Competency in Establishing Positive Relationships with Program Youth: The Impact of Organization and Youth Worker Characteristics

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Purpose
The purpose of this study was to evaluate both the presence of six workplace elements, as identified by the National Collaboration for Youth (NCY), that strongly predict employees’ success and job competency among successful United States youth programs and the degree to which having or not having these elements predict youth workers’ self-reported competency in the development of supportive relationships with program youth.

The Article
The authors begin by discussing research that has established the beneficial impact program participation can have on youth. They include six workplace elements, as identified by the National Collaboration for Youth (NCY), that strongly predict employees’ success and job competency among successful United States youth programs. These elements are: 1) adequate compensation and opportunities for advancement; 2) opportunities for professional development and training; 3) working in supportive environments and climates that foster success; 4) clear role descriptions and perceived competence to perform that role; 5) a sense that their work is valued; and 6) opportunities for networking. This study used a web-based survey where items in the survey were organized into six categories, in accordance to the six elements identified by the NCY. Additionally, youth workers were asked to self-report how good they were at each of three skills related to developing strong positive relationships with program youth. Results showed that generally most youth workers reported high job satisfaction. Additionally, results indicated that the majority of youth workers felt confident in their skills to form strong positive long-lasting relationships with program youth. Results also indicated partial support for the use of the NCY framework.

What this Means for the Field
The relationship between youth workers and program youth are some of the strongest mediators of the relationship between involvement in youth programs and positive developmental outcomes. Having an understanding of what job characteristics influence youth workers’ skill to support this critical element of youth programming is important to the advancement of the field of youth work.

Citation

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