

# Women's Attitudes and Barriers toward Husband's Participation during Childbirth in Makkah Al-Mukarramah Region

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**Abstract:** Chapter II of this document focuses on the topic of spousal involvement during childbirth, with a specific emphasis on the context of Saudi Arabia. The chapter begins with an introduction highlighting the significance of childbirth in marking the beginning of parenthood and its impact on the well-being of both the mother and the baby. It emphasizes the role of external support, particularly from husbands, in enhancing the birthing experience and improving postpartum outcomes.

The method of review is then outlined, detailing the use of the PICOT framework to formulate the research question and a comprehensive search strategy involving databases like PubMed, CINAHL, and Google Scholar. Inclusion and exclusion criteria are established to ensure the selection of relevant studies, and the process of data extraction is explained.

The quality assessment of selected papers is conducted using the criteria developed by Hawker et al. (2002), and all reviewed studies are deemed to have high quality. The results of the search are presented, categorizing them into women's attitudes toward husband's participation, barriers to spousal involvement in childbirth (including individual, cultural, and logistical barriers), and a comparison between Saudi Arabia and other countries.

The discussion section analyzes the findings, highlighting the positive attitudes of women toward spousal participation, perceived barriers such as lack of awareness and cultural norms, and a comparison between Saudi Arabia and other nations in terms of healthcare provider involvement and the type of support husbands offer.

A notable gap in existing studies is identified, particularly in understanding the long-term effects on family dynamics and marital connections post-childbirth. The discussion calls for further research on the perspectives of husbands, the impact of socioeconomic conditions, and the influence of cultural differences on spousal involvement during childbirth.

The chapter concludes with a summary that provides an overview of the key issues discussed, including women's attitudes, spousal roles, and barriers to involvement. Additionally, the chapter introduces the PRISMA Framework, indicating its future use in the systematic review and meta-analysis of healthcare research on this topic

**Keywords:** Women's Attitudes, husband's participation, healthcare provider, childbirth.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Childbirth is a significant event that marks the beginning of parenthood, impacting the physical and mental well-being of both the mother and the baby. The current process is intricate and requires the support of external sources in the form of psychological, physical, and social reinforcement. Out of all these sources, the husband plays a crucial role in offering this kind of support. Recently, there has been increasing attention on the importance of the husband's participation in childbirth.

This is because it has been linked to improved birth outcomes, increased satisfaction with the birthing experience, and better adjustment to the postpartum period for both the mother and father (Al-Malki et al., 2021).

Men's efforts to safeguard maternal health have gained increased recognition in recent years. Studies have demonstrated that involving males in the process of pregnancy and childbirth enhances the well-being of mothers, reduces the likelihood of premature birth, and decreases the occurrence of low birth weight and infant mortality. Male involvement reduces maternal stress through the provision of social, emotional, and financial assistance, as well as contributing to decision-making and providing logistical support (Mohammed et al., 2022).

Additionally, the inclusion of husbands in women's lives fosters a sense of security and protection, encourages their willingness to seek prenatal treatment, and guarantees their active involvement in the duties related to impending parenting. The involvement of men in maternal health can promote healthier spousal relationships and improve the overall welfare of moms (Alharbi et al., 2018).

Several countries, like the United States, Australia, and Sweden, allow husbands to be present during childbirth, enabling them to provide aid and emotional support to their partners. Additionally, these countries provide husbands with preparatory training and counseling during the antenatal time (Alharbi et al., 2018).

In African cultures, it is often recognized that men usually take on the role of decision-makers when it comes to choosing a suitable location for their spouses to give birth. Hence, the proactive involvement of men in maternal healthcare services is an essential element in ensuring the holistic well-being of women and children (Mohammed et al., 2022).

Although birth rates are high in Saudi communities, there is a lack of academic research on the participation of husbands during the childbirth process (Alharbi et al., 2018).

The aim of this study is to enhance the existing literature by incorporating the findings from previous studies conducted both domestically and internationally, specifically focusing on the region of Saudi Arabia. This document shall give a comprehensive summary of the available information concerning the topic at hand while simultaneously highlighting any identifiable gaps that may demand further examination in future research attempts.

