

Challenges for researchers when getting access to children and young people and their consent in research. A scoping review.

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ABSTRACT (1)

This article aims to support researchers in addressing the challenges when seeking access to CYP and their consent to participate in research. Despite the growing consensus about the need to involve children and young people in research, there is a lack of literature on how to increase their participation in welfare research. Researchers have reported that seeking contact with children and young people can be challenging, requiring approval from numerous gatekeepers. This scoping review discusses challenges researchers must address when seeking access to children and young people and getting their consent for research. The article reports on findings from fourteen qualitative studies, using thematic analysis to identify common topics. We conclude that the main challenges are a lack of clarity and confidence in researchers' communications with gatekeepers, children, and young people. To overcome those challenges, researchers should write clear research plans, demonstrate and clarify that they are qualified to work with children and young people and incorporate time for trust-building. However, we also conclude that more evidence from children's and young people's perspectives is needed to shed better light on their experiences participating in welfare research and what motivates them to agree to participate.

Keywords: child, young people, consent, participation, research, gatekeeper

INTRODUCTION (1)

There has been growing awareness about children's rights and the importance of participation of children and young people [CYP] in research projects (Carter, 2009; Bradbury-Jones et al., 2018; Stafford et al., 2021; UNCRC, 1989). Three approaches have been used to identify the level of CYP's participation in research: Research *on* children, *with* children, and *by* children (Asselin & Doiron, 2016). Clavering and McLaughlin (2010) describe cooperative research as being conducted *with* or *by* participants rather than *to*, *about* or *for* them. Research with CYP should use a rights-based approach (Bessell, 2015; Colling, 2012) that recognises CYP's vulnerability and lack of power. It should also respect CYP's entitlement to express opinions about their lives and environment. Using a rights-based approach, researchers

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employ theories that authorise CYP to actively represent their perceptions of issues in their lives using child-friendly participatory methods, including drawing, talking, photographs, and making crafts (Colling, 2012; Bessell, 2015; Farmer & Cepin, 2016; Guttormsdóttir & Kristinsdóttir, 2017). Even though research *with* CYP has increased, there is still a gap in research on the participation of CYP who are getting support from the child welfare system (Cojocar, 2013; Fleming, 2011; Garcia-Quiroga & Agoglia, 2020; Horwath, 2011; Mossige & Backe-Hansen, 2013; Perry-Hazan, 2016). To produce research findings that are helpful in developing services in professional social and health practice (Drisko & Grady, 2015), it is essential to have data from all groups of people, including CYP (Kennan et al., 2012; Kiili et al., 2023; Seim & Slettebø, 2017; Stabler et al., 2020). CYP are not a homogenous group; they have diverse needs and expectations (Arnadóttir & Ólafsdóttir, 2019; Merkel-Holguin et al., 2020; Stabler et al., 2020). By recognising CYP and supporting their participation in research, researchers can give CYP new experiences and an increased understanding of their rights (Kiili et al., 2023).

Ethical standards that encourage trust and fairness are required in research involving CYP. Legal regulations differ between countries and sometimes even between ethical committees inside each country. The same applies to regulations regarding age limits for children's consent to participation. In any case, the researcher needs to follow specific standards to ensure the quality of the research (European Commission, 2021; Kristinsdóttir, 2020; Peart & Holdaway, 2000). After getting the required formal permission from the ethics committee, researchers need to get clearance regarding access to the target group.

Recruiting CYP receiving support from child welfare services for research projects is often challenging (Merkel-Holguin et al., 2020; Watson et al., 2018) and sometimes results in failure to conduct the research project with the target group. On closer inspection, challenges for the researchers can often be found in their relationship with gatekeepers (Hood et al., 1996; Kennan et al., 2012), who sometimes are called *betweeners* due to their position of being in between the data collectors and potential participants (Heath et al., 2007; Keesling, 2011). Based on their personal or work position, gatekeepers can control who has access to the respondent and when (Keesling, 2011; Powell & Smith, 2009). They include managers and practitioners in welfare organisations and parents/caregivers (Kristinsdóttir & Arnadóttir, 2015; Kennan et al., 2012). Gatekeepers want to be included in the creation of the research

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plan early to ensure that it will be appropriate for CYP to participate in the research project (Reeves, 2010; Skelton, 2008).

