



OLLSCOIL NA GAILLIMHE
UNIVERSITY OF GALWAY



UNESCO Child and Family Research Centre
In association with
The Institute for Lifecourse and Society
University of Galway

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What Works for Engaging Young Adults in
Youth Programming:
A Case Study of the Youth as Researchers
Programme



University
ofGalway.ie

Why, in the heart of a global pandemic, would young people apply to participate in a program?

Youth as Researchers

UNESCO Chairs youth development program

4-8 youth (ages 14 -35 years)

Crash course in social science research methods

Youth-led program, therefore... young people determine:

- Research question, method, instrument used, population, logistics, what the final product is, how to share the data...

They then analyze the data, create a boring but important report, and then disseminate in a format that *their* peers would receive it

Youth as Researchers

The ultimate goal is to share evidence-based results with an authority figure who can then enact broader change

It's easy to ignore someone who society considers to be *young n dumb* but it is a lot harder to ignore evidence

YAR: Ireland Youth Perceptions on Homelessness



Youth as Researcher Projects

YAR: United States Racial Disparities in Policing



YAR: Global Youth Perceptions on the COVID-19 Pandemic

Self-Determination Theory

Autonomy:

“A sense of initiative and ownership in one’s actions”

Relatedness:

“A sense of belonging and connection”

Competency:

“The feeling of mastery, a sense that one can succeed and grow” (Ryan & Deci, 2000)



Self-Determination Theory

Ownership over Your Choices (autonomy)

Friends (relatedness)

Belief in your Abilities (competency)

Empathy

“The ability to experience and understand what others feel without confusion between oneself and others” (Decety & Lamm, 2006)

Perspective Taking:

“The tendency to spontaneously adopt the psychological point of view of others”

Empathetic Concern:

“Assess ‘other-oriented’ feelings of empathy and concern for unfortunate others” (Davis, 1980)



Study Details

Time Frame: Spring 2021

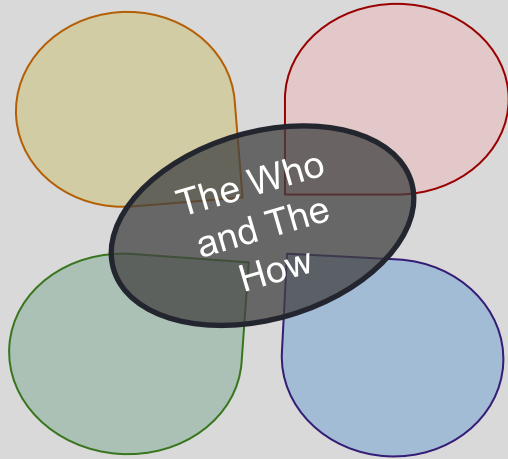
Study Participants: Youth as Researchers applicants (N= 5,581)

Age Range: 18-35 years

Home Countries: over 90 countries represented

Language: Understanding of English or French

Method: Survey delivered through Qualtrics



Results!

responses: N= 1,953 (35%)

age:

18 – 24 years (44%)

25 – 30 years (38%)

31 – 36 years (18%)

gender:

female (54%)

male (44%)

region: N=73 countries

Africa (19%)

Arabic Nations (9%)

Asia (44%)

Europe and North America (3%)

Latin and Central America (24%)

Refugee (2%)

