

Approaches used by Teachers to Sensitize Learners with Visual Impairment on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in Kenya

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Abstract

There has been a recent increase in the advocacy for the raising of awareness of Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights among Young Persons with Disabilities. The government of Kenya, through its various ministries such as the Ministry of Education, is also calling for the raising of awareness among the Young Persons with Disabilities, including learners with visual impairment in schools. This study, therefore, sought to explore approaches used by teachers in sensitizing learners with visual impairment on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights in an integrated secondary school in Nakuru, Kenya. This study was informed by the Theory of Change by Connell and Kubisch (1998). The study adopted a phenomenological design within a qualitative research approach underpinned by an interpretivist paradigm. Purposive sampling was used to select 8 teachers from the integrated boys' school to be participants in this study. Semi-structured individual interviews were used to collect data. Data collected was analyzed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that teachers integrated approaches such as open-door activities, different professional experts on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, supplementary learning resources, and differentiated instructions that included learner-centered approaches building on learners' knowledge, and soft skills to sensitize the learners with visual impairment on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights. The study recommends that the Ministry of Education works together with organizations that offer braille books on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights to supply to integrated schools, and train teachers on how to include learners with visual impairment in their classes, as well as how to facilitate Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights.

Key words: *Teachers Approaches, Learners, Visual Impairment, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Rights*

1.0 Background of the study

Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) highlights the agreements on services and/or interventions required to meet the sexual and reproductive health of all individuals (United Nations Population Fund, 2019). Persons with Disabilities too, are people with sexual desires, needs, rights, and family dreams like anyone else (Division for Communicative Disabilities and

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Deafness, 2017). SRHR plays a pivotal role in meeting some of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) such as goal four on quality education, goal three on healthy lives, goal five on gender equality, and goal ten on reducing inequalities among countries (Barot et al., 2015). World Health Organization (2009) noted that the SRHR of persons with disabilities (PWDs) are often overlooked by their disability community and the people working on SRHR even though the needs of these PWDs are similar to those of people without disabilities. Maurya (2016) says that for the unique needs of Learners with Visual Impairment (LWVI) to be met within an educational setting, an approach comprising of professionals, parents and students using specialized resources and services should be utilized. These specialized resources are made by braille machines which are meant to help LWVI be on par with their peers in society. The World Health Organization (2009) and the Division for Communicative Disabilities and Deafness (2017) indicated that PWDs may have greater need for SRHR education due to their increased risk of being exposed to the dangers of abuse related to SRHR. The African Union Commission (2006) noted that different reasons cause adolescents, who are the most vulnerable group, not to understand SRHR, have adequate levels of knowledge on their sexuality, reproductive health and prevalence of high-risk sexual behavior. The Global Financing Facility (2019) concluded that adolescent SRHR has a crucial role in the results of improving the health and life cycle of adolescents.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Sensitization refers to any approach teachers might adopt when working with SRHR, also respecting the LWVI's culture and religious norms. Creating awareness of SRHR requires teachers to be creative in the approaches they use with LWVI, as they too need to be aware of their SRHR. Scanty research exists about the approaches used in the sensitization of LWVI on SRHR in integrated secondary schools in Kenya. It is against this backdrop that the study explored approaches used by teachers to sensitize LWVI on SRHR in Kenya.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study was to explore approaches used by teachers to sensitize LWVI on SRHR in an integrated secondary school for boys in Kenya.

1.4 Research question

What are the approaches used by teachers to sensitize LWVI on SRHR in an integrated school for boys in Kenya?

1.3 Theoretical and conceptual framework

This study adopted the theory of change proposed by Connell and Kubisch (1998). They defined the theory of change as an explanation of how and why an initiative works, as it is an evaluation technique that links activities, outcomes and contexts of a comprehensive community initiative. The theory of change has common elements that are followed to achieve desired results. These include how change is expected to happen, identifying participants' roles, developing a conceptual pathway, and monitoring change that is taking place (O'Flynn & Moberly, 2017).

The implication of this theory for this study was that using the theory would help give an understanding of the ways in which teachers navigate through the complexities of the society to sensitize the LWVI on SRHR. The theory fit into this study as it helped look into the activities and strategies that have been used for sensitization to take place.