Researchers depend on the gatekeepers' time and interest in paving the way to access children. However, the process is obstacle-oriented, leaving some CYP out of having a say in their participation in research (Checkoway, 2011; Dentith et al., 2009; Fitzgerald & Graham, 2011; Garcia-Quiroga & Agoglia, 2020). In addition, researchers believe that gatekeepers find it challenging to balance participation and protection because they do not recognize these concepts as cohesive; instead, they see them as conflicting forces (Dempsey et al., 2016; Sandberg, 2018; Vis et al., 2012). This challenge could lead to the exclusion of CYP in favour of adult participants (Schelbe et al., 2014; Tunestveit et al., 2022) and failure to include CYP's voices (Carter, 2009). The outcome is that researchers adhere to protective ideas about CYP instead of looking at their skills, competencies, and their right to have to say about their lives and sometimes the lives of others (Cojocar, 2013; Fitzgerald & Graham, 2011; Gallagher et al., 2012; Roose et al., 2009; Seim & Slettebø, 2017).

In this review, we point out factors that researchers need to explain better when requesting access to children to increase the likelihood of obtaining consent from all stakeholders. We aim to support researchers in addressing the challenges when seeking access to CYP to participate in research. The purpose is to enhance opportunities for CYP to be involved. Thus, the research question framing the review is: What are the main challenges researchers must overcome when seeking access to CYP and getting their consent in welfare research?

METHODS AND ANALYSIS

In the research methodology literature, it is increasingly common to distinguish between the systematic review and the scoping review approach (Munn et al., 2018). The former usually produces a synthesized answer to a specific problem and may aim to provide best practice guidance based on the sum of evidence. The scoping review approach, on the other hand, serves different purposes, including identifying the types of evidence available, examining how research is conducted on a particular topic, or identifying gaps in the knowledge base. In this study, we chose a scoping review to map relevant articles and address the current

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knowledge about challenges researchers face when seeking access to CYP for welfare research.

Sampling criteria

In this review, we chose research articles carried out *with* CYP in welfare research. The focus is on 10-18-year-old CYP because this literature review is part of a larger project where the age limit is 10-18 years. We conducted the searches in Scopus and ProQuest. We used the following keywords for the search: 'qualitative research' or 'social research', 'youth or children & youth', 'research participation' or 'participation in research' or 'involvement', 'children's involvement' or 'children's participation'.

The entire search string is available from the first author upon request.

We included articles if:

- they were related to issues arising when seeking access to CYP and their consent, aged 10-18,
- they included researchers' reflections about conducting qualitative research with CYP,
- they were published in English or Icelandic journals between 2015 and 2021,
- full access was attainable,
- the study context was related to research within child welfare services,
- they were scientific peer-reviewed publications.

We excluded articles if:

- the research focused primarily on children younger than ten,
- they concerned adults, 18 years and older,
- the topic was research conducted *by* CYP,
- the study addressed only methodological issues,
- they were review studies.

