

RESEARCH SUMMARY

“Youth Initiated Mentoring: A Meta-Analytic Study of a Hybrid Approach to Youth Mentoring”

What is this study about?

This study summarizes all of the existing research on Youth-Initiated Mentoring (YIM). YIM is an approach to mentor recruitment and matching that invites youth to select their own mentors. As a hybrid approach, YIM combines the advantages of both formal and natural mentoring by inviting mentees to identify the natural mentors in their own communities and empower them to formalize these pre-existing relationships into mentoring relationships. The core purpose of YIM is to offer mentees more *voice and choice* during the mentor-nomination and matching process.

Where did the study take place?

This meta-analysis included research articles taking place in North America (10) and Europe (4).

Who was involved in the study?

This study examined 14 studies of YIM that took place between 2006 and 2019. In total, the researchers examined data from 3,594 youth.

How was the study conducted?

This study examined the links between YIM and four important outcomes: academic and vocational functioning, social-emotional development, physical health, and psychosocial problems.

What were the key findings?

This meta-analysis discovered the following important findings:

- Across all studies, YIM was strongly linked with positive outcomes for mentees.
- YIM programs that involved larger numbers of female mentees produced larger effect sizes.
- YIM had an overall effect size (i.e., the magnitude of benefits for mentees) of 0.30 (small effect size).
- This effect size is slightly larger than the most recent meta-analyses of both formal (0.21) and natural mentoring (0.22).

“Although most Youth-Initiated Mentoring programs are in the early stages of development, this meta-analysis provides preliminary evidence that this approach protects against risks and fosters positive outcomes” (p.10).

Why does this research matter?

The results of this study offer evidence that YIM can provide significant benefits for mentees and mentoring organizations. Mentoring organizations might draw upon these results to improve their recruitment and matching procedures.

Recruitment

- YIM offers mentoring organizations an opportunity to partner *with* youth and their parents to recruit their own mentors.
- This approach might help mentoring organization tap into a more localized pool of adult volunteers

Matching

- YIM is acknowledged in the most recent version of MENTOR's *Elements of Effective Practice for Mentoring*[™] as an approach to mentor matching that can promote match longevity and youth outcomes.
- Alternatively, mentoring organizations might consider a more partial adoption of this approach that simply incorporates more opportunities for mentees to have voice and choice during the mentor nomination and matching process.
- Based on previous research, this might be accomplished by hosting “meet-and-greet” sessions that that invite mentors and mentees to interact with one another and begin developing relationships.
- After a brief meet-and-greet, mentors and mentees are then invited to make a note of who they felt a natural connection towards and who they would feel comfortable initiating a mentoring relationship with.
- Using this information, program staff make the final matching decision, with an effort to match mentors and mentees who reported a natural connection.
- Taken together, this meta-analysis supports a movement towards inviting youth and their families to have more *voice* and *choice* in who becomes their mentor.

Reference

van Dam, L., Blom, D., Kara, E., Assink, M., Stams, G. J., Schwartz, S., & Rhodes, J. (2020). Youth Initiated Mentoring: A Meta-analytic Study of a Hybrid Approach to Youth Mentoring. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 1-12.