

## **New Media Strategies' Model for Sexual Reproductive Health & Rights Campaigns among Young People in Informal Settlements: Mitigating the Challenges**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Routine data by the Ministry of Health (MOH) from prenatal visits by schoolgirls in June 2020 uncovered 4,000 pregnancies from only one county (Machakos). This data covered the March-June 2020 period when schools closed due to Covid-19. The current study is motivated by the perspective that media managers should play a fundamental role in disseminating sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) messages among the youth. Current circumstances justify an exploration into the possibility and acceptability of developing a new media strategies' model instead of using conventional media strategies to disseminate SRHR campaign messages. Kenya has developed a vibrant policy space to protect young people's SRHR. Specifically, the Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health (2015) policy extensively covers reproductive issues including advocating for the use of digital means to reach adolescents. Several studies have chided Kenya for great policies which fall short at the implementation stage. There is a dearth of studies that examine the interplay between media managers, new media strategies, and policy to help build a new model of communication to address SRHR issues. Using qualitative in-depth interviews of 11 informants and a thematic analysis, results indicate that even though media managers wield immense influential power, they have relegated SRHR issues to the back desk. All the 7 media managers have not read any policy on SRHR; thus, cannot implement what they do not know. The new media strategies identified that can work in Kenya include key messaging; school-web-based solutions; combination strategy; new media-geographic-based strategy; digital billboards; and a sustained solo strategy. All the 11 informants agreed that it is possible and acceptable to use new media strategies for SRHR campaigns. The study recommends that media managers must develop interest in SRHR policy to own the process and play a part in message dissemination.

**Keywords:** *New media strategies; Media managers; SRHR Policy; Young people; Informal Settlements*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The problem of unwanted pregnancies among young people is a global concern, and Kenya is no exception (Ram, Andajani, & Mohammadnezhad, 2020). According to UNFPA (2018), approximately 378,400 adolescent Kenyan girls aged 10-19 years got pregnant between July 2016 and June 2017, out of which 28,932 were children aged 10-14 (UNFPA, 2018). Unwanted youth pregnancies in Kenya, especially among informal settlement dwellers, remain an obstacle to Vision 2030 (GOK, 2008), despite the Government of Kenya's (GOK) aggressive past media campaigns. Early pregnancies, especially in developing countries, lead to early child marriages, lack of education, risk of domestic violence, stagnated careers, and isolation (WHO 2014). Moreover, early pregnancies may result in maternal deaths, abortions, infant deaths, and sexually transmitted diseases (WHO, 2014).

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) (2014) reveals that the greatest obstacle to realizing universal access to SRHR is radically decreased funding and lack of access to contraceptives. Studies have identified many challenges why unwanted pregnancies persist among young people (Mambo et al., 2020). These include access to SRHR services (Mogere & Obutu, 2014), cultural beliefs and practices (Godia et al. 2013), lack of parental guidance (Ram, Andajani, & Mohammadnezhad, 2020), lack of political will (Onono et al. 2019) and problems introducing sexuality education in schools (Mbugua & Karonjo, 2018).

Many studies have also offered solutions which include improvements in parent-child communication (Maina, Ushie, & Kabiru, 2020), introduction of sex education in schools (Mbugua & Karonjo, 2018), increasing access to SRHRH information and services (Mogere & Obutu, 2014), use of media campaigns (Gatere & Ongondo, 2019), use of new media (Adzovie & Adzovie, 2020), among others. However, the scourge continues with greater vehemence, especially during this Covid-19 period.

Media managers play a fundamental role in informing, educating, surveying, and entertaining society (Albarran, 2014). With teenage pregnancy proliferation in recent times, media managers can utilize media campaigns to reach adolescents and related stakeholders to spread information and consequently, awareness. Previous health intervention campaigns involving SRHR were mostly based on family planning and used a conventional media strategy (De Silva and Tenreyro, 2017). However, conventional media strategies may not be useful to adolescents because the campaigns target women of reproductive health, as reported by (De Silver & Tenreryo, 2017) and others.

New media are channels of communication that involve the combination of information technology, communications networks, digital media, and content emanating from convergence (Flew, 2008). Social media is part of new media and is mostly used for social engagements, unlike new media, covering the whole spectrum (Siapera, 2018). Social media are the websites or applications that allow users to create and share content and participate in their networks (Edwards et al., 2016; Flew, 2008; Siapera, 2018). New media is the umbrella term that includes iPods, Netflix, smartphones, video on demand, iTunes, e-mail, video games, YouTube, Facebook, Skype, text messages, Twitter, Instagram, Imgur, LinkedIn, Flickr, Google+, Reddit, among others (Edwards et al., 2016).

