

Youth Advisory Groups in Health Research: A Review of the Literature and Synthesis of Promising Practices

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BACKGROUND

Youth advisory groups, or YAGs, are increasingly being used to facilitate youth input and voice in research. There is a need to review the current landscape of YAG uses and structures within health research. Additionally, synthesizing promising practices on how to best form and maintain YAGs in health research will be valuable in the continued and future use of YAGs.

METHODS

- Review: Adapted review protocol. See Figure 1.
- Practices: Through inductive analysis promising practices for forming, implementing, and maintaining YAGs were distilled from all articles.

RESULTS

- Out of 53 articles about YAGs, 24 articles reported use of YAGs for health research. 22 articles were published between 2010 – 2020.
- 14 articles described YAGs as co-researchers and 10 as advisors.
- YAGs are used for diverse research topics like HIV/STIs (5 articles), Other Sexual Health (4), Mental Health (4), Environmental Health (3), Diet/Obesity (2), and Tobacco/Smoking (2).
- Few articles mention the impact of YAGs on youth or youth on research, and of those, most reporting is qualitative in nature.

DISCUSSION

- Use of YAGs in health research in recent years is increasing.
- YAGs are not well defined or reported in the literature. There is a need for more consistent and standardized reporting of the use of YAGs in health research.
- There is a wide and varied spectrum of involvement - from youth as involved co-researchers to consultants.
- There are many gaps, including impacts of YAG participation on youth and of youth input on research.
- There is no standard set of best practices for YAGs but some promising practices are emerging. See Figure 2. There is a need for further study of effectiveness of different approaches.

Key promising practices for YAGs prioritize youth-centric structure and engagement.

Promising Practices. Practices emerging from literature on youth advisory groups.		
Practice	References	Exemplars/Quotes
Provide dinner, drinks, and snacks during meetings. Can start off meeting with dinner and socialization and then transition into discussion.	Maslow et al. (2013); Hohenemser and Marshall (2002); Barraza (2016); Ross (2011); Rich et al. (2014); Lindquist-Grantz and Abraczinskas (2018)	"During meetings, snacks and beverages are provided, and after meetings." Hohenemser and Marshall (2002) "Routines promote predictability and cohesiveness. As established with the first TAC meeting in 2002, each teen receives a courtesy parking voucher, and every meeting begins with an informal dinner." Rich et al. (2014)
Arrange transportation arrangements and funding. Staff can plan transportation method in advance for youth, reimburse transportation costs (gas, parking, fares) to remove barriers and increase participation/attendance.	Livingwood et al. (2017); Hohenemser and Marshall (2002); Barraza (2016); Brown et al. (2016); Ross (2011); Rich et al. (2014); Lindquist-Grantz and Abraczinskas (2018)	"They are also offered reimbursement for bus/cab fare to and from meetings or parking if necessary." Hohenemser and Marshall (2002) "The youth leader also reflected on the importance of having “patience” and being “persistent.” She made phone calls to youth every week (sometimes multiple times a week) and worked with FAIHP to ensure youth had transportation to all events. These activities were necessary to support youth participation." Barraza (2016)

Figure 2. Screen capture of “Promising Practices” document. The promising practices were grouped into the following categories: Collaborative Creation and Planning, Recruitment, Engagement, Structure, Frequency, Community Building, Soliciting Youth Input, Feedback, Youth as Researchers, Role of Adults, and Institutional and Community Relations.

Some examples of youth-centric practices ranged from creating spaces for socialization within meetings (like dinners or open discussion at the beginning of meetings) to carefully considering adult roles and facilitation (like not letting adult presence physically overwhelm youth presence and hiring dedicated, long-term staff to decrease turnover).



