

Empowering through Peer Facilitation: A Comprehensive Approach to Sexual Risk Avoidance Education

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Abstract

This poster presentation introduces the YMCA's innovative Peer Facilitator model for implementing SRAE programming. The inclusion of peer facilitators significantly enhances trust and rapport, reducing barriers to learning. Peer facilitators consistently outscore adult facilitators in quality observation scores and excel in answering youth questions, fostering community, and encouraging group participation. Testimonials from peer facilitators emphasize the transformative impact on their lives, fostering a sense of purpose and connection.

Introduction

Peer education programs have even been shown to be more effective than adult-led education programs in changing behaviors, attitudes and norms. Studies on adult and peer co-led health education programs show this model provides maximum impact in terms of credible information dissemination, and behavior change.¹

- Peer Facilitators are recruited from past participants, a local High School Teaching and Learning magnet program, and other teen Y programs.
- Teens are trained in Love Notes as a facilitator. Additional training provided in Positive Youth Development, Social Justice Youth Development, Trauma-Informed Care, and facilitation techniques.
- Peer facilitators are paired with adult facilitators to co-facilitate sessions with complete sharing of power. Peer Facilitators are compensated for their time facilitating.



Photo: YMCA Love Notes Program

¹ University of North Carolina Healthy Heels. (October 26, 2012). *The Power of Peers: Health Benefits of Peer Education*. <https://healthyheels.org/2012/10/26/the-power-of-peers-health-benefits-of-peer-education/>

Benefits of Peer Facilitation

"The opportunity to be a peer facilitator was the best thing that has happened to me."

"Love Notes can be the change my community needs."

"Love Notes has had an impact on my life by making me feel like a valuable asset to youth."