## 2. METHOD OF REVIEW

### 2.1 Identifying the research question

The study topic was formulated utilizing the PICOT framework, specifically focusing on the views of pregnant women and the social-cultural hurdles that hinder husbands' participation in delivery within the Makkah Al Mukarramah region.

PICOT	CONTENT	PICOT QUESTION
P	Postpartum women	What are the women's attitudes and barriers to husbands' childbirth involvement?
I	Women's attitude, and barrier toward husband involvement in childbirth	
C	Not applicable	
O	Determine levels of women attitude and barrier toward husband involvement in childbirth	
T	October 2023- March 2024	
Type	Meaning PICOT question	

## 2.2 Search Strategy:

A meticulous search was executed in esteemed databases such as PubMed, CINAHL, and Google Scholar. The utilization of the subsequent keywords and their respective variations encompassed: "females", "attitudes", "perception", "obstacles or barriers", "spouse", "companion", "partner", "Spouse's engagement", "childbirth", "labor and delivery", "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia".

The utilization of Boolean operators, namely AND and OR, was employed to combine the diverse terms. Furthermore, comprehensive research was conducted on the reference lists of the incorporated studies in order to identify supplementary articles that are relevant to the research topic.

## 2.3 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The subject of inclusion and exclusion is a subject of great significance and relevance in contemporary society. It is an area of study that delves into the dynamics of including individuals from diverse backgrounds. The study's selection criteria were as follows:

1. Published in the English language, this piece of work has been disseminated to a broad audience, showcasing my competence in the use of the English language.
2. Research projects conducted at the primary level
3. My research activities were primarily directed toward comprehending the perspectives and hindrances encountered by women in relation to their spouse's involvement in the process of childbirth.
4. The empirical investigation was carried out within the geographical boundaries of Saudi Arabia or other nations of similar contexts.
5. Published within the esteemed timeframe of 2013-2023.
6. Scholarly articles that have undergone a rigorous evaluation process by experts in the field.

The disqualification criteria included:

1. studies conducted in languages other than English.
2. Secondary research investigations (e.g., comprehensive examinations of existing literature, methodical evaluations)
3. Research endeavors that should have prioritized the examination of women's perspectives and impediments regarding their spouse's involvement in the process of childbirth.
4. pre-2013 studies
5. Conference abstracts, editorials, letters, and commentaries, which are essential components of scholarly discourse. These forms of academic communication serve as platforms for researchers and scholars to share their insights, opinions, and findings with the wider academic community.
6. Conference abstracts provide concise summaries of research papers or presentations that are to be.

## 3. EXTRACTING THE DATA

This stage involves extracting relevant information from the available literature. The process involves gathering all pertinent and noteworthy data from the incorporated studies, with the objective of addressing the current research problem (Coughlan & Cronin, 2016).

Data extraction is a method used to methodically gather and record relevant information on the features of a study, the methodology used to conduct it, and the results obtained. As stated by Coughlan and Cronin (2016), using this component has the potential to reduce bias and improve the dependability and accuracy of the results. To effectively investigate the research topics of the review, it is crucial to incorporate pertinent variables into the extraction process (Systematic Reviews, n.d.). In this current review, the researcher autonomously gathered all relevant information, such as publication details, study goals, study characteristics, and main results.

#### 4. QUALITY ASSESSMENT

The assessment technique devised by Hawker et al. (2002) was used to independently evaluate the quality of the nineteen papers that met the inclusion criteria of the review. The instrument created by Hawker et al. (2002) is designed to assess various components, including abstract and title, introduction and objectives, methodology and data, sampling, data analysis, ethics and bias, findings/results, transferability, implications, and utility.

The total score is 36 points, with each individual aspect receiving a score of 4 points. The scores range from 1 (representing very poor quality) to 4 (representing good quality). An evaluation of the research's overall quality can be determined by combining the scores of the nine distinct items.

Studies with scores ranging from 9 to 18 are regarded as having poor quality, while those with values ranging from 18 to 27 are deemed to have good quality. Studies with scores between 28 and 36 indicate high quality.

After conducting a rigorous study of the research contained in this review, it was determined that all of the examined papers exhibit a high degree of quality.

