



## Review Article

# Relationship Between the Use of Cyberspace and Cultural Globalization on the Tendency Toward Childbearing: A Narrative Review Study

Fatemeh Aghaei Meybodi<sup>1,2</sup>, Mahdie Arab Bafrani<sup>1</sup>, Maryam Khalili<sup>1</sup>, Hossein Akhondi<sup>3</sup>, Zahra Beygi<sup>2,3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Student Research Committee, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, Isfahan, Iran

<sup>2</sup>Department of Nursing and Midwifery, Meybod Branch, Islamic Azad University, Meybod, Iran

<sup>3</sup>Center for Healthcare Data Modeling, Department of Biostatistics and Epidemiology, School of Public Health, Shahid Sadoughi University of Medical Sciences, Yazd, Iran

## Abstract

**Introduction:** Cultural globalization and cyberspace growth are having an enormous effect on people's lives in today's world. Cyberspace, through social networks, online media, and digital content, allows not only communication but also the transfer of cultures. Therefore, this review study focuses on the trend of childbearing influenced by these two factors.

**Methods:** Scientific studies published in reputable databases, including PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and JSTOR, were examined to compile this review article.

**Results:** The findings revealed that cyberspace and cultural globalization have multidimensional impacts on the tendency toward childbearing, which may vary depending on age, gender, education level, and geographical location. Young people may be more influenced by online content and global cultures, leading to different attitudes compared to older generations. The use of cyberspace can alter childbearing-related attitudes. Moreover, cyberspace promotes individualistic and consumer-oriented values. Additionally, it introduces new values and attitudes to users through the dissemination of diverse content and international connections. As one of the primary tools of cultural globalization, cyberspace also plays a crucial role in disseminating diverse cultures.

**Conclusion:** Generally, this review article clarified that cyberspace and cultural globalization might significantly affect the tendency toward childbearing by transmitting new values and attitudes.

**Keywords:** Cyberspace, Cultural globalization, Tendency toward childbearing

## \*Corresponding Author:

Zahra Beygi,  
Email: [zbeygi969@gmail.com](mailto:zbeygi969@gmail.com)

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## Introduction

In recent decades, globalization and advancements in information and communication technologies have profoundly transformed the social and cultural structures of societies. Cyberspace and the internet play a pivotal role in this process by providing easy access to information and facilitating international communication (1). Despite growing attention to these global shifts, the mechanisms through which digital environments and global cultural flows influence family-related attitudes, especially childbearing, remain insufficiently theorized and inconsistently understood (2). These changes are particularly evident in areas such as attitudes and behaviors related to family and childbearing. The extensive use of social networks and other digital platforms has enabled an unprecedented exchange of cultures and values. This cultural exchange, in turn, can have significant impacts

on individual attitudes and decisions, including the inclination to have children. Some studies suggest that individualistic and consumerist cultures, which rapidly spread through cyberspace, may lead to a reduced desire for childbearing (1, 2). Exposure to heterogeneous global value systems introduces new models of family life and reproductive decision-making, thereby expanding the diversity of fertility attitudes across populations. Additionally, exposure to diverse cultures through the internet can result in greater variety in attitudes and decisions related to childbearing (3).

In this review, cyberspace refers to digital communication environments, including social networking platforms, online communities, and media-sharing ecosystems. Cultural globalization denotes the diffusion of cultural norms, lifestyles, and ideologies across societies. In addition, childbearing tendency

is conceptualized as fertility intention, encompassing attitudes, motivations, and preferences regarding having children (4, 5). Accordingly, clarifying these concepts is essential for situating the current evidence within a coherent analytical framework. The impacts of cyberspace and cultural globalization on the inclination toward childbearing can be analyzed from several perspectives. Firstly, cyberspace, through social media and informational websites, disseminates new information and attitudes about family and childbearing. This information can play a significant role in shaping attitudes and decisions related to having children (5). Further, digital media heavily emphasizing individual achievement and consumerist lifestyles may alter life-course priorities in ways that weaken fertility intentions (6). Secondly, cultural globalization through cyberspace can cause widespread cultural changes, probably influencing family patterns and childbearing. Studies have shown that individualistic cultures have a lower tendency toward childbearing, and these cultures are rapidly spreading through cyberspace (7, 8). In contrast, collectivist cultures, which place greater emphasis on family and childbearing, may experience different effects (9). Thirdly, cyberspace can serve as an important source of social support. This support can remarkably contribute to decision-making about having children. According to some studies, social support through cyberspace can help reduce stress and anxiety associated with childbearing, leading to an increased willingness to have children. Furthermore, interpersonal validation, shared experiences, and informational support available in online communities may influence reproductive decision-making through mechanisms distinct from those of cultural value diffusion (10, 11).

