Irrelevant, Dangerous, and at Odds with My Identity and Dreams

Qualitative research findings using human-centered methodology in Ethiopia, Nigeria, and Tanzania reveal emotional dynamics complicating contraceptive use among adolescent girls

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1. Background | *A360 in its disciplinary context*

2. Methods | *Youth partnership for evidence-based design*

3. Findings | *Themes across three country profiles*

4. Interpretation | *Considerations for contraceptive youth programming*

5. Discussion | *Learning exchange*
Aiming to understand the story behind girls’ relatively high fertility and low unmet need for contraception.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>mCPR</td>
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<tr>
<td>all girls 15-19</td>
<td>7.4%, 31.8%</td>
<td>4.8%, 1.2%</td>
<td>8.6%, 13.3%</td>
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<td>currently married girls 15-19</td>
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<td>Unmet need</td>
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<tr>
<td>all girls 15-19</td>
<td>4.7%, 20.5%</td>
<td>6.2%, 13.1%</td>
<td>10.8%, 23.0%</td>
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<td>currently married girls 15-19</td>
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<td>Median age at first sex</td>
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<td>women age 25-49</td>
<td>16.6</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>17.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Median age at first birth</td>
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<tr>
<td>women age 25-49</td>
<td>19.2</td>
<td>20.2</td>
<td>19.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adolescent fertility rate</td>
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<td>(Births per 1,000 girls aged 15-19 per year)</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>133</td>
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Adolescents 360

- January 2016-June 2020
- USD 30 million
- Ethiopia, Tanzania, Nigeria

Aims:

→ Increased demand for and access to modern contraceptive services among adolescent girls aged 15-19

→ Cost-effective interventions through a transdisciplinary approach
Methods
Methods

✓ Ethiopia
- IRB approval
- Addis Ababa, Afar, Oromia, Tigray
- 294 semi-structured interviews

✓ Nigeria
- IRB approval
- Kaduna & Lagos
- 365 semi-structured interviews

✓ Tanzania
- Consent obtained
- Bagamoyo and Morogoro; Dar Es Salaam, & Mbeya
- 100+ semi-structured interviews

➢ Adolescent girls, adolescent boys, mothers, fathers, male partners, community influencers, providers and caregivers
Similar *but* not the same

** ✓ Qualitative inquiry to inform design**

- Site selection rationale
- Interview Guide
- Note taking & observation
- Inductive group approach to synthesis & grouping of themes
- Interpretation based on discussion rather than frameworks
  - Formulate “how might we” questions as basis for ideation
- Prototyping to test and try

** ✓ Qualitative inquiry for research**

- Site selection rationale
- Theory or Framework
- Interview Guide
- Transcription & back translation
- Interrater reliability testing (when >1 analyst is coding)
- Inductive &/or Deductive Coding
- Codebook
- Analytical approach
- Hypothesis & in some cases, hypothesis testing
A360: At a Glance

September - December 2016
- Data collection to inform design

January - December 2017
- Prototyping, Vetting, & Refinement through the transdisciplinary approach

January 2018 - Present
- Evidence-based adaptive implementation as engine for scale
Findings
### Six Dominant Themes Across Countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Anxiety &amp; uncertainty about how to secure a stable future</th>
<th>Misalignment between sexual behavior, contraceptive use &amp; identity</th>
<th>Motherhood as the and achievable dream</th>
<th>Contraception as threat to dreams</th>
<th>Isolation &amp; mistrust</th>
<th>Girls’ (complex) connections to their mothers</th>
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Anxiety & Uncertainty About How to Secure a Stable Future

Girls perceive a norm of insecurity, and desire future stability. Having one’s own money is seen as a means of asserting control over the current situation. This manifests in entrepreneurialism, a sense of urgency to act, as well as increased exposure to transactional and/or coercive sex—for example, when jobs cannot be found.