#### 5. RESULT OF THE SEARCH

This section aims to show the findings obtained from a thorough study of selected research about women's attitudes and barriers towards their husbands' active involvement in the delivery process. The research endeavors were evenly dispersed investigations done throughout the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with an additional study carried out in several overseas locations. The research endeavors utilized a variety of approaches such as surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions, with sample sizes ranging from 50 to 500 individuals. The findings are methodically arranged and presented in the following subcategories.

##### 5.1 Women's Attitudes Toward Husband's Participation

This investigation aimed to delve into women's perspectives regarding their spouses' involvement in various aspects of their lives, particularly focusing on husbands' roles during childbirth. The primary objective was to gain a comprehensive understanding of women's viewpoints and preferences concerning their partners' active participation in the delivery room.

Women in Saudi Arabia and other countries consistently exhibited positive attitudes toward their husbands' involvement in the childbirth process. A notable study conducted by Al-Mandeel et al. (2013), involving 402 female participants from Saudi Arabia, revealed a compelling 94.5% agreement that involving spouses in the childbirth process is beneficial for both themselves and their partners. In a separate survey by Xue et al. (2018), 83% of pregnant women in the United States expressed a strong preference for their spouses to be present during delivery.

The positive sentiments were often attributed to the psychological support and comforting presence that husbands could provide. While the existing literature offers valuable insights into women's perspectives, there is a noticeable gap in studies exploring husbands' attitudes and willingness to actively participate in the childbirth process. To address this gap, future research could focus on understanding the viewpoints of husbands, their expectations, and the factors influencing their roles during childbirth. In the meantime, drawing on studies in diverse cultural contexts, such as the research conducted by Lewis et al. (2015) in Nepal and Guatemala, provides evidence that women generally believe spouses possess the ability to offer crucial emotional support during childbirth.

##### 5.2 The barrier to Spousal Involvement in childbirth

Despite the commendable ideas and beliefs that women have demonstrated, there are still perceived barriers to the participation of their partners in the childbirth process. These obstacles have been adequately acknowledged in both the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and numerous other countries. They can be accurately categorized into specific groups, specifically individual, cultural, and logistical barriers.

###### 5.2.1 Challenges at the Individual Level

Several studies undertaken in Saudi Arabia and other countries have identified distinct individual obstacles that impede advancement. These hurdles include fear of the unknown and concerns about how one's partner may react. A recent academic study conducted by (Yasser Abulreesh et al., 2021) in Saudi Arabia revealed that female participants expressed apprehension about the possibility of acquiring infections and feeling discomfort if their spouses were present during birthing.

A study conducted by Dumbaugh et al. (2014) in Ghana revealed that several women showed concern about how their husbands might react to the birthing experience. As a result, some women have stated that they prefer to have a female midwife present during the birthing process instead of their husbands. They are uncertain about how their husbands will respond and would rather have a midwife who is competent and non-judgmental.

### **5.2.2 Cultural Barriers**

Intercultural communication is significantly hindered by cultural obstacles. These barriers emerge as a result of disparities in cultural norms, attitudes, beliefs, and practices. Cultural views and attitudes towards birthing were identified as barriers to the husband's engagement. Women in Saudi Arabia are expected to prioritize seclusion during childbirth according to cultural norms.

The cultural tradition, deeply rooted in custom, has the potential to hinder husbands' active involvement in this significant life event. According to the findings of the scholarly research conducted by Alharbi et al. (2018), there is a common belief that men's participation in providing emergency obstetric care for their partners is limited. The study highlights that, within this cultural context, men tend to play a restricted role in addressing emergency obstetric situations. Despite these limitations, the research underscores that women do receive substantial support during pregnancy, evident in financial assistance and aid with household chores.

A study conducted in South Africa (Chalmers, 1988) revealed that a significant proportion of Pedi females maintained adherence to the customary and cultural norm of male participation in birthing. Sharma et al. (2018) conducted research on the factors influencing the level of domestic support provided by husbands in rural lowland Nepal. They discovered that male involvement is culturally discouraged due to significant barriers such as social pressure, limited awareness, and gender-specific challenges in spousal communication.

### **5.2.3 Transport Barriers**

The identification of logistical hurdles was predominantly observed in investigations undertaken in diverse international contexts. The difficulties included the professional responsibilities of couples and a lack of awareness or knowledge about the childbirth process.