The figure below puts this theory into a tangible perspective to be able to help inform this research. In the figure, for SRHR information to be delivered to LWVI by teachers, sensitization must take place. In the process of sensitization of LWVI, teachers have different approaches, get different experiences, and different challenges. Through these experiences, approaches used, and challenges faced, teachers make the necessary adjustments which help improve sensitizing techniques which in turn influence how LWVI acquire SRHR information.

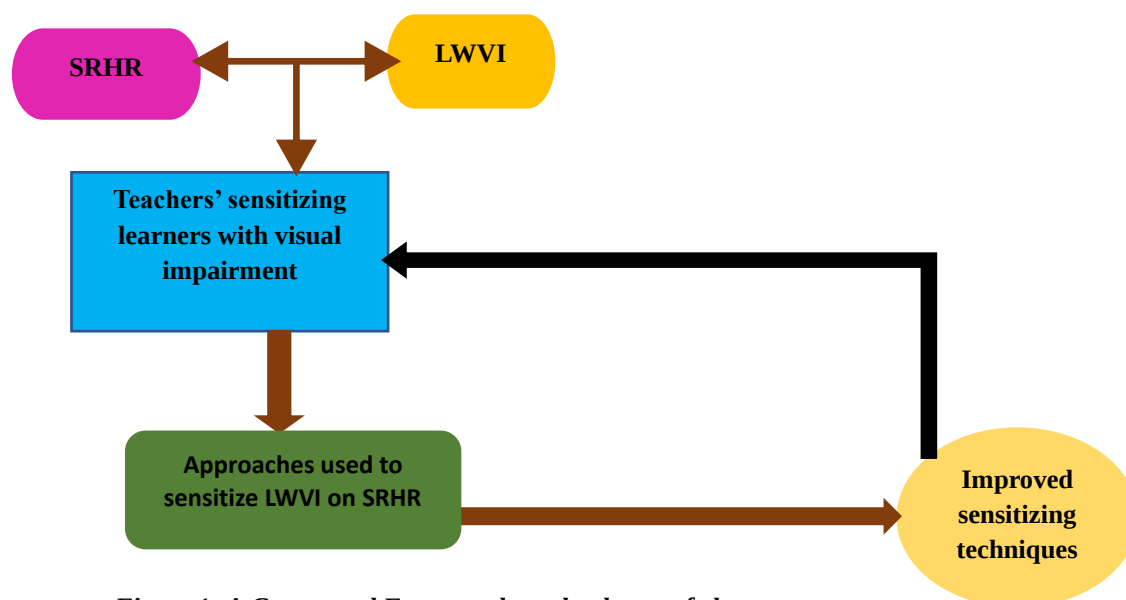


Figure 1: A Conceptual Framework on the theory of change

2.0 Literature review

For countries such as Germany, Netherlands, Belgium and some in Central Asia, Ketting et al. (2018) noted that sexuality education was embedded in teaching subjects and as a compulsory subject. Rabbitte and Enriquez (2018), while looking at the role of policy on sexual health education in Schools in United States of America (USA), found that even though most parents in the USA supported CSE in schools, most schools only offered Abstinence Only Education (AOE). Their study also noted that if CSE was to be implemented correctly, it helped enhance learners' perceptions of physiology, hygiene, anatomy, positive image, healthy relationships, handling uncomfortable situations and the health resources near them. This would be a role played by

school nurses who may work together with teachers, parents, administrators or staff members. According to Violita and Hadi (2019), high school students with high knowledge levels of adolescent reproductive health services were two times more likely to make use of such services as compared to those with lower levels of knowledge. Desrosiers et al. (2020) found that effective interventions for sexual reproductive health (SRH) dissemination to be SRH knowledge or education, education on Gender Based Violence, sexual self-efficacy, use of condoms and contraception, and prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. England et al. (2020) opine that learners used soft skills to make decisions on real-world issues, resulting from application of technical skills. This agrees with Novitasari et al. (2020) who found that there were positive effects of teachers' developing learners' soft skills. Rybska and Blaszk (2020) presented a modular model for using a holistic approach in an educational activity, which shows how an holistic approach enables a child's learning in the dimensions of safety, inclusion, and participation, while at the same time focusing on interaction, cognition and representation and also using affective actions that can lead to imagination and creativity.

