

Evaluating Community Programs: Youth Voluntarism & Delinquency



“Like we are all from the rugged rugged type, then because of this community service ah, we really become more generous, more friendly to people”

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Report Writing

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Beyond Social Services started out as the Bukit Ho Swee Community Service Project more than 50 years ago. It has grown and morphed significantly since and is currently a community development agency dedicated to helping children and youths from less privileged backgrounds break away from the poverty cycle. BSS adopts an asset-based community development approach to its work with low-income communities and seeks to provide support and resources that enable families and communities to care for themselves and each other. The organization's current reach extends to 64 rental housing blocks spread out over 14 neighbourhoods, involving 3,029 families and a total of 11,710 persons.

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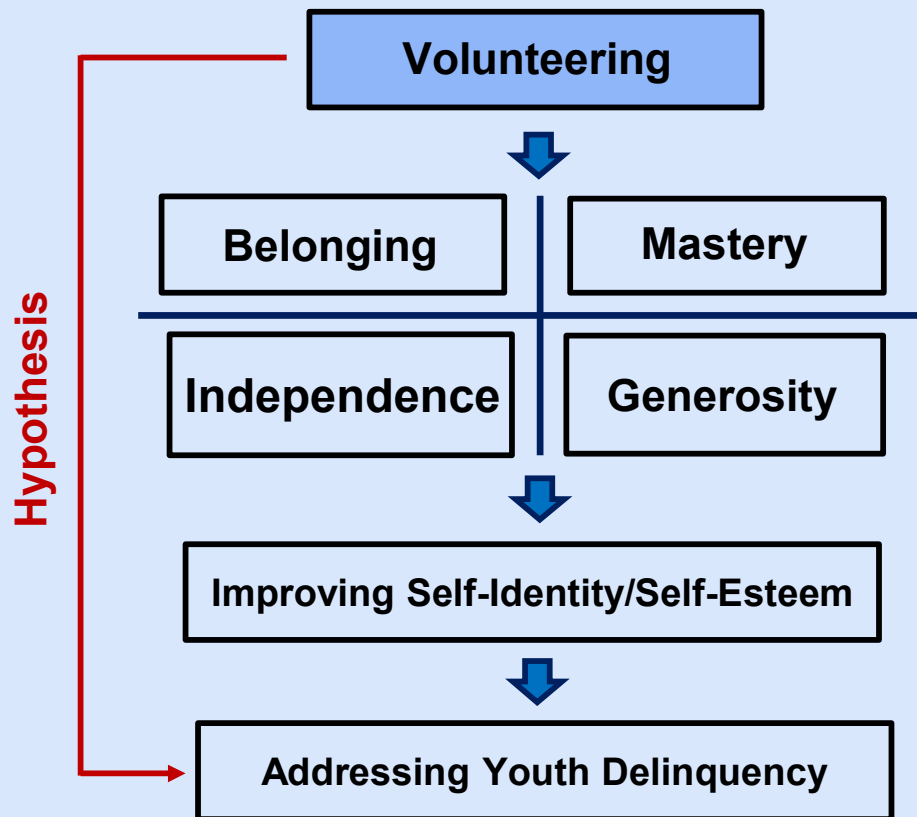
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1. Overview of Study

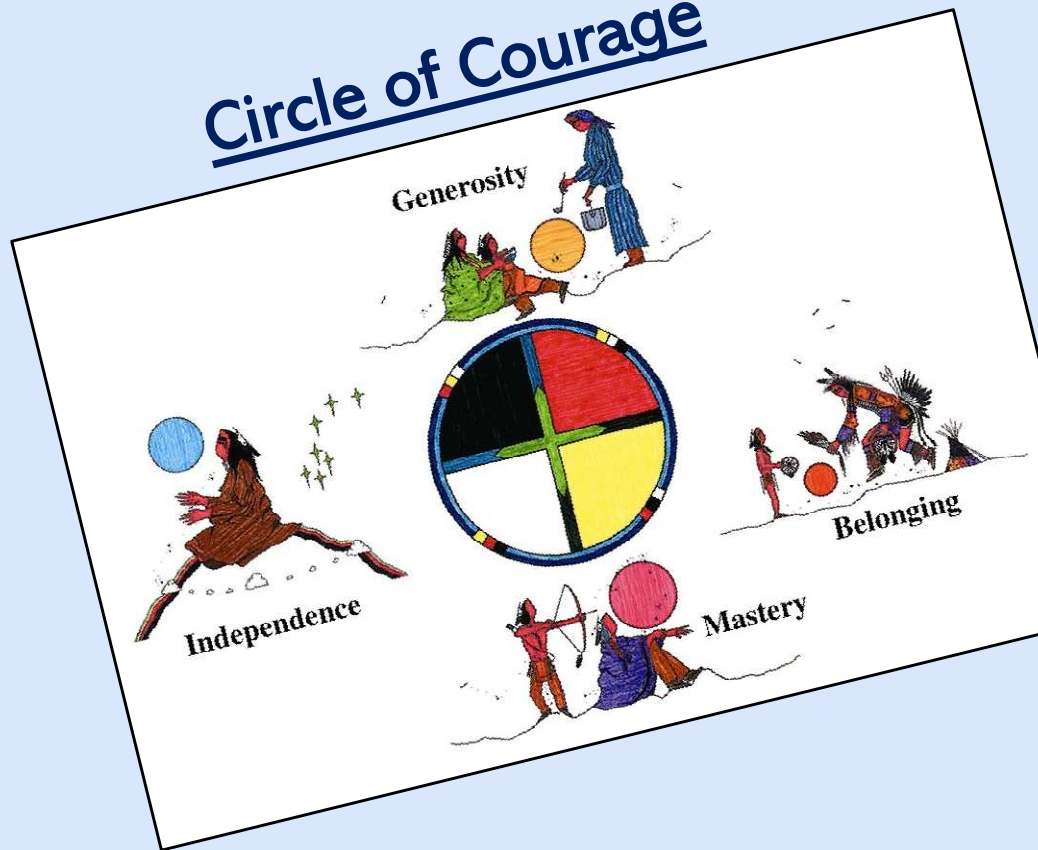
Overview of Study



- This report aims at evaluating existing youth community programs at Beyond Social Services
- The task at hand is to consider the effects on these programs on low-income youth volunteers/participants, specifically in the area of youth-related delinquency in the community.
- Taking from realist evaluative practice, this report will assess existing programs across five key mechanisms: the development of (i) Belonging, (ii) Mastery, (iii) Independence, (iv) Generosity, as well as (v) relevant effects on youth self-identity and self esteem.
- As it shall become clear, community programs can serve as useful buffers to hedge against forms of youth delinquency, as well as other community related transgressions.

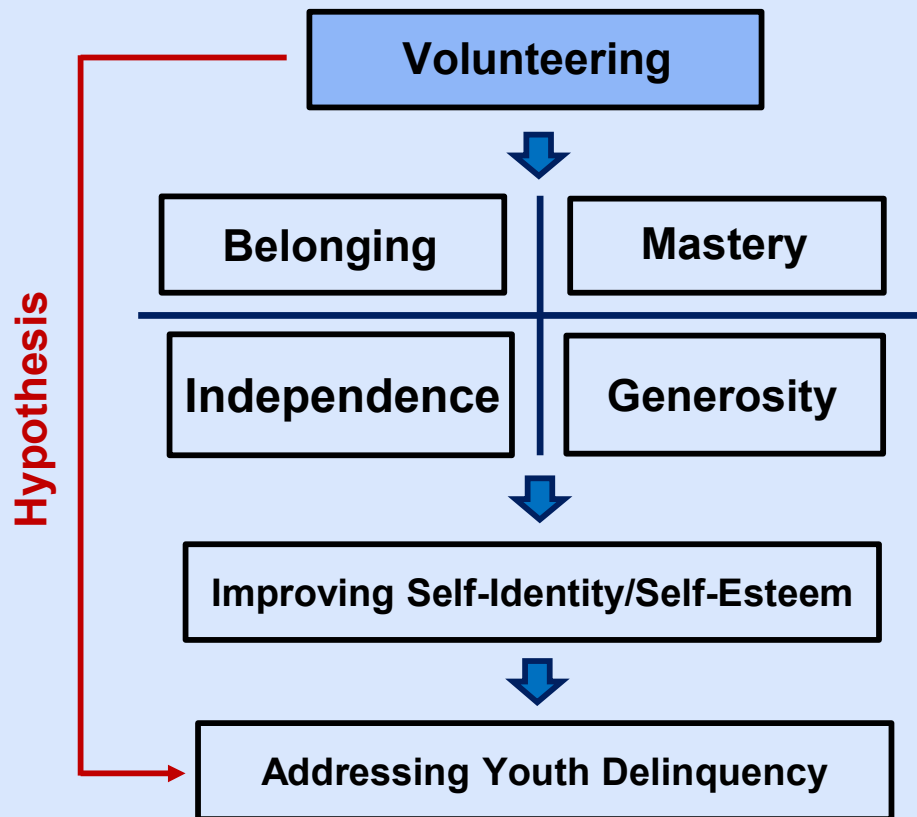
Overview of Study

Circle of Courage



- The mechanisms under evaluation here is taken from the Circle of Courage model (Brokenleg and Brendtro 1990).
- Drawing on Native American and First Nation philosophies in the areas of child-rearing, education, and community practices, the Circle of Courage model looks to four principal domains (i.e. belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity) from which positive development and life experiences of youth may emerge.
 - *Belonging* : To develop a sense of connectedness to a person, place, or community...
 - *Mastery* : To develop core competencies and gain opportunities for achievement...
 - *Independence* : Taking initiative and making decisions by one's own...
 - *Generosity* : Engaging in positive contribution in the lives of others...
- Through these interventions, it is intended that programs can positively shape the neighborhood environments, as well as improve the overall well-being of residents.