New media strategies refer to a plan of action designed to achieve long-term goals using new media platforms (Pearson, 2016). These strategies include interactive social media campaigns (Lee et al., 2014), integrated or combination strategy (Golbeck, 2013), and a solo platform strategy such as Facebook (Subandi et al., 2019).

It is often assumed that the digital divide is economic, where informal settlement dwellers are unable to afford gadgets and data bundles to access the Internet. However, young people in informal settlements have access to and actively participate in online discourses (Kibere, 2016; Nemer, 2015; Wyche, 2015).

With the enormous shift in communication channels mainly leaning towards new media, this study is premised on the perspective that media managers need a new model of disseminating SRHR campaign messages using new media strategies. Several studies point out that efforts to use new media are in full gear to reach the target group (Akinola et al., 2019; Lee, 2014). Communicators have developed mobile applications (Apondi et al., 2020); text messaging (Pedrana, 2018); websites (Clief & Anemaat, 2020); social media platforms (Adzovie & Adzovie, 2020); digital billboards (Nemer, 2015); and others to address SRHR issues.

Young people must be engaged in interactive communication by integrating appropriate new media technologies (Iwokwagh, 2017). By so doing, virtual communication spaces are enlarged, which mutually benefit SRHR dialogues among the young people, policymakers, and development agencies (Iwokwagh, 2017). New media can provide information and confidentiality; therefore, stakeholders should take advantage and fully exploit it as young people are heavy users and actively seek information from new media platforms (Iwokwagh, 2017). The current study propagates the view that a new media strategies' model can be used to disseminate SRHR campaign messages to young people, even in informal settlements. However, specific challenges may hinder the application of this model, but media managers can mitigate them to actualize the model.

Therefore, to arrive at answers to these concerns, the current study was guided by the following objectives:

- a) To document the likely challenges that can impede the implementation of a new media strategies 'model to disseminate SRHR messages to young people in media campaigns.
- b) To understand how media managers would mitigate the challenges that may interfere with using new media strategies' model to disseminate SRHR messages in media campaigns to young people.
- c) To probe stakeholder perspectives on the possibility and acceptability of adapting a new media strategies' model to pass SRHR messages to young people in media campaigns.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Sexual reproductive health and rights*

SRHR in Kenya is anchored on international conventions that represent both international law and consensus (political will) (KNCHR, 2012). The 1994 Cairo International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) defines reproductive health as "a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being ... in all matters related to the reproductive system." (Shalev, 1998).

The IPPF (2015) refers to SRHR as the core of achieving sustainable development goals (SDGs). If mishandled, SRHR will negatively impact SDG areas such as poverty, environmental degradation, food and water insecurity, climate change, state fragility, growing inequality, economic crises, and food and water insecurity (IPPF, 2015). SRHR segments covered by the Women's Convention include female genital mutilation (FGM), HIV/AIDS, sexual violence, and reproductive issues. This study is only concerned with the element of reproduction, specifically unwanted pregnancies among young people.

Mogere and Obutu (2014) concluded that many youths of tender ages engage in sex without the knowledge of risk; therefore, provision of sex and sexuality education and information should be disseminated through religious places, schools, colleges, health facilities, and so on. However, in 2020, debates are still raging on dissemination while the young people continue to get pregnant in high numbers. This study interrogates the possibility of the media manager taking the lead to disseminate SRHR information while leveraging on new media platforms despite the challenges.

Many studies on SRHR have tended to examine issues such as access of SRHR services (Mogere & Obutu, 2014), alcohol and SRHR (Muturi, 2014), policies and programs (Akwaru & Idele, 2020), and challenges/barriers to reproductive health access (Mambo et al., 2020). Others are reproduction coercion (Uysal et al., 2020), sexuality education (Mbugua & Karonjo, 2018), parent-child education (Maina, Ushie, & Kabiru, 2020), parent perception about SRHR (Ram, Andajani, & Mohammadnezhad, 2020), sex workers (Wilson et al., 2020), and teachers' attitude (Khan et al., 2019).

Communication-related studies also dot the research landscape and include use of mobile technology and SRHR (Apondi et al., 2020), social media and SRHR (Adzovie & Adzovie, 2020), new media and the Internet (Pankratova, 2020), and use of websites (Clief & Anemaat, 2020). Others include communication strategies (Febres-Cordero, 2020), mobile applications (Apondi et al., 2020), use of smartphones (Rono et al., 2020), text messaging (Pedrana et al., 2020), and so on. However, most of these studies report sporadic or individual effort in SRHR information dissemination and services. The current research is housed under the media management umbrella. Few studies have set out to examine the role of the media manager in SRHR campaigns using new media strategies, the challenges notwithstanding. Studies examining the challenges and mitigations by media managers concerning SRHR are rare.

### *SRHR & communication in Kenya*

Many studies have been conducted, but a significant number tends to situate SRHR issues in the health and sociology departments rather than communication (Bongaarts, 2012). When they are anchored in communication, they will often be interpersonal communication as opposed to mass media (Irani, Speizer & Fotso, 2014).