Figure 1: Flowchart of literature search and selection process

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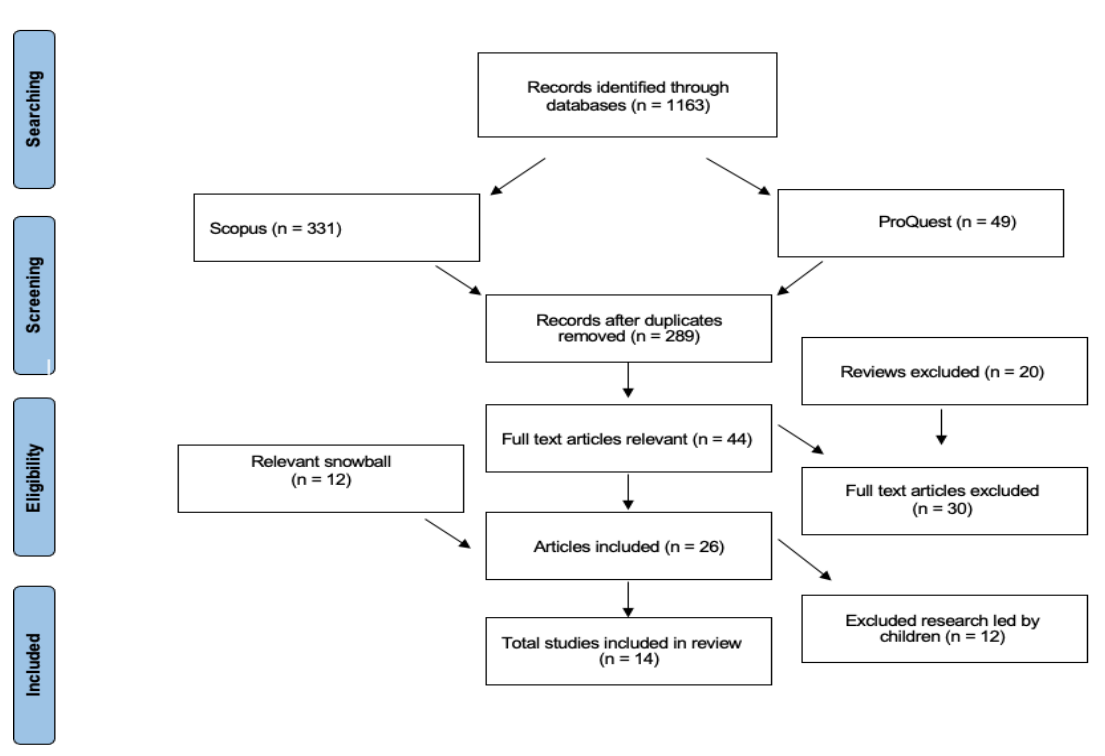


Figure I, search process and results.

The process of selecting the final articles for analysis was a reflective journey. First, the research team read through the articles' full texts and discussed the relevance of the material. The review includes fourteen articles with stakeholders: CYP, gatekeepers, and researchers. As shown in Figure 1, the search and retrieval process identified 1163 studies through the initial search process. We read 44 studies in full text to determine if the inclusion criteria were met; this eventually led to the exclusion of 30 of those studies. Later, we identified 12 additional articles by looking for other potentially relevant articles in the reference lists of the previously identified articles and by consulting with colleagues who are experts in the field. We excluded twelve of the remaining studies because they focused on child led projects. Thus, the final sample included in this review is 14 articles.

Analysis

To ensure that the literature is covered and to analyse the findings, we adopted the five stages framework from Arksey and O'Malley (2005) which describes the process from the research question to the discussion. The process is not linear but interactive, requiring reflective thought at every step of the writing process. After creating a research question, we identified keywords to search for relevant studies. Then, reading abstracts, we generated criteria for

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deciding which upcoming articles suited the research's aim and purpose. Our analysis process was interactive. We read and coded the text, looking for "bottom-up" patterns and building themes related to the research question and the project's aim. Reading and coding the text led to the themes we present and discuss in this article.

FINDINGS

The fourteen articles address the subject of research with CYP differently; some are self-reflections about previous studies, while others use individual or focus group interviews with stakeholders, including CYP and gatekeepers. The included studies were conducted in the Minority world: Australia (n= 7), England (n =2), New Zealand (n=1), New Zealand and Australia (n= 1), Scotland (n=1), Ireland (n= 1), and Portugal (n= 1). None of the included articles came from the Majority world as defined by Tisdall and Punch (2012).

Analysis of the articles resulted in three main topics: (1) The researchers' competences, (2) The research project, and (3) Understanding and trust.

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Table 1: Key characteristics of the included studies

Characteristics: 1. The researchers' competences. 2: The research project. 3: Understanding and trust.