A study conducted in Rwanda (Kalisa & Malande, 2016) revealed that only 42% of women believed that their husbands could participate in the delivery process due to their work commitments.

## **5.3 Comparison between Saudi Arabia and Other Countries**

This section aims to conduct a comprehensive comparison between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and several other countries, utilizing peer-reviewed analyses and meticulous research methods. The objective is to explore both the parallels and differences across social, economic, political, and cultural aspects by employing a rigorous and systematic approach.

After an in-depth examination of research conducted in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and various other nations, distinct patterns have emerged. When focusing on Saudi Arabia, researchers have frequently observed the presence of cultural and individual obstacles. In contrast, studies conducted in other countries have predominantly identified logistical obstacles (Alshammari et al., 2019). This implies that while cultural and individual factors often pose challenges in Saudi Arabia, logistical barriers take precedence in other countries under consideration. The comparative analysis aims to shed light on these nuanced differences, providing valuable insights into the diverse contexts shaping attitudes and practices related to spousal involvement during childbirth.

## **6. DISCUSSION**

This review will thoroughly analyze the findings derived from chosen research regarding the attitudes and challenges faced by women in regard to their spouse's involvement during childbirth. The research was conducted in Saudi Arabia and several other countries to have a comprehensive understanding of the subject topic. Furthermore, this discussion will involve the scrutiny of subgroup analysis.

### **6.1 Women's attitudes towards husband's participation**

The research included in this study consistently found that a substantial percentage of women displayed positive attitudes regarding the participation of their husbands during childbirth. A thorough examination carried out in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia unveiled a significant discovery.

A study found that 90.1% of women strongly agreed that their spouse's presence during labor and delivery is extremely important (Beckerle, 2023).

A scientific study conducted by (Alharbi et al., 2018) revealed that a considerable number of female participants considered the assistance provided by their spouses during childbirth to be an essential aspect. Furthermore, Alharbi discovered that Saudi women perceived their partners' active participation as a source of emotional assistance and facilitator of decision-making and communication with healthcare professionals (Alharbi et al., 2018). The aforementioned conclusions were additionally substantiated by investigations conducted in multiple countries.

Moreover, the studies have revealed that women feel a profound sense of appreciation towards their life partners for their consistent support and encouragement during the entire process of childbirth, including the pre-labor phase, the labor process, and the post-delivery period. In Saudi Arabia, it was noticed that women demonstrated a direct relationship between their husbands being present throughout labor and delivery, and their capacity to properly cope with discomfort and reduce fear.

Similarly, a distinct inquiry carried out in the United States by (Nasiri et al., 2021) revealed that husbands demonstrated their support during the labor process by administering soothing physical interventions, such as providing massages, while simultaneously encouraging their partners to practice deep breathing exercises and adopt a state of relaxation. The findings indicate that women view their partner's participation as a way to offer assistance and comfort during the birthing experience.

## **6.2 Perceived barriers to husband's participation**

Although women generally had positive attitudes about their spouses being actively involved, the simultaneous research uncovered certain perceived obstacles that hindered their level of participation. The primary barrier discovered in both Saudi Arabia and other countries was the insufficient awareness and preparedness demonstrated by males in general regarding the complex process of birthing.

According to the academic research conducted by Al-Mandeeel et al. (2013), a large majority of Saudi women have shown a preference for their husbands to actively participate in attending childbirth classes. The reason for this inclination is to promote a thorough comprehension of their individual roles and duties throughout the delivery process.

A recent scientific study conducted by Nasiri et al. (2021) in Iran found that men who participated in childbirth education classes showed increased levels of involvement and support during the labor and delivery process.

Another impediment that was recognized pertains to cultural and societal conventions, particularly in conservative cultures like Saudi Arabia. A recent scientific study conducted by (Al-Malki et al., 2021) found that some husbands were prohibited from entering the delivery room due to cultural and religious reasons.

This occurrence was also noted in culturally conservative cultures, where husbands were severely forbidden from being present during labor due to strongly rooted cultural views (Maluka & Peneza, 2018).