The following table has sampled a few studies on SRHR in Kenya from 2019-2020 from databases such as Pubmed, Google Scholar, Scopus, EBSCO, and many others. The data is grouped according to the various categories that constitute SRHR.

Table 1: Distribution of SRHR studies in Kenya (2019-2020)

SN	CATEGORY	SUBJECT OF STUDIES	NO. OF STUDIES	METHODOLOGY
A	Reproduction	Policies and programmes (Akwara & Idele, 2020)	1	Systematic literature review
B	Reproduction	Abortion (Opondo, 2020)	1	Commentary
C	Reproduction	Parent-child communication (Maina, Ushie, & Kabiru, 2020)	1	Qualitative-Narrative interviews
D	Reproduction	Access to SRHR services (Ooms et al., 2020; Mogere & Obutu, 2020; Roberts et al., 2020)	3	Quantitative-Cross sectional survey; Baseline survey; Secondary analysis of cross-sectional data
E	Reproduction	Interventions for adolescent pregnancies (Austrian, et al., 2020)	1	Longitudinal RCT
F	Female Genital Mutilation	Barriers to health care (Kimani et al., 2020)	1	Qualitative-In-depth interviews
G	SRHR	Milestones in health campaign messages (Gatere & Ongondo, 2019)	1	Systematic literature review
H	SRHR	Mhealth intervention (Apondi et al., 2020)	1	Development of an app
I	SRHR	Online sex education platforms (Cleif & Anemaat, 2020)	1	Analysis using Google Analytics
J	SRHR	SRHR among adolescent girls (Wilson et al., 2020)	1	Secondary data analysis of cross-sectional data
K	SRHR	Alcohol consumption and SRHR (Muturi, 2014)	1	Qualitative in-depth interviews and FGDs
L	SRHR	Reproductive coercion (Uysal, 2020)	1	ARCHES Model
M	SRHR	Health outreach interventions (Mbithi, Abuya, & Rambo, 2020)	1	Quantitative-Cross sectional

Studies on SRHR (general) dominate the research space. Out of the 15 sampled reviews, only four were concerned with communication (Apondi et al., 2020; Cleif & Anemaat, 2020; Gatere & Ongondo, 2019; and Maina, Ushie, & Kabiru, 2020). Nevertheless, growing research on new media and SRHR is encouraging. From the table, only two studies used qualitative in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, or both (Kimani et al., 2020; Maina, Ushie, & Kabiru, 2020; Muturi, 2014). None of the sampled studies touch on informal settlements. A rarity of studies using the qualitative methodology in SRHR studies and involving informal settlements and mass media in Kenya has necessitated this study.

#### *New media strategies*

Scholars have suggested that incorporating accurate and comprehensive SRHR into the school curriculum is a strategy that can address unwanted pregnancies, but challenges exist about developing and implementing it (Mbugua & Karonjo, 2018). The Reproductive Health Care Bill (2019) grants youth the right to access SRHR information and services without parental knowledge.

Media managers may consider collaborating with the government to use new media strategies in the school curriculum. The media manager's role would be to publicize the positive aspects of SRHR information through media campaigns. Evidence points to young people who have moved away from conventional media (Ayub et al., 2020), thus necessitating a shift. For instance, in America, a web-based proxy-targeted campaign to promote the California Smokers' Helpline among health care

professionals succeeded in generating more than 2.7 million gross impressions from digital media sources over three years (Lee et al., 2014) due to government involvement.

Other new media strategies involve holistic SRHR programs designed for pregnancy prevention and sexual health packaged in mobile applications and disseminated to the youth (Akinola et al., 2019). Young people could also benefit from youth-friendly mobile apps on contraceptive use (Akinola et al., 2019). In Kenya, 37% of 185 participants reported using CycleBeads, a mobile application intended to prevent pregnancy (Shelus et al., 2017).

Media managers may need to explore strategies such as the intentionality in using a single strategy like a sustained Twitter campaign (Graham et al., 2019). Others include an integrated or multifaceted strategy that uses more than one platform (Mundt et al., 2018). The power in a social media strategy versus a conventional media strategy may lie in such factors as cost-effective, speed, ease of use, interactivity, flexibility, a wider reach, better tools, and a participatory approach (Akinola et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2014). Besides, social media is an empowerment tool for populations at risk (Hamid, Ishak, & Yusof, 2016). Thus, exploring stakeholder perspectives on challenges and mitigation could help build a new media strategies' model for SRHR campaigns and extend media management theory.

