
2. Studies which are not published in peer review academic journal, such as book chapters, conference papers, and dissertations.
3. The Studies' date of publication is prior to 2014.
4. If multiple papers were published based on the same databases/ study, only paper with the most detailed information could be included.

Source of evidence screening and selection All studies searched from databases will be screening in the Covidence system. After removing duplicates automatically by Covidence, two reviewers (JHY and ML) will independently screen all titles and abstracts based on inclusion and exclusion criteria, to identify initial included studies. 20% of these studies will be double-blind full-text screened by two reviewers independently. Any study with unreached consensus or conflict will be discussed with the third reviewer (DS). The remaining studies will be continued in screen full text by one reviewer (JHY). Any ambiguous study will be made final decision by three reviewers.

Data management All studies searched from databases will be managed in the Covidence system. Data of each study will be extracted in an Excel spreadsheet. Following data will be extracted from the included reviews: (1) Basic information: first author's surname, publication year, survey dates, setting and city, study design, sampling method; (2) Population data: population type, sample size, age (Mean with SD, Median, or Range), gender (women, men, or both); (3) Outcome data: exact SRHR outcome item, exact gender related item, item related to SRHR and gender. SRHR item and gender item will be extracted more detailed based on each study.

Reporting results / Analysis of the evidence Because the review will not have restriction on the type of study design, any study design, such as quantitative and qualitative studies, may be included and selected. Therefore, narrative synthesis design will be applied to synthesize all the data of the review. In this design, all included studies will be analysed using the same synthesis method and results will be presented together. Qualitative thematic synthesis will be used to narratively describe the characteristics and data of included studies. This method has three steps: coding of text, developing descriptive themes, and generating analytical themes.

Presentation of the results The results will be presented in relation to the four questions outlined above. In particular the two outcome terms are SRHR and gender.

1. SRHR

The SRHR outcomes will be categorised to seven items based on the WHO Reproductive Health Strategy:

- 1) Helping people realise their desired family size.
- 2) Ensuring the health of pregnant women/girls and their new-born infants (maternal and infant mortality; preventing complications in pregnancy, childbirth, and postnatal period).

- 3) Preventing unsafe abortion.
- 4) Promoting sexual health and well-being (prevention of reproductive tract and sexually transmitted infections; HIV/AIDS; and interventions promoting sexual well-being. Excluding conditions not acquired sexually)
- 5) Promoting SRH in disease outbreaks (prevention of sexual transmission of Zika and Ebola viruses).
- 6) Promoting healthy adolescence for a healthy future.
- 7) Preventing and responding to violence against women/girls (intimate partner violence (IPV); domestic violence and sexual coercion/violence) and harmful practices.

2. Gender

The gender terms will relate to gender identity, gender roles, gender norms, gender differences, gender equality or inequality, gender diversity, , etc. Because there is usually not clear distinction between gender and sex in the Chinese system, and the Chinese words used to describe both are almost the same (xing), there may be instances in some studies where gender is expressed in terms of sex. Therefore, sex terms will also be included in the gender terms. (Gender: Men or women; transgender men or transgender women or non-binary individuals; Sex: male, female, intersex, or other).

Language restriction No language restriction.

Country(ies) involved China.

Keywords Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), Gender, Sex, Higher Educational students, China.

Contributions of each author

Author 1 - Jinhong Yang - Author 1 drafted the manuscript of protocol, searched in the databases, screened and selected articles, and will extract and synthesize all the data, and write the final report of the review.

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Author 2 - Maria Lohan - Author 2 guided the review, including the development of search terms, eligibility criteria, screened the articles, and will provide expertise and guidance in data extraction and synthesis.

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Author 3 - Dirk Schubotz - Author 3 contributed to the development of search terms, eligibility criteria, made the decision of conflict in data screening, and will provide expertise and guidance in data extraction and synthesis.

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