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# From Taboo to Touchscreen: A Mixed Method Exploration of a Digital Sexual and Reproductive Health Intervention for Bangladeshi Adolescents

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## Background

- In Bangladesh, adolescents constitute nearly **one-fifth of the population**, accounting for approximately **36 million individuals**.

- Adolescents face barriers to **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information and services**.

- While the 2011 GoB adolescent health programme aimed to address these issues, offline methods fell short, where **digital interventions, like app-based solutions, offer promising alternatives**.

## Aim

To design, develop and test the feasibility of an app for promoting peer interaction and facilitation enhancement within the current school-based adolescent health programme.

## Methods

This study was an implementation research (experimental non-randomised before-after design), mixed methods designed to understand the app's usability, acceptability, level of adoption, and utility for peer communication and digital capacity-building facilitation on adolescent SRHR issues.

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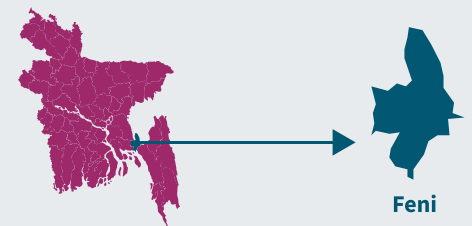
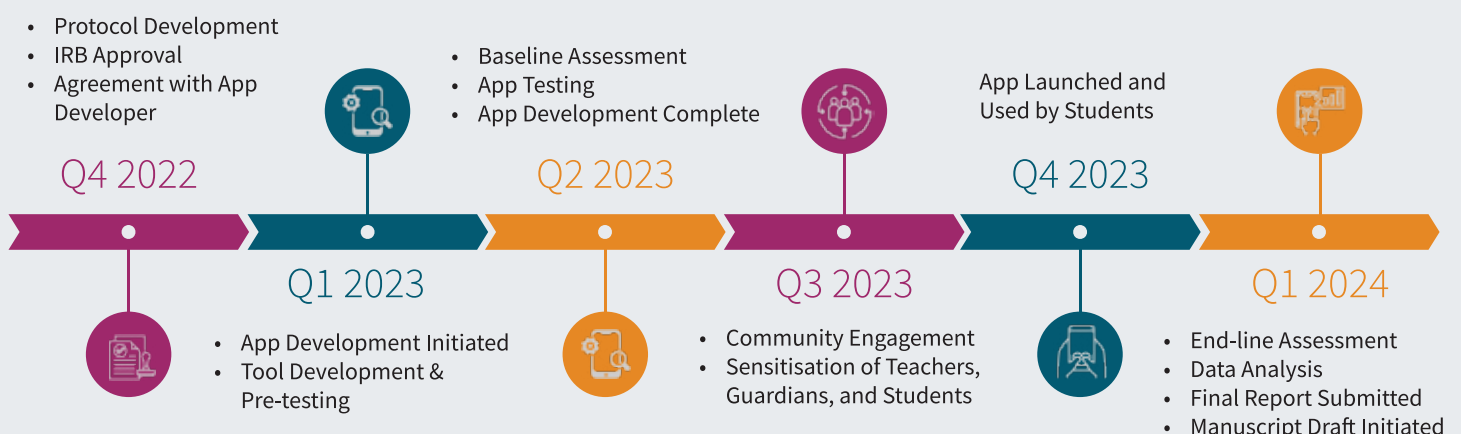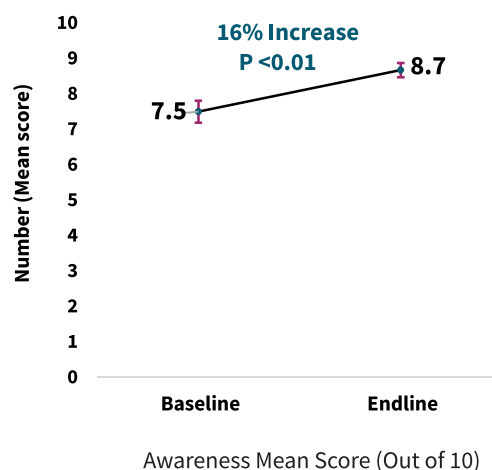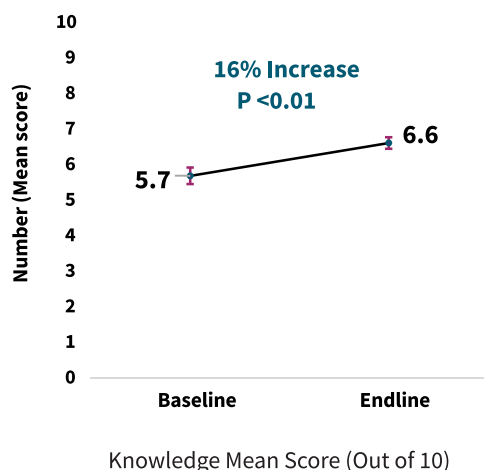| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **1 Girls' Secondary School:** Grade 9 | **1 Boys' Secondary School:** Grade 9 | **1 Co-education Secondary School:** Grade 9 |

