**Table 1** Study community researchers and study participant characteristics

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| Lead author (Country) | Study Aim | Study focus | Study design | CR demographic characteristics | Characteristics of study participants | QA rating |
| Bhattacharyya 2024 (India) (40) | Examine the methods and opportunities for street-connected children meaningful participation in research and advocacy during COVID-19 using the Child in Need Institute method. | Vulnerabilities and access to services | Participatory action research | n=30 street-connected-children and young people aged 13-18 years from Kolkata | Street-connected-children | 100% |
| Brear 2018a, b; 2020; 2023 (Swaziland) (13, 23, 24, 39) | Apply Bourdieu’s theory to interrogate the social relations of informed consent in the ‘field’ of community-based participatory research in a rural Swazi community. | Structural determinants of health in a community caring for children affected by AIDS | Participatory health research with an ethnographic and critical reflection approach informed by Bourdieu’s sociological theory | n=10 CRs; 4 men and 6 women; aged 18–40; with positions in governance committee, relatives, community police. Spoke English and Swazi fluently | Rural Swazi community members involved in caregiving for children affected by AIDS and subsistence farming | 100% |
| Burke 2017; Burke 2019 (Senegal)  (35, 36) | Explore access to sexual and reproductive health services for young people with disabilities (YPWD), and pilot a peer research methodology to assess how working with YPWD as peer researchers influences the quality of data collection | Understand what barriers and enablers young people with disabilities experience when accessing sexual and reproductive health services | Qualitative participatory research using FGDs | n=14 peer researchers (8 young men and 6 young women) of which 3 were visually impaired, 9 were living with a physical impairment, and 2 were sign language interpreters. One person dropped out prior to the start of the data collection phase. Most peer researchers were university students with the ability to speak French and Wolof and were computer literate | Young people with disabilities; diverse in age, gender, and impairment type; recruited across Senegal | 100% |
| Chappell 2014 (South Africa) (41) | What YPWD learn through undertaking sexuality research. | Same as study aim | Participatory qualitative research using FGDs and interviews | n=3 youth aged 15–20 with physical impairments (two females aged 17 and 20, one male aged 15); isiZulu-speaking; limited English; two with secondary education, one left school at 9 years. | Youth with disabilities | 100% |
| Collumbien 2009 (Pakistan)  (42) | Distinguish between three distinct groups of male and transgender sex workers in Pakistan and to demonstrate how members of these stigmatised groups need to be engaged in the research process to go beyond stated norms of behaviour | Same as study aim | Peer ethnography including conversational interviews, observational methods | n=30 peer researchers (15 male sex workers and 15 transgender sex workers); mostly non-literate; recruited as “average” members of their groups rather than program insiders | Peers from the networks of the peer researchers | 100% |
| Coudel 2023 (Brazil) (43) | Understand how global changes are affecting family farmers. | Same as study aim | Participatory action research | n=18 farmer co-researchers (8 female and 10 male) aged 18-30, Most had previous links with the farmer unions, through trainings or as youth group leaders. | Households and representatives of rural communities | 100% |
| Elmusharaf 2017 (South Sudan) (44) | This article discusses an innovative methodological approach that was used to gain an in-depth understanding of maternal health issues in Renk County - an area in the Upper Nile State of South Sudan. | To provide a contextualized understanding of maternal health issues in South Sudan and to provide recommendations on how these can be addressed in a realistic time frame for programmatic health interventions. | Community-based participatory research using the Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation and Research (PEER) approach | n=14 women, aged 15–49, married with at least 2 children; 5 literate, 9 illiterate; 10 Muslim, 4 Christian; tribes: Dinka (12), Sholuk (1), Nuba (1) | Participants included mothers, community leaders, health workers, and midwives in rural Sudan | 100% |
| Francis 2008ab, 2009,2010,  2011 (South Africa) (25-29) | To explore out-of-school youth’s constructions of love, sex, relationships, and HIV/AIDS; To examine the opportunities and challenges of involving out-of-school youth as peer researchers. | Same as study aim. | Qualitative study using semi-structured interviews; participatory, peer-research approach | n=8 out-of-school youth aged 15–17; five girls and three boys; left school between ages 10–16. | Out-of-school youth (boys and girls) aged 13–18 | 80% to 100% |