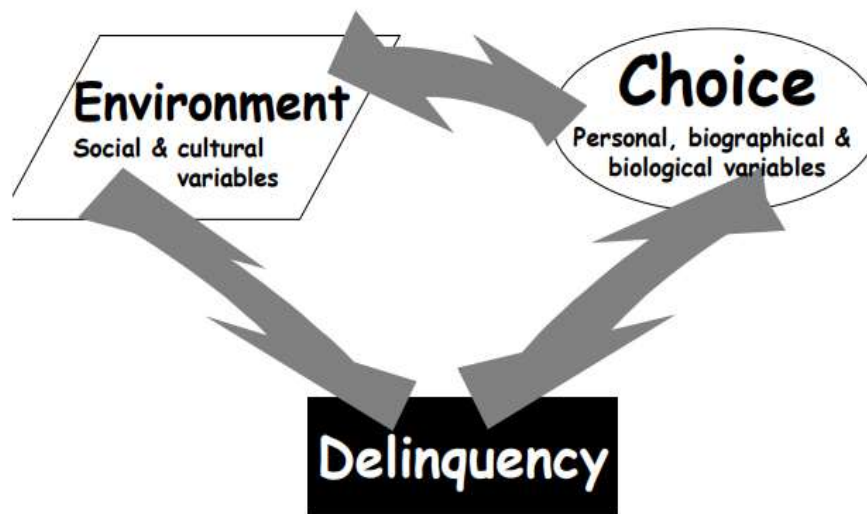
Overview of Study



- More specifically, community programs can offer youth a sense of belonging to their communities, both persons and location, as well as a space to discuss difficult issues that surround respective neighbourhoods.
- Furthermore, volunteering programs can also support youth in the development of relevant skills across various areas of life, including scholastic performance as well as professional trajectories, both of which can kindle feelings of achievement and other positive effects on youth self-esteem.
- Through these mechanisms, community programs can serve, within specific capacities, as **useful buffers against forms of youth-related delinquency and transgression.**
- At the same time however, because programs are targeted only at the community level, they remain **limited in addressing extraneous variables** (including financial stability and, inadequate family support) that often lead to youth delinquency in the first place.
- In this regard, interventions seeking to minimize youth-related delinquency in low-income communities must remain comprehensive, by accounting for factors at **all levels of the interpersonal, community, and national.**

Understanding 'Delinquency': A Caveat

A Complex Model of Delinquency



- When speaking of delinquency (whether of interpersonal harms, law-breaking activities, or acts that cause distress to others), we do not refer solely to specific behavior displayed by an individual or group, of which interventions at the individual or personal level become introduced
- Rather, our model of delinquency stresses the interaction of personal and environmental factors, specifically that which may influence, (dis)incentivise, or motivate an individual in making specific life choices.
- Bearing this in mind, community programs are implemented with the aim of transforming lived environments of various youth, intended to offer guidance and support to youth in navigating challenges, intended also at supporting youth make appropriate decisions.

Methodology and Project Timeline



Realist Evaluation

Realist evaluation examines the causative effects of an intervention (e.g. youth voluntarism) on a specific outcome (e.g. youth delinquency).

Relevant to this causative relation is the degree to which the intervention influences or determines the outcome in question. Furthermore, realist methodology takes seriously the assumption that the same intervention will not work everywhere and for everyone.

In this regard, crucial to realist examination is the identification of circumstances, conditions, as well as other pertinent variables in which an intervention succeeds or fails (Pawson and Tilly, 1997).

Realist Evaluation of Voluntarism

Context

Youth of low-income backgrounds living within rental communities

Working in collaboration with community workers from Beyond Social Services.

Intervention: Programs aimed engaging youth as volunteers, serving to improve community welfare.

Mechanism

Volunteering may offer avenues for youth to develop:

- A stronger sense of *belonging* to community
- *Mastery* of skills, hard and soft
- A sense of *independence*
- Understandings of *generosity* and mutual care
- A stronger sense of self, and self-esteem.

Outcome

Through these mechanisms, youth will find greater accountability to their communities, develop a self-confidence to pursue what they seek to achieve, as well as consider how to give back to the communities where they are raised.

In addition, it is intended that youth will be less motivated to act in ways that may transgress the laws.

Research Participants

Interviews (Qualitative)

25 *Youth*

Age Range: 13 – 29 years old

6 *Community Workers*

Survey (Quantitative)

57 *Youth
Participants*



2. An 'Ideal' Community



What is Your Ideal Community?

“Very Open and Friendly”

“I think an ideal community will be that neighbours will be like very open and friendly, and be able to talk, without feeling anxious... and like Beyond will be able to host like alot of gathering acitivities, for everyone...”—**P05, 18 years old**



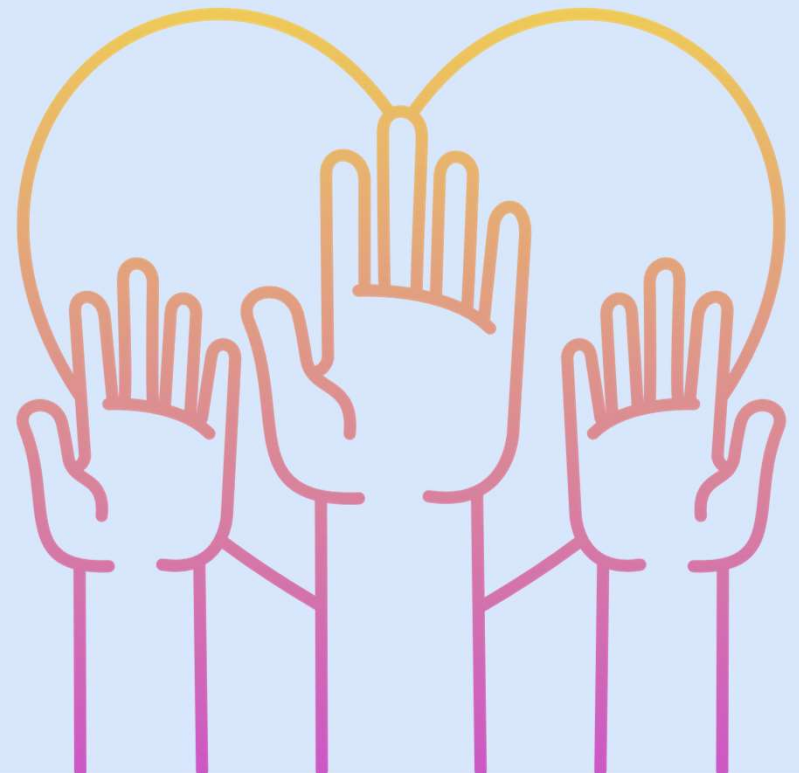
“Kampong Spirit”

“I feel like it’s more Kampong spirit lah, it doesn’t matter what race you are, what religion you are, everyone is friendly here... We help out each other... we all know each other lah.”—**P10, 24 years old**

What is Your Ideal Community?

Community as Mutually Supportive

“I will be a bit happy for the people... [if] they did something for me, like for example, my neighbour... one of the lady helped me, like to take care of me... [if] I forget my key or something, her house is open all the time, so I got there and stay for a while. She helped me... In return, if she needs our help... like if we make food, sometimes I will call her...”—P01, 12 years old



3. What is Volunteering?

What is Volunteering?



“A Very Broad Subject”

“Volunteering... is a very broad subject.... [it] can come in many different forms, so I think is how you want to help out.”—P04, 17 years old

Work that Benefits Others

“I think volunteering in definition is just... [being] really, really like sincere in what you are doing, and just make sure that what you are doing benefits the community and whoever you are doing it for”—P07, 15 years old

Sincere Work

“Volunteering is nice when it is sincere... Like not being forced to do [it]...”—P14, 18 years old

Participant

A youth who attends community events, whether sports, social, or otherwise, as a participant, to meet and hang out with community workers or other youths, as well as to participate in relevant activities (e.g. weekly sports games).

For community workers, these relations may form the basis for further, more formal volunteering engagement later.

vs

Volunteer

A youth who engages in activities usually understood as supporting or improving the lives of community members. This may include activities such as food distribution, organizing community events, or supporting community workers in relevant programs.

In practice however, the distinction between 'participant' and 'volunteer' may not always be clear. For example, a youth may seek to *participate* in a sport event (e.g. a community badminton game) without the intention of volunteering, but may *volunteer* afterward, incidentally, to help community workers or other volunteers clean up or store relevant items from the event (e.g. packing badminton racquets; etc.).

Participant... to Volunteer?

"We need to first have strong relations with one another *before* even considering how we can build good or successful programs"—CW5

"Very Loose group of Youth"

"This group is just a very loose group of youth that we are quite familiar with... to keep engaging them, we decided to have a fortnightly sports session... but I think this group, because we have been in touch with them for quite long... there are few among them that we are trying to build up their ability to lead and volunteer in small ways... [and] if we need help with distributions or if we are organizing some youth activity... they usually are quite willing to come down and help..."—CW4

"Maintain and Deepen our Connection with Them"

"Having the sports session, it's just a way for us to maintain and deepen our connection with them and give us a platform to... build up their leadership and volunteer kind of qualities... Cause you want very organic... we don't want to be like, oh we're here to teach you how to be a volunteer the way we do it... it is more like you use the sports platform ask them, Oh you wanna try this or how about this, or what do you think about this? And then it become a platform for us to have a discussion with them."—CW4

4. Why Volunteer?

Why Volunteer?

To Help Others Out

“Because I can distribute things... can help people out... we give them the stationaries and files so they don't have to get a new one.”—P15, 14 years old

Making Contributions

“I can help to keep my neighbourhood more cleaner.”—P02, 14 years old

Gaining New Experiences

“Its about like the experience lah. Because its very fun actually... like being there for the kids and seeing the difference at the start of the day and the end of the day.”—P06, 23 years old



Why Volunteer?

