



YOUTH MEANINGFULNESS INDEX

**Salaam Bombay
Foundation**

Youth Meaningfulness Index

The **Youth Meaningfulness Index (YMI)** aims to explore how children and youth experience **meaning** in their lives.

By conducting **surveys** with **young people** in schools across multiple geographies...



... provide **policymakers** with the **tools** to help **young people** lead more meaningful lives.

...we aim to **measure and compare** how **meaningfulness** is experienced by children and youth around the world and...



Methodology



Phase 1: Identifying drivers of YMI

The first step in the creation of the YMI focused on collecting data in schools across different geographies.

We collected data from children aged 8-15 in schools in Denmark, India, and Norway in collaboration with UNICEF Denmark and Gleding.

Responses were analyzed using natural language processing in content and sentiment analysis for the identification of drivers of meaning.



Phase 2: Developing the YMI Tool

After identifying the main drivers of meaningfulness, we developed the YMI tool. The tool measures each driver through sets of statements answered on a Likert Scale.

A second round of data collection will be conducted throughout 2024 to test the tool, validate it, and measure the specific drivers.

The YMI will provide an overall measure of meaningfulness.



Creating YMI Score

The statement scores from the survey are converted into 10-point scores. Furthermore, we average the converted statement scores to determine the overall YMI Score.

Similarly, the statements corresponding to each driver are averaged to arrive at the driver score.

The scores are further disaggregated based on gender and age to derive more nuanced insights.



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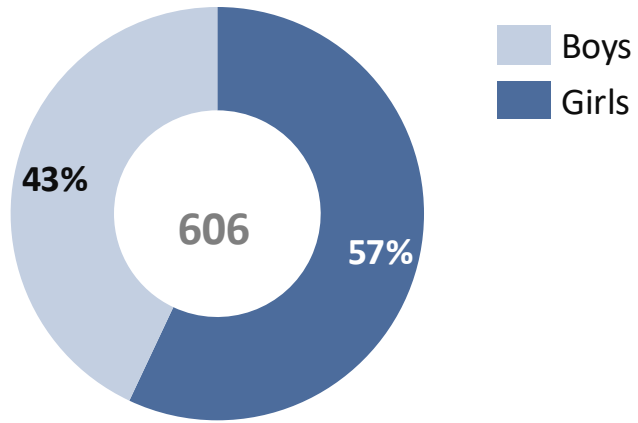


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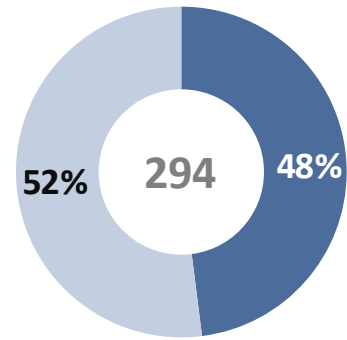


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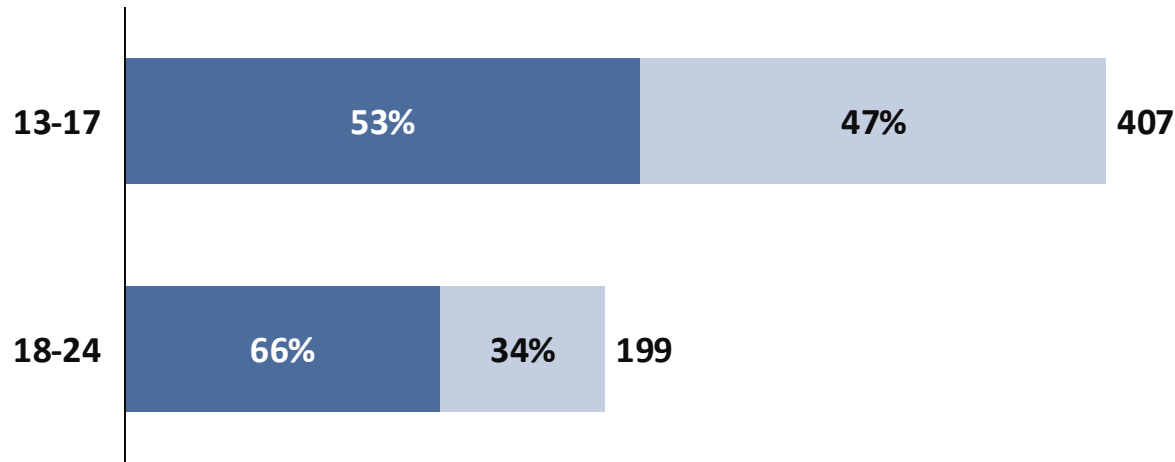
Context : India