Author and year	Country	Study design	Main topic	Characteristics
Moore et al. (2021)	Australia	Focus group interview with children 9-16 years old	What factors lead children to agree to participate in social research? Extrinsic and intrinsic motivations for participation.	1. The researchers' competences 2. The research project 3. Understanding and trust
Powell et al. (2020)	Australia	Semi-structured interviews with 42 adult and child stakeholders	Address and explore factors that influence decision-making from the stakeholders' point-of-view.	1. The researchers' competences 3. Understanding and trust
Kyritsi (2019)	Scotland	Case study	How to obtain ongoing and informed consent in research with children.	2. The research project 3. Understanding and trust
Moore et al. (2018)	Australia	Case study	How to be creative and use pictures when choosing methods for research with children.	1. The researchers' competences 2. The research project 3. Understanding and trust
Vaswani (2018)	England	Case study	Reflection on researchers' obstacles in seeking children's participation and discussing how to overcome these obstacles.	1. The researchers' competences 3. Understanding and trust
Martins et al. (2018)	Portugal	Case study	How to obtain informed consent using plain and meaningful language.	1. The researchers' competences 2. The research project 3. Understanding and trust
Powell et al. (2018)	Australia	Interviews with children, parents,	Stakeholders' perspectives on what is defined as a sensitive topic to help address a potential concern and	1. The researchers' competences 2. The research project

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		and other stakeholders	facilitate the development of research with children.	3. Understanding and trust
Kennan & Dolan (2017)	Ireland	Case study	The challenge of navigating the balance between participation and protection.	3. Understanding and trust
Turner & Almack (2017)	England	Case study	Exploration of complexities of relationships and negotiations with gatekeepers.	3. Understanding and trust
Powell et al. (2016)	New Zealand/Australia	Case study	How to improve practice in qualitative research involving children.	3. Understanding and trust
Collings et al. (2016)	Australia	Case study	To balance and be aware of the tension between parents' and children's rights.	3. Understanding and trust
Moore et al. (2016)	Australia	Case study	How to use reference groups made up of children to promote and help researchers reconsider their research approaches.	2. The research project 3. Understanding and trust
Daley (2015)	Australia	Case study	Balancing protection and participation in research design.	3. Understanding and trust
Graham & Powell (2015)	New Zealand	Case study	How to provide a framework for approaching ethical research involving children.	3. Understanding and trust

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The researchers' competences

Five of the fourteen articles address the gatekeepers' and CYP's concerns about the reputation and qualifications of the researchers when deciding if they want to support the project and participate in the research (Martins et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2018; 2021; Powell et al., 2018; 2020). To support research and open the gates, stakeholders want researchers to be more precise about the following themes: the researchers' background and qualifications.

Researchers' background

The researchers' responsibility is to provide all stakeholders, professionals, parents/caregivers, and CYP with enough information to decide whether they want to support the researcher's project by participating (Moore et al., 2018; Powell et al., 2018). Moore et al. (2021) and Powell et al. (2020) point out that, from the point of view of the gatekeepers, it is essential that researchers give information about the institution they represent. They emphasise that gatekeepers trust researchers who represent universities more than those representing other agents, like non-governmental organisations. The challenge for researchers is demonstrating the institution's quality and developing genuine respect and trust.

Researchers' qualifications

Moore et al. (2021) and Powell et al. (2020) address the requirements from stakeholders about the quality and experience of researchers working among CYP. In general, researchers must present themselves and their work in a way that demonstrates their ability to work professionally with CYP. For instance, researchers must demonstrate their relevant educational and experiential background for working with CYP. The challenges entail establishing trust and cooperation with CYP. Furthermore, researchers should be capable of informing gatekeepers that they are skilled in various methods when working with CYP and emphasize how they consider their approaches according to age, developmental stage, and cultural background (Martins et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2018; 2021; Powell et al., 2018; 2020). Informed and meaningful participation is a critical aspect of research with children and young people (Martins et al., 2018). Therefore, researchers must provide information to ensure that CYP are fully informed and can freely give or withhold their consent (Vaswani, 2018). They must explain to CYP the aims and purpose of the research and how findings will

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impact their lives both now and possibly in the future (Moore et al., 2018; Powell et al., 2018). Moore et al. (2018) pointed out that researchers too often talk to CYP in complex language, which could lead to CYP not understanding the nature of their involvement in the project (Powell et al., 2020).

The research projects

Five articles describe how, for gatekeepers to be willing to encourage CYP to participate in research, researchers must show that they have chosen creative research design and methods appropriate for children (Kyritsi, 2019; Martin et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2018; 2021; Powell et al., 2018).