Meeting New People

“I also like because I get to meet new people... people from different interests... So that I... can understand how their mindset is... I'm not really a social person... I don't really interact with other people a lot...[but] I'm still trying to make the effort.”—**P02, 14 years old**



“Because of the People There”

“I think its because of the people there, like the staff... also because last time Beyond used to be like very close to neighbours... very open and stuff like that. Even like neighbours, like my friends, also join, so I got a lot of influence from them also.”—**P05, 18 years old**

Why Volunteer?

Influence from Family

“Reason because like my mother do volunteer... frequently lah, so from there... I try to be like her.”—P19, 23 years old



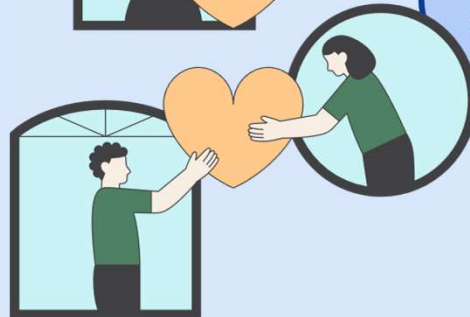
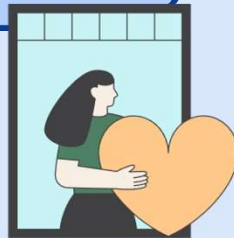
“My Mom Say... Go and Volunteer”

“Because I was also a bit bored at home. So my mom say like, go and volunteer, at least... it’s a bit interesting, you can go and volunteer. So I was like, okay, I will go and volunteer. That’s why I’m here, it’s just by incident, if not, I would not have gone into there.”—P01, 12 years old

Why Volunteer?

Better Use of Time

“(I: So why did u decide to join them?) I think its much more helpful than me sitting at home using my phone.”—**P21, 13 years old**



“I Felt like Bored Honestly”

“At the time, right... My O levels was over, and I was waiting for my results and then I felt like bored honestly because there was like so many months of doing nothing right? Then I was like okay, why not join this event basically and I just went for it and then I asked my cousin to join us” —**P21, 13 years old**

Why Volunteer?

Gaining New Perspectives

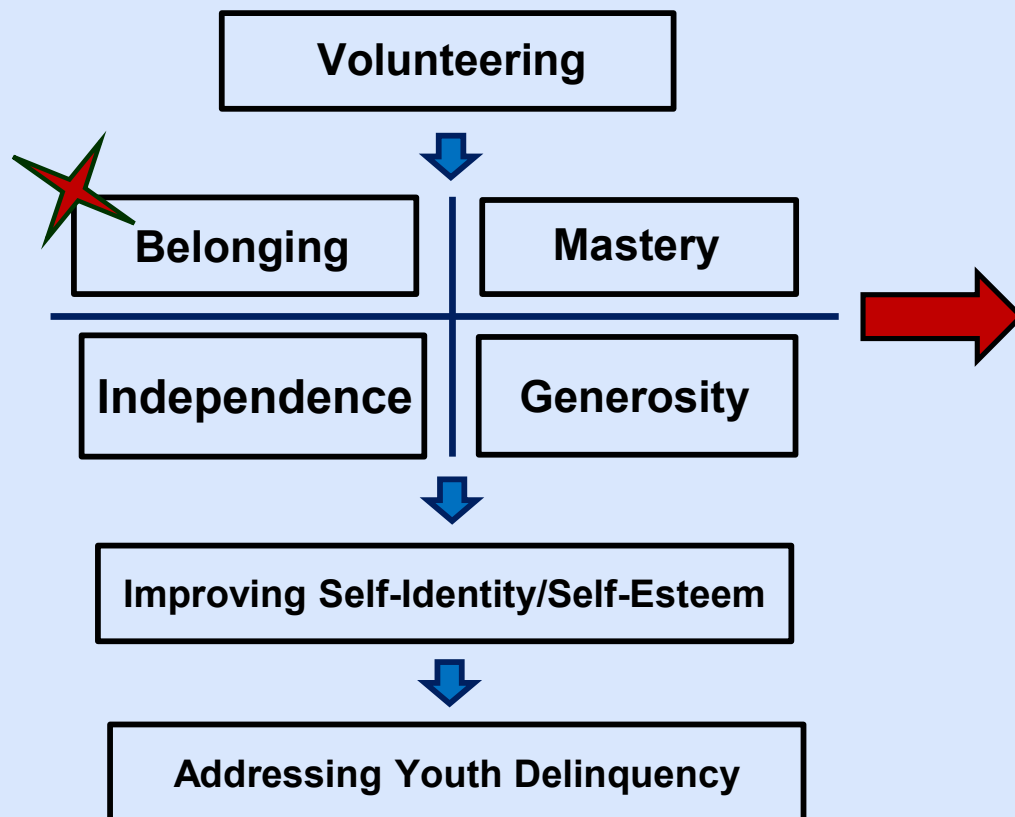
“Yeah, like some people they like shared their experiences with me... That opened me up to know more about what our community is facing... I think it’s good, it helps to improve... how i can be a better listener for others, and how I can like improve my positive relationship with the community lah.”—**P04, 17 years old**



“Face the Community”

“I think make me gain more experience on how to deal with specific people or like face the community. I think it helped a lot.”—**P05, 18 years old**

5: Impact of Volunteering



- What is the impact of volunteering? This segment of the report examines how volunteering shapes youth lives and experiences in four principal domains: (i) Belonging, (ii) Mastery, (iii) Independence, and (iv) Generosity.
- Most notably, interviewees are asked to consider how their volunteering engagements have influenced them in these four areas, with consideration taken too in how *they would understand and define the terms themselves*.
- For example, some youth may perceive sense of belonging as it pertains to their neighbours or community *residents*. Others however may understand belonging as it relates to the *place* in which their reside.
- As it will become evident, gains in these four areas can hold a degree of improvement in youth self-identity and sense of self.

5A: Belonging

To develop a sense of connectedness to a person, place, or community...

What Does Home Mean to You?

Place of Safety

“Home is a place where we can sleep. It’s a place we are safe, we don’t feel like scared to stay in that place, that’s called home”
—P01, 12 years old

Place of Belonging

“Comfortable, where I belong... [the people] they treat me with kindness, respect, care, everything.”—P07, 15 years old



Place of Mutual Care

“Since young I’ve been here, and since young like people around like notice me... and then like anytime when they see me... they actually like ask lah, how is my condition like, after like my father has passed away, like are you ok?... Some people that were really close to me and really close to my father they actually help me... So ya, I feel home lah.”—P09, 16 years old

What Does Home Mean to You?

Sense of Familiarity

"I like the kind of neighbourhood that's like friendly ah. Not like... when u walk past them right, then like you act like you don't know them."—**P01, 12 years old**

"It's Not About the Place"

"I felt like it's not about the place. It's never about the place... The community [is] like... where we can bond with each other... we should all come together and then we should all have like a small event like this that involve everyone inside the block... I hope to be closer, ya... Towards the community... and anybody that I can be closer with."—**P09, 16 years old**



How Volunteering Leads to Belonging?

“Helps to Build the Relationship”

“Because before I volunteered, I don't really know who was in the community. But after volunteering, I got to know some new people, individual people in the community. And when I went to their houses, I know what the family was facing.... I think it feels good because you still know that whatever they need, they can still come to us.. volunteering in the community programs, I think that really helps to build the relationship between them and the community.”—**P04, 17 years old**

“Get to Know... My Neighbourhood”

“(I: Do you feel closer to your community because like because of the food distribution?) Yes... Cause... like I get to know about my neighborhood... and maybe there's some things I don't know about [them]... and then they will tell me...”—**P25, 15 years old**

How Volunteering Leads to Belonging?

“Be More Bond to the Community”

“After joining, it makes me... open my eyes more, change more lah. So, you will be more bond to the community, be good to others lah.”—**P10, 29 years old**



“Sense of Belonging”

“It’s the sense of belonging... because some of them have quite large siblings so they just want to get away... they just wanna like play downstairs and some of them... they tend to like gravitate towards us... I think its like identity also so that okay, I belong to this sports group.”—**CW5**

5B: Mastery

To develop core competencies and gain opportunities for achievement...

Developing Skills



Communication Skills

“Because like I send the stuff to the community, it helps... improve how I communicate with others, cause like it helps... teach me like how I can communicate with the people I send to... It's something that I learned overtime... it was more of a lesson that I didn't expect”—**P02, 14 years old**

Speaking with Others

“I probably like gain more confidence, and like my speech... I probably do not need practice... I just need to plan what I'm going to say, and then like I can use it as a base and then like I'm just going to talk and talk and talk. Then that makes me better in like communication, and communicating with them...”—**P09, 16 years old**