Moreover, the socioeconomic impacts of cultural globalization and the use of cyberspace are significant. On the one hand, economic globalization and access to global markets can create new economic opportunities, which may positively influence decisions related to childbearing (12, 13). On the other hand, economic concerns and the high cost of living, exacerbated by economic globalization and consumerist culture, can reduce the willingness to have children (14, 15).

Given these complex and occasionally contradictory concepts, a systematic synthesis of current evidence is needed to clarify how cyberspace and cultural globalization jointly shape fertility attitudes across different sociocultural contexts. Accordingly, this review addresses the following research question:

*How do cyberspace use and cultural globalization influence fertility intentions and attitudes toward childbearing?*

More precisely, this review article seeks to determine the impact of cyberspace usage and cultural globalization on the tendency toward childbearing. By reviewing various studies in this field, it is aimed to achieve a better understanding of the complex relationship between these factors and analyze current trends in this domain.

## Materials and Methods

This review study analyzed previous studies on the impact of cyberspace and cultural globalization on the tendency toward childbearing. Data were collected by searching reputable scientific databases, such as PubMed, Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and JSTOR, as well as reviewing sources and reports from international organizations, such as the World Health Organization and the United Nations. A combination of keywords was used for database searches, including:

- “Cyberspace” and “Childbearing”
- “Cultural Globalization” and “Tendency toward Childbearing”
- “Social Networks” and “Childbearing”
- “Consumerist Culture” and “Family”

In addition, a multi-step search and screening process was applied to ensure methodological transparency. The initial search yielded 214 records across databases. After removing duplicates ( $n = 58$ ), 156 titles and abstracts were screened, and based on predefined criteria, 97 records were excluded at the abstract level. Then, full texts of 59 articles were assessed for eligibility, from which 27 were excluded due to lack of relevance, insufficient methodological clarity, or absence of fertility-related outcomes. Ultimately, 32 articles met all the inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis.

## Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

### Inclusion Criteria:

Studies examining the impact of cyberspace usage and cultural globalization (1), published between 2000 and 2024 (2), and employing quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods (3) were included in this review.

### Exclusion Criteria:

Articles were excluded from the investigation if they were written in languages other than English or Persian or addressed topics unrelated to cyberspace or cultural globalization. Articles without full-text access, opinion pieces, and editorials were excluded as well.

## Quality Appraisal of Included Studies

Following the selection and screening phases, the 32 included articles underwent a qualitative appraisal prior to data synthesis. This process was essential to ascertain the validity and reliability of the evidence integrated into this review.

Acknowledging the narrative scope of this review, the quality assessment was driven by analytical and critical criteria, focusing on three principal dimensions:

## Methodological Clarity and Reporting

The transparency and precision with which primary studies reported their research objectives were evaluated, along with detailing their methodology, specifying data collection instruments, and presenting the findings.

### *Design-Question Congruence*

The appropriateness of each study's design (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods) in addressing its stated research questions was assessed, and particular attention was given to confirming the presence of satisfactory psychometric properties (i.e., reliability and validity) for measurement instruments (e.g., scales and questionnaires) employed in the original research.

### *Evidential Rigor and Risk of Bias*

The quality of the reasoning and the strength of the evidence supporting the reported conclusions in each article underwent critical examination. Moreover, studies exhibiting a high risk of bias or significant methodological limitations were identified, and their findings were incorporated into the final synthesis with appropriate caution and qualification.

This rigorous critical appraisal framework not only facilitated the synthesis of findings but also ensured that the strengths and weaknesses of the existing literature on the impact of cyberspace and cultural globalization on childbearing intentions were adequately reflected. The outcome of this qualitative assessment informs the subsequent discussion, providing a comprehensive and evidence-based analysis. The specific implications derived from this appraisal are further elaborated in the Discussion section.

## **Results**

### *The Impact of Cyberspace on Attitudes and Behaviors Related to Childbearing*

According to numerous studies cyberspace use significantly shapes attitudes and behaviors related to childbearing. Engagement with social networks can alter expectations surrounding family life. Furthermore, exposure to achievement-oriented and consumerist digital content is associated with lower fertility intentions. Similarly, Bernardi and Klärner concluded that extensive use of social media increases individualistic and consumerist values among young people, thereby reducing the tendency toward childbearing. These patterns are reinforced across multiple studies, implying that digitally mediated individualism and materialism consistently correlate with diminished reproductive intentions (6, 9, 16).

