

Sexual and Reproductive Health through a Screen

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Abstract : Cultural and structural limitations and conservative social norms have direct effects on the availability of sources of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the Arab Region. Nevertheless, SRHR advocates, healthcare providers, and organizations have created online spaces like websites, blogs, and social media platforms to increase people's access and ability to share information, experiences, and services. While these efforts help increase the accessibility to information and services, they also create and reflect inequalities based on limited internet access. Furthermore, these emergent ways of sharing and raising awareness online cannot be seen as a substitute for the urgent need for public healthcare systems and services to address SRHR issues in Arab states. This research aims to analyze the impact of the increasing importance of the role of social media platforms and technologies in the dissemination of SRHR-related information online to the youth as well as the associated inequalities of access. It also seeks to assess the effects and inequalities of the dependence on online platforms, which should be complementary to public and private SRHR services. The theoretical framework adopts Asef Bayat's concept of social non-movements to analyze how collective mobilization around SRHR issues is exercised in repressive and conservative settings in the Arab region. Using digital ethnography of four prominent digital platforms and a qualitative survey of people aged 18-30 years, the research draws attention to the urgent need for better access to knowledge and services around gender, bodily autonomy, and sexual and reproductive health in the Arab region.

Keywords : sexual and reproductive health and rights, social non-movements, digital platforms, Arab region

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