#### *Potential challenges against a new media strategies model and mitigating factors*

The right to SRH in Kenya is enshrined in international, regional, and local conventions. Kenya's 2010 constitution, the Adolescent Sexual & Reproductive Health (2015) policy, and others guarantee this right (KNHCR, 2012). However, young people encounter challenges accessing youth-friendly services (Ooms et al., 2020). Budgeting is often limited, leading to reduced campaign launches (DSW, 2014). Cultural beliefs or taboo topics hinder a free discourse as far as SRHR is concerned (Githinji, 2020). The lack of political will and unwilling curriculum developers are also obstacles (DSW, 2014).

There are more arguments against new media and its potential to be used as a health communication strategy (Maher et al., 2014). Abdullahi and Abdulquardi (2018) posit that adolescents in Sub-Saharan Africa develop antisocial behaviours through new media. Smith and Buzi (2014) believe that without skills, knowledge, confidence, and privacy assurance, promoting new media for health will be affected. This study takes the perspective that all these challenges can be mitigated for the media manager to construct a new SRHR communication model.

#### *Theoretical support*

The most under-researched regions where the digital divide is concerned are Latin America, Central Asia, and Africa (Ragnedda & Muschert, 2013). Research on the digital divide was overwhelmingly about physical access to personal computers and the Internet among these demographical categories: income, education, age, gender, and ethnicity (van Dijk, 2017). Van Dijk (2017) predicted that future research will see a shift from the first to the second digital divide amplified. More studies are expected concerning several digital skills or media literacies alongside actual use of digital media and their outcomes (van Dijk, 2017). The current study goes beyond access as predicted by van Dijk (2015) since the youth in informal settlements are already engaged in new media (Kibere, 2016; Nemer, 2015; Samuel, 2017; Wyche, 2015) to extend the digital divide theory on the benefits of adopting a new media strategies' model in underprivileged areas.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study will use qualitative FGDs and in-depth interviews to develop a new media strategies' model as depicted in a constructivist approach and in line with Witz's (2015) view that exploratory studies need to dominate future media management research compared to confirmatory research so that researchers can build new theories. Westlund (2014) advocates for further research using a wider variety of methodological approaches, including in-depth interviews to gain a deeper understanding. Further, most of the digital divide studies employ quantitative methods with qualitative methods often used as complementary (Srinuan, 2018).

Thus, the current study collected perspectives from 54 stakeholders to examine the challenges media managers might encounter when rolling out SRHR campaigns in Kenya and how these managers

can mitigate these challenges to build a new model of communication. The following table shows the distribution of the informants:

Table 2: Distribution of informants

SN	Category	Gender	Occupation	Number
A	Young People	Female	Student	2
1&2		Male	Student	2
A 3&4				
B1	Headteacher	Female	Headteacher, Kibera Girls Soccer Academy	1
C1	Parents	Female	Businesswoman	1
C2		Male	Jobless	1
D1	Healthcare workers	Female	SRHR nurse at Upendo Clinic	1
D2		Male	SRHR clinical officer, Kibera Clinic	1
D3		Female	SRHR doctor, AMREF	1
E1	NGOs	Female	Director, Africa Gender and Media Initiative Trust	1
E2		Female	Director, Polycom Development Project	1
E3		Male		1
E4		Female	SRHR Project Officer, Dream Achievers Youth Organization	1
E5		Female	Program Manager, SHOFCO, Kenya	1
E6		Female	Director, Centre for the Study of Adolescents	1
E7		Female	Communications Director, AMREF	1
E8	Male		1	
E9	Female	National Youth Coordinator for SRHR Alliance	1	
F1	Media Managers	Female	Executive Director, Network for Adolescent and Youth in Africa Communications Director, SHOFCO	1
F2		Female	Head of radio online, Kenya Broadcasting Corporation	1
F3		Female	County news editor, Standard Group	1
F4		Male	Senior Digital Journalist, <i>The Star</i> newspaper	1
F5		Female	Science editor, <i>The Star</i> newspaper	1
F6		Male		1
F7		Female	Gender online editor, NMG	1
			Managing editor, <i>Habari Kibera</i>	
			Managing editor, digital, Standard Group	

G1	Policymakers/implementers	Male	Director, Policy and Research, National Council for Population and Development	1
G2		Female		1
G3		Male	Policy and advocacy, Ministry of Health	1
G4		Female	Director, Research and Policy Development, Ministry of ICT and Youth Affairs Policy and Advocacy Director, AMREF	1
				30

The following table represents informants who responded to questions in focus group discussions:

Table 3: FGD distribution

SN	Category	Gender/Number
1	Young people with children	3 females; 3 males
2	Young people without children	3 females; 3 males
3	Parents with and without grandchildren	3 females; 3 males
4	Teachers	3 females; 3 males

30 face-to-face in-depth interviews with various stakeholders were held. Purposive sampling and snowballing (Creswell, 2014) were the sampling techniques used to identify the interviewees. The sample size was sufficient because the researcher started with a sample of 20 but continued to interview until saturation levels had been attained, as espoused by Creswell (2014). The youth, healthcare providers, and teachers were all based in Kibera, the most significant informal settlement in Kenya. Kibera was chosen because it's assumed people there are poor. The interviews were voluntary, with informants required to sign consent forms. The healthcare workers work in various SRHR clinics within Kibera while the teachers all came from a Kibera school. The rest of the stakeholders included media managers (one is managing a media house in Kibera), NGOs (most are located in Kibera), and policymakers/implementers. More informants came from NGO's and media managers because the organisations are numerous and deal directly with the issues under discussion. Therefore, it took many more stakeholders to achieve saturation.