### *The Effect of Cultural Globalization on the Tendency Toward Childbearing*

Research also demonstrates that cultural globalization reshapes fertility-related norms. Qian and Hu indicated that global value diffusion leads to transformative shifts in attitudes toward family and reproduction, particularly in societies rapidly adopting modern and individualistic ideals (3). Hofstede (7) and Triandis (8) similarly reported that collectivist value systems, traditionally supportive of childbearing, may weaken under global cultural pressures. Conversely, exposure to diverse global cultures introduces alternative models of family formation, increasing

heterogeneity in fertility decision-making (13, 16).

### *The Role of Social Support Through Cyberspace*

Social support is one of the key factors that can influence decisions related to childbearing. Gleeson et al (10) and Hampton and Wellman (11) found that cyberspace can serve as a significant source of social support, helping to reduce stress and anxiety associated with childbearing, leading to an increased willingness to have children. This supportive function may counterbalance some of the negative effects of individualistic digital content and contribute to more favorable fertility intentions (16).

### *The Economic Impacts of Globalization and Cyberspace Usage*

Economic globalization introduces both opportunities and constraints relevant to fertility decisions. Economic globalization, through expanded access to international markets, cross-border trade, and integration into global production systems, can generate a complex set of opportunities and constraints that shape fertility decisions in non-linear and context-dependent ways. On the one hand, increased export capacity, particularly to high-income markets, may stimulate economic growth, improve employment prospects, and enhance household financial stability. These conditions can reduce economic pressure, strengthen future outlooks, and, in some settings, create a more favorable environment for childbearing. On the other hand, certain components of globalization (e.g., foreign direct investment, labor-market flexibilization, and structural dependence on external capital or debt) frequently introduce heightened economic uncertainty, income inequality, and job instability. A substantial body of comparative demographic research indicates that such forms of insecurity tend to suppress fertility intentions, delay family formation, and weaken traditional fertility norms. Consequently, the demographic impact of economic globalization is inherently dual and contingent, shaped not only by the specific pathways through which countries engage with the global economy but also by their institutional capacities and prevailing cultural and ideational frameworks surrounding family and reproduction (17, 18).

By comparing the findings of various articles, several key results can be obtained:

### *The Effect of Individualistic and Consumerist Culture on the Tendency Toward Childbearing*

Rising individualism and consumerist cultural orientations, typically disseminated via digital media and globalization, contribute to lower fertility by reshaping values, life-goals, and social norms. For example, evolutionary-demographic literature on low-fertility transitions posits that cultural change, driven by social learning, changing status hierarchies, and diffusion of new values, plays a central role in decreased fertility across societies (19). From this perspective, as individual autonomy, self-expression, and consumption-oriented lifestyles become more widespread, the perceived benefits

of parenthood may be revalued relative to alternative forms of self-fulfillment, thereby diminishing preferences for large families or early childbearing. The diffusion of low-fertility norms through social networks, especially among non-kin peers sharing urban, educated, and individualistic lifestyles, further accelerates this cultural shift (20). Moreover, empirical evidence suggests a negative association between individualist cultural values and fertility. In one cross-national analysis, higher degrees of individualism were correlated with increased gender equality, higher female education and greater labor force participation, and thus lower fertility rates (21).

Additionally, social-network approaches highlight that support for pro-natal norms weakens as individuals substitute kin-based networks with more friend-oriented or non-kin-oriented networks (20). Nevertheless, the relationship is not strictly deterministic. The authors of a key review (on the cultural evolution of fertility decline) caution that fertility decline proceeds through origin, spread, and maintenance phases, each potentially driven by different causal economic, institutional, or cultural processes (12).

### ***The Economic Impacts of Globalization on Childbearing Decisions***

#### ***Dependent Effects on Fertility Behavior***

Several studies indicated that integration into global markets can improve economic performance, expand employment opportunities, and enhance household income stability, factors that may support family formation. For example, Aassve et al found that exposure to global economic integration is associated with improved living standards in some middle-income countries, which can mitigate financial constraints surrounding childbearing (22). Similarly, Dreher et al demonstrated that economic globalization can stimulate economic growth and reduce macroeconomic volatility, potentially creating more favorable conditions for fertility (23). Nonetheless, other studies highlighted the opposite dynamic, representing that globalization may heighten economic pressures that discourage childbearing. Research by Kreyenfeld and Comolli revealed that rising living costs, job insecurity, and increased labor-market competition—often intensified by global economic integration—reduce fertility intentions, particularly among young adults (24, 25). Additionally, consumerist cultural norms, which frequently accompany globalization, have been linked to delayed marriage, postponement of parenthood, and lower desired family size (24, 25). These findings suggest that economic globalization does not uniformly raise or lower fertility; in other words, its effects depend on how global market forces interact with national labor-market institutions, welfare systems, and household economic security.