Boys
Girls



Mumbai Data Collection: Gender Distribution



India Data Collection: Age Distribution

Data collection in India was conducted in collaboration with the Dream a Dream Foundation in Bangalore and the Salaam Bombay Foundation in Mumbai. A total of 606 valid responses were recorded from India, with 294 responses collected in Mumbai.

All responses from Mumbai were from adolescents aged 13-17. The gender representation of boys and girls was nearly equal in the Mumbai dataset. Of these, 133 students were participants in programs run by the Salaam Bombay Foundation, while 161 students were not associated with the foundation. This report further disaggregates the data to highlight differences between these two groups, referred to as SBF Academy (Salaam Bombay Foundation) and SBF Non-academy, respectively.

- Overall YMI Score for India is **8.04/10**
- The four drivers of meaningfulness, defined for the scope of YMI, are detailed below. Each driver is accompanied by its driver score, as observed in India overall.

Quality and depth of relationships that adolescents cultivate with peers, family members, community and other individuals within their social networks. Meaningful social connections go beyond mere social interactions and involve a sense of emotional closeness, trust, and mutual understanding.

Social Connectivity
7.86

Sense of direction, significance, and meaning that adolescents derive from their actions, goals, and aspirations. It involves understanding one's values, interests, and strengths and its alignment with the aspirations and goals.

Purpose
8.24

The degree to which adolescents are intellectually and physically engaged in activities that challenge and stimulate their minds and bodies. It fosters personal growth, skill development and sense of accomplishment.

Intentional actions and practices that adolescents engage in to nurture their physical, emotional, and mental well-being and promote overall health and vitality. It involves prioritizing one's needs, happiness and satisfaction - including physical, emotional, social, and psychological dimensions.