Creative and meaningful

CYP have expressed their desire to choose whether to participate when asked to contribute or participate in a project. They want to have a say in the time and location of the meeting and whether they will be interviewed alone or in a group (Moore et al., 2018). CYP were more likely to participate if the research issues were related to their daily lives and if the topics were well-known and meaningful. To have a chance to talk about things during the interview and ‘get things off your chest’ could be healing. Some CYP said it might be better to use face-to-face interviews rather than talking in groups if the topics are sensitive (Moore et al., 2021). Others disagreed, saying they would benefit from being in a group, allowing them to listen to the opinions of other CYP who have had similar experiences (Moore et al., 2018).

CYP were less likely to participate if they did not connect to the subject or found it boring (Moore et al., 2021). While some of the reviewed studies seem to compensate for this by attempting to make the research process more ‘fun for children’, this can detract from the purpose of the research (Moore et al., 2016; 2021). CYP also reported wanting to know about the potential use of the project. All stakeholders would be more likely to support or participate in a study if they thought it would improve the lives of others (Moore et al., 2018; 2021). Moore et al. (2018) and Kyritsi (2019) emphasize consent as part of an ongoing creative process rather than a unique event by including CYP in every research stage. CYP must understand what the researchers expect from them in the research process, which helps them know what they consent to (Martins et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2018; 2021). In

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discussing informed consent, Kyritsi (2019) criticized the process of seeking consent regarding participation in research, questioning whether CYP could exercise their fundamental rights when they are the last ones to be asked to participate. She argues that due to this low priority, CYP are powerless, and she questions whether they get to have a voice.

Understanding and trust

Twelve articles discussed gatekeepers' requests for building relationships to work on mutual trust and understanding of the subject and the importance of the research.

It is challenging for all actors to have time and space for reflective discussion about the meaning of CYP participation and protection with that aim to build mutual understanding of the aim and the purpose of the research and trust.

Gatekeepers' beliefs and worries

Six of the included articles discuss challenges related to gatekeepers' beliefs and worries about CYP's participation in research (Daley, 2015; Graham & Powell, 2015; Moore et al., 2018; Powell et al., 2016; 2020; Vaswani, 2018). Although we identified certain common factors in the articles, we found that gatekeepers' concerns varied based on their beliefs, roles, and experience working with CYP (Powell et al., 2020). After obtaining ethical clearance, researchers must negotiate with other gatekeepers, who are often overloaded with work and only sometimes prioritize researchers' applications to recruit participants (Moore et al., 2018). This process has proven challenging and described as protracted, intricate, complicated, and sometimes unworkable for researchers (Vaswani, 2018). Moore et al. (2021) discuss doubts among gatekeepers about whether it is always appropriate to ask CYP to participate in research because of their vulnerability and level of maturity. They question if it is appropriate to ask CYP to discuss sensitive topics, including sexual abuse, problems at home, or death. Other studies found that gatekeepers believe CYP can discuss every topic -- it just depends on the researchers' qualifications and ability to use suitable approaches and tools. The researcher must contextualize participation appropriately related to CYP's development (Kyritsi, 2019; Powell et al., 2020; Vaswani, 2018). However, professionals are aware of the gatekeeper's role and the responsibility that comes with it because of children's rights to participate and have their voices heard (Powell et al., 2020). Researchers have noted that some gatekeepers believe that supporting researchers in accessing CYP goes beyond their professional responsibility (Collings et al., 2016).

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Perception of risk

Eight articles discuss the gatekeepers' concerns about the risk of involving CYP in research as a crucial challenge (Collings et al., 2016; Daley, 2015; Kennan & Dolan, 2017; Kyritsi, 2019; Martins et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2021; Powell et al., 2020; Vaswani, 2018).

Powell et al. (2020) discuss risk as a critical concern for gatekeepers and underline how researchers need to know how to plan and manage CYP's safety, including the potential impacts of the research. Under some circumstances, participation could traumatise CYP or jeopardise their safety. Daley (2015) and Powell et al. (2020) discuss a tension between respecting CYP's autonomy and the right to participate while protecting them from harm. Powell et al. (2020) found that whether the research project should be supported was based on potential risks to the child, emphasising how researchers acted to mitigate these. When discussing the importance of involving diverse groups in research, Daley (2015) argued that excluding people from participation in research can only be justified where there may be potential harm to participants. Daley (2015) discusses that ethical research reviewers are so preoccupied with protecting CYP from risks and harm that they compromise their rights to participate in research and have a voice in matters that affect them. Daley argues that excluding CYP from participation in research will lead to a lack of understanding of how CYP experience their lives and the provided services.