FGDs have the potential to yield rich data because they probe for details (Creswell, 2014). All four FGDs involved members from Kibera. Each FGD comprised at least 6 members, as suggested by (Krueger & Casey, 2000). The participants were selected using purposive sampling and snowballing with groups balanced for members' comfort. The youth were aged between 15-24 and balanced according to age, internet access, and those with or without children. The same applied to the parents except a balance was needed between those who had grandchildren (from their underage or unmarried children aged 15-24) and those who didn't. The teachers were also gender-balanced but represented the various subjects they taught.

Both the interviews and FGDs were recorded and transcribed in English. However, among the youth, one or two would use Kiswahili or Sheng (unique language comprising English and Kiswahili), which was translated into English. Data was coded and analysed using thematic analysis. Triangulation was used where only data confirmed by most informants was included. Moreover, data from the interviews was cross-checked with data from FGDs. Triangulation helps a qualitative study avoid bias (Creswell, 2014). FGDs were first conducted, and the rich data informed the fine-tuning of questions for the interviews.

## RESULTS & DISCUSSION

### *The challenges*

Five themes (main sets of challenges) were identified through the interviews. The following table summarises the results on challenges and mitigation:

Table 4: Challenges & Mitigation

SN	Challenge	Mitigation
1	Opposition	Involve all stakeholders in all the stages of the campaign
2	Message-related	Planning is the most fundamental aspect
3	Limited finances and resources	Use of apps is a less expensive option; media managers to lobby for funding from relevant financiers
4	Technology-related	Training is needed especially among media managers from the older generation
5	Implementation-related	Media managers to lobby for inclusion of SRHR education in the school curriculum

#### *a) Opposition/stakeholder-related factors*

Most stakeholders identified opposition as the fiercest challenge. An online group of parents exists to immediately opposes SRHR-related issues. Opposition to sex education being introduced into Kenyan schools is not new. In 2015, President Uhuru Kenyatta launched an HIV/AIDS campaign called, ‘All in the Campaign to end Adolescents AIDS’ (Githinji, 2020). However, the campaign was ridiculed by bloggers, social, and mainstream media who renamed the campaign, ‘Condoms for children (Githinji, 2020).’

The NGO world has experienced opposition whenever they run an SRHR campaign. Unfortunately, opposition groups never take time to understand the message. Their reaction is predictable, arguing that SRHR would corrupt the moral well-being of young people. One NGO informant shared this:

Policymakers and decision-makers sometimes prevent the successful dissemination of SRHR messages. If the campaign calls them out as failing in their responsibilities, they put blocks on the way. Critical implementers are then unable to access the messages, thus cutting off one crucial input that would have helped solve this problem.

Yet another NGO informant backs the views expressed by his counterpart above:

A decision-maker who blocks you on social media has cut off your feet as we put it literally here in Africa. Suppose the individual sits on the budget committee and is needed to approve campaign county budgets. And it doesn't end there. Some of these decision-makers can mobilize social media influencers who come to throw rocks on your page. Consequently, Kenyans' broader community starts believing that you are trying to corrupt their children's morals.

Most of the informants identified the church as forming the most prominent opposition. Kenya is 90% Christian, with a solid church-going and mosque-going culture. Religious leaders are trusted, and whatever they say is followed. This is what one informant shared:

The church remains the most significant opposition. It has not offered an alternative to delaying sexual debut. You can tell somebody to delay sex, but you have not told them how to deal with the changes in their bodies. Grown women will tell you a few days to their period they want sex. Same with a young man with an erection every morning. What do you tell this young woman? What do you tell this young man? I have not heard the church say go this way. It's always don't go down that path of SRHR information. Yet, unwanted pregnancies have skyrocketed in recent times.

Yet another informant had this view of the church:

All you hear is noise. I call it noise because some of it is borne out of ignorance. For example, many people think that abortion is a family planning method. I heard Pastor Nganga- this pastor who makes noise- say that it is okay for people to have an abortion as a family planning method. Can you imagine from somebody calling himself a pastor? The church just jumps in, beats up drums, and changes the entire narrative, and because Kenyans listen to them, as a nation, we lose the opportunity to rectify an endemic problem. Then you wonder, what is the lesser evil? Just telling the youth anyway, or watching a 9-year old turn into a mother?