Photo: YMCA Love Notes Program

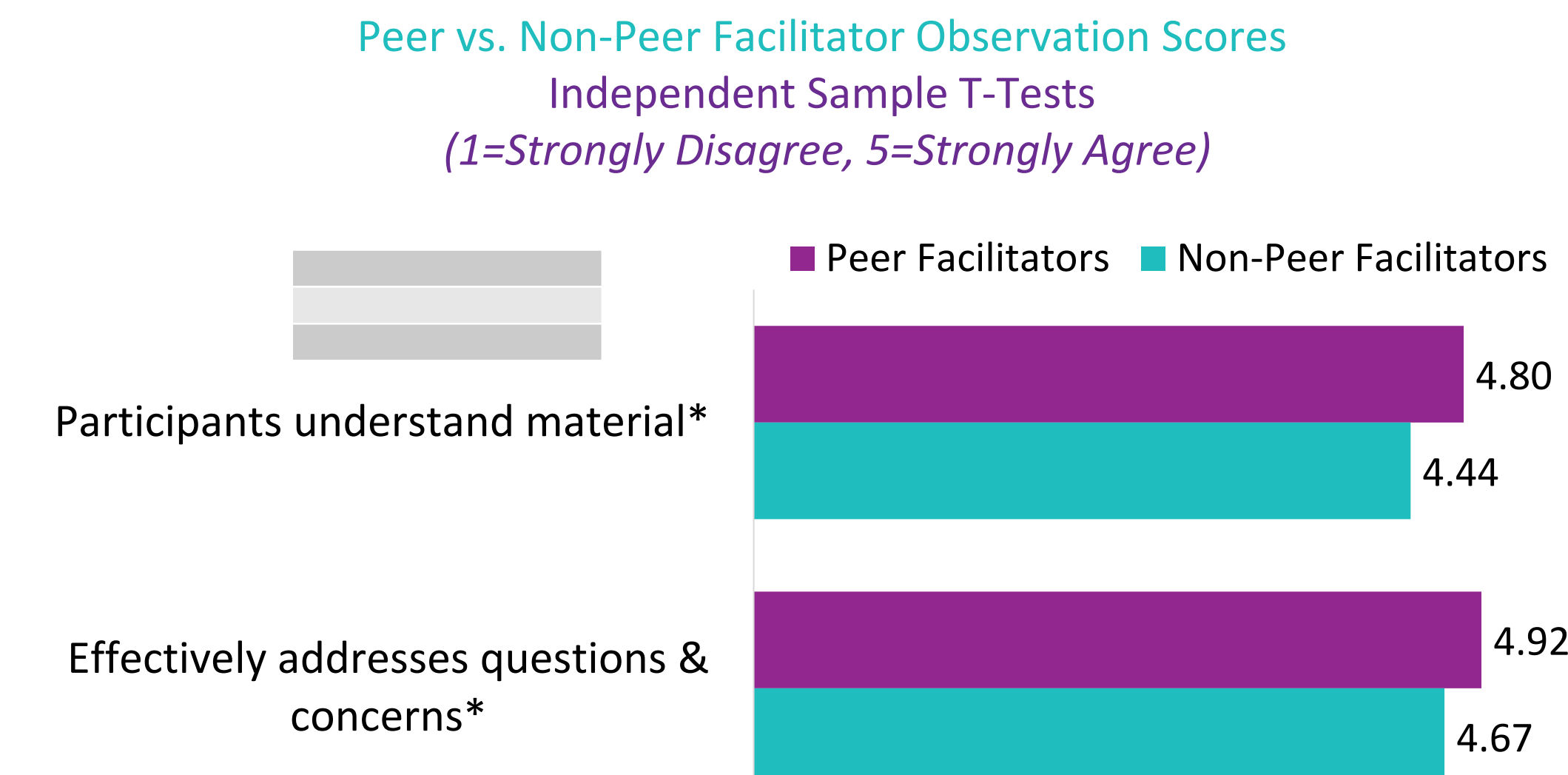
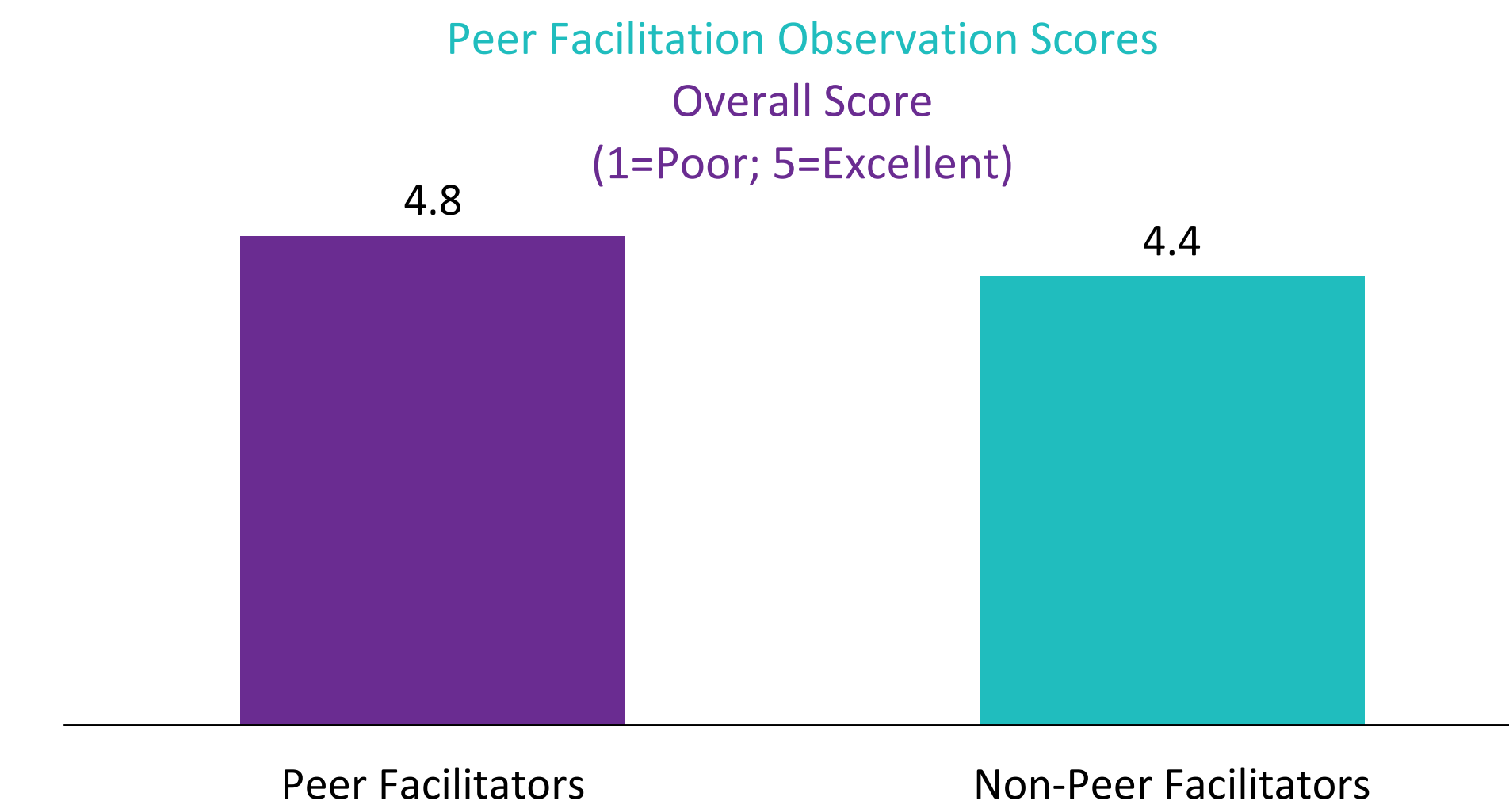
For the Peer Facilitator

- An increased investment in the curriculum allows for their own deeper understanding and a commitment to the SRAE program.
- They develop leadership, facilitation, and public speaking skills, among others. All of these are transferrable to various careers.
- They maintain mentor relationships with the adults in the program. This furthers their resilience in creating more trusted adults and supports.
- Teens have opportunities for jobs and careers within the YMCA, outside of the paid peer facilitator role.

For the Youth in the Program

- Youth have decreased barriers to learning and engagement, often because the peer facilitator is able to understand and incorporate language around relationships that the teens use.
- Youth have increased rapport & trust with the program and facilitators, reporting that they feel an ease in learning from their peers.
- Increased learning & participation because the youth have more sense of comfort in the program.

Peer Facilitator Effectiveness



Peer Facilitator Strengths Based on Observation Scores



Conclusion



Photo: YMCA Love Notes Program

Over the past three years that we have been engaging with this work, we have found that the Peer Facilitator Model is one of the keys to making SRAE programming successful. This model helps to bridge the gap with the youth and creates an environment primed for learning. In addition, we have seen the life-changing effects of being given this opportunity, specifically in building confidence and setting the Peer Facilitators up for success.

Peer Facilitator
Blueprint Materials



Teen Vibe Camp
Linktree



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