| Garnett 2009 (Australia, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Kenya) (45) | Uses case studies from tropical Australia and Africa to argue that a more effective means of engagement and knowledge transfer is training and remuneration of community members as coresearchers. | Natural resource management | Case study analysis using participatory action research | Zimbabwe: n=6 employed as researchers, additional 6 as support staff; included men and women. Ethiopia and Kenya: n=8 Borana-speaking locals (5 Ethiopia, 3 Kenya), trusted by community. | Zimbabwe: Community members and local farmers from Chivi, a drought-prone district in southern Zimbabwe. Ethiopia and Kenya: Borana-speaking pastoralists living across southern Ethiopia and northern Kenya. | 0% |
| Kana 2022 (Democratic Republic of Congo) (46) | Examine the role of armed conflicts in the motives of children to join the street in Ituri. | Same as study aim. | Participatory ethnographic research | n=10 young people (seven men and three women) aged 21-30 who were previous street children | Children and youth living on the streets for at least one month | 100% |
| Keygnaert 2014 (Morocco) (47) | Investigate the nature of violence that sub-Saharan migrants experience around and in Morocco, assessing which determinants they perceive as decisive and formulating prevention recommendations | Same as study aim | Community-based participatory research using in-depth interviews | n=12 CRs (8 women, 4 men), sub-Saharan migrants aged 15–49, in irregular legal status (refugee, asylum seeker or undocumented) | Sub-Saharan migrant men and women with various legal statuses and migration histories | 100% |
| Kombo 2023 (Kenya) (48) | Describe a novel community-based program science approach to guide an interdisciplinary research project on HIV self-testing among men who have sex with men in three Kenyan counties | Same as study aim. | Mixed-methods participatory research | n=12 CRs; self-identified as gay, bisexual, and men who have sex with men ; diverse in age, education, and experience; many affiliated with LGBTQ+ organizations | Gay, bisexual, and men who have sex with men | 100% |
| Mosavel 2011, Simon 2010 (South Africa) (37, 38) | Explore the experiences, challenges, and benefits for community members conducting health research in their own underserved communities | Cervical cancer prevention intervention led by daughters at a resource-poor community | Qualitative study | n=7 CRs; all women; aged early 20s–40s; all high school graduates; residents of Masidaal; no prior research experience. | Caregivers and adolescents from the same underserved community; involved in a cervical cancer prevention study | 100% |
| Moyo 2017 (South Africa) (49) | Explore the perceptions of community-based field workers on the effect of the MAL-ED South Africa project on their tangible and intangible capital which together comprise sustainable livelihoods | Interactions of enteropathogenesis, malnutrition, growth, and cognitive development in young children. | Qualitative study using in-depth interviews and FGDs | n=16 participating community-based field workers; aged 23–42; majority had high school diplomas; recruited from Dzimauli community. | Not reported | 100% |
| Mudaly 2012 (South Africa) (50) | Describe an empowering methodology which was used to enable young people to conduct research about sexuality among other young people | Sexuality and girls’ culture | Participatory research | n=7 girls and N=8 boys; age 15 to 18 linguistically adept | Same gender, age, and language proficiency as co-researchers | 60% |
| Ngarachu 2015 (Kenya) (51) | Investigates student’s attitudes towards ethnicity and politics in two secondary schools in Kenya, and compare the quality of data collected in peer-led versus adult-led FGDs with adolescents | Same as study aim. | Qualitative comparative study using peer-led and adult-led FGDs | Student researchers | Adolescent participants | 80% |
| Paganini 2021 (South Africa) (52) | Report on a co-research process on household food security during the pandemic in four neighbourhoods of the Cape Flats | Same as study aim | Participatory action research | Co-researchers were urban farmers from Cape Town, fisherwomen, and other food actors, such as food activists and community kitchen chefs | Households from Cape Flats neighbourhoods | 60% |
| Page 2023 (Netherlands and Indonesia) (10) | Provides practice-based insights from involving young people as peer researchers within two rights-based sexuality-focused research projects in Indonesia and the Netherlands, and explore benefits and challenges regarding youth-adult power dynamics, the taboo nature of sexuality, research quality and dissemination. | Same as study aim | Case studies | Indonesia: n=6 peer researchers, aged 21–24, all held bachelor’s degrees. Netherlands: n=17 peer researchers aged 16–18 from six secondary schools, with different sexuality and cultural backgrounds | Indonesia: urban areas Indonesia. Netherlands: pupils aged 12–18 across six schools. | 100% |