Most informants identified parents as another group of oppositionists. Previously, there were traditional set-ups where SRHR information was disseminated. However, because of today's urban set-up, extended families are separated. Where aunties used to talk about menstrual hygiene and sexual debut to the young girls, now exist a void. Unfortunately, parents have failed to step up because their parents did not talk to them about SRHR. Young people rely on the scanty information they learn in Biology classes and amongst themselves. Paradoxically, when sex education is mentioned as a potential subject in the school curriculum, the biggest challenge comes from the parents and the church.

Another informant's perspective lends credence to the views expressed above and succinctly summarises opposition in the following words:

So, no one is telling the youth to go this way. The parent is silent. The teacher is unsure of what to tell the young person. The church/religion only knows one word: don't. The media manager is busy chasing financially lucrative stories. Other health issues inundate the healthcare worker. The policymaker is sitting on an ivory tower. Only the young person is talking to him/herself or fellow youth. No wonder the ticking time bomb has gathered full momentum and is exploding.

FGD findings indicated that SRHR messages could be packaged in creative apps and be disseminated. However, even as the app is developed and shared, it will still encounter opposition.

#### *b) Message-related challenges*

According to stakeholders, messaging is everything in a campaign. Without the message, there is no campaign. Failure to control the message on new media platforms can alter the trajectory of a message. The timing of a message is crucial because wrong timing constitutes a challenge. A media manager shared this:

On social media, our readership is very high in the morning, goes down, and comes alive again from 4 pm. If we post anything beyond 9 pm, no matter how good the story is, not many people read it, but if we publish it in the morning, we see so many comments with many sharing the story.

NGO informants said that a message that runs contrary to an individual's personal, cultural, or religious beliefs would not be disseminated at the workplace. An employee will comfortably use the organization's Twitter handle to spread messages and sustain a campaign but will never use a personal handle. They may even request the organisation not to tag them when releasing the message.

Lack of follow-up after a campaign has been rolled out can affect it. Disseminators may not know whether the message was received and whether the target audience received the same message or whether it was distorted. If the information is not moderated correctly, then myths, misconceptions, and unprofessional opinions will thrive. Then new media only allows a limited number of words, for example, Twitter (280 characters), forcing message dissemination in threads. Limited space is a breeding ground for misconceptions and misinterpretations. Moreover, finances or lack of patience may not allow a young person to follow the message thread to the end.

Several informants felt that ignorance on technology use might hinder message dissemination, especially in informal settlements. Some schools do not have classrooms and pupils learn under trees, leave alone, putting up computer laboratories. However, the consensus was that it might be possible to reach every young person in informal settlements, but not in rural areas.

A worrying challenge, according to most informants, is that young people have a short attention span. A boring SRHR message will not be shared within their spaces. The message must be engaging, factual, and understandable. Messages in both English and Kiswahili are ideal because many Kenyans

speak Kiswahili. In Kibera, the influential groups include the Luo, Luhya, Kamba, Kikuyu, and Nubians. Messages can also be drawn in these languages.

All informants thought that variations in youth preferences might interfere with the reception of a message. Some prefer to be on Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, or recently, Tik-Tok. If the message is relayed on only one platform, it may not reach its target audience.

*c) Limited finances and resources*

To effectively use new media, several informants said young people must access the Internet using smartphones, computers, tablets, etc. In informal settlements, this may present a challenge due to poverty. Even if they can afford a phone, they may lack data bundles. Surprisingly, youth informants from Kibera wondered why everyone thought they have no access to technology because most of them have.

Media managers also experience financial challenges as they need to be online throughout. Most have Internet and technological access at the workplace, but once they leave the office, they must depend on personal resources, as revealed by one of them:

You know some of us belong to small media houses and may not be well-paid. It's okay in the office-plenty of Internet. It doesn't hit you like a challenge until you get home and realize your attention is needed at work. Wi-Fi at home, thus, is a must for the media manager, but some cannot afford it. Bundles run out too fast. Then imagine when your laptop crashes, and you must wait for payday to purchase a new one.

Most of the parents had this view concerning access and rural folk:

Most rural folks don't have access to new media, so you are limited in terms of reach if you are doing advocacy. People do not have gadgets to access social media platforms. Reliable and affordable Internet is not available for them. You may reach the urban youth but not the rural youth.

*d) Technology-related challenges*

Some informants opined that power issues and the availability of a stable internet might affect an SRHR campaign. Sometimes, even mainstream media suffers when the electricity goes off because online streaming is affected. This has necessitated the installation of generators at the workplace. However, most individual homes in Kenya are not powered by generators. If the Internet keeps tripping, that might affect SRHR message dissemination.