According to Lawrence et al. (2021), among adolescents living with HIV, most adolescents prefer to get SRH information from health care workers. Student-centered approaches to addressing problems encouraged learners to develop skills that could be of use in their lives (Tzenios, 2022; Ali 2019; Olugbenga 2021). Elmegaly et al. (2019) also found that the use of audio teaching programs with girls who are blind, improved their knowledge and attitude on matters to do with reproductive health. Chilambe et al. (2023) pointed out the importance of educators identifying opportunities that could help learners make meaning of experiences outside class by connecting these experiences to the lessons they were learning. Isroani and Huda (2022) argued that teachers should be able to act as parents as well as friends for students while they are in school. They also stated that parental support was vital in the learning progress of students. Elbes and Oktaviani (2022) also argued that building learners' soft skills had a significant effect on learners' understanding of cultural values and norms. Milanzi (2021) found that integrated materials in the teaching of reproductive health lessons were viable and practical in helping adolescents acquire knowledge on SRH. However, there is a research gap regarding approaches teachers used to sensitize learners with visual impairment (LWVI) on SRHR in Kenya.

Mbithi et al. (2020) did a cross-sectional study on the relationship between the health outreach approaches and delivery of adolescent health information and services in reproductive health projects in Kisumu City and noted that there was a statistically significant relationship between SRHR approaches that are friendly to adolescents and the reception thereof by this target group. Adolescents showed an interest in having role models or outside experts to take up the task of providing SRH education (Nash et al., 2019). A study done in Syria on SRH with refugee adolescent girls found that mothers were the most approached people for information on SRH issues. However, most of these girls still preferred to get advice from specialists in private and comfortable environments (Korri et al., 2021). According to Mwenje (2018) adolescents who are male need to be specifically targeted for SRH education and related services. This means that clinics that are youth-friendly need to sensitize communities so that they are open to the idea of

male SRH services uptake. This was after their study looked at the effects of sexual and reproductive health education on the sexual and reproductive health and wellness among male adolescents in Roysambu, Kenya. They found that male students were open to the idea of receiving SRH information and for this reason, schools should gear CSE purposely for male learners. These studies have pointed out that there is in fact great benefit in engaging learners to help them acquire information on SRHR by using of a wide range of methods other than the conventional methods they find in class. However, the literature reviewed here was not adequately covering approaches used for LWVI and this study therefore sought to explore what approaches teachers used to help sensitize LWVI on SRHR. This is the gap that led to this study.

3.0 Materials and methods

3.1 Research design

The study adopted a phenomenological research design using a qualitative approach, because the study was looking to understand the phenomenon of sensitizing LWVI on SRHR from the teachers' perspectives. According to Tobi and Kampen (2018) a qualitative approach enables researchers to get acquainted and make meaning of the data they gather, constructing a narration of the interviewees' experiences. An interpretivist paradigm, constructing meaning of the phenomenon under study, was used and thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews were done to understand the approaches teachers used to sensitize LWVI on SRHR.

3.2 Study area

The research was conducted in Nakuru County Kenya North-West of Nairobi Capital city. It has a population of 2,162,202 making it the third most populous county in Kenya. People living in the rural areas total 1,115,122 while 1,047,080 live in the urban areas. Of the total population in Nakuru, 0.7% persons live with visual impairment (Owino, 2020). Most people in this population are adolescents aged between 10 and 19 years who are 509,948 in number (Brinkhoff, 2020).

3.3 Sampling size and sampling methods

This study used purposive sampling to select participants who have taught or cared for learners with visual impairments in an integrated secondary school in Nakuru county, Kenya. The sample of this study comprised of eight participants who have worked in the secondary school. For this study, the participants were two Biology teachers, one guidance and counselling teacher, the pastoral leader, the teacher of Christian Religious Education, the school librarian, the school braille transcriber, and the head of boarding section. Of the eight, six were women and two were men.

3.4 Research instruments

Kalu and Bwalya (2017) state that a qualitative researcher has the freedom to choose a framework that is most suitable for collecting data to understand the phenomenon in their study. Semi-structured interviews were selected as data collection tool.

3.5 Ethical consideration

The researcher sought permission from authorities such as the National Commission for Science Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) and the school principal before conducting the research. The participants' consent was sought, and they were informed about their safety, the maintenance of their anonymity, and the possibility of withdrawing from the study at any time.

3.6 Data analysis

Data collected from the semi-structured interviews was transcribed in the form of verbatim transcripts. This data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The data was winnowed, organized and prepared for analysis, coded and categories and themes were then developed.