### ***The Role of Online Social Support in Childbearing Intentions***

Research evidence indicates that receiving online social support can strengthen attitudes toward fertility. Studies

by Ellison et al have shown that supportive interactions on social networks reduce stress related to family decisions while increasing feelings of self-efficacy in parenting (26). The findings of Hampton and Wellman also demonstrated that online communities can foster more positive attitudes toward childbearing by strengthening social ties while reducing feelings of isolation (27). Similarly, reports from the World Health Organization have emphasized that social support, including digital support, is an important determinant of pre-fertility mental health and can increase the desire to have children (28).

### ***The Impact of Cultural Globalization on Changes in Family Values***

Cultural globalization has brought about profound changes in family values and patterns of fertility. Inglehart and Baker's seminal study of value shifts shows that societies that are increasingly exposed to modern, individualistic values are gradually moving away from traditional patterns of fertility (29). These changes are frequently accompanied by increased individual choice, an emphasis on self-actualization, and a decline in the acceptance of collectivist norms about childbearing. Likewise, international evidence suggests that this value shift is more pronounced in countries that are globalizing more rapidly.

### ***Diversity in Attitudes and Decisions Related to Childbearing due to Cultural Globalization***

In addition to changing reproductive norms, cultural globalization has also led to a diversity of attitudes and decisions related to childbearing. Cross-cultural studies have shown that exposure to different values, lifestyles, and family models has increased the diversity of reproductive choices, including delaying childbearing, choosing not to have children, and adopting new patterns of parenting (30, 31). This diversity is observed not only between countries but also within a society. Moreover, it is partly due to individuals' access to globalized lifestyles and multi-layered cultural identities.

### ***Digital Media Exposure and Encountering Diverse Cultures Through Cyberspace***

Digital media consumption and exposure to different cultures in cyberspace can influence individuals' attitudes toward childbearing. The findings of Chan and Prendergast revealed that frequent exposure to consumerist media content can reinforce materialistic values and reduce the desire to have children (32). On the other hand, as the United Nations' reports have shown that access to multicultural perspectives online can lead to a rethinking of family-related values and decisions (33). This exposure may weaken fertility norms in some individuals while strengthening the motivation to have children in others, particularly through positive role modeling. Thus, the effect of media and the digital space is dual and depends on the type of content (32, 33).

## Discussion

Although several studies demonstrated that exposure to digital media reduces fertility intentions, this effect predominantly appears among younger, urban, and higher-educated populations, indicating that demographic characteristics moderate the influence of cyberspace. There are contradictory findings in this regard across geographic regions. While European and North American studies emphasize value-driven mechanisms, research from East Asia and the Middle East points to structural pressures, suggesting that cultural globalization differently interacts with local socio-economic systems. A comparison of studies indicates that statistical associations alone cannot explain the complexity of reproductive decision-making, underscoring the importance of integrating interpretive analyses to capture value negotiation within globalized digital environments. Furthermore, studies informed by economic globalization paradigms highlight the role of material constraints and shifting opportunity structures, whereas research grounded in cultural globalization theory underlines the reconfiguration of identities, value orientations, and life-course aspirations. Collectively, these strands of evidence confirm that fertility intentions emerge from the dynamic interplay between structural forces and culturally mediated meaning-making processes (34-38).

The findings of this review study indicated that cyberspace usage and cultural globalization have diverse and complex effects on the tendency toward childbearing. By providing access to extensive information and communications, cyberspace has unprecedentedly facilitated the exchange of cultures and values. These changes can influence attitudes and decisions related to family and childbearing.

One of the key findings of this study was the impact of social media and other digital platforms on attitudes and behaviors related to childbearing. A couple of studies have shown that consuming media content focused on individual achievements and consumerism can reduce the willingness to have children (4, 6, 10). This is particularly evident in societies where individualistic and consumerist values are rapidly spreading (1, 2). These findings imply that cyberspace can serve as a powerful tool in shaping social attitudes and behaviors.

On the other hand, cultural globalization also has significant effects on the tendency toward childbearing and leads to profound changes in values and attitudes related to family and childbearing. These changes are particularly evident in societies rapidly adopting modern and individualistic values (3, 7, 9). However, exposure to diverse cultures through cyberspace can increase the diversity of attitudes and decisions related to childbearing (7).

