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Youth Mentoring Survey (for 4th Grade & Up, Revised 2018)

The Youth Mentoring Survey (YMS) for 4th Grade & Up is the most comprehensive measure of match characteristics available with published validity evidenceⁱ. It comes in three age-appropriate versions. The YMS was designed to complement the mentor-completed Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ), and strong correlations between the two measures have been obtained. The version for 4th graders and older is a refined version of the original measure and offers the most validity evidence. It is appropriate for use with children in 4th grade and up. It is completed by matched youth, includes 51 items, and typically takes 10-15 to administer.

Structure & Scoring

The YMS measures relational and instrumental (growth-focused) quality, including positive and negative perspectives on internal match relationship quality (MRQ; the way the mentee feels about the match) and structure (how the mentee perceives that match activities focus). The survey consists of two sections of rating questions. The first section (25 items) measures relational quality, instrumental quality, and prescription. The second section (22 items) assesses how much match time is devoted to activities focused on fun, sharing/relating, and learning/growing. Four final questions measure the frequency and logistics associated with match meetings.

The two sections of the original YMS present statements that students read and answer by indicating their response on a four-point Likert-style scale (internal items) or a five-point scale (structure items). All scores are translated to a scale of 0-100, with higher scores indicating more positive ratings. Scores on subscales and broadscales are reported only if the respondent answers at least 67% of the questions.

Administration

The YMS should not be administered sooner than 3-4 months into the match. Before that point, matches can experience a “honeymoon” period in which participants may have an unrealistically hopeful perspective on the match and may still be “on their best behavior.” During this “honeymoon” period, ratings may not yield an accurate perspective on how a match is really going.

Among community-based matches, the full YMS is recommended for administration 9-12 months into the match. Subsequent administrations may take place every 6-12 months. Among school-based programs, the survey is intended for administration as far into the match as possible without being affected by suspension of match meetings and the end of the school year (typically 4-6 weeks prior to the end of the school year). It is recommended that the YMS be administered within two weeks of administering the mentor-reported Match Characteristics Questionnaire (MCQ).

Use & Citation of the YMS

Permission to use the YMS and MCQ is granted freely and may be obtained through ARC’s website (www.MentoringEvaluation.com). The appropriate citation for the YMS is provided below and should be used in any reporting associated with the surveys:

Harris, JT, & Nakkula, MJ. (2018). Youth Mentoring Survey (YMS). Unpublished measure, Applied Research Consulting. Fairfax, VA.

We ask all who use the YMS to consider sharing collected data with ARC along with related demographic information and, if possible, related outcome data. ARC will use this data to improve the surveys and to develop norms for them. ARC will respect all requests made about what is done with shared data. Data sharing is not required.

Subscale Descriptions & Validity Evidence

ARC has analyzed over 2,000 YMS surveys. Respondents in ARC's database tend to be elementary-aged youth and the data is comprised mainly of responses from four large (statewide or national) mentoring organizations. White mentees from rural or suburban environments comprise the plurality of this data. However, the database also reflects hundreds of matches serving other ethnicities, adolescents, participants from urban settings, and other organizations.

The YMS has strong validity evidence, some of which has been published (Nakkula & Harris, 2005)^{ii,iii}. The authors have additional, strong evidence that is being prepared for publication. Confirmatory factor analysis shows support for the constructs presented here. Scales from the YMS have been found to correlate strongly with scales from the MCQ and other measures of MRQ. The YMS scales also have been found to predict outcomes related to academic functioning, length of match, and psychosocial development. Additional evidence has been gathered from interviews with mentees and practitioners who have taken or administered the survey. The YMS's practical utility has been demonstrated through its use by practitioners as a tool to structure monthly match supervision. It has been used by researchers and practitioners in almost every one of the United States. It is in use in dozens of countries and on several continents. Factor analyses of the MCQ subscales have yielded adequate to strong reliability estimates (Chronbach's alpha). However, the items in each subscale also reflect the composition found to be most usefully predictive of outcomes and other match characteristics.

Factor analyses of the YMS's subscales have yielded reliability estimates (Chronbach's alpha) ranging from .61 to .85. The elements of internal quality measured by the YMS include the following (with item counts and reliability estimates):

- Relational Quality (14 items / alpha = .84), protégé feels happy, close, satisfied with relationship;
- Instrumental Quality (8 / .76), how much the youth is open to support and perceives benefits from it;
- Prescription (3 / .61), protégé does not feel that the mentor is too prescriptive;

The elements of Structure measured by the YMS (with item counts and reliability estimates) include:

- Fun Focus (8 / .74), how much activities focus on hanging out and having fun;
- Sharing Focus (7 / .85), how much activities focus on talking and sharing emotionally.
- Instrumental Focus (6 / .79), how much activities focus on academics, outlook, and character development.
- Relational Focus (15 / .86), includes items from the fun and sharing subscales; and,
- The ratio of Relational Focus to Instrumental Focus indicates whether mentees perceive a greater emphasis on relational or instrumental activities in the match.