“‘We want to change ourselves to have a better future with lots of money.’
-Married girl, Ethiopia

“‘My parents give me N100 for [all meals]. It’s not enough. Not even enough for breakfast. So how do I eat? I need to take care of myself.’
-Unmarried girl, Nigeria

--Unmarried and married girls, Tanzania and Nigeria
Misalignment Between Self-Identity & Sexual Behavior

“Family planning is not for girls in school. It is for married girls, for birth spacing.”
- Unmarried girl, Ethiopia

“I’m not having sex. He had sex with me!”
- Unmarried girl, Nigeria

“What if you are a virgin and your boyfriend said he wants to have sex with you and you use a condom, so are you still a virgin?”
-- Unmarried girl, Nigeria

Self-identification as sexually active (whether to external audiences or to one’s self) was complex, at times harrowing. Girls’ perception of their sexual activity status itself was often shifting, given infrequent, transactional, or coercive sex, adding layers of complexity to whether girls identify as “sexually active.”

-Girls in Tanzania, Nigeria, and Ethiopia
Motherhood was near universally discussed as a central, dependable life joy for girls. Where other joys exist, in an unpredictable and challenging life, none were deemed as reliable as the dream, goal, joy of becoming a mother.

--Girls in Tanzania, Nigeria, and Ethiopia

"Having the first child is respect. You start to be called by the name of your child…"
- Unmarried girl, Ethiopia

"I want to go to school. Even if I do not work, I will help my children with their school work."
– Unmarried girl, Nigeria

"If you don’t have a job and can’t continue your education, then having a child is the only profit you have."
- Married girl, Ethiopia
Contraception as Threat to Dreams

“Contraception as a cause for fear due a perceived threat to fertility, as well as (social) security. Though a too-early or mis-timed pregnancy was also a source of shame, this was ultimately a more acceptable, and temporary hardship as it was still a path to motherhood.

--Unmarried girls in Tanzania, Nigeria

“They say contraception is good, but not for me it’s not good. It will destroy your womb.”
- Unmarried girl, Nigeria

“[A girl who uses contraceptives] might age and not get the child when she wants it.”
- Mother of adolescent girl, Ethiopia

“The girl will be toad-jumping if contracepted– from one man to another.”
- Father of unmarried girl, Nigeria

They say contraception is good, but not for me it’s not good.
Isolation & Mistrust

“If a [unmarried] girl is sexually active, the community will hate her and isolate her.”
--Unmarried girl, Ethiopia

“Your worst enemy can be your best friend.”
-Unmarried girl, Nigeria

“I don’t trust my boyfriend. I don’t trust men. Men are the worst!”
-Unmarried girl, Nigeria

A sense that men, providers, and even friends cannot be trusted, and that girls must navigate a challenging gauntlet to arrive at a secure future—largely on their own and/or in secrecy.

-Married and unmarried girls, Tanzania, Nigeria, and Ethiopia
Many girls discussed their desire for support and information from a trusted source, and for some, their mothers served as that figure in their lives. At the same time, girls discussed mothers as figures from whom to hide knowledge about their lives, and/or information they are accessing. Some girls held this dual view. Others fell starkly in one of the two camps.

- Girls in Tanzania and Nigeria

“My mom would understand, but she would scold me.”

-Unmarried girl, Nigeria
**REFRAMING THE BENEFITS OF CONTRACEPTIVES, WITH AND FOR ADOLESCENTS**

Adolescents 360 listens to what girls say they want to deliver sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services when and how they need.

1. **When you become sexually active.**
   - "I have dreams but no idea how to achieve them."
   - "Motherhood is my dream. Infertility would be more tragic than being a mother too soon."
   - "I'm all alone in this."
   - "I'm living for today."
   - "As long as I am not using contraceptives, I am not sexually active."
   - "I trust my mum most."
   - "You are offering me shame and infertility. It is worse to be known to be contracepting."

2. **Use contraceptives!**
   - "Girls need to feel seen, heard and respected."

3. **So you can finish school and stay healthy.**
   - "Your current needs are important!"
   - "What's your dream? Set a goal, make a plan!"

4. **And achieve all your dreams.**
   - "Contraceptives are a first step to achieving your immediate goals."
   - "Whenever you are ready, you can have a baby."

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**THE OLD FRAMING**

Traditional adolescent and youth SRH research yields meaningful data, yet lacks an emotional connection to the work.

**THE A360 FRAMING**

Girls' insights help design resonant SRH solutions responsive to girls' needs and desires.

#InMySquad
“There are things known and there are things unknown, and in between are the doors of perception.”

— Aldous Huxley
Thank you!

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