Developing Skills

Project Management, Volunteer Liaison

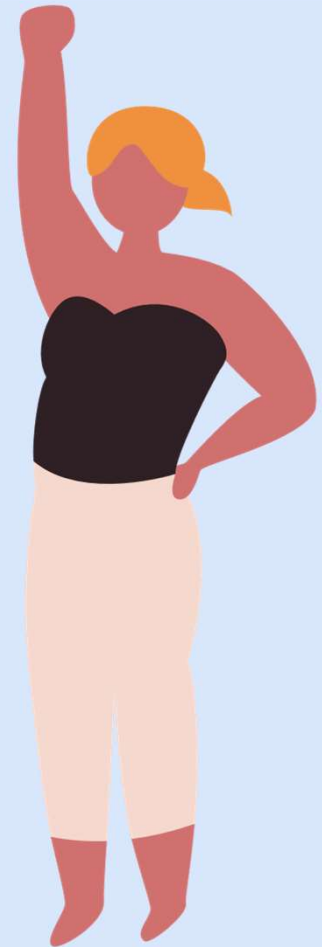
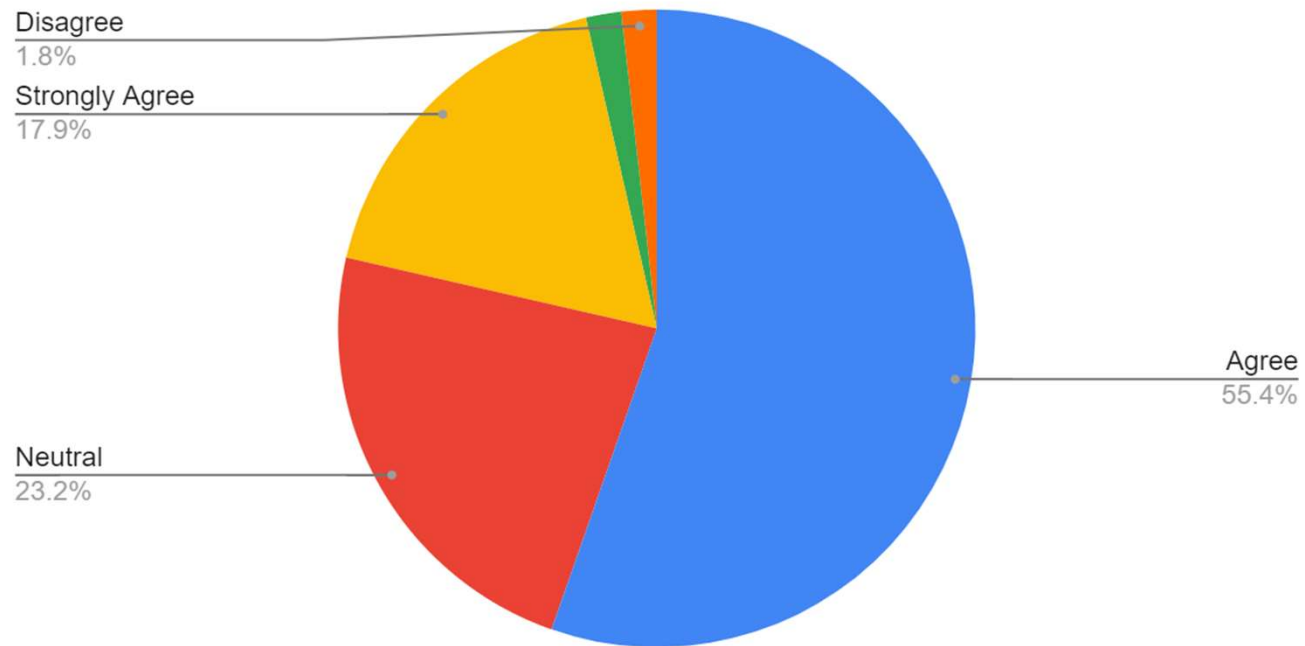
“Like recently, they learned about project management... They always wanted to plan something that’s out[side] of their community. The leader was like let’s go to the beach to do the cleanup together.... [Later] some members... helped to lead community walks, so whenever I have groups of volunteers with me... they will be the one leading the community walk, to bring them around the community and to share what’s happening... they also learn how to liaise directly with volunteers... with what they want to put in their care pack and they guide the volunteers how to distribute the care packs afterwards.”—**CW1**

Sports-Related

“Each Sunday we will learn like different kinds of skills. First we will come and learn passing, then shooting and this kind of things, basic things ah... Then slowly when we grow older they will take a bit of the training... make us run more, they will make us do more physical activity like push up, sit up, this kind of thing...”—**P08, 19 years old**

Developing Skills

Because of this program, I have skills or talents that can be used to support others.



Learning Soft Skills

“Soft Skills” (Confidence, Ownership)

“I think it mainly be soft skills. So, I think it would be more confidence in sharing, and in planning and organizing small scale events. I think also that they are taking ownership... Some of the younger youth, I think at home they're very much constrained by what their parents started to do... but [we] actually give them a space... this is a project we hope to do with you and then we support you... When we ask them to do little things or even we ask them to volunteer and then after when they first go [out]... then they be shy...to talk to stranger... but then when we take a step back and let them be the one to [hold] the conversation, actually they can do it quite well...”—**CW4**

Empathy

“Before that, I guess I was already kind, but... through the activities, I became even more kinder. Knowing the different perspective, other people that [are] not myself, seeing their point of view, sympathise with them more... I was able to listen more... I listen to everyone’s opinion... and I reply them in a way that will not offend them, affect them, and stuff like that.... I can empathise with people better.”—**P05, 18 years old**

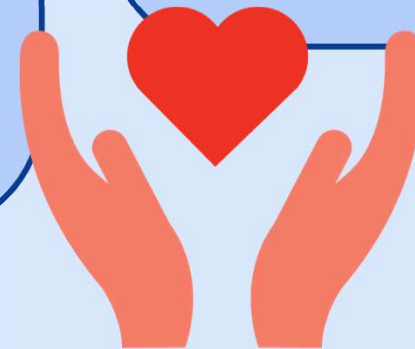
Learning Soft Skills

“Help You to be Somewhat Better in a Way”

“Like in a way you will see and understand people... because like different people [are]... brought up differently... go through different thing everyday. So... volunteering always brings me back to how the world is... We just have to be kind to everyone and try to help whenever we can, just like how we want to be helped whenever we need... I think like my biggest takeaway from that is that by volunteering... it can change one person’s life in a way, then it can even change my life, like my way of viewing things. And It’s always nice to volunteer because you get to see this different kind of people. And then like you get to help them in a way and without realizing also they help you to be somewhat better in a way yeah”—**P06, 23 years old**

“Do Not Judge Them”

“So, it’s weird where people and smile to hide their problems. It’s kinda hard to know what’s wrong with them. So, I learn a lot of things from them like do not judge them just by looking at them, you have to know their background. You have to know what’s wrong with them. And this kind of thing. I learn a lot from there ah ...”—**P08, 19 years old**



Learning Soft Skills

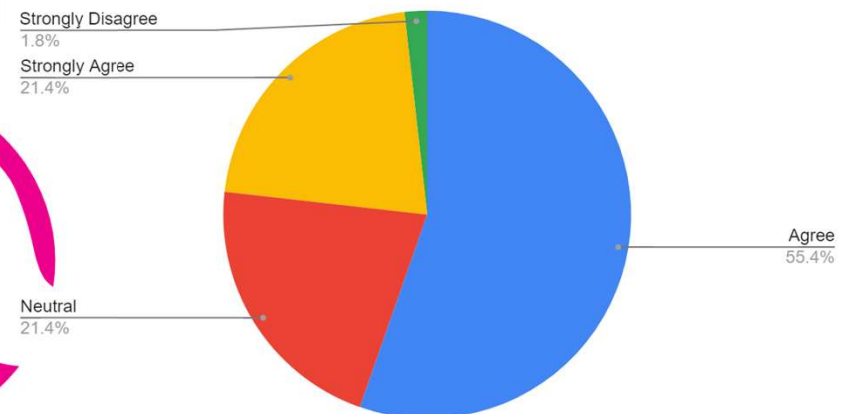
Personal Responsibility

"I learn to be responsible when I take charge... Ya because like everything is going to be blamed on you, if you are not going to do your work properly, like if something is lost, it's going to be put on you... Cause you are responsible, you are the in-charge of this.... You have to have self-responsibility lah."—**P09, 16 years old**

Consideration for Others

"They made me realise that I should be responsible for my actions... helped me like... have more care towards my neighbourhood"—**P02, 14 years old**

Because of this program, I try to think more carefully about how my actions can affect other people



Learning Soft Skills

Improving Interpersonal Relations



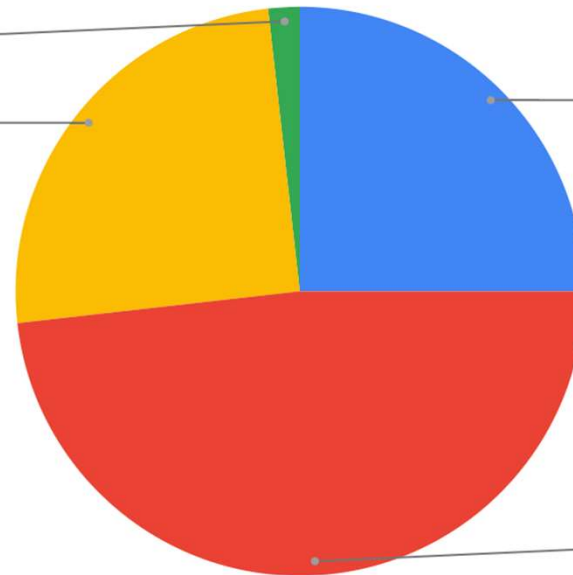
Because of this program, I am better at cooperating with people around me

Strongly Disagree
1.8%

Strongly Agree
25.0%

Neutral
25.0%

Agree
48.2%



5C: Independence

Taking initiative and making decisions by one's own...