Scoring the Survey

"Uninverting" items:

An "inverted" item is one for which a high rating would indicate a negative answer. To obtain meaningful scores, it is necessary to ensure that a high rating always indicates a positive answer. To do that, simply subtract the selected rating from one more than the number of answers in the rating scale. To uninvert items from the first page of the YMS, subtract from 5. To uninvert items from the second page, subtract from 6.

Standardizing Scores

It is not necessary to do so, but it is recommended that scale scores be translated to a scale of 0-100. This standardization makes it easier to think about the scores and to compare scores across scales. To standardize YMS scores to a scale of 100, follow these instructions:

- Ensure that all ratings on "inverted" items have been "uninverted," using the directions above;
- Using the subscale breakdowns provided below, calculate a scale average based on the uninverted answers (i.e., making sure that high scores for each item are most positive);
- Subtract 1 from the subscale average;
- Multiply the result by 33.33 for Internal scales (from the first page) or by 25 for Structure scales (second page).

Examples:

- An average rating of 3.0 on an Internal scale from the first page of the YMS (4-point rating scale) would equal a score of 67 out of 100, using the following calculations:
 - $3 - 1 = 2$
 - $2 \times 33.33 = 67$.
- An average rating of 3.0 on a Structure scale from the second page of the survey (5-point rating scale) would equal a score of 50 out of 100, using the following calculations:
 - $3 - 1 = 2$
 - $2 \times 25 = 50$.

Getting the Most Out of the YMS

The YMS may be used as an entire survey or specific scales/items may be selected/excluded. However, it is recommended that entire scales be used in order to avoid compromising the validity of the scales being used. It also is recommended that the entire survey be used because each scale measures match characteristics that lend important insight on different facets of the match. Internal quality scales are important to measure in order to assess whether mentees are experiencing their match in ways that would be expected to keep them engaged. Structure scales are important because they indicate how a mentee feels that match activities focus. To date, ARC’s structure scales have been more predictive of outcome than internal scales (including indications of closeness) in ARC’s evaluations.

Subscale Composition

Internal Quality Scales	Items <i>(inverted items in red italics)</i>	Chronbach’s Alpha
Relational Quality	2, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 22, 23, & 24	0.85
Instrumental Quality	1, 3, 7, 11, 13, 15, 21, & 25	0.77
Prescription	<i>8, 14, 20</i>	0.61

Structure Scales	Items <i>(inverted items in red italics)</i>	Chronbach’s Alpha
Fun Focus	26, 28, 29, 32, <i>35</i> , 38, 41, & 45	0.74
Sharing Focus	27, 30, 33, 36, 39, 42, & 46	0.85
Growth Focus	31, 34, 37, 40, 43, & 47	0.79
Relational Structure (Fun & Sharing)	26-30, 32, 33, <i>35</i> , 36, 38, 39, 41, 42, 45, & 46	0.86

Adaptations for Younger Mentees

Younger students have often struggled to understand some items on the longer version of the YMS and the instrument usually requires longer to complete than they can manage. Therefore, the YMS has been adapted for use with younger students, with versions for K-1st grade students and 2nd/3rd grade students now being piloted. Both of the adapted versions contains mainly questions about match focuses (structure), but there is substantial overlap with the constructs measured by the YMS for 4th Graders and Up. Both versions contain fewer items and simpler, visual rating scales. The YMS for K-1st Graders and the YMS for 2nd-3rd Graders are available upon request.

ⁱ Nakkula, M. J. & Harris, J. T. (2014). Assessment of mentoring relationships. In DuBois, D. L. & Karcher, M. J. (Ed.s) *Handbook of Youth Mentoring, Second Edition*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

ⁱⁱ Nakkula, M. J. and Harris, J. T. (2010), Beyond the dichotomy of work and fun: Measuring the thorough interrelatedness of structure and quality in youth mentoring relationships. *New Directions for Youth Development*, 2010: 71–87.

ⁱⁱⁱ Karcher, M. J., Nakkula, M., Harris, J. (2005). Developmental mentoring match characteristics: Correspondence between mentors’ and mentees’ assessments of relationship quality. *Journal of Primary Prevention*.