

Youth Happiness in Botswana

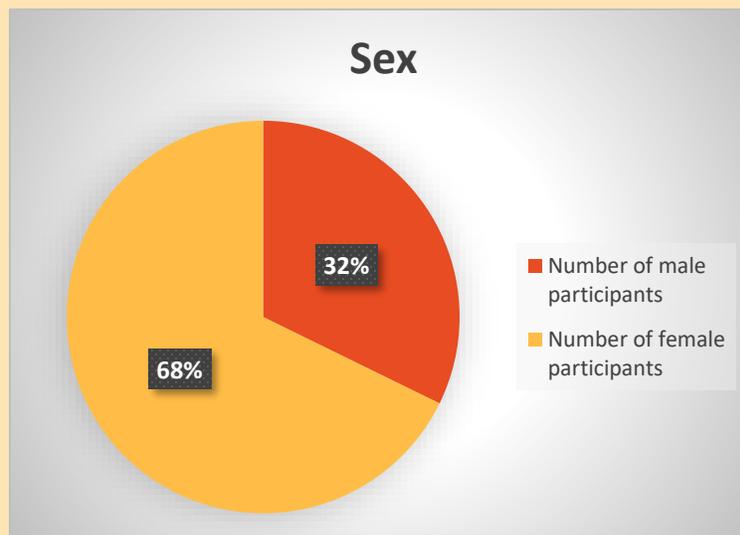
Success Capital Organisation, June 2016

Introduction

Happiness is often spoken of a measure of life among young people. Little reflection, investigation and understanding of how its articulated and expressed is ever documented. Although there are systemic research studies, there are too few bodies of work that are youth led or reflective within their context and framing. This position paper was a result of a clear gap in better articulating how young people in Botswana relate and experience happiness. It highlights key aspect of young peoples' decision making ability, exercising agency and being a part of community and country.

Approach

An anonymous survey was chosen as a tool for data collection. This is to safeguard participants' identity and allow for them to share their experiences without restriction. The survey was administered both online and offline. Only primary data was used in ensuring that captured experiences are appropriately reflected. Success Capital Organisation is intentional in ensuring the lived experiences can inform better advocacy and policy making. A total of 45 young people under the age of 30 years were engaged through snowball recruitment; ensuring trust and rapport for potential participants to feel comfortable in the data collection process. However, only 38 young people completed the survey. This could be attributed to internet connectivity and disinterest mid-survey. The disinterest could emanate from either lack of interest or perceived low value of the initiative. 25% of participants were under the age of 18 and 75% over 18, of which an overall majority were female participants.

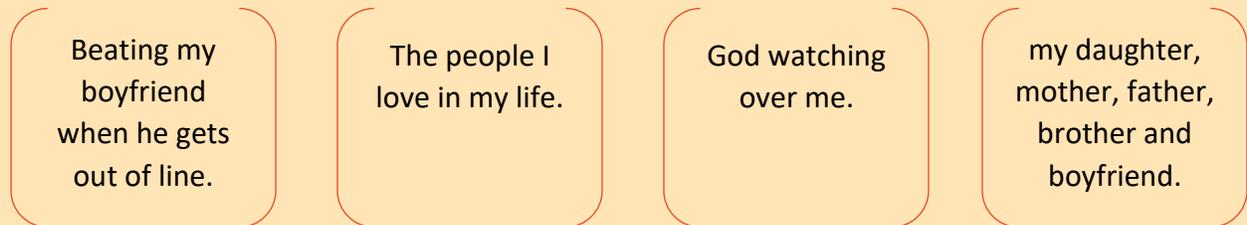


92% of participants were resident in Gaborone, the capital city. whilst the minority of participants are resident in Francistown. This is solely attributed to the production of the position paper not being funded.

Findings

95% of participants expressed that they are happy, although only 40% felt that they were living their best life. This reflects that most did not associate happiness with leading a fulfilling life. 80% believed their support structure influenced their happiness and to some extent, the ability to leading a fulfilling life. At least 80% of participants identified nuclear family as a support structure. There were overlaps with extended family, friends, partners and other kinds of support such as religion and social clubs.

The causes of happiness range from intimate partner violence, family and religion, illustrated below:



School and life in general were other causes of happiness. One notable experience did not express happiness as bullying and abuse at home impeded happiness. Support structures play a huge role in young Batswana's lives, this requires nurturing, enabling and care. In many experiences these three requirements could not be fulfilled by one type of support structure, this is reflected in the overlapping selections. Sexual partners were a unique source of happiness. However, it is clear that social engagement is a large influence towards happiness. In many instances it is more of a state to achieve than one that is integral to being. This reflects a complexity to navigating Botswana's socioeconomic complex landscape.

Conclusion

The ability to connect, socialize and belong within a group, family, religious affiliation or other collective is a critical component of happiness. There are many facets that include violence, spirituality and sex as contributors to happiness. More work is needed to better understand how happiness impacts the ability to be productive, exercise agency and progress in life. This snapshot highlights the need to investigate and understand what support looks like for a young person in Botswana to thrive, but also how other facets impact on decision making and navigating life.

Recommendations

- a) Young people should be involved in more research initiatives, moving away from extractive forms of engagements and allowing for them to own the findings and outcomes of research.
- b) Future research should unpack issues of violence, spirituality and support structures to better understand young people's needs and interests within the context of development.

Our Position

Success Capital Organisation recognizes the need to address the interests and not just needs of young people in Botswana. This requires unpacking lived experiences and other issues invisible to decision makers and civil society. The understanding of young people's happiness is one avenue to better harnessing their potential and talent. More exploratory interventions are needed to uncover their power.