4.0 Results and discussion

The study sought to explore approaches used by teachers to sensitize LWVI on SRHR in an integrated secondary school. The following main research question was formulated: The themes and their categories that emerged from the data have been presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of themes and categories of the current strategies for effective research supervision in the completion of postgraduate studies

Emerging themes	Categories
Use of integrated approaches	Holistic learning approaches Open-door activities Supplementary learning resources Use of health professionals
Use of differentiated instructions	Learner-centered approaches Building soft skills of LWVI

4.1 Use of integrated approaches

Integrated approaches have been used in this case to mean the combination of skills, values or attitudes from different subject areas to help with the development of a better understanding of a particular idea. This emerged as the first theme of the approaches used by teachers to sensitize LWVI on SRHR. Under this theme the categories that emerged include:

4.1.1 Holistic learning approach

Within this study, holistic learning approach means any approach that seeks to activate all aspects of the learners with regard to their body, their thinking, imagination and emotions in order to get a more effective comprehension on a topic that is being taught (IBE-UNESCO, 2013). Taking into consideration the extra needs of LWVI and the importance of LWVI settling into school for the ease of being sensitized on SRHR, teachers spoke of how LWVI got assistance from their learning counterparts in order to settle down and adapt to school life. The head of boarding section said:

“For the first three weeks, we have one of the learners to guide them. The learners we have are very good since they get to help them, show them around and they are able to adapt to the environment. As part of getting adapted, we have someone help them in making their bed and help them queue like other students.” (Individual interview, Teacher A p.10, line 16{14-5-2023})

The teachers also noted that it was important to send LWVI to an integrated school and the benefits this had on LWVI being sensitized on SRHR. The head of boarding section said:

“...that is why they were brought to an integrated school so that they can grow up like any other student. When they are in a special school, there are skills they don't acquire but the way we talk about sexuality with other ordinary students, the LWVI need to be talked to like all other students.” (Individual interview, Teacher A, p.10 lines 6-9{14-6-2023})

The use of a holistic learning approach by teachers to help sensitize LWVI on SRHR bring out what Rybska and Blaszk (2020) said when they presented a modular model for using a holistic approach in an educational activity. The model demonstrated how learning for can take place in form of safety, inclusion and participation while focusing on cognitive abilities, representation and interaction all in a bid to yield imaginative and creative learners. Helping LWVI lead comfortable lives in school helps enhance the process of sensitizing them on SRHR. This is because Chilambe et al. (2023) opine that it is important for educators to identify opportunities that help learners make meaning of the experiences they have out of class and connect these experiences to the lessons they are learning. The use of the holistic approach helps ensure that all areas of a learner's life are touched on while at the same time, incorporating the understanding of SRHR matters.

4.1.2 Open door activities

Open door activities have been used in this study to mean the activities used by a school as evidence-based interventions, to create a sense of community which is protective and preventive. This uses class assemblies, dialogic pedagogical gatherings with teachers or parents and other social networks for learners (Roca et al., 2020). Participants in this context highlighted different open-door activities such as group meetings within the school such as family groups (these are groups of learners formed in school to bring them together as siblings in a family, with a teacher who acts in a parental capacity) and dormitory meetings. The teachers also used religious gatherings to help sensitize the LWVI on SRHR matters. This is what the participants had to say:

“We have family groups within the school which LWVI are a part of. In these (family) groups, learners hold meetings within the term where they talk on agendas prepared by the guidance and counselling teacher. The discussions cover a range of topics such as SRHR, drugs, bullying in school and any other topics that revolve around the lives of the learners.” (Individual interview, Teacher B, p.23 line 1-4{14-6-2023})

“We also have houses among the dorms where we hold weekly meetings. The teacher on duty takes part in these meetings which occur every other Tuesday.” (Individual interview, Teacher B, p.23 line 6-8{14-6-2023})

Participants also pointed out that teachers used gatherings that involved parents of LWVI and prepared topics that touch on SRHR in advance to have parents hold this discussion with the LWVI. The pastoral leader had this to say:

“We have inculcated some topics in the spiritual programs we have in the school which involve all the students. In the course of the year, we pick on certain topics and the topic of reproductive health is usually covered in the second half of the academic year.” (Individual interview, Teacher C, p.14 line 17-19, {14-6-2023})

“We can come up with topics such as how to deal with homosexuality, relationships between fathers and their sons and how to develop a healthy relationship, relationship with people of the opposite sex and how to deal with content they consume from platform such as social media.” (Individual interview, Teacher C, p.15 line 1-3{15-6-2023})

According to Rabbite and Enriquez (2018), strategies bound to raise awareness successfully include school representations during faculty meetings (school staff meetings), community and parents’ association and school meetings to garner their support. Isroani and Huda (2022) found that teachers should be in a position to play the role of parents and friends for students while they are in school, and that parental support contributes to the learning progress of students. Creating bonds with the LWVI through these open-door activities and the involvement of parents have been used by teachers to help enhance the sensitization of LWVI on SRHR.