*Baseline:* **144**
*Endline:* **122**

**8 In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)** with the students and teachers, **1 Focused Group Discussion (FGD)** with peer leaders, **3 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)** with stakeholders

## Implementation Journey

**Q4 2022**
- Protocol Development
- IRB Approval
- Agreement with App Developer

**Q1 2023**
- App Development Initiated
- Tool Development & Pre-testing

**Q2 2023**
- Baseline Assessment
- App Testing
- App Development Complete

**Q3 2023**
- Community Engagement
- Sensitisation of Teachers, Guardians, and Students

**Q4 2023**
App Launched and Used by Students

**Q1 2024**
- End-line Assessment
- Data Analysis
- Final Report Submitted
- Manuscript Draft Initiated

# Knowledge and Awareness



Knowledge Mean Score (Out of 10)

Baseline: 5.7, Endline: 6.6 — **16% Increase P <0.01**



Awareness Mean Score (Out of 10)

Baseline: 7.5, Endline: 8.7 — **16% Increase P <0.01**

# Thematic Findings

| OPPORTUNITIES OF THE APP | KEY CHALLENGES OF THE APP | ACTIONABLE INSIGHTS |
|---|---|---|
| *By using the Mukhorito App, now we can access various types of information that we didn't know before, such as reproductive health and drug addiction. I am satisfied with the app."*<br>- ***Student, Female, 15y*** | *Many of them (app users) raised issues about not attending sessions, such as lack of mobile data, a dysfunctional phone, time constraints, internet problems, power outages, or no Wi-Fi."*<br>- ***Peer leader, Female, 16y*** | *If the Mukhorito app is integrated with the government's adolescent health programme, adolescents will gain greater benefits and deeper knowledge about their health. Providing them with proper health education at this stage will empower them to lead the country and nation in the future."*<br>- ***Stakeholder, Male, 53y*** |

# Key Takeaways

- Mukhorito app's well-structured content and engaging stories **enhanced navigability, user interest, and ease of access to SRHR information**.

- It **successfully increased** the **knowledge and awareness** among the app users significantly at the endline compared to the baseline.

- It **reduced the stigma surrounding SRHR discussions through peer communication**, creating a more open environment to engage in conversations with peers, teachers, and even parents.

- Both students and teachers acknowledged the app as a **valuable tool for addressing SRHR needs that were previously considered taboo**.

- However, challenges are there including, **limitations in smartphone access, poor internet connectivity, and the mobile data cost** to participate in online sessions.

- Introducing the app to younger students, enhancing the educational content with short drama and animations, strengthening institutional support, and integrating the app into existing government programmes could enhance its effectiveness and sustainability, as mentioned by the participants.

# Conclusion

- The Mukhorito app shows promise in improving adolescent SRH awareness in Bangladesh by enhancing knowledge, leadership, and service use.

- Collaboration with government programmes is essential for scalability, sustainability, and fostering healthier adolescent outcomes.

- Addressing challenges, integrating them into the curriculum, and ensuring cyber security for data protection can increase acceptance.



To learn more about the study, scan here