How Volunteering Can Spur Independence

“I Become More Independent”

“There are some activities... which actually make myself more independent lah... Before, I used to rely so much on people. I used to like ask people help me, to do this and do that... But then like after having volunteering activities, I become more independent, like i know the procedure on how to do this and how to do that... In life also, generally, I used to be so afraid to going to places by myself. Because I am always unfamiliar and bad with directions, but then like, I will go out and be mature, trying to be independent. Like I will be like actively participating in things [myself], without people telling me to do so.”—**P05, 18 years old**



“Self-Reliance”

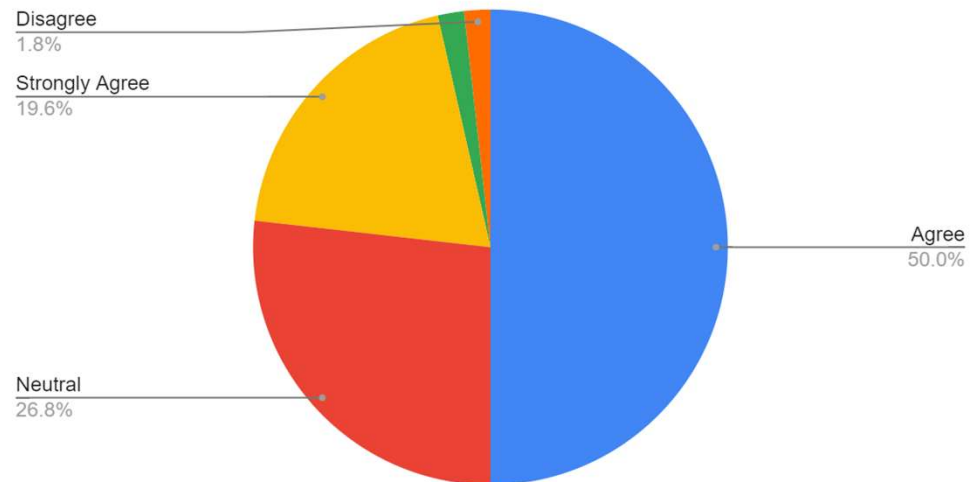
“Usually... the programmes [are] accompanied by my parents or my siblings... There was one of the programmes where I had to go alone... First, I shocked, quite scared, quite nervous... And then I realise that I can still go through the programme... that I can rely on myself more”—**P02, 14 years old**

How Volunteering Can Spur Independence

Opportunity to Be a Leader

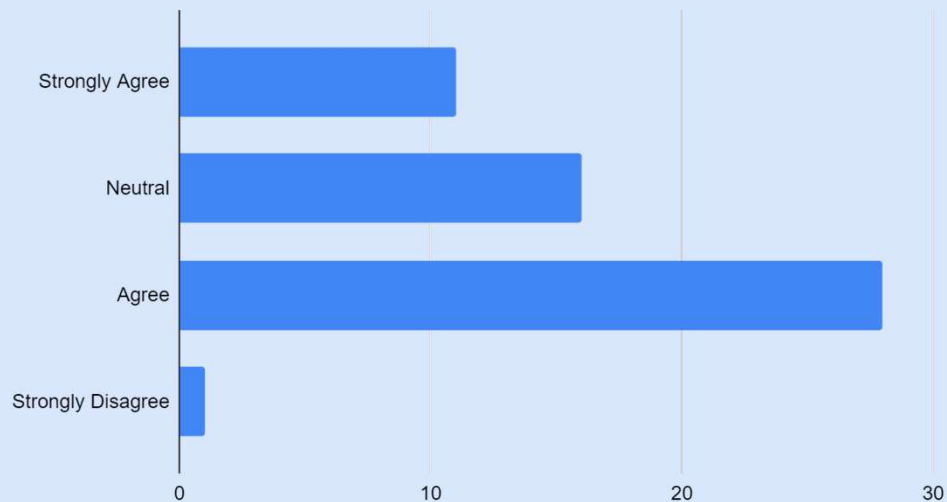
“When you volunteer... you are actually taking the role of the leader... like when you have to there and you have to lead them and make choices for them. In a way it will make you... like okay, you have to make decisions... It will make me independent cause like I wouldn't have to depend on anyone, you know?”—**P06, 23 years old**

Because of this program, I feel more confident in taking on leadership roles and duties

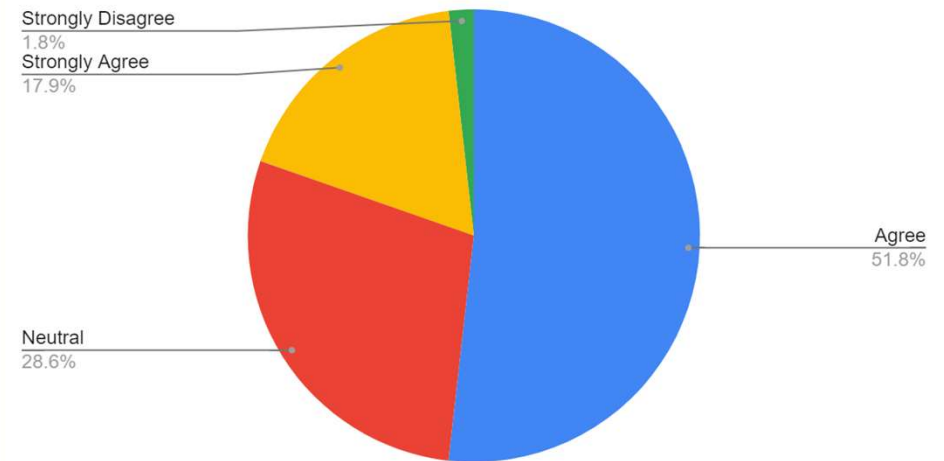


How Volunteering Can Spur Independence

Because of this program, I know how to identify and plan out my goals



Because of this program, I know how to achieve my short-term goals (within the next 2 years)



5D: Generosity

Engaging in positive contribution in the lives of others...

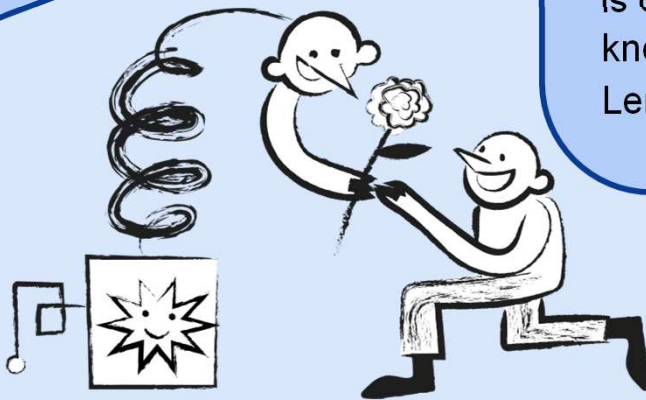
Contribution to Others

Giving Back

“Beyond’s activities will always teach you how to be kind, how to give back to the community.”—**P05, 18 years old**

Empathy leads to Contribution

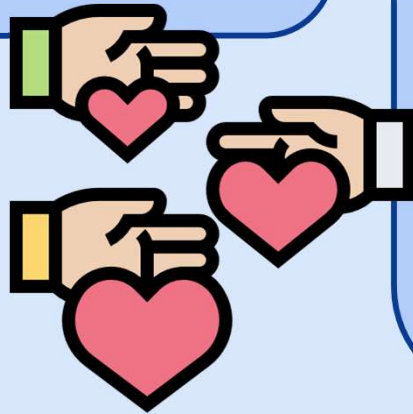
“Usually for myself lah... when someone approach me for a sick of cigarette ah, sorry ah, I just F them up... But now it’s like less talking already lah like ok, just take, you want \$2 or 20 cents its okay, just give. You don’t know how they need it more... (I: Why did you suddenly change your behavior?) Like I mentioned to you lah, I’ve been around to the community so I observe how difficult people life can be... There is one part that saddens me a lot lah, I was doing the... door knocking... I see I think four or five children sharing one packet of Nasi Lemak... that really... broke me down lah.”—**P10, 29 years old**



Contribution to Others

The Role of Trust

“I feel like I’ve been trusted by them... Ya so I feel like I... gained trust from them... I’m more willing to help them...”—**P09, 16 years old**



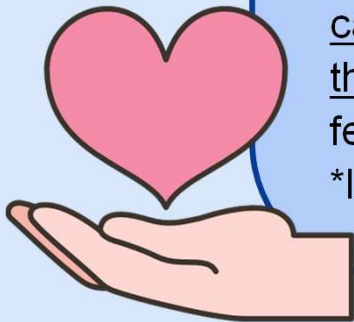
Familiarity as Necessary

“I think [if] there was anything that could be improved... one thing will be like... because when I send it out the food distribution thing, there wasn’t like a proper way we could communicate with other volunteers... because sometimes when like, for example like volunteer A comes, this resident will feel like uneasy and volunteer B come, will have a sense of being familiar or something like that”—**P09, 16 years old**