Media managers were unanimous that some of their colleagues are out of touch with technology. Currently, training on new media is ongoing in most media houses but some are finding it challenging. In fact, in some mainstream media outlets, the management does not yet understand the need for these digital platforms. One informant had this perspective:

Our media house is transitioning to online 90%, and the remaining 10% has been reserved for print. We were told categorically that we either accept training and move together as a company or ship out. I am not very young but guess what; a 25-year old sat me down to train me. I appreciated it because I understood that is where we are headed.

On the technology that is new media, one media manager opined thus:

If new media is taken seriously, as a vital profession, then perceptions would change. But I am amazed at the young people joining our company. I realize they are well-versed and well-trained in new media use. Indeed, the college and tertiary education system that offers communication as a discipline infuses new media into the training. So, it's coming through, albeit rather slowly, but it's coming through.

One media manager decried staffing issues so that the allocation of duties involving new media is done haphazardly:

In our media house, we get to do double or competing roles. For instance, I may be required to develop content for social media, but sometimes I can go for days without

posting anything online. How can I when a daily paper is waiting for me? We are yet to undergo full training on new media use. For instance, when doing a Twitter storm, there are no right number of people to push the agenda online, no funds to advance the agenda, and no data bundles when I am at home to carry on that SRHR campaign.

*e) Implementation challenges*

All policymakers/implementers felt that the teams engaged in the roll-out might not be talking from the same script. Some young people are not trained in SRHR issues but are very fast in churning out content. Others have SRHR training and experience but may be incompetent.

The lack of technical skills may hamper implementation because implementers must either be fully trained or have used new media for a long time to know the most effective way to pass the message.

Most informants felt that Kenyans are still bound by cultural beliefs and may not be ready to absorb online content considered taboo. When nudes or inappropriate content hits the Internet, it creates mistrust among the conservatives who have formed vicious online groups to shut down SRHR talk. This problem is compounded by the fact that new media is such an open space without restrictions.

The fluid and fickle nature of the youth may also present roadblocks. Young people are trendy and ever on the move, as explained by one informant:

They move very quickly from one trend to another. Then you need to keep up with these new media platforms because you might be targeting your messages on the wrong platform. You may be putting everything on Twitter when they moved to Instagram. You must understand the trends for that age group and keep abreast of where they are and where they are likely to move.

One of the challenges facing message implementers is not involving all other critical stakeholders like the teachers, healthcare workers, parents, and others. This is what a teacher said:

Besides talking to the teenagers, I think it would also help to speak to their teachers who interact with them daily. The religious bodies must be roped in too since SRHR messages are discussed within their spaces. Parents also must come on board to address the challenges in broaching the subject of sex education. The media manager will then package a rich, possibly acceptable message because all the stakeholders were involved.

Perceptions about new media may present a challenge since some parents already think new media is immoral. Some of them have already joined these platforms and are following or being followed by their children. Because lines are not drawn as they were in the traditional set-up, these new media platforms come off as 'loose' and devoid of morals. An NGO informant had the following perspective:

I have told you about my challenge with Facebook, and the history behind it is that one day, I had a visitor who was addicted to the platform. She could not sleep. She would wake up in the middle of the night and request the Internet to be on Facebook. But I would wonder, culturally, where do you draw the line? The lady's daughter's boyfriend had sent the daughter pictures of him almost naked. Hence, I was never comfortable with Facebook. Until my employer requested me to organize a live forum on Facebook. That's when I realized all new media platforms are useful; it just depends on what you are using it for.

Food for thought for implementers is best captured in the following perspective by an NGO informant:

New media is there, yes, but are we ready to have our children receive SRHR messages via the new communication channels?

*Mitigating the challenges*

Most informants were of the view that the challenges involved in using new media strategies' model do exist but are not necessarily insurmountable. Media managers can mitigate them and shift to a new communication model.

On opposition, implementers can consider continuous, gradual, and well-thought-out involvement of all stakeholders. Once a segment of the population is aware and owns a process, they are likely to offer support and not take to Twitter in droves to oppose or twist the message. The young people in informal settlements must be included in focus group discussions to discuss the campaign.

Forums can be created, be they face-to-face, on social media, on conventional media channels, and whatever channel implementers might use to involve the young people.

To minimize cost, some informants felt that the government could sponsor an app on SRHR and have media managers popularize it. It is possible to develop a creative app that passes short messages using text, video, graphics, music, among others and pay the youth to share the information. The GOK can provide more tablets to young people in school settings and install hotspots all over the country. The recently released Google loons are already helping some rural populations access the Internet.