Thus, a protective attitude could result in CYP not being allowed to participate in matters that influence their own lives and environment. Collings et al. (2016) discuss parents' duty to protect their children versus the right of the latter to participate in research. In addition to preventing CYP from suffering emotional harm in research settings, researchers must create a safe and protective physical environment (Martins et al., 2018). According to Moore et al. (2021), some CYP identified schools as safe places for interviews because these familiar environments could empower them and put them in an equal position.

Building relationships

Nine articles discuss the importance of establishing and maintaining good relations with gatekeepers (Collings et al., 2016; Martins et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2018; 2021; Powell et al., 2016; 2018; 2020; Turner & Almack, 2017; Vaswani, 2018). When gaining access to

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CYP and getting them to participate in research, researchers are often grounded in their competence to develop and maintain relationships with the key actors, gatekeepers, and CYP (Turner & Almack, 2017). To the gatekeepers, it was essential to have the opportunity to form relationships with researchers (Moore et al., 2021; Powell et al., 2018), but for some researchers, building these relationships has proven frustrating (Turner & Almack, 2017; Martins et al., 2018; Powell et al., 2020). The relationships with gatekeepers give researchers opportunities to present the purpose, potential benefits, context, and details about the conduct of the study (Collings et al., 2016). As mentioned earlier, researchers need to share whether they know about CYP's cognitive level and have experience talking to children and young people in a language they understand (Powell et al., 2020; Vaswani, 2018). Parents emphasized the importance of relationships with the researcher who would be in contact with their child. In some cases, the researcher's gender was relevant -- for example, if the research were about sexual violence (Powell et al., 2020). Some CYP underlined trust and experience because they felt they would be more likely to agree to participate if the researcher had experience working with children and youth, which would increase their trust. Other CYP value the anonymity of an interview with a researcher they did not know before (Moore et al., 2021). Powell et al. (2020) discuss what effect the gatekeepers' relationships with CYP may have on CYP's decision to participate in research. They point out that CYP may not want to participate but feel obliged to because of their relationship with the gatekeeper. From CYP's perspective, this could be the case because of their position at school as class representatives or of loyalty, i.e., because someone they have a relationship with asked them to take part, and they could not refuse (Moore et al., 2018).

Discussion

This scoping review aimed to support researchers in addressing the challenges when seeking access to CYP and their consent to participate in research. Our purpose has been to enhance opportunities for CYP to be involved in research. The research question was: What are the main challenges researchers must overcome when seeking access to CYP and getting their consent in welfare research?

Overall, this review requires ongoing development and analysis of best practices when conducting research with CYP to meet legal rights and the growing requirements regarding CYP in research (Carter, 2009; Bradbury-Jones et al., 2018; Stafford et al., 2021; UNCRC, 1989).

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We have divided the discussion into three main topics: The researchers' competencies and the research project itself (including the need to be creative and meaningful). The third topic concerns challenges such as understanding and trust, including beliefs and worries, perceptions of risk, and building trust and relationships. The discussion addresses each topic and presents ideas about overcoming challenges.

Six of the fourteen articles discuss researchers' competencies and challenges (Martins et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2018, 2021; Powell et al., 2018; 2020; Vaswani, 2018). In addition, Moore et al. (2021) and Powell et al. (2020) discuss the importance of all stakeholders trusting the researchers' affiliated institution. Improving an institution's reputation would be a long-term task that would depend on factors including the institution's size and the researcher's level of influence. However, being part of or associated with a university will enhance trust.

When researchers seek the support of gatekeepers to access CYP and their consent, they must present their qualifications, knowledge and experience working with children.

Even if the researcher has appropriate approval from an ethical board, this does not necessarily guarantee access. Other gatekeepers may want to consider if the researcher is qualified enough. The gatekeeper's personal and professional values also impact the standards for such consideration. Vis et al. (2012) mention that gatekeepers have criticised researchers for lack of knowledge and experience when working with CYP in complicated situations. Gatekeepers have also criticised researchers for writing complex and lengthy introductions to their research plans, making it difficult for stakeholders to understand the study and how it benefits children. A lack of clarity regarding researchers' qualifications can reduce the likelihood of participation and trust among stakeholders.

