



The Role of Youth in Advancing Maternal and Reproductive Healthcare in Tanzania: A Contemporary Analysis

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Abstract

Maternal and reproductive healthcare challenges persist in Tanzania. The potential role of the substantial youth demographic in advancing these services within formal and community structures remains inadequately examined. This study aimed to analyse the contemporary role of Tanzanian youth in advancing maternal and reproductive healthcare. It examined their participation, perceived impact, and the barriers and facilitators to their engagement. A concurrent mixed-methods design was employed. A cross-sectional survey was administered to a stratified sample of youth involved in healthcare. In-depth interviews and focus group discussions were conducted with a purposive sub-sample and key stakeholders. Thematic analysis was used for qualitative data, with descriptive and inferential statistics for quantitative data. Youth are engaged primarily in community outreach, health education, and data collection. A significant theme was their role as cultural intermediaries, bridging generational gaps in health communication. Quantitatively, a majority of survey respondents reported that their activities increased clinic attendance for antenatal care in their communities. However, systemic barriers, including limited formal recognition and mentorship gaps, constrained their potential impact. Tanzanian youth are active, valuable agents in advancing maternal and reproductive healthcare, particularly at the community level. Their integration is, however, often informal and faces systemic challenges. Formalise youth engagement through structured programmes within healthcare facilities. Integrate youth-led community health education into national reproductive health strategies. Establish mentorship schemes linking young practitioners with experienced gynaecologists and midwives. Youth engagement, Maternal health, Reproductive health, Healthcare delivery, Tanzania, Community health workers This original research provides empirical evidence on the specific mechanisms through which Tanzanian youth contribute to maternal healthcare, offering practical insights for policy and programme development.

Keywords: *Maternal health, Reproductive health, Youth participation, Sub-Saharan Africa, Community-based interventions, Health systems strengthening, Tanzania*



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