Another factor that could positively influence the childbearing trend was social support gained through cyberspace. Indeed, studies have reported that cyberspace can be an important source in providing social support to alleviate stress and anxiety associated with childbearing,

thereby increasing willingness.

The economic impacts of globalization also require special attention. Economic globalization can create new opportunities that may increase the willingness to have children (12, 13). Nonetheless, economic concerns and the high cost of living, exacerbated by economic globalization and consumerist culture, can decrease the tendency toward childbearing (14, 15). This duality highlights that the economic effects of globalization on the tendency toward childbearing may depend on the specific economic and cultural conditions of each society. Cyberspace influences fertility intentions through both value-driven (individualism and consumerism) and support-oriented (emotional and informational online support) mechanisms. The model proposed in this review integrates cultural globalization with digital media exposure, suggesting that global value diffusion interacts with online environments to reshape fertility-related norms, thereby producing heterogeneous outcomes across different socio-cultural groups (38-40).

This conceptual framework emphasizes three core mechanisms: (1) value transformation through globalized digital content, (2) perceived economic and lifestyle pressures amplified by online consumer culture, and (3) compensatory social support emerging from virtual networks. This represents that the effect of cyberspace is contingent upon cultural context; in individualistic settings, it reinforces autonomy-driven fertility postponement, whereas in more collectivist societies, it may generate hybrid attitudes that blend traditional family expectations with globalized lifestyles. Based on evidence, the influence of cyberspace and cultural globalization on fertility intentions is neither linear nor uniform but emerges from the interaction of global value systems, digital communication patterns, and local socio-cultural structures. This integrated synthesis moves beyond descriptive summaries and demonstrates that reproductive attitudes are increasingly shaped by hybrid value frameworks formed at the intersection of local traditions and global digital influences (34, 41, 42).

## Conclusion

This review revealed that cyberspace and cultural globalization exert multifaceted and occasionally contradictory influences on fertility attitudes and childbearing tendencies. Digital environments typically amplify individualistic and consumer-oriented values that may reduce interest in parenthood while simultaneously offering informational and emotional support that can ease concerns about childbearing. Cultural globalization follows a similar dual pattern, diffusing autonomy-centered norms that may weaken pronatalist expectations while also exposing individuals to diverse family models that can reshape or reinforce fertility aspirations.

Overall, the synthesis confirmed that these factors operate through several underlying mechanisms, including value transformation, perceived economic pressures, shifting gender expectations, and the formation

of online social capital. Accordingly, understanding these mechanisms helps move beyond simple associations, providing a clearer theoretical explanation for variations in fertility intentions across different societies.

The findings highlight important implications for policymakers and researchers. Digital platforms may be leveraged to provide evidence-based reproductive information and foster supportive communities for prospective parents. Thus, future studies should adopt more rigorous and theory-driven methodologies, particularly longitudinal and cross-cultural designs, to examine how digital engagement and global cultural flows interact with socioeconomic structures and national family policies. By recognizing both the opportunities and challenges embedded within cyberspace and globalization, more effective strategies can be developed to address contemporary fertility trends.

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### Authors' Contribution

Conceptualization: Fatemeh Aghaei Meybodi and Zahra Beygi  
Data Curation: Mahdie Arab Bafrani and Maryam Khalili  
Formal Analysis: Fatemeh Aghaei Meybodi, Mahdie Arab Bafrani, Maryam Khalili, Hossein Akhondi, and Zahra Beygi  
Investigation: Fatemeh Aghaei Meybodi, Mahdie Arab Bafrani, Maryam Khalili, Hossein Akhondi, and Zahra Beygi  
Methodology: Fatemeh Aghaei Meybodi and Hossein Akhondi  
Project Administration: Fatemeh Aghaei Meybodi and Zahra Beygi  
Resources: Hossein Akhondi  
Software: Maryam Khalili  
Supervision: Fatemeh Aghaei Meybodi and Zahra Beygi  
Validation: Fatemeh Aghaei Meybodi and Zahra Beygi  
Visualization: Fatemeh Aghaei Meybodi and Zahra Beygi  
Writing—Original Draft: Fatemeh Aghaei Meybodi, Mahdie Arab Bafrani, Maryam Khalili, Hossein Akhondi, and Zahra Beygi  
Writing—Reviewing and Editing: Fatemeh Aghaei Meybodi, Mahdie Arab Bafrani, Maryam Khalili, Hossein Akhondi, and Zahra Beygi

### Competing of Interests

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interests.

### Ethical Approval

None.

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