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A digital self-care intervention to improve sexual and reproductive health in youth in Zimbabwe

Submission date 26/08/2026	**Recruitment status** Not yet recruiting	[X] Prospectively registered [_] Protocol [_] Statistical analysis plan [_] Results [_] Individual participant data [X] Record updated in last year
Registration date 27/08/2026	**Overall study status** Ongoing	
Last Edited 10/11/2026	**Condition category** Other	

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Young people in Zimbabwe can face difficulties accessing sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services. Barriers may include limited confidentiality, concerns about stigma, inconvenient clinic opening hours and worries about being judged when seeking care. Digital self-care services may help young people access information, testing and health products more easily. This study aims to co-design, implement and evaluate a digital self-care intervention that improves access to SRH services for young people attending a tertiary education institution in Zimbabwe.

Who can take part?

Adults aged 18 to 40 years who are actively registered at the Harare Institute of Technology and are able to provide digital consent to access the services.

What does the study involve?

The study has three stages. First, young people will work with researchers to design the intervention through a series of workshops and a design event. The study will be supported by a Youth Advisory Committee and a Working Advisory Group.

Second, the intervention will be piloted and implemented. The intervention will provide access to a range of SRH services through a free digital platform that can be accessed on a mobile phone. Services will include HIV self-testing kits, sexually transmitted infection (STI) screening, condoms, menstrual health products and contraception. Participants will be able to order these services through the platform and collect them from secure smart lockers using a one-time access code. Surveys will be carried out before and after the intervention to understand participants' needs and experiences.

Finally, researchers will evaluate how the intervention worked using service use data, interviews and group discussions with young people and other stakeholders. The findings will be used to develop guidance to support future implementation and wider use of the intervention.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
Participants may benefit from easier and more confidential access to SRH services. The information collected will help researchers understand whether digital self-care services are acceptable and useful for young people. There are no significant risks expected beyond those associated with providing personal information and discussing health topics. Data will be collected and managed according to approved research procedures.

Where is the study run from?
The study is being run at the Harare Institute of Technology in Zimbabwe and is sponsored by the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, UK.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
January 2027 to November 2029.

Who is funding the study?
The study is funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) through a Global Advanced Fellowship

Who is the main contact?
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Study information

Scientific Title
Co-design and implementation of a digital self-care intervention to improve sexual and reproductive health among youth in Zimbabwe

Acronym
The CoDe Study

Study objectives
This study aims to co-design, implement, and evaluate a digital self-care SRH intervention for youth attending a selected tertiary education institution (TEI) in Zimbabwe. The study has three objectives:
1. Co-design a digital self-care intervention for integrated SRH services with youth attending TEI in Zimbabwe.
2. Determine the feasibility, acceptability, and uptake of the digital self-care intervention and develop optimal user pathways for delivery of integrated SRH services for youth attending TEI in Zimbabwe
3. Conduct a process evaluation of the digital self-care intervention and develop a toolkit to inform operationalisation, scale-up and sustainability of the intervention.

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
Submitted 25/08/2026, Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe (20 Cambridge Raod, Harare, 00263, Zimbabwe; +2638644073772; mrcz@mrcz.org.zw), ref: MRCZ/A/3510

Primary study design
Interventional

Allocation
N/A: single arm study

Masking
Open (masking not used)

Control
Uncontrolled

Assignment
Single

Purpose
Health services research, Prevention, Screening

Study type(s)

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
The study will offer sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services, including HIV self-testing, STI screening, condoms, menstrual health products, and contraception.

Interventions
The study will be supported by a Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) and a Working Advisory Group (WAG). The first objective will involve co-designing the digital self-care intervention with youth through four participatory workshops, followed by a designathon. The second objective will focus on piloting and implementing the intervention, which will offer SRH services, including HIV self-testing, STI screening, condoms, menstrual health products, and contraception ordered via a free digital platform accessible on mobile phones using Unstructured Supplementary Service Data (USSD). Processed orders will be delivered to "grab and go" smart lockers, accessible for pickup with a one-time access code. This objective will also include a baseline and endline survey with students to understand SRH needs and changes over time. The final objective is a mixed methods process evaluation that utilizes routinely collected data, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions with youth and stakeholders.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
1. Uptake of services during the 12 month intervention period measured using study data on service uptake, collected at the end of the intervention period

Key secondary outcome(s)

Completion date
30/11/2029

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
1. Active registration at the Harare Institute of Technology
2. Digital consent to access services provided

Healthy volunteers allowed
Yes

Age group

Adult

Lower age limit
18 Years

Upper age limit
40 Years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
0

Key exclusion criteria
1. Unable to provide digital consent to access services provided

Date of first enrolment
05/01/2027

Date of final enrolment
30/09/2029

Locations

Countries of recruitment
Zimbabwe

Sponsor information

Organisation
London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

ROR
https://ror.org/00a0jsq62

Funder(s)

Funder type

Funder Name
National Institute for Health and Care Research

Alternative Name(s)

National Institute for Health Research, NIHR Research, NIHRresearch, NIHR - National Institute for Health Research, NIHR (The National Institute for Health and Care Research), NIHR

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype
National government

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary
Not expected to be made available