
Designing for Resilience with Unaccompanied Migrant Youth from the Arab World

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Abstract

Unaccompanied boys and girls fleeing Syria are at particular risk of mental health issues. A recent research project focuses on how technologies can be used to deliver existing evidence-based strategies around resilience and positive coping strategies for this high-risk user group. In order to design for migrant youth's context, they should be included in the design process. However, methodologies such as participatory design have evolved in Western societies and also the way to deal with mental health in the Middle East differs from the Western societies. Thus, the question is how the design methods can be modified that the developed results will support the Arab migrant youth and fit into their context.

Author Keywords

Unaccompanied migrant youth; mental health; participatory design; Arab technology user.

ACM Classification Keywords

D.2.10 Design: Methodologies;

Introduction

TEAM (Technology Enabled Mental Health for Young People) is a 4-year Innovation Training Network (ITN),

funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions initiative [2]. The aim of the TEAM research program is to develop new technologies that support assessment, prevention and treatment of mental health difficulties in young people.

As part of the TEAM project, my individual PhD project focuses on exploring potential frameworks and sets of design implications for technology developments to support resilience in high risk groups. The specific focus lies on how to implement evidence-based prevention strategies that fit into the unaccompanied migrant youth's life worlds. Due to the current events, there are a high number of unaccompanied boys and girls from Syria in Vienna where the research will take place. When developing a design solution, it is important to gain an in-depth understanding of the user's lived experience and needs. Thus, an ethnographic study of the unaccompanied migrant's contexts and including the migrant youth from Syria in the design process will be essential.

In variety of projects, I have applied ethnographic and participatory design methods. I have used data collection methods from workshops to 'Cultural Probes' [1] to gain an understanding about participants' lived experiences such as escaping and suffering from torture, and about personal emotions such as fear and loneliness. However, participatory design has evolved in Western societies [3]. Besides, it might be problematic that design products impart the societal value system of its creators [3].

In addition, the research project is about a sensitive issue namely mental health. It has shown that dealing

with mental health in the Middle East differ from the Western societies. One challenge is the stigma and ignorance of mental illness [4]. In addition, the model used to treat patient was developed by a primarily Anglo-Saxon population [4]. There is a positive impact of family in the Middle East society which functions as a social support and strengthens resilience [4]. Thus, the loss of family of unaccompanied migrant youth increases the risk of mental illness. Thus, it is important to design technology-enabled support for migrant youth from Syria that meets their needs. As part of the workshop Designing for the Arab World, I would like to participate in the discussion about challenges when using design methods in order to design for Arab technology users and how they should be modified. I would like to apply the results to my research project and afterwards share my findings with the community.

References

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