



Canada



Exploring young people's experiences with health-related content in social media platforms:

A qualitative study to inform youth-friendly services demand generation in Yogyakarta, Indonesia

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ANJALI SEN

UNFPA Indonesia Representative

UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund, listens to the voices of young people and supports their meaningful participation in decisions that affect them. “My Body, My Life, My World” is a UNFPA brand new initiative placing youth’s needs, aspirations, and ideals at the core of our work to support the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the International Conference on Population and Development Programme of Action.

“My Body” ensures access to integrated adolescent reproductive health services and information for all adolescents and youth; “My Life” addresses determinants of adolescent and youth health and well-being, upholding rights and investing in human capital; and “My World” promotes adolescent and youth leadership as well as their fundamental right to participate in sustainable development, humanitarian action, and sustaining peace.

In accordance with these principles, this research report was conducted to understand young people’s experiences with digital health content to form the basis of demand generation strategies that will help connect more young people to life-saving health services and information. In this 21st-century world, digital platforms play a pivotal role in our efforts to reach young people, and hence it is essential for us to understand their feelings, needs, and aspirations in relation to digital health content—reaffirming that it is indeed young people themselves who know best what works for them.

In addition to putting young people’s experiences at the front and center of our work, this research also employed innovative, participatory methodologies—from drawings to photo elicitation to social media listening—with young people collecting data, writing, and leading the process. It is youth-led in every sense of the word, and allows young people to freely express themselves through diverse and creative modalities, adding a fresh perspective in the evidence base for youth-friendly services, demand generation, and digital health content for youth.

It is my pleasure to share this report as we take a step forward in creating a world where young people’s experiences and aspirations are better understood, their leadership and creativity are optimized, and their health and well-being fulfilled to the maximum extent possible. I would like to thank the technical team and our implementing partner, Yayasan Siklus Sehat Indonesia, who has facilitated the development of this important report.

Introduction

Youth-friendly health services (YFS) is an essential component in the fulfilment of adolescents' and youth's sexual and reproductive health rights, as acknowledged in the landmark 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)'s Programme of Action (United Nations, 1994). ICPD called for "meeting the educational and service needs of adolescents to enable them to deal in a positive and responsible way with their sexuality", which includes the provision of services that are youth-friendly—that is, accessible, acceptable, equitable, appropriate, and effective for young people (World Health Organization, 2009). Indonesia, a country where slightly more than a quarter of its population are of the age 10-24, has struggled to achieve this goal (Hull, Hasmi, & Widyantoro, 2004). Nevertheless, Indonesia has developed several initiatives to fulfil young people's health needs including adopting national

standards for youth-friendly services and implementing it in more than half of its 10,000 primary health centers nationwide (Ministry of Health Indonesia, 2018).

While data evaluating the effectiveness of these initiatives remain minimal, the Indonesia Demographic and Health Survey (Central Bureau of Statistics Indonesia, 2017) revealed that only 12% of girls and 6% of boys aged 15-24 know where to find reproductive health information and services. Paradoxically, the survey also revealed that health services providers were the most preferred source of reproductive health information and counselling by young people. With only half of youth aged 15-24 able to identify the risks of pregnancy and 30% of them knowing the fertile period accurately, enormous gaps in the provision of information and services still persist.

Studies have indicated that YFS



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programming should include interventions on the demand side. This includes marketing and information dissemination to increase uptake of services (Denno, Hoopes, & Chandra-Mouli, 2015; Chandra-Mouli, Lane, & Wong, 2015; Keserton & de Mello, 2010). These interventions typically involve outreach activities to inform youth regarding the availability and characteristics of services, and encourage them to use those services. Demand generation components increase the ability and willingness of youth to obtain services (Denno, Hoopes, & Chandra-Mouli, 2015). In an age where mobile use of the internet is virtually ubiquitous, social media presents ample opportunities for YFS demand generation. Among Indonesian youth in particular, nearly 90% of youth aged 15-24 are connected to the internet. A more recent report done by Indonesia Internet Providers Association (IIPA) in 2019 found similar results. Social

media is listed as the second primary reason for internet use (IIPA, 2019), with youth spending over 3 hours per day on social media (Hootsuite, 2019) and youth aged 13-24 making up 45% of Indonesia’s social media audience profile. Given this data, social media platforms provide YFS programming with enormous opportunities for demand generation activities. Social media platforms can be a valuable platform to disseminate health-related information and messages to youth, since it allows interventions to be incorporated in their daily activities (Bull et al., 2012; Allison et al., 2012)—or in other words, it allows interventions to meet young people where they are.

Apart from reaching young people with health-related messages, interventions using social media platforms have other benefits, they include; accessibility spanning geographical and time-

related barriers, low cost relative to number of people reached, capacity for personalization, and interactive functionality (Laranjo et al., 2015; Gold et al., 2011). In addition, when compared to web-based platforms, established social media platforms such as Instagram or Facebook usually have higher levels of user engagement and retention (Maher et al., 2014). Ralph, Berglas, Schwartz and Brindis (2011) specifically highlighted the benefits of using social media to connect youth to services; that is, the fact that social media allows communication between youth and service providers to be done confidentially and anonymously, establishes clinics' reputation as youth-friendly, helps reach youth that do not respond to in-person contact, and assists clinics in reinforcing messages and maintaining relationships with youth after initial in-person contact, among others.

It should be noted, however, that research evaluating the impact of social media interventions on health-related behavior change, including youth uptake of services, is still in its infancy. Systematic reviews

should be done to explore approaches, content, and other factors that keep audiences engaged in health-related social media content (Laranjo et al., 2015; Gold et al., 2011). This point is reflected in other demand generation and/or youth health studies, which argued that youth-targeted demand generation should be accompanied by further research that clarify mechanisms and highlight how to best deliver interventions (Denno, Hoopes & Chandra-Mouli, 2015), as well as called for accelerating approaches while "safeguarding fidelity to those factors that ensure quality and success" (Chandra-Mouli, Lane & Wong, 2015, p. 339). Social media-focused studies particularly called for client-oriented research regarding how beneficiaries use social media in their day-to-day lives, as well as the kind of health content that they find engaging, in order to design interventions that reflect, and is responsive to, the way beneficiaries use social media (Giustini, Ali, Fraser, & Boulos, 2017; Maher et al., 2014).

Despite its clear importance, client-oriented research that explores the health-

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