Contribution to Others

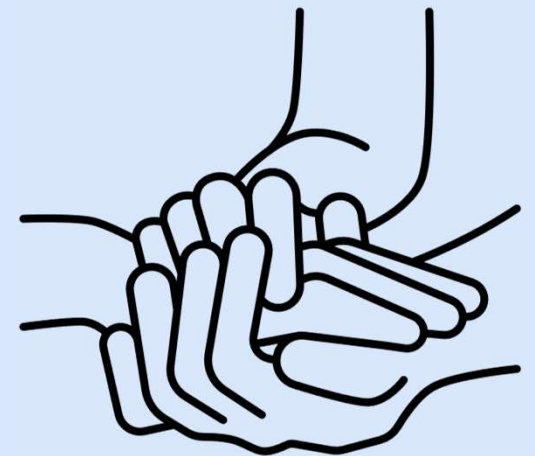
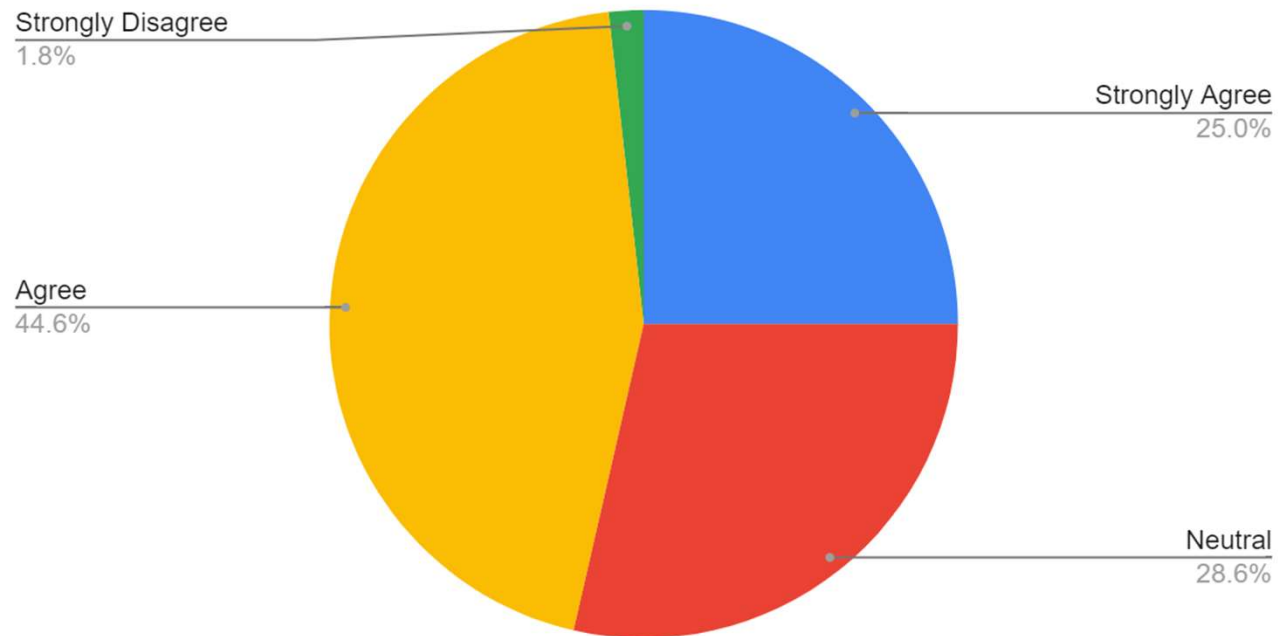
“Sense of Being Cared For”

“Whether... the volunteering actually solves their personal issues, I’m not sure, but one thing for sure is, such kindness... make the beneficiary people... will feel uh ok someone thought of me, someone still cares for me... someone still remembers me... Although I’m a nobody, someone knows I might be hungry and they give me food... I might be left out during festival seasons, they give me goodie bags and hampers... the sense of being cared for... being remembered by the community, I think that’s the most important part... to lift up their spirits... When people feel they’re cared for, they will.... less likely [do] bad things *laughs*... This is how I feel”—P18, age n.d.



Contribution to Others

Because of this program, I think it is important to serve my community.



6. Self Identity & Self-Esteem

Feelings of Achievement

“Get to Achieve Something”

“I like to help out, a lot... ya... It gives me pride, somehow... Cause I get to achieve something by helping people.”—**P14, 18 years old**

Feelings of Pride

“It was tiring but worth it because after that day, wah you just so proud of yourself you did something. Did something nice like that.”—**P11, 13 years**

“When they come to the session... they are allowed to do any form of art to express themselves, and that no one is gonna belittle their masterpiece... and then, [we] would display their art and showcase their art piece... So, I guess children feel so encouraged lah... [to] like display [their] art pieces to decorate... We have this a yearly event. It's called Celebration of Learning to celebrate... [we would] set up a booth and then display their artwork as well. So, I mean, it's a moment to be proud of for the children. They would say ‘Eh, that one is mine!’... ‘That's mine!’, ‘I made this! I made this!’—**CW3**



Increased Confidence, Better Performance

“Developing them... (as) Limitless”

“We want them to be able to learn something, gain something and hopefully like it makes some kind of like community pride. Yeah... [some] there are a bit *pai seh*, you know, because they come from rental flats... and they feel... because like where they are, they won't have much capacity and capability to... excel... So, for me it's really like developing them and like making them understand that... it's limitless”—**CW5**



“Bring Yourself Out More”

I learn like to be calm... people will listen to you, if you sound like more professional... If you just stand there you like ah, ah, then people won't believe you.... Ya confident of yourself. Like bring yourself out more. Like don't just [be] stuck in the box, you know like open up the box abit”—**P09, 16 years old**

Increased Confidence, Better Performance

PROUD

Confidence in Volunteering

“I think definitely more confidence in volunteering... because I'm thinking of... [a] few youth where they started helping us out in small ways, volunteering and distribution of things like that. Then end of last year when we asked them to help with the celebration of learning distribution we actually pair them up with some of our [other] volunteers... and so our youth were actually leading them to the blocks because this was their community and they knew the people.. [Later] the volunteers... shared with us that they were... very impressed by the kids”—**CW4**

“Make My Parents Proud”

“They were just asking around who want to like be emcee. Then i was like I actually want to try, ok i can try. So, I guess that's how it happened... I wanted to be confident, gain confidence in speaking in front of a lot of people... I think to also make my parents proud of me I guess.”—**P05, 18 years old**

Increased Confidence, Better Performance



Confidence for School

“For the peer learning circle group... I think... for them it's more of [taking] ownership of their learning and realizing that actually they can don't score A... So long they enjoy what they're doing and that they realize that actually they can master the content, I think is a good enough goal... For quite lot of them it's about really about confidence. They started falling behind in class, they feel like, okay, I just give up la... why should I do the work?”—**CW4**

Mentorship: “Keep Pushing Yourself”

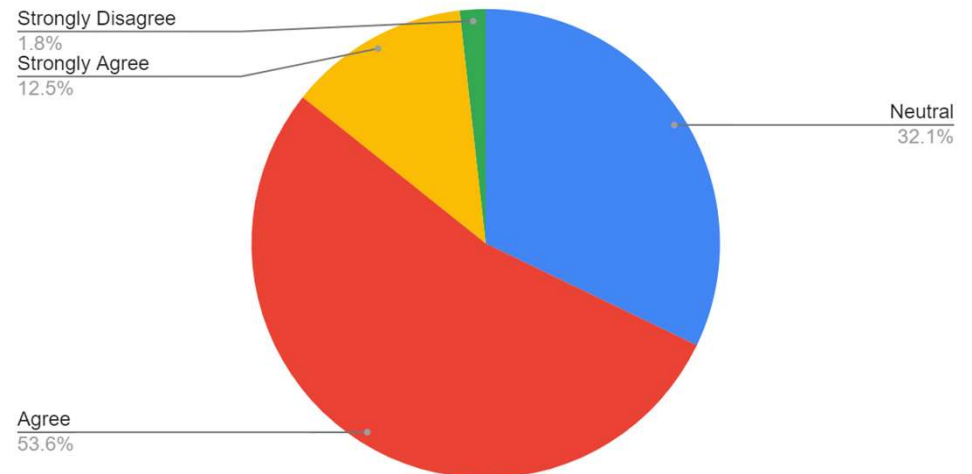
“I [will] learn responsibility during the time... My coach will always tell me... how to learn... about your teammates so that the communication can be better... Then from there I was like I got to do this, I got to do that to improve myself in the skills and mindset la, then he will say never give up. I used to give up a lot to be honest I used to give up a lot but then my coach keep on keep on pushing yourself, keep on pushing us over... I keep asking him why... then he say one day you will learn why ah... Then when I graduate secondary school, I learned... if I did give up at the path right, I will never be here where I am now ah, then I did well for my N level, I did well for the school game, I did well for what i did ah”—**P08, 19 years old**

Increased Confidence, Better Performance

Career Building Pathways

"I am studying events management in [a local] poly... One of the reasons why I choose event management right, was because of the activities that I did in Beyond... So, yea, that was one of the inspirations on why i choose the course.... I think one of [the activities] was night cycling... From those experience, I gain more encourage(ment) and like making the first move to talk to people. Cause I got participate [in] organising events with Beyond before, so like based on those experiences right, I think that it might help me in... my event course, which did a huge favour for me. It help me to understand how to go through, how to do this how to do that and stuff like that."—**P05, 18 years old**

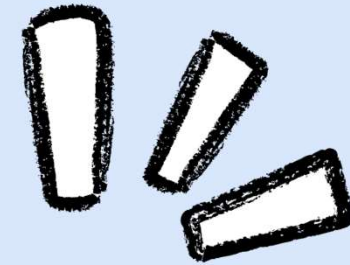
Because of this program, I feel confident that I will be able to overcome difficulties when striving for my goals



Avenue for Self-Expression

Revealing Issues in Community

"I think we had this activity where we also brought in photos, and we asked them to choose one that represented their emotions at that point in time.... Then [this one girl] she picked this very fiery photo for campfire. That was a very intense fire... [then] we realized she has all these strong emotions and intense feelings inside of her, but she has difficulty expressing it. So, the photograph kind of help her to express that part of her... and then what surfaced was that actually a lot of the girls... they shared [that] there was frequently some form of harassment by older men in the community. It can be things like heckling them when they walk and things like that. So, at that point we were like wow, okay we didn't know this was happening to these girls at night, cause we thought the it was relatively safe... so I thought that was another very like impactful moment for me to realize that that [these programs] can reveal these things in the community."—CW4



Identifying Troubles

I felt that [this program] has always been a space where children can... discover and learn other things... when you really sit down and do art with them, do all these little activities and then you engage in small conversation with them, and that's where you realize there's a lot more going on in their homes"—CW3