Self-Care
7.79

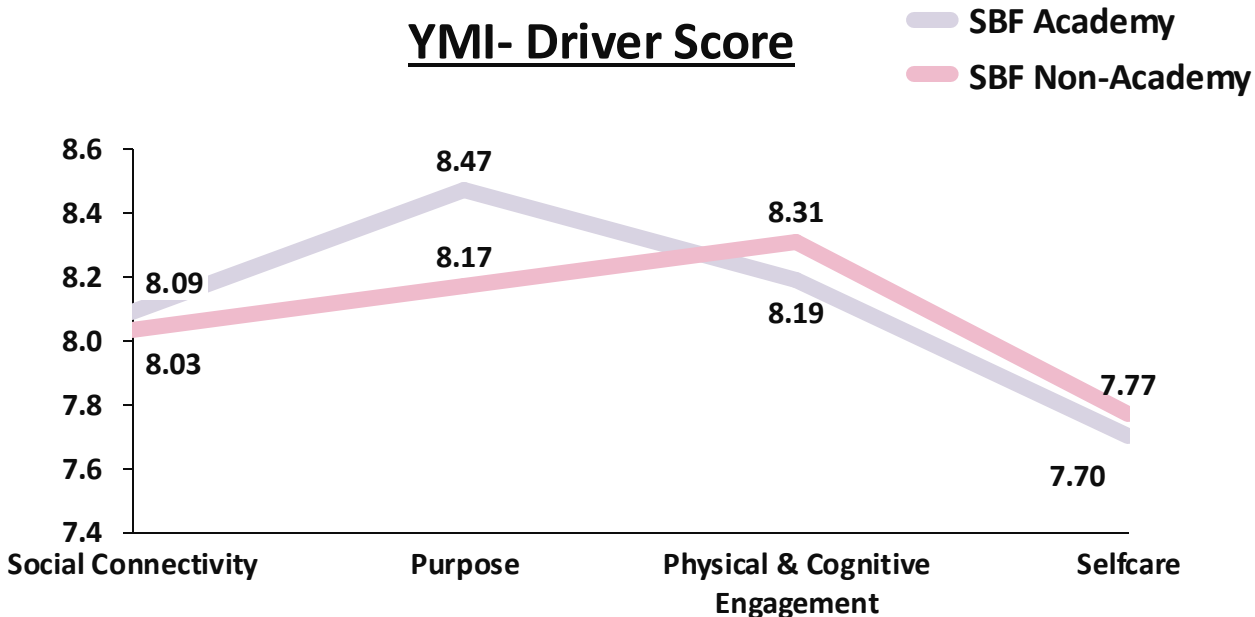
Physical and Cognitive Engagement
8.31

YMI Mumbai – Driver Scores

YMI- Overall Score



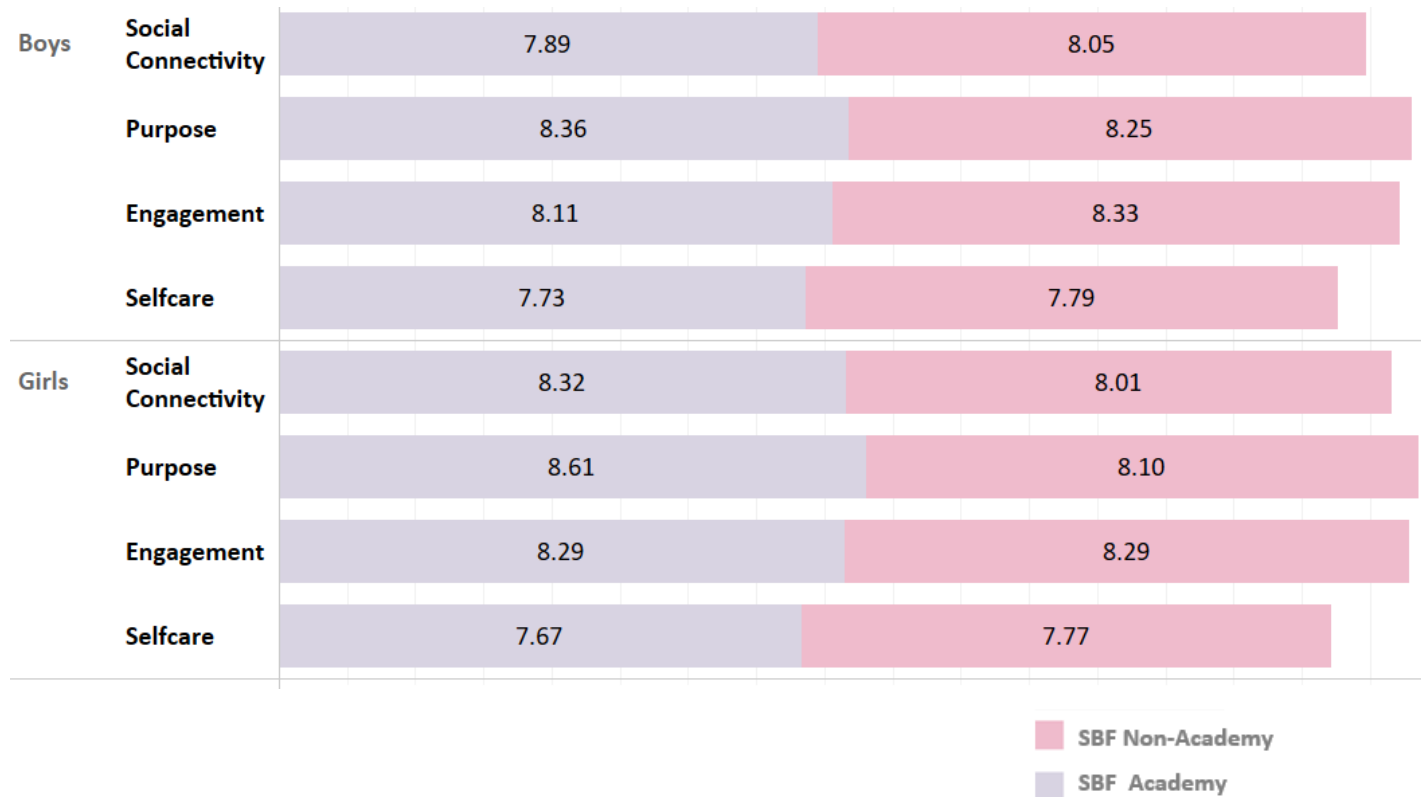
YMI- Driver Score



The overall YMI scores demonstrate a close alignment between the two groups. SBF Academy participants recorded a slightly higher score of 8.11 compared to 8.07 for SBF Non-academy participants. This suggests that while both groups exhibit a relatively similar overall sense of meaningfulness, the programs offered by SBF Academy might provide a marginally enhanced sense of fulfillment and purpose to its participants.

When disaggregating the scores by the four drivers, distinct patterns emerge. SBF Academy participants consistently outperform SBF Non-academy participants in Purpose (8.47 vs. 8.17) and marginally in social connectivity, indicating that adolescents engaged with SBF programs likely benefit from stronger social bonds and a clearer sense of purpose. Surprisingly, SBF Non-academy students scored higher in Physical and Cognitive Engagement. Self-care scores are low for both the groups.

YMI Mumbai – Gender Disaggregation



The relatively lower Engagement score for the SBF Academy group can be attributed to boys, who scored lower in Engagement (SBF Academy: 8.11 vs. SBF Non-academy: 8.33) compared to their SBF Non-academy counterparts. Additionally, SBF Academy boys also scored slightly lower in Social Connectivity and Self-care when compared to SBF Non-academy boys. On the other hand, SBF Academy girls demonstrated strong performance, recording the highest scores in Social Connectivity (8.32) and Purpose (8.61) across all groups.