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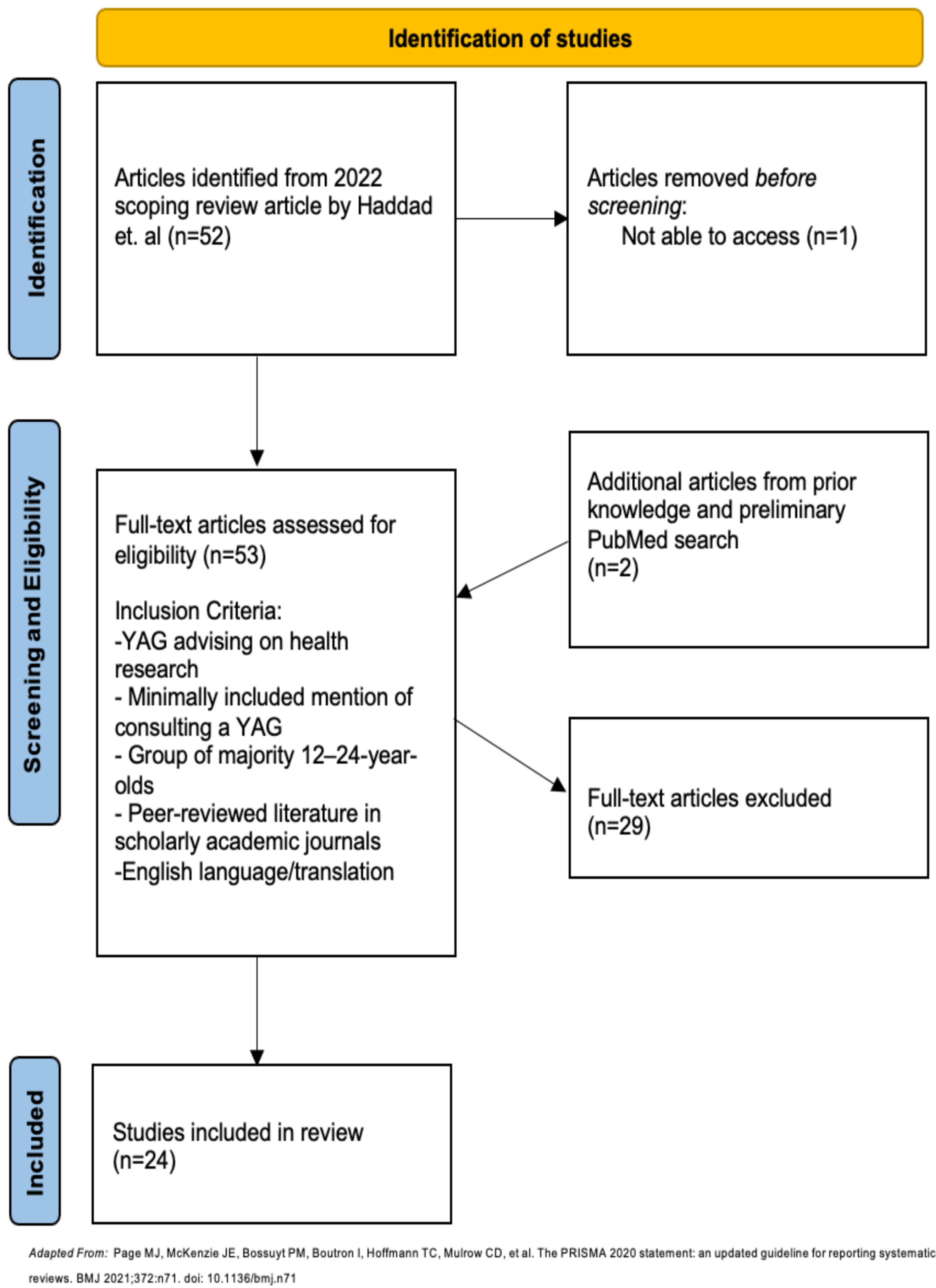


Figure 1. Flow diagram of the article identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion process.

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REFERENCE:

Haddad K, Jacquez F, Vaughn L. A scoping review of youth advisory structures in the United States: Applications, outcomes, and best practices. Am J Community Psychol. 2022 Dec;70(3-4):493-508. doi: 10.1002/ajcp.12597. Epub 2022 Apr 25. PMID: 35467024.