GUATEMALAN YOUTH IN ADVERSE CONTEXTS: 
Resilience processes underlying educational opportunities

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Guatemala’s overview

Population: 16,703,000 people *(CEPAL, 2016)*

66.5% under 30 years of age *(INE, 2014)*

Multiethnic: 60% ladinos, 40% mayas, xincas y garífunas *(ENCOVI, 2012; INE, 2014)*

Multilingual: 25 national languages *(INE, 2014)*

Central America’s biggest economy *(BM, 2015)*

Geographically privileged

Photo courtesy of Erlin Ayala
The “eternal spring country”
Contrast
Guatemala’s adverse context

Guatemala ranks 133rd out of 187 countries in Development Index (0.581) health – education – income (PNUD, 2013)

59.29% poverty incidence rate (BM, 2014)

5.6 average years of schooling (INE, 2014)

It is one of the 13 countries with the highest crime rate in the world (Perspectiva, 2016)

Lack of opportunities, insecurity, migration phenomenon, gangs, drug traffic, natural disasters, post civil war effects (BM, 2013)

Photo courtesy of Erlin Ayala
Potential

Young country

Opportunity for transformation

Education and culturally relevant programs

Prevention

Key moment for innovation - education - entrepreneurship

Well-being and mental health awareness

Photo courtesy of Erlin Ayala
Research purpose

To understand, from a transformative paradigm, the experience of Guatemalan at-risk youth who chose to participate in an educational program that sought to prevent violence through a technical scholarship.

Photo courtesy of Erlin Ayala
Research objectives

Follow-up the youth who participated in the Violence Prevention Program (VPP)

Understand the resilience processes of youth who graduated and also of those who dropped out VPP

Deepen our understanding of the youth’s complex context
Research question

What are the risks, protective and promotive factors that influence the resilience processes of the young people who participated in the Violence Prevention Program technical education project?
Sub-questions

What are the social, psychological, economic and health risks faced by VPP youth?

What are the individual, family, community and educational protective and promotive factors of this youth?

What is the youth life course before, during and after VPP?

What are the personal, family and work changes that VPP youth experienced from their participation in the program?
Sub-questions

What is the resilience level of VPP youth?

What is the influence of the Violence Prevention Program on youth?

How can this research be used to influence policy and support positive changes in the community to increase youth resilience?
Participants

151 youth started VPP
(94 men and 57 women)

102 youth graduates
(64 men and 38 women)

49 drop outs
(30 men and 19 women)

23 years old average age

Living in conditions of economic disadvantages, coming from identified red zones
Red zones
INTRODUCTION

The VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR AT RISK YOUTH IN GUATEMALA, led by Tania de Castañeda, Marco Saz, and Maria del Pilar Grazioso, aims to address the alarming rates of violence and aggression among youth in Guatemala. The program’s objective is to implement strategies that will promote non-violent behaviors and enhance social and emotional skills among at-risk youth.

METHOD

PARTICIPANTS

Participants for the program were selected from high schools in Guatemala City and the surrounding areas. A total of 80 students were recruited, representing a diverse range of socio-economic backgrounds. The participants were divided into two groups: one for the intervention and one for the control group.

MEASUREMENTS

The program employed a pre-post design, with measurements taken at the beginning and end of the intervention period to assess changes in students’ attitudes and behaviors. The intervention involved weekly workshops, discussions, and role-playing activities aimed at promoting conflict resolution and emotional intelligence.

RESULTS

There was a significant improvement in the intervention group compared to the control group. Students in the intervention group showed a decrease in aggressive behavior and an increase in pro-social behaviors.

DISCUSSION

The results suggest that the intervention program has been effective in reducing violence and promoting positive behaviors among at-risk youth. The findings support the need for more comprehensive and targeted interventions to address the complex issues of violence and aggression in Guatemala.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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REFERENCES

Acompañamiento socio-emocional para el Programa Prevención de la Violencia

Objetivos: Intervención socio-emocional

Motivar a los participantes con el fin de crear un proyecto de vida personal en el que puedan vivir su potencial, capacidad creativa y de trabajo como vehículo para su auto-realización, sentido de pertenencia y contribución a la sociedad.

Llevar a cabo un proceso de consejería psicológica individual y grupal, de acuerdo a las necesidades personales y/o grupales que se determinen.

Proporcionar información y seguimiento a padres de familia para mejorar destrezas parentales.

Obtener resultados a largo plazo, incluyendo análisis de la validez y confiabilidad de la intervención.

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Castañeda, Saz & Grazioso, 2016
Transformative paradigm: Cyclical mixed methods design (Mertens, 2012)
Based on: Social Ecology of Resilience theory (Ungar, 2012)

**Cycle 1: Qualitative**
- IRB approval
- Context analysis / previous studies
- Local Advisory Committee (LAC)

**Cycle 2: Concurrent**
- Focus groups / visual methods (graduates and drop outs)
- RRC-ARM-28 pilot
- Data analysis
- LAC consultation

**Cycle 3: Sequential**
- In depth interviews
- Online RRC-ARM-28 (including contextual questions)
- LAC consultation

**Cycle 4: Concurrent**
- Data analysis
- Return results workshop with participants to explore ways of dissemination
- LAC consultation

**Cycle 5: Qualitative**
- Findings dissemination
- Follow up
- LAC consultation
Preliminary results: Promotive and protective factors

Family support - mothers key role

Significant adults – teachers – spiritual leaders

Peers – friends support

Educational opportunities - sports

Socioemotional support

Community service activities

Job opportunities
Personal strengths

- Positive - curious - creative - love to learn - capacity to dream - entrepreneurial characteristics
- Set goals - self determination
- Finance awareness - saving concept - consciousness of giving back to their families
- Seize every opportunity however small it is
- Listen and look for advice
- Social awareness - give back to their communities and country
Challenges

Unemployment - low paid jobs - exclusion

Violence - fear

Poverty - need to work at young age to pay the school or support their families

Stigma – discrimination – judgement (physical appearance / ethnicity / neighborhood)

Drugs – alcoholism

Lack of services - marginalization
Scholarship meaning

- An exit of community challenges
- Hope for next generations change
- Possibility to help their communities
- Experience and job stability
- Increased income (to buy a car and own home in a safer neighborhood)
- Independence
- New goals
Visual methods to elicit narratives
Relational map
Desempleo

Dejar de estudiar la licenciatura por la falta de dinero

Aplicar a la beca para proseguir

Ayuda social y ver la realidad de mi país para ayudar a más personas

Conseguir un trabajo estable desde las prácticas del técnico y seguir allí hasta la fecha
Lessons learned

• LAC key role

• Researcher long term engagement to gain trust

• Follow up - new opportunities

• Networking - jobs

Photo courtesy of Erlin Ayala
Gracias!!!
References


References


Special thanks to Erlin Ayala for facilitating Guatemala's beautiful pictures!!!