These findings emphasize the need for targeted interventions to address the gaps observed among SBF Academy boys, particularly in areas like Engagement and Self-care. Further exploration is necessary to understand the drivers of success among SBF Academy girls and replicate these positive outcomes across other demographic segments.

YMI Mumbai: Statements with SBF Academy leading the scores

The SBF Academy group leads in key Purpose and Social Connectivity statements, indicating a stronger alignment with meaningful actions, cultural engagement, and support systems compared to their SBF Non-Academy counterparts. Notable areas are future aspirations, making positive life choices, and prioritizing relationships.

Drivers	Statements	SBF Non-Academy	SBF Academy
Purpose	I often think about what I want to do, become, or change in the world when I grow older	8.54	9.17
Purpose	I generally try to do what I believe is right	8.55	8.88
Purpose	I frequently choose to take part in activities related to my religion or cultural traditions that are important to me	8.12	8.63
Purpose	The choices I make can make my life better	8.16	8.57
Social Connectivity	I have someone to ask for help when I need it	8.00	8.41
Social Connectivity	I often prioritize doing things that benefit those around me	7.74	8.19
Self-care	I dedicate time for my own mental health, for example when I feel stress or anxiety	7.21	7.70
Social Connectivity	I often feel that people around me value and accept me for who I am	7.48	7.84

YMI Mumbai: Statements with SBF Non-Academy leading the scores

The SBF Non-Academy group leads in several statements across Social Connectivity, Engagement, and Self-care, reflecting stronger connections with friends and family, higher involvement in creative activities, and better utilization of time for relaxation and nature compared to the SBF Academy group.