4.1.3 Use of supplementary learning resources

Supplementary learning resources have been used to describe the instructional materials used to strengthen, enrich or give an extension to the normal teaching programs. Participants described a range of resources to help enhance the sensitization of LWVI on different SRHR topics. These have been discussed by the teacher of Biology, the guidance and counselling teacher and the librarian:

“In order to create awareness among LWVI, we employ use of models that help enhance LWVI understanding on topics about reproductive health.” (Individual interview, Teacher D, p.27 line 21{15-6-2023})

“...we usually show them videos to help enhance further learning, but for LWVI, they only get to listen to the audio.” (Individual interview, Teacher E, p.24 line 12{15-6-2023})

“... We encourage LWVI to interact with their peers and hold discussions on the matter of SRHR who have had the chance to see video clips shared or read books on the topic. When they talk to encourage LWVI to interact with their peers and they approach the teacher and want to know more about what (SRHR topic) they have discussed.” (Individual interview, Teacher F, p.28 line 9{15-6-2023})

According to Elmegaly et al. (2019) applying audio teaching programs for teaching girls with visual impairment yields high improvement in their knowledge and attitude on matters related to reproductive health. Supplementing the lessons LWVI get in class with appropriate resources helps create an environment where LWVI can receive SRHR information. Mbithi et al. (2020) noted that there is a statistical significance between friendly SRHR adolescent approaches and

their reception by this target group. Supplementing the sensitization of LWVI on SRHR through use of different materials yielded results of enriched learners who have hands-on experience on how to tackle issues that may arise concerning SRHR.

4.1.4 Use of health professionals

A professional is a person who has a qualification in a particular matter through the education they have received. The participants mentioned people from different professions who helped sensitize LWVI on SRHR such as persons at youth-friendly health centers and health workers. The guidance and counselling teacher mentioned:

“When they have any health issues, we make them aware that there are youth-friendly health centers where they can be tested and ask any questions. In fact, we even encourage students to go for Voluntary Counselling and Testing besides these other counselling sessions.” (Individual interview, Teacher E, p.25 line 4{14-6-2023})

“We usually invite health workers to talk to them when we have a counselling session, we factor in LWVI so that they tackle them in detail. We also usually refer them to the youth-friendly health centers.” (Individual interview, Teacher E, p.24 line 21{15-6-2023})

The teachers also mentioned holding plenary discussion forums where talks on SRHR are given by professionals to all the learners including LWVI. The school nurse raises an alarm on any SRHR issues reported. The teacher of C.R.E. and the pastoral leader said:

“We then deal with them (SRHR issues) in the main forums such as in smaller group meetings and then have a general assembly...” (Individual interview, Teacher C, p. 15 line 5{15-6-2023})

“The nurse is usually advised to report on any diseases reported to them (nurses) by learners that could be of concern to the safety of other learners.” (Individual interview, Teacher B, p.22 line 1-2{14-6-2023})

It is important to include other professionals who have knowledge on SRHR in the sensitization of LWVI on the topic. This is supported by Lawrence et al. (2021) who found that most adolescents prefer getting SRH information from health care workers. Nash et al. (2019) also noted that adolescents showed an interest in having role models or outside experts take up the mantle of providing SRH education. Korri et al. (2021) also found that most girls preferred getting advice of SRH from specialists in private and comfortable environments. Mwenje (2018) noted that male adolescents needed to be targeted for SRH education and related services in that youth-friendly clinics need to sensitize communities so that they are open to the idea of male SRH service uptake.

