

Youth perspectives on sexual health workshops: Informing future practice

JUST SIX
QUESTIONS

RESEARCH
SUMMARY



Key Details

KEY WORDS

Focus Groups; Health Promotion;
HIV/AIDS Prevention; Sexuality;
Sexual Health

POPULATION GROUPS

Newcomer Youth;
Youth Living In Poverty

STEPPING UP THEMES

Health and Wellness; Coordinated &
Youth-Friendly Communities

RESEARCH ORIGIN

Canada

SOURCE

Academic

“We found that some youth opinions ran counter to what appear to be commonly held opinions of sexual health educators; these discrepancies echo the need for youth engagement in program development and the importance of knowledge translation from youth to educators” (p. 1548).

1. What is the research about?

This research focuses on evaluations completed by newcomer and street-involved youth of sexual health workshops they attended. Due to their unique circumstances, newcomer and street-involved youth are at higher risk of contracting sexually-transmitted infections, including HIV. Given this higher risk, it is important to ensure that programming designed for these youth is appropriate and applicable, both in terms of content and delivery.

2. Where did the research take place?

The research took place in an unidentified Canadian city with a population of 714,000.

3. Who is this research about?

This research is about newcomer and street-involved youth, ranging in age from 15 to 19.

4. How was the research done?

An educational sexual health workshop was created, which incorporated several common approaches to teaching: a game, a story, opportunities to ask open questions, a lecture including diagrams, a hands-on activity, and a reading-aloud activity.

The workshops were delivered to groups of newcomer and street-involved youth. Two White women, aged 25 and 30, facilitated the workshops.

Youth participants were identified through four youth-serving agencies, one of which works exclusively with newcomer youth.

Immediately after the workshop, the facilitators held a focus group. Eight workshops were held, and participants were split based on gender; four focus groups were held with 10 young women, and four focus groups were held with 10 young men. During these hour-long focus groups, the youth were asked to provide feedback on which educational approaches should be employed in the workshop, what they would change about the workshop, their impression of the workshop, as well as the effectiveness of the workshop. The youth were given a \$30 honorarium for participating.

5. What are the key findings?

Youth reported that the workshop facilitators need not be from same cultural background as the participants, but that their familiarity and sensitivity to different

cultures and languages would be beneficial. In fact, they felt that the material should be presented in a culturally-relevant, culturally-safe way, regardless of who is presenting. Recognizing that there is great diversity within groups often presumed to be homogeneous was also deemed important.

In terms of specific activities within the workshop, only storytelling was rated highly by nearly all participants. Youth reported that hearing stories made it easier for them to imagine themselves in a similar scenario. This method also aligns with the traditional learning styles of many cultural groups, making adaptation easy.

Overall, the youth's feedback supports the idea that there is no "one size fits all" approach to this type of workshop. Materials, content, and delivery should be adapted to fit the needs of the target population.

6. Why does it matter for youth work?

This research is noteworthy in that youth were asked to provide feedback on the content and facilitation of the workshops; typically, youth are only involved in the evaluation of sexual health programming to determine if the workshops have an impact on behaviour change.

This research makes clear that the voices of youth matter. Programming aimed at youth should be created and developed in consultation with the youth themselves. This engagement will result in a youth-centered approach that meaningfully responds to their needs.



Ashdown, H., Jalloh, C., & Wylie, J. (2015). Youth perspectives on sexual health workshops: Informing future practice. *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(11), 1540-1550.

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