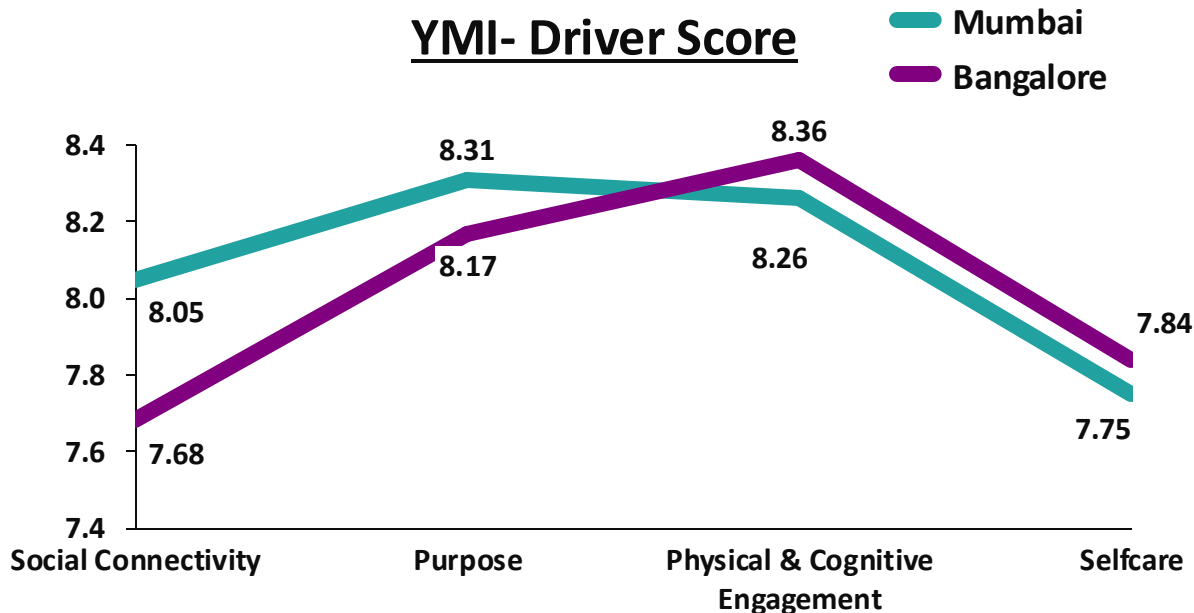
Drivers	Statements	SBF Non-Academy	SBF Academy
Social Connectivity	I often spend time together with my friends or family	8.99	8.66
Social Connectivity	I have people around me that care about me	8.51	8.24
Engagement	I often choose to do creative activities where I can use my imagination, for example drawing, writing, dancing, creating music, others.	8.42	8.23
Selfcare	I often take time to do fun things	8.20	7.73
Selfcare	I often spend time in nature	7.92	7.54

YMI (Mumbai and Bangalore)– Driver Scores

YMI- Overall Score



YMI- Driver Score



Apart from data collection in Mumbai, YMI partnered with the Dream-a-Dream Foundation to collect data in Bangalore. Additionally, a few other data points were collected independently. The image highlights the difference between the overall YMI scores and driver scores for Mumbai and Bangalore.

For context, data collection through the Dream-a-Dream Foundation focused on underprivileged children, including orphans and children without guardians. This may explain the lower scores for Social Connectivity in Bangalore (7.68). Bangalore also lagged behind Mumbai in purpose-related statements. However, it showed a slight lead in the drivers of Physical and Cognitive Engagement and Self-Care. A statement-level analysis is provided in the subsequent slides.

YMI Mumbai: Statements with Mumbai leading the scores

Mumbai scores notably higher in aspects like having a sense of belonging, receiving care from others, and having someone to ask for help. Additionally, respondents in Mumbai report stronger aspirations and self-belief, alongside higher engagement in physical activities and social interactions with family and friends.