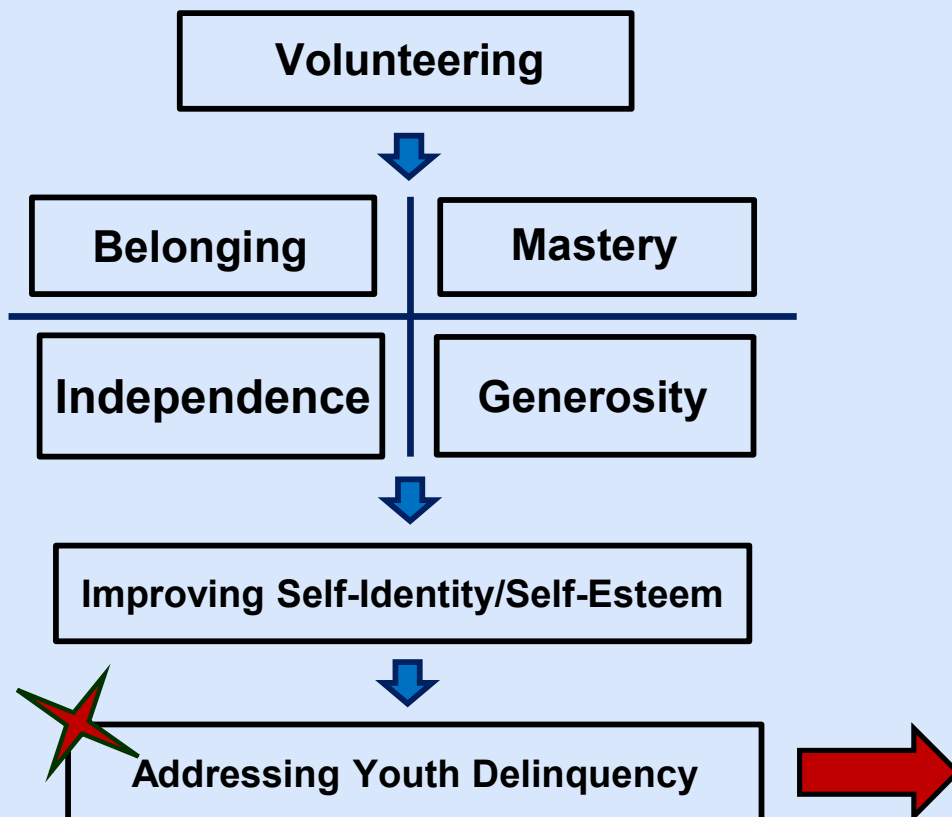
Relevant Interventions

"I think one child... through her drawing... she did express herself that she wanted to kill herself. So, we had to follow up with that... We had to take action... So, the first thing was that we tried to ask her, is she okay, and that kind of thing. And then we communicated with the parents, and then after that, we also made contact with the school counselor. "—**CW3**



"It's like a window... it gives us like a sense of... what's happening in their life... so that... we know like okay, this happened. This happened... so she's like [that], yeah, he's like that... [it's] a glimpse of what's happening in their life..."—**CW3**

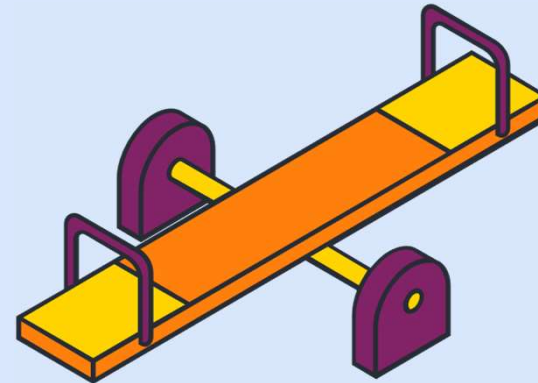
7. Addressing Youth Delinquency?



- In this section, we examine three different case studies of community programs implemented.
- We will explore how each program serves to offer new opportunities for youth to find belonging, mastery, independence, generosity, as well as to develop their own self-identities through the engagement in these platforms.
- Notably, with each program, ideas around the different concepts (e.g. mastery, belonging; etc.) may take different forms. Nonetheless they all lend in some degrees to building stronger youth identities and community bonds.
- At the same time, each program will also evidence, through these various mechanisms, ways of confronting issues of youth delinquency (as well as other types of transgressions) within the community

“Because ultimately, it’s their playing space... Why not get the children to design their own craft, to advocate what they want in their community? That makes them take the ownership to take care of the playground as compared to having [someone] coming in and be like oh, we need a slide, swing and things.”—CW1

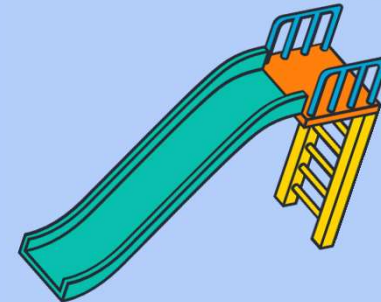
Case Study 1: Community Playground



Case Study 1: Community Playground

- Frequent cases of playful arson had become a community concern in a neighborhood where a common playing area was all but a plain field.
- Because of this, one community worker sought to speak with the children and their parents to discuss how to create a shared playing area for all.
- Through guided drama and drawing, the children designed their ideal playground, and then presented this drawing to the adults and community workers in the community.
- Later, various mothers from the community shared this image with the neighborhood's local MP, advocating on behalf of the children for plans to build this ideal playground in the neighborhood.
- Despite some hesitation at first, the local MP eventually agreed to the construction of this new, ideal playground in the area.

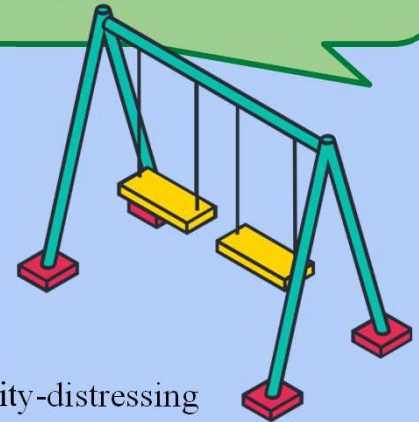
"There were a lot of... reported cases of children playing in the carpark or even burning down the building. Because they're playing around in the area, so it's a community concern... To plan about their playing area, [the children] went through a little drama program about to explore their own expression, and they said they want to build a playground. They started to draw their ideal playground, [and] they presented to us."—CW1



Case Study 1: Community Playground

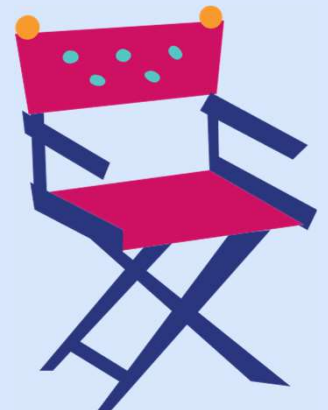
- The construction of the playground entailed a new, common space from where youth in the community could play.
- Because the youth and children themselves had a role to play in the playground's construction, it was cited that many of them actively participated in ensuring that the common area was kept clean.
- The community worker in charge shared also that the youth would speak against littering in the playground area, suggesting also ways of ensuring that the place can be kept in order.
- This suggests that when communities *themselves* have a hand in how common areas are created, they gain a sense of ownership and belonging over the place and are therefore more likely to ensure that common areas are properly maintained.
- The community worker also shared that there were less instances of arsons or other community-distressing behavior, although it remains to be seen the *extent* through which the playground had a role in this shift.

"Ahh no because the playground is like by the children themselves ... So, the playground up till now is very clean... [If] the children did notice there is people who litter somehow... they... are vocal about that. They will like okay, is there something like we can enhance and change?"—CW1



“They practiced to stand up for themselves.... They know how to speak about issues of feminism, about poverty... and all those stuff... Now they are quite equipped to speak about those kind of things in their circle”—**CW2**

Case Study 2: Community Theatre



Case Study 2: Community Theatre

- Before COVID-19, community workers worked with low-income youth to organize community forum theatre programs aimed at discussing complex personal and social issues
- Writing and performing their own stories, the community theatre program offered space for the youth to speak on various, concerning issues including parentification (i.e. growing up too fast), growing up in an environment of substance abuse, as well as sexual harassment.
- In this regard, forum theater can serve as an effective tool to speak about and inform audiences of various challenges in the community, including themes around criminalization
- In addition, the program also opened space for community workers to build relations among community youth (belonging):

“[It was] to investigate what kind of interest... or experience that exists in the space to connect people... following (by) the principle of building friendship” —CW2

“The intention was to create safe platform for people to share their stories... and also, to tackle issues that seems important to them.”—CW2



Case Study 2: Community Theatre

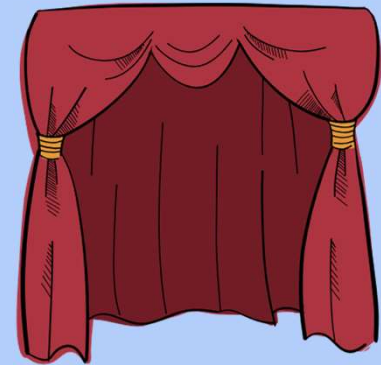
- Through the powers of performance, youth are offered the opportunity for self-expression, not only of their own personalities, but their own lives. Such spaces can thus provide youth solace and healing over their struggles.
- As one community recalls of a youth who shared with the audience after having staged a performance:

“He stood up and he was like... ‘I just wanna tell all of you, the message... to all of you is that, this is my story... and these stories are real and is happening it’s not just for entertainment’”—**CW2**

- Later, the youth expressed crying to the community worker:

“... And he was like ‘I didn’t know I could express myself so much. I was so angry that people were just coming and thinking that it’s not real but... this is my story and I didn’t know how vulnerable I was’”—**CW2**

“Youth programs should be catered in ways that center the strengths of the young person, but also acknowledge the pain that they are going through... when they feel comfortable to share”—**CW2**



Case Study 2: Community Theatre

- For another youth with interest and film and photography, as well as some acting, the program also gave an opportunity to hone skills (mastery), and to build a portfolio that the youth later used for admission into a local film school.
- Later, this youth would also work to create short films around various issues in the community, seeking to put stories out for others to watch and understand (belonging/generosity ;contribution). As one community had shared:

“He was the shyest boy at first, then he became a really good actor, I think it’s because of this value of putting stories out that are important to him”.

