



Digital Media Literacy and Youth Civic Reasoning in Kenya

Key Informant Interview Report

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Introduction

The Youth Café conducted Key Informant Interviews to expand our knowledge on media literacy in Kenya and the intervention measures that would apply. The information collected through these interviews informs the digital media literacy handbook that The Youth café is designing for the Youth Excel project. These expert insights help in aligning the deliverables and contextualizing the results.

Methodology

The interviews took place on Zoom, where The Youth Café’s facilitator interviewed the experts using a detailed plan that was previously shared with them. Project managers at both The Youth Café and IREX drafted and reviewed the questions before they were administered. The questions were designed to spark partnerships in the future as part of the sustainability plan. A total of two organizations participated in the Key Informant Interviews. The interviews were recorded for the purpose of documentation with consent from all the interviewees. The experts' qualifications for the interviews included having a deep understanding of the community, understanding of cultural factors, communication skills, knowledge of social determinants of media literacy, and social work skills. Both experts were also from Kenya and dealt with young people in their previous projects to establish a strong perspective for their recommendations.

Key Informant Interview Findings

From your knowledge and experience in Kenya, do you think youths are well equipped with digital media literacy skills?

Kindly explain your answer.

Both experts were agreeable with their answer that youths in Kenya are not equipped with digital media skills. The explanation to that answer was also similar as all of them mentioned that youths know and understand the power of digital media. Still, they lack the skills to manage their engagement in the social space responsibly. Many adults make the mistake of interpreting digital savviness with the know-how to have good conduct and analysis skills when on social media. More often than not, young people are prey to misinformation and cyberbullying as compared to adults.

What role might consumption of information play in civic reasoning for youth in Kenya?

Key Interviewees attributed the consumption of information on social media with civic reasoning. They both noted that information is the basis of decision making which means that all the information consumed directly or indirectly affects the choices that people make. Considering electioneering periods, information sharing is more rampant and consistent through different platforms. Due to the intensity of information in political years, young people are eager to share and internalize information. False information can thus spread quickly, causing ill decision making and propagating stereotypes about certain groups. Both experts considered online information as unsustainable if there are no strong mechanisms for the detection of fake news. The most common responses dwelled on misinformation's effect on people's decisions regarding the biggest online challenge. Digital media could thus be a tool for better civic reasoning and harmony in a political time.

Kindly share any information on programs you know that teach media literacy in Kenya.

In addition to university courses that offer media as a course, the experts also mentioned several programs that teach media literacy, albeit general. One of the programs mentioned is run by Kenya National Library Services (KNLS) as an extension program for the public to understand literacy. Although this program is not on digital media literacy, it teaches topics that could be applied when dealing with all types of information. Among the Key Informant Interview informants, being young with access to the internet is a blessing that should be utilized. Youths should take advantage of the many learning opportunities online and develop their literacy skills through the identified programs.

Do you have any thoughts or ideas about strategies or activities that you think would be particularly effective in increasing digital media literacy in Kenya?

Both experts had a lot of information to give on the kind of topics and programs that would help improve digital media literacy in Kenya. One of the informants mentioned that young people need to be taught the essence of online participation in driving change, whether positive or negative. There is a lot of power in the social media space that could be used for development. Young people should understand their influence and how that could result in changes in the people they interact with on different platforms. Youths in Kenya should learn how to curate content and also consume in a way that builds them.

Understanding the authenticity of the information shared was yet another topic that both experts highlighted. They were both optimistic that misinformation could be curbed by just teaching young people how to handle content online with objectivity. Understanding the information shared, its purpose, the background of the information and the effect it has on people is crucial to effective communication. Key informants established a strong connection between the source of information shared in the digital space and the relevance it has on the decision-making process of participants.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The Key Informant Interviews garnered a lot of information on how digital media literacy relates to young people and their civic decisions. The following recommendations were established from the interviews. Generally, the experts agreed that digital media literacy is important for young people and could be very helpful in establishing better civic engagement.

- 1.** Focus on showing the strong relationship between usage of digital tools and literacy.
- 2.** Develop and teach the procedures that need to be followed for youths to fact-check information.
- 3.** Teach ethical principles in the categories of “others” and “self” to increase young people’s accountability for their actions and reactions online.
- 4.** Ensure there is adequate awareness of the handbook for young people to reap benefits and increase sustainability.