



YOUNG PEOPLE AS AGENTS OF CHANGE IN PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN.

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The R4Respect research

The research aimed to evaluate the impact of a peer-to-peer respectful relationships education model: R4Respect on young people.

The main research question was:

“Did the young people as peer educators help to build understanding among other young people of what is ok behaviour and what crosses the line into harm?”

Funded by Australia’s National Research Organisation for Women’s Safety (ANROWS), in partnership with Griffith University, YFS Ltd, Logan and Ruby Gaea sexual assault service, NT.



The full research report and peer-to-peer education guide with teaching materials, videos and more are available at <https://www.anrows.org.au/project/young-people-as-agents-of-change-in-preventing-violence-against-women/>¹

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The research method



The R4Respect youth team developed and delivered 4 hours of respectful relationships education using a peer-to-peer delivery model to young people aged 14-16yrs in Logan and 14-25 years in Darwin.

Researchers administered pre- workshop (n=86) and post-workshop (n=80) surveys to participants and undertook interviews with education stakeholders.

What is R4Respect?

The R4Respect program is an education and prevention strategy which aims to prevent anti-social behaviour and violence, including violence in personal or intimate relationships. R4Respect features a unique peer-to-peer model in which young people are program leaders and the agents of change. The program members are young people from diverse cultural backgrounds and identities, aged 17-24 years.



In a very short time, R4Respect has reached thousands of young people, on-line and face to face, with positive messages of respect and of what crosses the line into harm. The program is evidence-based and it has also achieved national acclaim.

What is peer-to-peer education?

Peer-to-peer education is a “participatory style of teaching and learning in which people of similar social status or group membership educate each other about specific topics.”²

Peer-led interventions are viewed as a means of engaging young people, especially those from marginalised groups, on a range of sensitive topics, including sexual health, drug use, mental health, bullying and more.

The use of peer models is promoted as valuing young people’s capacity to participate and lead change.

Key findings of the R4Respect research

92% of youth participants strongly agreed or agreed that it is helpful to have young people leading the learning on respectful relationships.

86% agreed to the statement: “Things I learnt in the program would help me act with greater respect in the future.”

12% There was a 12% increase in young people indicating strong agreement with the statement “I know that there is a clear line between what is okay behaviour and what is harmful behaviour.”



R4Respect peer-to-peer education is a useful complement to teacher-led respectful relationships education.

Educators positive about the relatability and influence of the peer educators in the R4Respect program.



R4Respect showed potential to positively influence young people’s behaviour, including how they managed conflict.



Young men’s attitudes towards gender equality remain difficult to shift.

Why is the program needed?

Young people are at risk of violence and harm and/or witnessing harm—particularly in their own families.



One in 10 Australians aged 18 years and over have had their intimate images shared online without their consent.³

There has also been a dramatic increase in exposure to pornography among children and young people, especially young men.⁴

Too many young people think it is ok to force someone to have sex. Young men (32%) and young women (18%) agree with the statement, “A lot of times, women who say they were raped had led the man on and then had regrets.”⁵



One in five women (18%) have experienced sexual violence.⁶

What can be done?

Embed respectful relationships programs as a part of a whole-school approach.

Consider peer-to-peer initiatives as a part of whole of school respectful relationships education program in your school or community.

Engage young people in program planning and delivery.

Ensure that programs are inclusive of diversity and promote gender equality.

Manage disclosures and the wellbeing of participants, including the peer educators.



References

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