The second topic, being creative and meaningful, refers to how researchers can meet participants' needs by offering them choices regarding location and approach (Moore et al., 2018; Fleming, 2011). Researchers are responsible for using appropriate methods to ensure the study is in the CYP's best interests. CYP have emphasized that the research topics must be relevant and meaningful (Mossige & Backe-Hansen (2013). Martins et al. (2018) and

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Kyritsi (2019) have presented ideas for a child-friendly interface and equipment to make the participation of CYP in research more meaningful for children. Using pictures and conversation cards has also proved useful (Guttormsdóttir & Kristinsdottir, 2017; O'Kane, 2000; Woodhead & Faulkner, 2000). In addition, several authors propose that researchers could build self-reflection into their work by inviting CYP to provide feedback throughout the process (Fleming, 2011; Mossige & Backe-Hansen, 2013; Powell et al., 2016).

Stakeholders mention that researchers need to clarify their plans to handle data and information, who will benefit from their research, and how to avoid possible harm to CYP involved in the project. Being clear about the benefits for children is not always easy. One reason is that the primary aim of the research is to gain new knowledge. Unless the study is a clinical intervention, it is only sometimes possible to pinpoint the benefits of possible outcomes (Kennan & Dolan, 2017).

Additionally, participation in research may not be enjoyable when the topic is sensitive or severe. However, the research design should be creative and exciting for CYP whenever possible. As children and young people say, they would be more likely to participate in a project that at first sight seems fun and exciting than in a project that seems purposeless and boring (Martins et al., 2018), which aligns with the earlier findings of Stafford et al. (2003). To overcome these challenges, the researcher could be more reflective, use a collaborative approach, and focus on relationships built on trust, respect, and transparency (Powell et al., 2018). Kyritsi (2019) and Moore et al. (2018) offer creative solutions to support CYP in making informed decisions. Moore et al. (2018) offer ways to obtain consent using a graphic rather than text format, how best to explain roles, and other tools helpful in overcoming those challenges. Kyritsi (2019) offers a box with cards that CYP can use to stop or skip a topic at any time during the research process, corresponding to previous findings of Guttormsdóttir and Kristinsdottir (2017). Daley (2015) points out the contradiction in emphasizing the rights of CYP to participate in matters concerning them while simultaneously putting them last in line in obtaining consent. When the line of gatekeepers is long and challenging, particularly in the case of marginalized CYP, the latter might never get to choose whether to participate or express their feelings about participating in research. In this context, it is vital to question whether the safeguarding process protects the system, the gatekeepers, or the CYP.

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Building understanding and trust between CYP, gatekeepers and researchers in this context includes addressing how their beliefs, expectations and worries may differ. Building a trustful relationship through reflective discussion in the preparation phase is a process towards mutual understanding on the subject and enhancing the researchers' sensitivity to gatekeepers' concerns and CYP's needs. When striving to reach a mutual understanding with children and gatekeepers, it is essential to consider that child participants and researchers cannot negotiate away the power differences between them. Hence, we must recognise how such power differences form the backdrop of our ethical considerations when including children (Kiili et al., 2023; Moore et al., 2021; Powell et al., 2018; 2020; Turner & Almack, 2017). From the researchers' point of view, the process stretching from the initial application to getting access to CYP is often long and challenging. Contacting and getting *buy-in* from the gatekeeper is a challenging task for the researcher, sometimes resulting in the termination of the project (Daley, 2015). Previous studies relate that such processes have resulted in the exclusion of children and their voices (Carter, 2009; Cojocar, 2013; Gallagher et al., 2012; Roose et al., 2009; Seim & Slettebø, 2017; Tunestveit et al., 2022).

