

Research Project Outline:

Evaluating the Effectiveness of Values Clarification and Attitude Transformation (VCAT) in
Improving Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health Outcomes in Kisumu, Kenya.

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Abstract

Adolescent sexual and reproductive health (ASRH) remains a significant public health challenge in Kenya, with 15% of all births occurring amongst teens aged 15-19 in 2022 and even on the trend of rising to 18% in 2026, according to the newest Kenya Economic Survey data. Factors causing the high rates of adolescent pregnancy include early sexual debut, economic deprivation, stigmas on sexual and reproductive health, and barriers to youth-friendly healthcare in the communities. While Values Clarification and Attitude Transformation (VCAT) interventions have demonstrated success in reducing provider stigma in abortion-related care, limited evidence exists regarding their effectiveness in broader ASRH contexts.

This project contributes to the development and evaluation of an expanded VCAT intervention targeting healthcare providers and community health promoters in Kisumu and Vihiga County, Kenya. The intervention seeks to improve provider attitudes toward adolescents seeking sexual and reproductive health services, thereby increasing access to youth-friendly care and improving health outcomes. After conducting the pilot project in December 2025, this research aims to conduct further scoping work to understand further on the stakeholders and factors contributing to the rising teenage pregnancy rates in Kenya.

My research focuses on developing the project's theory of change and pre-analysis plan for the Randomized Controlled Trials (RCT) that could be conducted by Georgetown University's Initiative on Innovation, Development, and Evaluation (Gui2de) on the large scale in the future for VCAT in the ASRH context. Through a combination of literature review, stakeholder interviews, field observations, and pilot data analysis, I will identify the mechanisms through which provider attitudes influence service delivery behaviors and adolescent outcomes.

The project will ultimately support a cluster RCT evaluating impacts on adolescent pregnancy, school retention, healthcare utilization, and provider practices.

By strengthening understanding of how stigma and provider attitudes shape adolescent access to care, this research aims to inform evidence-based strategies for improving ASRH services in Kenya and similar low-resource settings.

Research Objectives & Questions

Primary Objective

- To understand how changes in provider attitudes generated through a VCAT intervention influence adolescent access to and utilization of sexual and reproductive health services.

Secondary Objectives

- Develop a context-specific theory of change linking provider attitudes to adolescent health outcomes.
- Identify measurable intermediate outcomes that connect attitude change to service provision behaviors.
- Contribute to the design of a rigorous evaluation framework for the intervention.
- Examine barriers and facilitators affecting youth-friendly service delivery in Kenya.

Research Questions

1. How does the VCAT intervention influence healthcare providers' attitudes toward adolescents seeking SRH services?
2. Through what mechanisms do attitude changes translate into changes in provider behavior?

3. Which intermediate outcomes best capture the relationship between provider attitudes and adolescent health outcomes?
4. How can these mechanisms be incorporated into a rigorous evaluation design?

Methodology

My contribution centers on developing the project's theory of change and pre-analysis plan. First, I will conduct a desk review of academic literature and project materials related to adolescent sexual and reproductive health, stigma, and provider behavior. Drawing on behavioral science and implementation research frameworks, I will construct an initial theory of change that maps pathways linking provider attitudes to adolescent outcomes.

Second, I will collect qualitative insights through stakeholder interviews, observations of VCAT workshops, and discussions with healthcare providers and implementing partners. These activities will help identify contextual factors influencing provider behavior and refine the project's causal framework.

Third, I will analyze pilot data to assess the feasibility of measuring proposed outcomes and mechanisms. Findings from the qualitative and quantitative analyses will be integrated into a detailed pre-analysis plan specifying outcome definitions, measurement strategies, and analytical approaches for the larger randomized evaluation.

Potential Impact

This research contributes to a growing body of work examining how social norms and provider attitudes affect access to healthcare for adolescents. By identifying pathways through which provider attitudes influence service delivery, the project may help policymakers and practitioners design more effective interventions that improve adolescent wellbeing.

The findings could inform future investments in youth-friendly health services, stigma-reduction programs, and provider training initiatives in Kenya and other low-resource settings. More broadly, the project demonstrates how behavioral and institutional factors shape the effectiveness of public health interventions.

Resources & Support Needed

This project is conducted under the mentorship of Professor Rebecca Smith and the guide research team. Key resources include access to project materials, stakeholder networks, pilot datasets, and opportunities for field engagement in Nairobi and Kisumu.

I welcome feedback from researchers working in adolescent health, behavioral change, implementation science, randomized evaluations, or sexual and reproductive health policy. I am particularly interested in perspectives on theory-of-change development, measurement of stigma and provider behavior, and evaluation design.

Feedback Welcome

I would greatly appreciate feedback, questions, or suggestions from the Laidlaw community. Insights from scholars across disciplines are especially valuable as I refine the theory of change and evaluation framework for this project.

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