Drivers	Statements	Mumbai	Bangalore
Social Connectivity	I feel that I belong to something, for example a community, club, group of people, team, others	7.4	6.78
Social Connectivity	I have people around me that care about me	8.39	7.85
Purpose	I often think about what I want to do, become, or change in the world when I grow older	8.82	8.3
Purpose	I generally try to do what I believe is right	8.7	8.27
Social Connectivity	I have someone to ask for help when I need it	8.19	7.81
Engagement	I often choose to do physical activities where I can use my body	8.04	7.73
Social Connectivity	I often spend time together with my friends or family	8.84	8.58

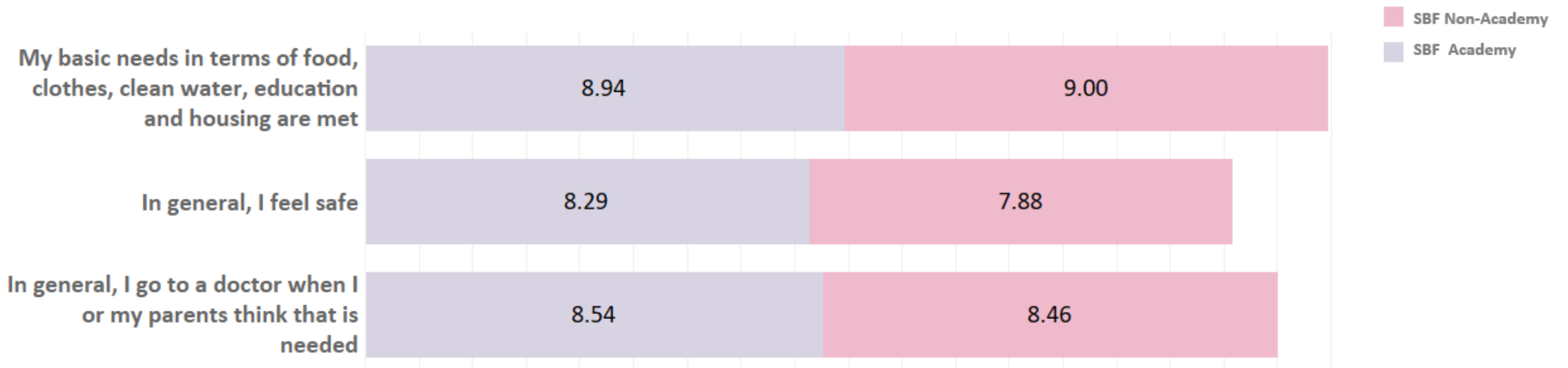
YMI Mumbai: Statements with Bangalore leading the scores

Bangalore scores higher in intellectual engagement, self-reflection, and mental well-being practices. Respondents in Bangalore also show greater resilience in overcoming difficulties, stronger self-discovery, and a greater inclination to seek role models and learning opportunities.

Drivers	Statements	Mumbai	Bangalore
Engagement	I often choose to do things that challenge myself intellectually (this refers to things that challenge your brain)	8.09	8.23
Selfcare	I spend time thinking about how I feel	7.46	7.68
Selfcare	Even when something is difficult for me, I generally think I can overcome it on my own and/or with the support of those around me	7.43	7.68
Purpose	I am discovering who I am as a person, such as my most important values and beliefs	7.85	8.11
Selfcare	I dedicate time for my own mental health, for example when I feel stress or anxiety	7.44	7.74
Social Connectivity	I often seek to be like my role model (a role model is someone you look up to)	7.43	7.8
Engagement	I often look for opportunities to learn new things	8.59	8.96

YMI Mumbai – Fundamental Needs

- Apart from defining the drivers of meaningfulness, YMI contains an assessment of fundamental needs. These include **food, shelter, clean water, safety, and healthcare.**
- Despite not being drivers, the lack of fulfillment of these fundamental needs limits the realization of meaningfulness.



YMI Mumbai – Qualitative Assessment

“What is important to you?”

Education

- Education is a recurring priority, with many children emphasizing its importance in shaping their futures.
- It is seen as the foundation for achieving dreams and improving their quality of life.

Sample statements:

"School is important in my life."

"My studies, education, and career are my focus."