Most informants agreed that the challenges involving the message are best handled in the planning stage. A media manager can institute a team that continually moderates the discussions and is at hand to correct any negative perceptions, myths, and misconceptions, and bring the debate right back. An informant offered the following perspective about the planning stage:

Excellent planning must precede message release. A message infused with graphics must be well-thought-out, with fewer words, the right images, color, etc. It must be factual because the recipients treat the source as a credible originator of a message. Pre-test the message to avoid a backlash that can cause the withdrawal of a campaign.

NGO informants felt that SRHR campaign message crafters can build an external support base from like-minded organisations to push the message forward. For instance, if one NGO raises a Twitter storm, fellow organisations will engage on that Tweet the entire day. They help to comment, like, retweet, tag, and so on.

The channel to use is equally important. For instance, disseminators might choose between a 1,000-word article that can be spread as a link or a short 2-minute video clip. Perhaps a hashtag would do to pass across a sex education message.

Most stakeholders felt that implementation challenges are best mitigated by media managers who can lobby for the inclusion of SRHR education in the school curriculum. Teams must be on the same wavelength when it comes to content development and dissemination.

#### *Possibility and acceptability of a new media strategies' model*

Out of the 54 informants, only one thought Kenya is not ready for a new sex communication model. Overwhelming acceptance of the model came from the youth:

People think that because we live in Kibera, we have no money to buy phones or bundles. Some of us do not have cash, alright, but we do have access! You ask me how. Well, through friends, at school, and from the various hotspots around Kibera. My school received donations of 120 computers from the US, including Wi-Fi. I often stay back at school till 6 pm just to tap into the Wi-Fi.

Still another one had this to say:

I don't want to hear sex talk from my parents or teachers. I would be ashamed. Truthfully, I don't watch TV though we have it at home. I prefer to learn about sex education from social media or websites.

Another youth revealed that they are already actively involved with an NGO that uses new media to disseminate SRHR information:

I got pregnant at only age 14. I didn't even know the sexual act was dangerous. It's my mother who noticed the bulge. It's been a tough journey for me, but I wish I had known earlier what it means to have sex. I have been recruited by an NGO where I now mentor young girls about sex. We are in a WhatsApp group. So, yes, I think the time has come for media managers to consider a new way of reaching us. After all, we are already using new media while they are still using newspapers which we don't read.

Informants from the medical field wonder why media managers have not tapped into new media. This would resonate with Tua (2020) on young LGBTQ people in Malaysia who found Twitter to be a safe space where they could freely express themselves. One medical informant said this:

We have groups of girls in WhatsApp groups where they freely ask questions about SRHR. Most of them are too shy to approach any adult, but in a WhatsApp group comprising only them and a healthcare worker, they are free. Even our Facebook page inbox is full of questions. Let's not smother an idea whose time has come.

The NGO world is the group most involved with using new media to reach the youth on SRHR. They already have an umbrella group where they help one another push their agenda online. To this group, developing new media strategies' model is overdue. They face the most challenges but have found a way to mitigate the challenges. One shared this perspective:

We posted a message that was immediately opposed by the parents' group online. They removed one word and added their own. The result was a distorted message. They then hired people to tweet and retweet. And that is how our campaign died. We have since learned to share a PDF message and engage volunteer youth to spread the message.

The parents acknowledged that given the dynamics, they would be foolish to oppose the use of new media strategies since their children already own and use smartphones. One parent opined thus:

I am the one who bought my daughter a smartphone because she needs it and because everyone else has it. It's cheaper for me to call her via a WhatsApp call. If credible information on SRHR can be given to them on their phones, why not?

One policymaker agreed that while the ministry lays down policies, media managers must come in strongly to implement.

Meanwhile, media managers felt that training at the tertiary and university level should factor in the skills, attitude, and knowledge to include new media campaign strategies for upcoming journalists. This view resonates with Ismail and Ismail's (2017) observation that good journalism encompasses knowledge, skills, attitudes, and experience. Media managers also acknowledge that a new model is possible except that media needs a change in the way business is run. Today, media has established digital spaces that run alongside the conventional model. However, priority is never given to the health desk, except if it's something that grips the world as Covid-19 has. Therefore, media managers need to be sensitized towards understanding and extensively covering issues such as SRHR that may impact generations to come.

## CONCLUSION

Unwanted pregnancies among young people is an old issue in Kenya, except that it has escalated to alarming levels. There are challenges, including stakeholder opposition; limited finances and resources; technology-based challenges; message-based challenges, and implementation-related challenges. However, they can be mitigated by involving stakeholders in message creation, lobbying for funds, engaging in aggressive training on technology; and investing in a sound implementation strategy. The youth are ready to receive SRHR messages via new media. Other stakeholders also find the new model possible and acceptable. Media managers must place themselves at the centre of SRHR message dissemination. They must develop interest in SRHR issues despite having a busy desk. Results also indicate that the digital divide should not hinder SRHR message dissemination because young people in informal settlements are already online, financial challenges notwithstanding.

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