

# Evaluation Report

## YCR Summer Research Programme 2019

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### **Introduction**

Pakistan is one of the youngest countries in the world. Currently, 64 percent of the nation is younger than 30 and 29 percent of Pakistanis are between 15 and 29 years of age (an age group which we define as the youth). Pakistan now has more young people than it has ever had, and this is forecasted to continue to increase until at least 2050.

With an underlying belief that the youth has the power to transform futures and drive engines of development, it is essential to guard this youth bulge and ensure that it remains an asset. There has been an increasing recognition of youth participation in the development process; however, Youth Center for Research (YCR) believes that the youth engagement needs to be meaningful which is only possible when the youth understands the magnitude of the development challenges (and their causes) facing the country and the world at large. Summer Research Programme (SRP) is an attempt to advance such understanding.

### **Background Information**

This programme is aimed for Bachelor's and Master's students who want to spend their summer time in comprehending global development challenges and contributing in devising their possible solutions. During the programme, selected applicants will be arranged into groups based on the choice of their thematic areas of preference and work on socio-economic and political issues aligned with current national and international developmental preference. The programme is aimed at encouraging students in developing a proactive mindset and outlook towards exploring the issues rather than being a passive recipient of information exchanged or shared on social media platforms which is also linked to unauthentic sources.

The summer research programme is an independent programme majorly based on participants' motivation towards undertaking research. This is rightly padded with supportive guidance to better facilitate in steering and improving the research focus and its execution. Each group is assigned a dedicated supervisor to oversee and guide through the research. It is a combination of extensive literature review based on secondary research followed by primary research (if required) majorly through discussions with the experts from the chosen area of interest.

For the 1<sup>st</sup> YCR Summer Research Programme 2019, the researches undertaken fell under the canopy of the following broad thematic areas: finance, society and technology. 6 teams, each consisted of 3 members, were assigned a supervisor or expert in the subject area taken into consideration and conducted research for 6 weeks (from June 1<sup>st</sup> till July 14<sup>th</sup>) of the programme. Upon programme completion, each team delivered a research article – which will soon be uploaded on the YCR website.



## **Criteria**

The programme evaluation was conducted by YCR team after 6 months of its completion. The delay was primarily to assess the impact of programme and to control all kinds of positive biases that may surface immediately after the graduation due to potential attachment with the team and the research. The participants contacted for the evaluation included young researchers i.e. programme participants. Evaluation was conducted online in the form of a questionnaire using Google Forms. Following were three major categories – comprised of series of questions – on which participants had to respond: 1. Overall Summer Programme and its impact, 2. Project Team, and 3. Supervisor/Advisor. Each category covered a separate aspect of the programme and also provided the platform to participants to give suggestions and recommendations for future improvements.

Some key limitations in SRP 2019 evaluation include: considering the small organizing team and first SRP experience, strategically developed monitoring and evaluation plan was missing; the programme evaluation did not include supervisors/advisors as key participants of evaluation although unstructured comments were collected via WhatsApp; and evaluation was conducted using one evaluation method i.e. questionnaire. These limitations are undertaken as areas of opportunities that shall be used in developing future SRP M&E plan.

## **Evaluation Findings**

Below given are the findings of programme evaluation:

### *Overall Programme Evaluation*

Upon inquiring about the aspects that they liked about – and learnt within the duration of – the Summer Programme, participants frequently mentioned that the programme equipped them with necessary research skills and tools to conduct rigorous research. They further added that the structure and professional setting of YCR SRP 2019 provided them a platform to contemplate, engage and act upon the contemporary localized issues along with building network with other local participants and global changemakers. In response to a question regarding the overall impact of the programme on their knowledge and lives, 16 out of 17 opted for option: YCR SRP “Enabled you to understand the notion of development and various challenges facing Pakistan”.

### *Project Team Evaluation*

Each participant’s experience with their respective team members was different. Upon answering the overall experience with the team, participants chose a range of variety of options in the following order: 8 of the participants rated their experience as ‘Good’; 3 as ‘Excellent’; 2 as ‘Satisfactory’; 2 as ‘Challenging’; and 2 preferred to ‘Work individually’. One of the key aspects among others like practicing professional behavior that participants admired was the team diversity. Participants praised and supported the idea of working in a platform where researchers are coming from diverse socioeconomic and educational background. However, the limitations and challenges predominantly faced by participants that resulted in aforementioned rating include communication gap and lack of strict accountability.

### *Supervisor/Advisor Evaluation*



Advisors of YCR SRP 2019 joined from different countries and carried diverse expertise with them. Most of the participants were able to engage and take assistance from their advisors to produce deliverables. 9 and 4 out of 17 rated their satisfaction as ‘completely’ and ‘somewhat satisfied’, respectively; the rest had a neutral opinion. Similarly, more than 13 participants responded by saying that their advisors met or exceeded their expectations. Some challenges highlighted by participants were communication gap, delayed communication and difficulty in reporting progress, which will all be considered while designing the next YCR SRP.

### **Conclusion/Recommendations**

As one of the researcher said,

“You need to have a high level of commitment for completing this program. Consistency, dedication, and the ability to think critically is (*sic*) imperative to succeed, while clear communication skills would make the process more efficient. Take your time exploring, discussing, and refining your idea before moving on to the next step. This will be a demanding task/ position so you need to have the appetite for continuous growth and a desire to solve social issues.”

The YCR team has taken all the responses of participant into serious consideration and aims to improve their Summer Programme in light of them. Some of the recommendations proposed by participants and that can also be inferred from the above findings include:

1. **Improved networking:** Young researchers come from a diverse background and have to spend 6-weeks in a single team due to which they find it difficult to network with other advisors and programme participants. It is recommended that opportunity should be provided to interact with advisors and fellow research participants.
2. **Deliverables and Programme Duration:** Researchers have put emphasis on the provision of clear, concrete and small deliverables that can easily be achieved. In addition to that, researchers suggested that for field based research, the programme duration should be extended to 2 or 3 months. The YCR SRP wants to equip young researchers with skills and tools to conduct researches research with rigor and considering that SRP 2019 was the first-ever research programme that provided opportunity to youth to conduct research on social issues; therefore, YCR undertakes the recommendation of a proper breakdown of deliverables to be shared with participants.
3. **Monitoring and Accountability:** The evaluation findings suggest that strict monitoring structured needs to be developed that shall keep all participants, teams and advisors as well accountable to their responsibilities.

To conclude, YCR SRP 2019 not only provided its participants with exceptional experience and research skills but also served as learning for YCR and its future activities.