Dreams and Aspirations

- Children frequently express ambitions related to their careers, personal goals, and future achievements.
- Aspirations often align with education and personal growth.

Sample statements:

• "My dream is to get into the Indian Navy."

"I often think about what I want to do, become, or change in the world when I grow older."

Family and Parents

- Family, particularly parents, plays a central role in the lives of adolescents, providing support and motivation.
- Many responses highlight the desire to make parents proud and prioritize family well-being.

Sample statements:

"I want to get successful and make my parents proud."

"My parents, siblings, and family are most important to me."

Health and Physical Well-being

- Many adolescents emphasize the importance of maintaining a healthy body and engaging in physical activities.
- Fitness and well-being are seen as essential for both personal confidence and future aspirations.

Sample statements:

• "My health, parents, education, and physical activities are important to me."

"I want to build muscle and stay fit."

YMI India : Participants Feedback

As part of continuous improvement of the YMI survey tool, feedback of the participants on the survey is analyzed and processed. This is done in two parts- Firstly, participants are asked to list the questions from the existing survey that they found difficult to understand. Secondly, an open-ended question imploring for suggestions on the tool is asked.

Drivers	Statements	Votes
Social Connectivity	I have people around me that care about me	57
Social Connectivity	I often feel that people around me value and accept me for who I am	12
Purpose	The choices I make can make my life better	9
Engagement	I often choose to do things that challenge myself intellectually (this refers to things that challenge your brain)	6
Selfcare	Even when something is difficult for me, I generally think I can overcome it on my own and/or with the support of those around me	6

Key Comments on Improvement of Survey

- Use simple English
- Conduct survey in interview format instead of written survey. [4 respondents suggested this]
- Include questions for girl safety. [3 respondents suggested this]
- Include questions for family conditions
- Include questions to help me choose my career

YMI Mumbai: Conclusions

Purpose: a key difference

The most evident difference between SBF Academy students and Non-Academy students lies in the statements related to the driver of purpose. This driver focuses on the formation of self-identity, personal aspirations, and the ability to equip oneself for the future. SBF Academy students, particularly girls, exhibit a strong sense of purpose.

Social Connectivity: A mixed bag

While SBF Academy students score higher than Non-Academy students in aspects like asking for help, being part of a community, and altruism, the trend reverses when it comes to spending time with friends and family. A possible reason could be that their engagement in the academy reduces the time available for social interactions with friends and family.

Engagement: A surprise score

Despite participating in SBF Academy programs, these students scored lower than their Non-Academy counterparts in engagement. This could be due to the nature of SBF activities taking place within the school setting, making students perceive engagement as part of the curriculum rather than something they can pursue independently beyond the classroom.

Selfcare: A neglected aspect

Self-care scores are generally low across the nation, regardless of the data collection source. However, SBF Academy students show slightly better results in dedicating time to their mental health and self-reflection. This level of self-awareness serves as an essential foundation for building resilience.

YMI Mumbai: Key Recommendations

Prioritize Self-care Initiatives Across Both Genders

Self-care which mainly deals with mental well-being is the lagging driver overall across India. Results for SBF and Non-SBF students are the same. Implementing self-care modules, including mental health sessions, mindfulness practices, and physical well-being programs can enhance the Self-care driver. It is also necessary to ensure participation across genders.

Address Fundamental Needs to Strengthen Meaningfulness

There is a direct link between fundamental needs and meaningfulness. Context awareness of the students enrolled with the program helps in drafting programs for their well-being. Introduce safety and well-being assessments for adolescents, ensuring that challenges to meeting fundamental needs do not limit adolescents' potential.

Leverage Strengths in Purpose and Social Connectivity Among Girls

Build on the strengths of SBF girls by creating mentorship programs where they can guide their peers and reinforce their sense of purpose and connection. Develop community engagement opportunities for girls, linking their strong sense of purpose to actionable outcomes within their communities.

Enhance Engagement and Social Connectivity for Boys

Foster stronger peer-to-peer interactions among boys through team-building exercises, group discussions, or leadership roles within the SBF programs.