However, scholarly inquiries conducted in societies characterized by a higher level of liberalism. Studies have shown that cultural barriers have less importance, making it easier for husbands to be there during the significant event of birthing, increasing the chances of their presence. Studies conducted in low- and middle-income countries indicate that there is still a lack of male involvement in maternal and child health, despite ongoing efforts to enhance it (Maluka & Peneza, 2018).

Despite the well-known impediments to male partners' involvement in mother and child healthcare, there is a scarcity of research on local attitudes towards male involvement in prenatal and postpartum care. The main objective of this study was to examine the attitudes of Tanzanians toward male involvement in pregnancy and childbirth (Maluka & Peneza, 2018).

Research indicates that women have a preference for attending clinics alongside their partners, particularly during their initial antenatal care consultation. Men exhibited reluctance to assume a more proactive part in prenatal care and the process of labor and delivery. Respondents perceived men as the main breadwinners and as having the major obligation to financially support their partners throughout pregnancy and childbirth. The primary obstacles to male engagement were conventional gender roles within households, apprehension towards HIV testing, and an unsupportive atmosphere within healthcare institutions. The study's results indicate that the location of health facilities and societal expectations of gender roles acted as obstacles to male involvement (Maluka & Peneza, 2018).

District health administrators should intensify their efforts to improve gender relations, promote men's awareness of their social and familial obligations in the context of reproductive health, and provide services that are accommodating to males (Maluka & Peneza, 2018).

### 6.3 Comparison between Saudi Arabia and other countries

While conducting a comprehensive analysis, it was observed that the research findings mainly indicated favorable dispositions towards the active involvement of husbands.

However, it is essential to acknowledge that specific differences emerged when comparing the context of Saudi Arabia with that of other nations. One significant disparity was in the active participation of healthcare practitioners during the process of birth. According to scholarly research conducted in Saudi Arabia, it has been observed that husbands play a significantly more significant proactive role in the process of decision-making and engaging in effective communication with healthcare providers (Alemayehu & Meskele, 2017).

The circumstance may be attributed to the rigorous implementation of gender segregation within the healthcare framework of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, wherein male healthcare practitioners are prohibited from providing medical care to their female counterparts. In contrast, it is noteworthy to mention that in nations such as Iran and Tanzania, characterized by a greater degree of gender role flexibility, healthcare providers exhibited increased engagement in the intricate process of childbirth (Nasiri et al., 2021).

However, another discernible distinction lay in the extent of spousal assistance rendered throughout the arduous process of parturition. The findings of research conducted in Saudi Arabia indicate that husbands in that particular context tend to offer a greater degree of emotional and physical support. Conversely, studies conducted in various other countries have revealed that husbands are more actively engaged in providing practical support, which includes tasks such as organizing transportation and maintaining communication with family members (Al-Mandeel et al., 2013) & (Alharbi et al., 2018).

This phenomenon may be attributed to the cultural and societal norms prevalent in Saudi Arabia, wherein there exists an expectation for men to demonstrate a higher degree of emotional expression.

### 6.4 Gap in the Studies:

Regarding the long-term ramifications and repercussions on the family dynamic and marital connection, there is a noteworthy gap in the substantial research on women's opinions of spousal participation during childbirth (Minagawa, 2023). There is little study exploring how these experiences affect relationships and family dynamics post-childbirth, particularly in a variety of cultural and societal situations, even if previous studies provide insight into immediate views and attitudes. It is crucial to comprehend how spousal engagement during childbirth affects family responsibilities and relationships after the birthing process.

Studies that follow couples over time and monitor their interactions, communication, and responsibility sharing after giving birth may be able to shed light on the long-lasting impacts of childbirth. Within the current study landscape, factors including strengthened bonds changed gender roles, and the effect on marital satisfaction are still largely unexplored (Minagawa, 2023).

Additionally, the bulk of recent research has mostly focused on the viewpoint of the woman, leaving a huge gap in knowledge regarding the husband's perspective and any difficulties they may have during this vital phase (Thomas et al., 2017). To gain a deeper knowledge of spousal relations during childbirth, it would be beneficial to investigate the experiences, expectations, and views of husbands. Additionally, there is a dearth of research that takes the impact of socioeconomic conditions on spousal involvement into account as a whole. A comprehensive understanding of the forces at work would include how monetary security, healthcare accessibility, and cultural norms interact to affect attitudes and levels of engagement.