4.2 Use of differentiated instruction

Differentiated instruction refers to an approach to teaching where a range of learning experiences and addressing the different needs of learners are offered to use learning opportunities to the maximum for each learner within the classroom (IBE-UNESCO, 2013). They include:

4.2.1 Learner-centered approaches

A learner-centered approach here describes an approach to teaching where teachers organize instructions, learning and assessment based on an individual learner's personal needs, traits and interests (IBE-UNESCO, 2013). The boarding patron mentioned:

"We therefore, try to help them (LWVI) know the real life and how they (LWVI) can deal with the real life, that is social life, moral life and also to emphasize on character because what is important is character." (Individual interview, Teacher A, p. 9 lines 20-21 {14-06-2023})

"If they (LWVI) are not controlled, they (LWVI) can prove otherwise and therefore, we try to guide them (LWVI) and tell them (LWVI) that it is good to be in a friendship but not relationships." (Individual interview, Teacher A p.10 line 12 14-6-2023})

The sensitization of LWVI is also dependent on the knowledge learners may have on the importance of acquiring information on SRHR. Desrosiers et al. (2020) noted that effective interventions in SRH knowledge or education are psychosocial interventions which include communication skills, assertiveness training and problem solving, all which focus to help the LWVI as an individual person. Just like teachers have used learners' engagement on the topic as an entry point, Milanzi (2021) also found a hybrid problem-based pedagogy to be an effective approach in delivering knowledge to adolescents on SRH, safe sexual behaviors and soft skills.

4.2.2 Building soft skills of LWVI

Soft skills used here refer to a set of intangible personal qualities, habits, attitudes, traits that are broadly applicable and transferable to different contexts in the lives of LWVI. They include empathy, self-management, self-esteem, sociability, integrity, sense of responsibility and decision-making (IBE-UNESCO, 2013). The head of boarding section and the teacher of C.R.E. had this to say:

"Yes, and what we do is we tell them (LWVI) that at their age it is important to only socialize but not look at things beyond so that they (LWVI) may not fall into any traps." (Individual interview, Teacher A, p.11 line 17 {14-06-2023})

"In school it is best to help LWVI form friendships with people who can encourage them to be independent alongside helping them (LWVI) with their orientation and mobility in the school environment. This helps ensure that LWVI do not feel like a burden to their counterparts as well as helping the learners not to forget that they are still learners." (Individual interview, Teacher B, p.22 line 16{15-6-2023})

Novitasari et al. (2020) found the building of soft skills, among other skills, to have positive and important effects on the performance of learners. This is also echoed by Elbes and Oktaviani (2022) who found that building learners' soft skills have had an impact on learners' understanding of cultural values and norms thereby helping learners be able to initiate and implement it daily.

These are the soft skills that LWVI learn which help them tackle different issues they face regarding their SRHR.

5.0 Conclusion and recommendations

From the findings it is evident that teachers used different approaches to ensure that the LWVI were sensitized on SRHR in this integrated secondary school. The findings revealed that teachers used integrated approaches to sensitize LWVI on SRHR. These integrated approaches involved use of holistic learning approaches which looked at all the aspects of a LWVI regarding their thinking, imagination, body and emotions for more comprehension when learning about a topic. There is also the use of open-door activities where the school held interventions that were meant to create a sense of community, that were protective and preventive, use of class assemblies, and dialogical gatherings with either teachers or parents and guardians of LWVI. Supplementary learning resources were seen to be used to strengthen and enrich teachers' normal teaching programs when sensitizing LWVI on SRHR. These included use of models, videos or audio materials, use of peer-led discussions, resource persons and issuing reading materials on SRHR. The teachers also used health professionals who helped sensitize LWVI on SRHR by holding plenary discussions in school or having the LWVI referred to their youth-friendly health facilities. Teachers also used differentiated instructions to sensitize LWVI on SRHR such as learner centered approaches that focused on the individual SRHR needs of a LWVI and building soft skills for LWVI which they believed would help them with the SRHR. This involved sensitizing LWVI on how to socialize with other learners, make decisions and maintain good self-esteem.

Based on these findings the study recommended that the government of Kenya should increase funds to support integrated secondary schools so that these schools can be in a better position to sensitize LWVI on SRHR. The Ministry of Education could work towards improving the curriculum so that learners could get more equipping information on SRHR. The Ministry of Education could train in-service teachers and universities could train pre-service teachers to use appropriate teaching approaches to sensitize LWVI on SRHR. The Ministry of Education could partner with organizations dealing with SRHR for SRHR braille material production and distribution. The MoE could also develop programs to help teachers how to include LWVI in the classroom and how to facilitate SRHR for LWVI. Clearly, teachers play an important role in sensitizing LWVI on SRHR and could be further encouraged and supported to use all available Approaches to do so.

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Conflict of interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest in the conduct of this study

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