

Youth Engagement: Developing Inclusive Survey Questions Using Cognitive Interviews

Immaculate Apchemengich, BS; Brandon Osborn, PhD; Cindy Walker, PhD; Angela Turner, BS

AMTC & Associates

2023 Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Grantee Conference | Re-unite Re-ignite Re-energize: Innovating for the future

May 23-25, 2023

Introduction

- When measuring constructs, previously validated scales are often used without consideration of societal and cultural changes as well as inclusivity. The language used in survey scales and items to capture specific constructs may not always reflect youth vocabulary and understanding. Cognitive interviews can be used to develop materials that are understandable and relevant.¹

Objectives

- To assess the content validity of an APP pilot survey among a racial minority group of 9th and 10th-grade students.
- To gain input on survey items from a racial minority group of 9th & 10th-grade students to ensure inclusive and relevant language.
- To design pregnancy and STI prevention, healthy relationships, and sexual risk avoidance survey language that is understandable and relevant to youth.

Methods

- Cognitive interviews in 2022 with a purposive sample of 6 racial minority youth. We obtained IRB approval from BRANY and consent/assent from the youth and their parents.
- Recruitment: We worked with schoolteachers to select 6 students based on gender and grade. An even mix of girls and boys.
- We obtained youth input on different elements of the survey that were unclear or not reflective/relevant to them, potential issues with items, and potential revisions to the tool.

Lessons

- Conducting cognitive interviews with a sample of the target population yields valuable feedback for survey development.
- Utilize a more diverse sample to include individuals that speak English as a second language.

Main Takeaways

Not all sexual and relationship terms frequently utilized in the adolescent pregnancy prevention field resonate with racial minority youth.



Key findings resulted in changes to survey items for clarity.



Scan to see what else we are working on!



Domain	Initial format	Issues Identified	Change made	Quote
Birth control methods	...many times did you or your partner use the withdrawal method when...	1.Youth use other terms 2.Pullout is used more than withdrawal 3.Don't know the term	...many times did you or your partner use the pullout method when...	PP4(F) "I don't know what that word means."
Time frame for intentions to engage in sexual activity	How likely is it that you will have sex in the next year?	A year is too long for youth to anticipate the likelihood of sexual activity.	Additional shorter time frames were considered (e.g if you have sexual intercourse tomorrow...).	PP1 (F): "A year is too far out and not measurable compared to 30 days because people don't really plan that far." PP5(M): "I don't know what this word is but I think others might know it."
Abstinence	... I intend to remain abstinent...	Defining/understanding abstinence.	I do not plan to have sexual intercourse any time soon.	PP2(M): Use "toxic" instead of unhealthy.
Awareness of healthy relationships	I know the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships.	1.Use "toxic" instead of unhealthy. 2. Nowadays people use the term toxic.	I know the difference between healthy and unhealthy /toxic relationships.	PP1 (F): "Some people use the word 'abusive' to make a toxic situation appear less toxic"
	I know what it means to be in an abusive relationship.	Synonymous use of abusive & toxic.	Unchanged, but an additional question was added: I know the difference between a toxic and an abusive relationship.	PP4 (F): "In my generation, we use "red flags"" PP3 (F): "Items a-e talks about sexual activity while f is very generic. Maybe change to make more specific"
	I can identify the danger signs in a relationship.	Use red flags instead of danger signs.	I can identify the danger signs/red flags in a relationship.	
Communication	Combined talking about sexual activity with general topics.	No face validity.	Split into two communication scales. Communication about sexual activity & general communication.	

Discussion

- Findings from the interviews resulted in changes to survey questions. Changes included clarifying: the definition of abstinence, the timeframes for sexual behavior intentions, the specific topics in the parent-child communication scale, and the definition of unhealthy relationship terms. The youth did not understand the difference between the term toxic and unhealthy; items were added to assess the capacity of the youth to differentiate these terms.

Citations:

1. Anderson S, Barry M, Frerichs L, et al. Cognitive interviews to improve a patient-centered contraceptive effectiveness poster. *Contraception*. 2018;98(6):528-534. doi:10.1016/j.contraception.2018.06.010



Disclaimer: The views expressed in this poster do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Department of Health and Human Services; nor does mention of trade names, commercial practices, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Acknowledgment: This work was supported by funds from the Family & Youth Services Bureau [Grant number: 90AP2700-01-00]. Thanks to the Trinity Church staff members, school teachers, and students that were involved in the cognitive interview process.



Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Program