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**Through the lens of egocentric design: Do AYA males' social networks influence or shape
their SRH literacy and information behaviour?**

**Abstract submitted to the Africa-Western Collaboration Day, University of Western
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In the justifiable attempt to highlight the brunt of sexual and reproductive health (SRH) risks faced by young girls, research, policy, and practice often miss the unique vulnerabilities of adolescent and young adult (AYA) males occasioned by their strict adherence to traditional masculinity. The liberal university environment, intense peer pressure, drug-related unprotected sex, and low utilization of SRH services make the situation of AYA males even more concerning. Thus, when tenets of masculinity are extended into romantic relationships in patriarchal societies such as Ghana, it further worsens SRH burdens (unsafe abortions, HIV/AIDS, and gender-based inequalities) faced by women. Meanwhile, the evolution of the information landscape occasioned by the improvements in digital technologies has led to a substantial adoption of internet-enabled platforms by young people across the Globe. These trends provide a unique opportunity not only to explore what sources of SRH information they access and use but also to examine the competencies they develop, sustain and apply when seeking, evaluating and incorporating such information into their SRH decisions and behaviour within the healthcare environment and beyond. Accordingly, considering the significant roles of social networks in evidence-based health outcomes, it becomes imperative to explore how persons within individuals' networks contribute to development of skills or competencies to apply SRH information especially given the existing inequalities within population groups despite information access approaching universality. That is, (how) do persons within the social networks of AYA males influence or shape their SRH literacy and information behaviour? Specifically, the structure of respondents' personal sources of SRH information, how information is sourced and disseminated within their networks amidst credibility and privacy/confidentiality, and the overall impact of these on the confidence and competence to apply SRH information in SRH decisions and behaviour will be explored. The study will be approached through the ego-centric design, a branch of social network analysis which

focuses on an actor (ego) and assesses the nodes connected to it (neighbours/alters). Thirty-two conveniently sampled male university students of two public universities in Ghana aged 18 to 24 years will be the study participants. I will employ name generator questions augmented with concentric circles to collect attribute and relational data. That is, I will supply participants with a paper containing four circles of which the centre represents the participant (ego), and then ask them to provide the names and biodata of three people who are important to them so long as SRH information is concerned. This will be followed up with questions on the key roles played by alters regarding SRH information in both online and offline environments, the kind and quality of topics discussed, and how they impact on SRH decisions. I will transcribe the recorded audio interview, back it up, and manage with the Nvivo software. Inductive coding will be iteratively carried out to move the data to the different levels of abstraction (in terms of codes, sub-categories, categories, and themes) to represent the entire data. A thematic description supported by narrative quotes will be used to present the findings.