“It definitely gave him courage to pursue the arts... We used his strength in this program where he started filming the videos... taking photos for our posters... [building a] portfolio to show...this is the reason I should be in your program”—**CW2**

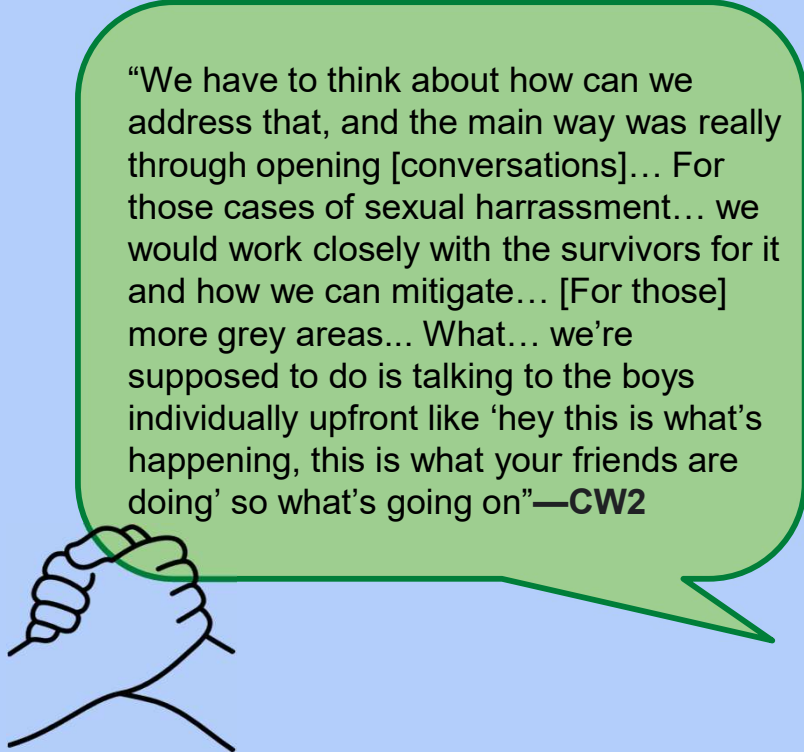


Case Study 3: Addressing Sexual Violence



Case Study 3: Addressing Sexual Violence

- The noticeable presence of sexual-related harassment in one community led youth to work with a community worker to create a group to address the matter.
- The group was split between younger women and men, each working to address various aspects of sexual harassment in the community.
- For the young women, the space cultivated through the program allowed for the development of shared resources, including emotional support for friends, as well as to identify victims, or potential victims, within abusive relationships.
- For the young men, the group has worked to create intervention strategies, including speaking with other male peers against sexual violence.



“We have to think about how can we address that, and the main way was really through opening [conversations]... For those cases of sexual harassment... we would work closely with the survivors for it and how we can mitigate... [For those] more grey areas... What... we’re supposed to do is talking to the boys individually upfront like ‘hey this is what’s happening, this is what your friends are doing’ so what’s going on”—CW2

Case Study 3: Addressing Sexual Violence

- At the same time, both groups have worked collaboratively to have community residents, including adults, to sign onto pledges to prevent sexual-related violence, as well as videos with calls to action for residents.
- Recently, the group had organised also a community event against sexual violence in the community. The event entailed various booths targeted at educating community residents about sexual violence in the area.
- In addition, the young women group worked to perform a song for the event, while the young men performed a rap, both surrounding the very issue of sexual violence.
- These coordinated events serve to demonstrate how community youth can take ownership of problems (independence), as well as confront their communities in ways that can address these issues.

“For the boys also it’s not really that they don’t care but it’s just more that you have to provide that space where they can get leadership ... and also like specific strategies to see what and allow that to happen...” —CW2

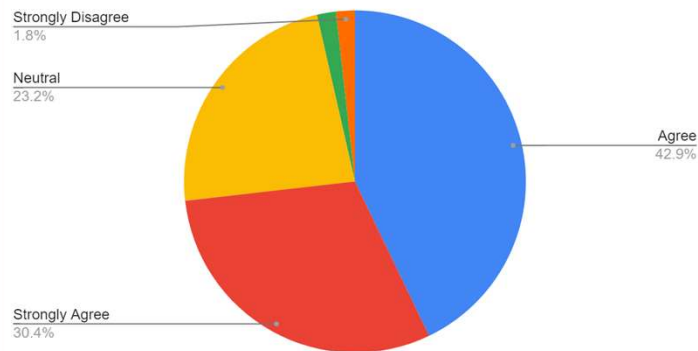


Community Programs: An Evaluation

“It's also hard for us to kind of like put a stop to these youth delinquency thingy, cause I mean come on, let's be honest, our programme only like once a week and sometimes you go down to the committee, we say hi-bye to the parents, chit chat or maybe one hour or two but other than that, its beyond our boundaries...”—CW5

- As the three case studies show, various community programs for youth may offer some way to *hedge against* forms of youth delinquency, in particular through the various mechanisms laid out earlier.
- These include opportunities for youth to develop skills and take ownership in dealing with community problems (e.g. through education, outreach; etc), as well as offering a space for youth to find community and solidarity.

Because of this program, I do my best to avoid harmful behaviours (e.g. self-harm, using drugs, acting with violence).



- At the same time, however, there remains limits to the effects of various community programs in addressing youth delinquency.
- This is owed largely to the multifaceted nature of the issue, including issues of poverty, and family instability, of which small-group community interventions cannot fully address.

8. Program Specifications

Under what conditions do programs succeed or fail?

Variables for Program Success

Getting Youth to Volunteer (Age, Time and Commitment)



“Really just so so busy”

“I think different age groups... the tertiary youth, they're really just so so busy... I think it's tough for them cause a lot of them have classes almost entire day and then they have part-time work, they do food delivery and between them they have family commitments... So they have all these other engagements. It's like, okay, why would you come for [this program?]”—**CW4**

“13 to...15”

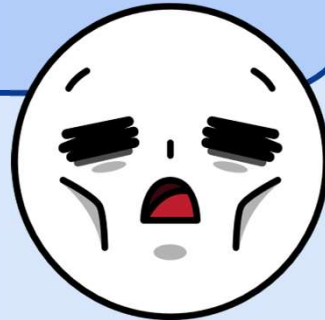
“[Those who] are not taking national exams... I think they are more responsive. I think that age group of like 13 to probably about 15, yeah, they're more committed to doing things with us... they do quite wholeheartedly lah...”—**CW1**

Variables for Program Success

Getting Youth to Volunteer (Age, Time, Commitment)

“Don’t think I have that time”

“I’d want to like be involved in more volunteering... if my time and like my work or anything like permits... but then like with the schedule i have now, I really don’t think I have that time [laughs]”—**P04, 17 years old**



Family Responsibilities

“I think I am better taking care of my family, focus on my family first, then can think about volunteering lah...”—**P19, 23 years old**

“Time Consuming”

[Volunteering] gives you awareness of what's happening, the things we want in today's society, the problems we are facing all that kind of stuff... But is time consuming cause sometimes you just don't have time to do it”—**P13, 18 years old**

Variables for Program Success

Getting Youth to Volunteer

Environmental Familiarity

“Because I need to get familiar with the environment first, then I will feel more like volunteering, if not I will not be familiar with it. So if I am not familiar, I won't feel like being a volunteer...”—**P04, 17 years old**

Existing Friend Groups

“The tertiary youth... by the age they usually have a pretty stable, several pretty stable friend groups [which might disincentivise them from coming]”—**CW4**

Attaining Parent Support

“I think it's really important to get the parents' trust, especially for younger children, and for parents to really see how this program is benefiting their children. The reason is because parents are... the first point lah, who will encourage their children, give permission... So, if the parents don't allow them to go out at this timing, means no [attendance] lor.”—**P03, 17 years old**

9. Concluding Statements

Concluding Remarks

- This report has sought to demonstrate, through the evaluation of existing youth community programs at Beyond Social Services, the possible ways in which youth volunteer work may hedge against forms of youth delinquency.
- Drawing on the Circles of Courage model, it is seen that community programs may allow youth to develop competencies in various skills (mastery/self-confidence), connect residents to common areas or one another (belonging), offer opportunities to take initiatives in various projects (independence), as well participate in activities that can uplift community residents (generosity), all while strengthening relations of care, support, and accountability among youth themselves, and also between youth and community workers.
- Notably, these mechanism can serve to reshape in some capacity the lived environments and experiences of low-income youth in Singapore, offering some level of buffering against interpersonal harms, or other forms of law-breaking transgression.

Concluding Remarks

- Yet, while the significance of these programs cannot be understated, the issue of youth delinquency remains connected also to larger structural challenges including economic inequality, financial instability at home, household and parent-related difficulties, of which community-level interventions cannot effectively attend to.
- Furthermore, the success of various programs remain mediated by other factors, including the role of parental support in youth engagement, the dynamic of various youth within each program, as well as youth balancing of participation with and external responsibilities; the latter too which is inextricable from external causes of inequality
- In this regard, committed responses aimed at averting youth delinquency cannot rely solely on community-based programs, but rather must incorporate a comprehensive host of interventions across all levels of society, including the social and national. Evidently, it is only through multi-faceted approaches that the issue of youth delinquency will be adequately addressed

”

“Volunteering is important because we are living in a society... we have to interact and help one another... We live as a community... is not like we're surviving by ourselves in a jungle... in a jungle we... We ok we rely on nature, mother nature for everything but... we live in a community. Everybody plays a role, we have doctors, we have uh bus drivers, we have governors... everybody plays a role. We just can't do everything by ourselves”

THANK YOU