Aggressive Regression Analysis

Multiple Regression of Itemized Independent Variables

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Full Model	Reduced Model
	Standard Coefficient Beta						
(R ²) I feel pressured in my life	-.065*					-.049	-.048
I feel like I am free to decide how to live my life	.038					.007	
I generally feel free to express my ideas and opinions	.012					-.021	
(R ²) In my daily life, I frequently have to do what I am told	-.107***					-.091**	-.093***
People I interact with on a daily basis tend to take my feelings into consideration	.086**					.001	
I feel like I can pretty much be myself in my daily situations	.090**					.040	
(R ²) There is not much opportunity for me to decide for myself how to do things in my daily life	.059*					.027	
I really like the people I interact with		.077*				.031	.034
I get along with the people I come into contact with		.016				-.030	
(R ²) I pretty much keep to myself and don't have a lot of social contacts		.038				.012	
I consider the people I regularly interact with to be my friends		.101***				.050	.049
People in my life care about me		.025**				.024	
(R ²) There are not many people that I am close to		.010				-.022	
(R ²) The people I interact with regularly do not seem to like me much		-.042				-.036	
People are generally pretty friendly toward me		.017				-.014	
(R ²) Often I do not feel very competent			-.104***			-.074*	-.071*
People I know tell me I'm good at what I do			.042			-.010	
I have been able to learn interesting new skills recently			.103***			.023	
Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do			.096**			.044	.039*
(R ²) In my life I do not get much of a chance to show how capable I am						-.013	
(R ²) I often do not feel very capable			.077*			.068**	.072*
I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision				.023		.010	
When I see someone being taken advantage of, I feel kind of protective towards them				.056*		.035	
I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective				.095**		.076*	.065**
(R ²) Other people's misfortunes do not usually disturb me a great deal				-.069*		-.020	
(R ²) If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's opinions				.020		.022	
(R ²) When I see someone being treated unfairly, I sometimes don't feel very much pity for them				.010		.015	
I am often quite touched by things that I see happen				.076**		.066*	.066*
I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both				.097***		.077**	.090**
I would describe myself as a pretty self-balanced person				.080**		.074**	.077**
When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while				.066*		.035	.068**
Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place				.033		.031	
Gender					-.014	-.025	
Age					-.123***	-.128***	-.119***
Home Area					-.047	-.034	
Community Interaction (CI): Immediate Family					.066*	.033	
CI: Extended Family					.031	.026	
CI: Friends-In-Person					.005	.001	
CI: Friends Online					.021	.000	
CI: Classmates					-.033	-.047	
CI: Workmates					.080**	.052	.052
CI: Acquaintances					.027	.030	
R ² Adjusted	.038	.038	.039	.035	.020	.114	.120
F Value	8.609***	7.761***	10.238***	12.316***	3.730***	5.043***	13.876***
Cases	1361	1389	1380	1371	1320	1320	1320

* An (R²) next to an item indicates that it is reverse coded. ** indicates significance at the p < .05 level, * indicates significance at the p < .01 level, *** indicates significance at the p < .001 level

Data Supporting Why You're Here:



Autonomy

“In my daily life I frequently have to do what I am told”



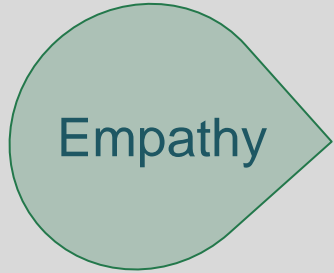
Competency

“I often do not feel very competent”

“I often do not feel very capable”

“Most days I feel a sense of accomplishment from what I do”

Data Supporting Why You're Here:



“I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective” (PC)

“I am often quite touched by the things I see happening” (EC)

“I believe there are two sides to every story” (PT)

“I would describe myself as a pretty soft hearted person” (EC)

“When I’m upset with someone I try to put myself in “his shoes” for a while” (PT)

Why You're Here:



Autonomy

Provide youth (aged 18-35 years) real authentic choices in their involvement in a program



Competency

Create moments where youth can feel competent and a sense of accomplishment with activities they participate in

Emphasize the element of constructive feedback. Youth know when they aren't good at something, but they want to know they are capable of improving

Data Supporting Why You're Here:



Empathy

Perspective Taking: create a safe and welcoming space for youth to share their stories and then promote activities that allow for discussion on what life is like for someone else

Empathetic Concern: create a programmatic space where participants can embrace and process their emotions

Reflective Questions

SDT: Autonomy

“Provide youth (aged 18 - 30 years) the opportunity to have real authentic choices in their involvement in a program.”

What does this mean? *Authentic choices?*

What is an informal program/activity/class/experience that you're engaging in?

What does *authentic choice* look like in that scenario?

SDT: Relatedness

Er'rybody likes friends.

While this was statistically significant in this study, it was a key element revealed in focus groups and conversations.

Participants found it to be refreshing to engage with other like-minded peers in a project that had meaning and was centered around making a difference.

What are ways that you foster a sense of belonging in your program settings?

Is it deliberate, part of the culture, or something that feels hard to do?

SDT: Competency

This is one of my favorites

“Create moments where youth can feel competent and a sense of accomplishment with the activities they participate in.”

Emphasize the element of constructive feedback. Youth know when they aren't good at something, but want to know they are capable of improving.

Do you believe in your participants? Do you believe they can achieve the program goals?

Empathy

“Perspective Taking: promote activities that allow for discussions around what life is like for someone”

Do you build in space for participants to be honest with each other?

Do participants get to share stories and “try on” other perspectives?

“Empathetic Concern: create a programmatic space where participants can embrace and process their emotions”

Life’s hard, processing emotions helps. How can you achieve programmatic goals while still supporting participant emotions?

Thank You!

Let's see how we can play
with space

...we did it!

Do we want to play a game or have discussion topics first? (autonomy)

I know that emotional charades sounds like a tough thing, but it's something we can all do - we do it all the time, now we're just verbalizing it. (competency)

I'd love to hear about the program you're working with, I'd like to learn from it, see what it's like and how it can relate to my program. (perspective taking)

Does anyone have anything else to share? (empathetic concern)

Who here had a good time? Meet anybody new? (relatedness)