The research on the effects of cultural differences on spouse engagement during childbirth is sparse, despite the fact that some studies examine attitudes and practices between other nations (Lowe, 2017). The comprehension of how other cultures influence the delivery experience for couples would be further improved by a more thorough examination of cultural quirks and societal expectations. Filling up these knowledge gaps would result in a more thorough understanding

of the complex facets of spouse involvement during childbirth, which would then inform policies and interventions to improve family dynamics and general well-being after childbirth.

### 7. SUMMARY

This chapter provides a thorough overview of the many facets surrounding women's perceptions of marital involvement during childbirth and sets the contextual framework for the present study. The review delves into a number of crucial issues, including women's attitudes toward their spouses' involvement, the degree of husbands' involvement in various aspects of family life and domestic duties, and the significant obstacles impeding spousal involvement in childbirth.

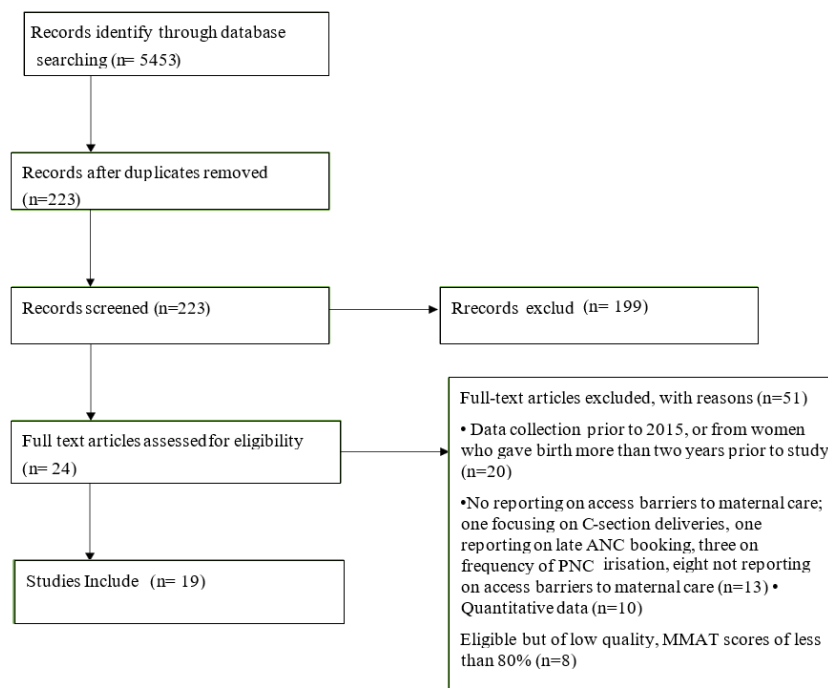
The viewpoints and actions seen in Saudi Arabia are contrasted with those in other countries in this chapter's comparative examination. Understanding the dynamics of familial relationships and the changing roles of husbands in modern countries requires a thorough investigation of women's perspectives toward their partners' presence during childbirth. It provides important insights into the practical, emotional, and psychological assistance that women look for and value from their partners during childbirth. Equally important is comprehending how spouses participate in different aspects of family life and home duties. Understanding the altering dynamics of gender roles and home obligations, as well as how these roles interact with the assistance that spouses offer during childbirth, is part of this.

Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize and examine the obstacles that prevent spousal involvement in childbirth. This includes institutional, cultural, and personal elements that restrict or encourage husband involvement, eventually affecting how the woman and her partner experience childbirth. The comparative analysis offers important insights into cultural norms and societal expectations that influence spouse engagement during childbirth in addition to giving a wider perspective by taking into account international opinions.

This review intends to emphasize the distinctive sociocultural factors that shape the attitudes and roles of husbands during childbirth by comparing Saudi Arabian practices and attitudes to those in other countries. In summary, this chapter sets the stage for a thorough investigation of attitudes toward, involvement in, and barriers to spousal participation in childbirth.

### 8. PRISMA FRAMEWORK

For performing and reporting systematic reviews and meta-analyses in healthcare research, the PRISMA Framework is frequently used. This method is clear and organized for finding, selecting, and assessing relevant papers to address a research issue. This scoping review will utilize the PRISMA Framework to process and report results.





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