| Palfreyman 2022 (Sri Lanka) (53) | To identify rewards, challenges, and recommendations for supporting wellbeing and development of community-based researchers in sensitive participatory projects in low-resource settings. | Youth violence and mental health | Participatory Ethnographic Evaluation and Research | n=21 Community Based Researchers, aged 23–29 (mean 26.1); 57% women; 90.5% held a degree; ethnically and religiously diverse; all resided in Eastern, Northern, Southern, or Western Provinces. | Participants were socially connected to the CRs | 100% |
| Porter 2008, 2010, 2016; Robson 2009; Hampshire 2012 (South Africa, Malawi, Ghana) (30-34) | Investigate the mobility and transport challenges faced by children and young people in deprived areas and develop more inclusive, ethical, and effective methodologies for researching and addressing these challenges. | Children's mobility in Ghana, Malawi, and South Africa - how mobility constraints might impact on livelihood opportunities and wellbeing. | Participatory peer research with longitudinal follow-up; qualitative interviews and reflections | n=70 in-school children living in deprived areas (aged ~10–18), selected for academic ability; Ghana follow-up sample = 8 youth (aged 16–20 at follow-up) living in deprived areas | Other school children, transport employers, young women, and community men regarding perceptions of women in transport | 40% to 100% |
| Porter 2016 (Tanzania) (31) | To reflect on a series of collaborative studies where co-investigation with peer-researchers has played a central role | Older people mobility | Participatory research | n=12 literate men and women older >60 years, along the spectrum of able bodies to severely disabled. Mostly farmers. | Older people living in same settlements | 100% |
| Price 2002 (Zambia) (54) | Introduce and field-test a new peer ethnographic method to research young people’s sexual and reproductive behaviour, and reflect on its potential, challenges, and value for applied health research. | Sexual health | Peer ethnographic approach, interviews | n=8 peer researchers: 4 female, 4 male; from 3 Lusaka compounds; mix of employment status (students, part-time, unemployed); different ethnic and social backgrounds. | Young people | 80% |
| Rink 2025 (South Africa and England) (55) | Explore how a curated walk with a peer researcher can inform methods that seek to capture young people’s embodied experiences of walking in low-income urban neighbourhoods | Pedestrian mobilities of young men as mediated by the precarities of urban life | Community-based peer research/participatory research | n=12 unemployed or casually-employed young men aged 18–35 from the study communities; some recent immigrants; multilingual | Community members | 80% |
| Schatz 2015 (South Africa) (56) | To draw on three projects embedded in the Agincourt Health and Socio-Demographic Surveillance System site in rural South Africa that integrate both approaches to demonstrate the benefits and limitations of this strategy | HIV/AIDS (Public Conversations about HIV/AIDS), aging (Gogo project), and child wellbeing CWSC | Qualitative studies | Conversations: n=9 adult men and women living in the research sites Gogo project: n=3 women >50 years CWSC: n=8 community members, 6 of which have previously who have previously worked within Agricourt. | HIV/AIDS: community members Gogo project: women >50 years CWSC: Households with at least one school-age child | 40% |
| Shaw 2022 (Kenya) (57) | Reflect on the use of an ‘intersecting methodologies’ approach, during the study "Seeing Conflict at the Margins" which explored local perspectives on resourced based projects in Kenya. | Renewable-energy projects | Community-based participatory research | Young peer researchers | Young people, women, elders, businesspeople, and pastoralists | 60% |
| Spuerck 2023 (India, Pakistan, Turkey, Kenya, South Africa, Brazil, Portugal, UK) (12) | Reflect on the experiences of young people who were involved as peer researchers in an international mental health project and further discuss best practices of youth involvement in sensitive research. | Mental health difficulties | Qualitative study | Young people | Youth 14-24 years who had experienced depression and/or anxiety | 40% |
| Yilmaz 2024 (Brazil, Kenya, South Africa, Pakistan, and Turkey) (58) | To explore whether children in MWC could relate their experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic to how older adults had responded to previous traumatic events. | Experiences of responding to traumatic events | Qualitative | Children 8-10 years (n=36), youth 14-16 years (n=37), from Brazil, Kenya, Pakistan, South Africa, and Türkiye living in deprived areas. | Older adults | 80% |

***Abbreviations:*** *Focus group discussions (FGDs); Young People with Disabilities (YPWD); Malnutrition and Enteric Disease Study (MAL-ED); Children’s Wellbeing and Social Connections (CWSC), Majority World Countries (MWC)*