There are two main views on the perception of risk. On the one hand, gatekeepers claim that researchers are not being careful enough; on the other hand, researchers claim that gatekeepers' overprotection hinders CYP's participation (Collings et al., 2016; Daley, 2015; Kennan & Dolan, 2017; Kyritsi, 2019; Martins et al., 2018; Moore et al., 2020; Powell et al., 2020; Vaswani, 2018). Much of the discussion involves gatekeepers' concerns about what is appropriate when inviting CYP to participate in research. The viewpoint is that CYP are sensitive and should be protected, especially if the subject is considered sensitive. Prior research has shown that gatekeepers often see participation and protection as irreconcilable (Dempsey et al., 2016; Sandberg, 2018; Vis et al., 2012). CYP's participation needs to be meaningful, powerful, and responsive. To fulfil this, the researcher needs to build in time to increase the possibility for CYP to have a positive experience and feel safe participating (Moore et al., 2016). Stakeholders ask that researchers plan for more time and have the competence to build trust and relationships when doing the research. They want to have the opportunity to evaluate the work at hand and get to know the researcher (Turner & Almack, 2017; Martins et al., 2018; Powell et al., 2020). This point of view corresponds with other research (Hood et al., 1996; Kennan et al., 2012; Reeves, 2010; Skelton, 2008), which has

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found that researchers should use the time to build trust with those who can assess the researchers' competence. Increased demands for speed and efficiency can be challenging and even a barrier for researchers to reserve time to build relationships and trust with gatekeepers. Researchers are often not given enough time to prepare for these issues, which can lead to the failure of the research and the exclusion of certain groups of potential participants (Cojocar, 2013; Fleming, 2011; Garcia-Quiroga & Agoglia, 2020; Horwath, 2011; Kennan et al., 2012; Mossige & Backe-Hansen, 2013; Perry-Hazan, 2016). Input from the individuals in these groups can matter when researchers make evidence-based conclusions about their lives (Drisko & Grady, 2015).

Conclusion

To overcome the challenges in accessing CYP and getting their consent in research, researchers should give the concerns of gatekeepers and children more attention. As introduced above, researchers should carefully design their studies to meet the stakeholders' expectations and requirements. When preparing the research plan, they must know how to present their qualifications and experiences working with CYP. In addition, they should include time for building a trusting relationship with stakeholders. By explicitly addressing these concerns in the research processes, researchers can be more successful in involving CYP in research.

For future work, it could be interesting to look at recommendations from Collings et al. (2016) that identify champions, people within an organisation with positive experiences working with CYP, who could share success stories about their experiences collaborating with researchers. In addition, champions could run workshops for gatekeepers on CYP's rights to participate in research and how it could benefit them and support gatekeepers in making informed decisions about CYP's participation.

Listening to stakeholders' demands and considering their concerns should increase researchers' likelihood of getting through the gates and asking CYP to participate (Daley, 2015; Graham & Powell, 2015; Moore et al., 2018; Powell et al., 2018; 2020).

STUDY LIMITATIONS (1)

This scoping review provides an overview of the challenges researchers need to address in their research plans when they are aiming to include CYP in research. We based the search

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and the literature identification on a combination of keywords connected to the aim. Although we conducted the literature search using the central social science databases, searching in additional databases with a more comprehensive search of the grey literature might have identified additional publications. Additionally, our procedure may have overlooked one or two relevant studies due to the indexing in research databases. The studies reviewed, however, were diverse concerning context, aim, and scope. This review is limited to identifying specific barriers that authors will mention when planning a study, leaving out more tacit barriers not explicitly communicated in scientific papers.

All the included articles come from the Minority world. None is from the Majority world, which is a significant limitation. Academics have pointed out previous studies' homogeneity and lack of diversity (Tisdall & Punch, 2012).

Most of the reviewed research builds on and discusses adults' views on CYP's participation and best practices when attempting to gain access to children and young people and their consent in research due to our sampling criteria. On the other hand, there is a noteworthy increase in research on CYP's participation in decision-making in welfare services (i.e., Cudjoe et al., 2020; Fylkesnes et al., 2021; Husby et al., 2018; Kosher & Ben-Arieh, 2020; Lauri et al., 2021; Mitchell, 2022; Nunes, 2022; Skauge et al., 2021; Toros, 2021). These topics are, however, outside the scope of this article. The CYP in the included articles relate what would appeal to them regarding research participation. Future research could address the issue of the hierarchy of gatekeepers and how to ensure that CYP are not the last in line to be invited to participate in research.

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