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Abstract
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Montgomery, 2013; Steinberg, 2014) to positively influence and foster strengths, skills, and attitudes.
Despite South Asia having the largest population of adolescent girls worldwide (UNICEF, 2011), there is a
paucity of such initiatives. This dissertation aimed to fill this gap. The development of the Go Girls- e-
Huddle practice manual is presented as a culturally competent online group intervention for enhancing
the resilience and self-esteem of adolescent girls raised in South Asian families (AGRSAF). It is developed
as a digital resource that allows for increased accessibility and is designed for a non-clinical population
that is led by a culturally responsive facilitator. The content, pedagogical design, intervention strategy, and
methodology of the Go-Girls e-Huddle program was grounded and informed by four sources of
information- evidence-based research, sound theoretical frameworks, focus group discussions (FGD) that
captured the lived experience of AGRSAF, and consultations with subject matter experts. A qualitative
thematic analysis of the FGD data was conducted to identify key content and design elements that were
meaningful and culturally relevant. The Go-Girls e-Huddle practice manual is submitted as a ready-to-use,
comprehensive yet flexible resource guide, that includes sections on effective facilitation skills, seven
detailed session plans, digitally available worksheets, and supporting PowerPoints.

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- A Culturally Competent Online Group Intervention for Enhancing Resilience and
Self Esteem of Adolescent Girls Raised in South Asian Families

Aparna Samuel Balasundaram

A DISSERTATION

in

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Dedication

“I tell my story, not because it is unique, but because it is not.
It is the story of many girls.”
Malala Yousafzai

This dissertation is dedicated to adolescent girls raised in South Asian families and similar patriarchal cultures. May they know they are valued for who they are as they navigate through life.
Acknowledgment

This dissertation is the result of a collective journey. I could not have walked this path without the help of many people, in both my personal and professional spaces, spread across the globe. The commitment, support, and expertise of my committee chair Dr. Melainie Masin-Moyer, LCSW was the bedrock on which I was able to build and push through when it felt like I could not go any further. She listened patiently and helped shape my thoughts, she always made time for me and would turn around the edits in record time, and most of all she believed in me. Dr. Betty Chandy, my second chair helped to think outside the box and breathe life into my manual design. Thank you both so much for creating this space.

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I close this chapter of my life, by once again thanking each and every one of you for walking this path with me. This is our collective success.
Abstract

The South Asian patriarchal and socio-cultural environment adolescent girls are raised in may disempower them, creating a perception of them being social and economic burdens (Theerthaana & Manzoor, 2018). South Asian American youth born of immigrant parents also face this gendered double standard and patriarchal attitude (Ragavan et al., 2018). Prevention and promotive-based programs for adolescents is a protective factor, as it supports and builds resilience, self-esteem and acts as a buffer against the potential occurrence of a mental illness (Martyn-Nemeth et al., 2009; WHO, 2020). The adolescence period provides a significant and dynamic developmental opportunity (Morton & Montgomery, 2013; Steinberg, 2014) to positively influence and foster strengths, skills, and attitudes. Despite South Asia having the largest population of adolescent girls worldwide (UNICEF, 2011), there is a paucity of such initiatives. This dissertation aimed to fill this gap. The development of the Go Girls- e-Huddle practice manual is presented as a culturally competent online group intervention for enhancing the resilience and self-esteem of adolescent girls raised in South Asian families (AGRSAF). It is developed as a digital resource that allows for increased accessibility and is designed for a non-clinical population that is led by a culturally responsive facilitator. The content, pedagogical design, intervention strategy, and methodology of the Go-Girls e-Huddle program was grounded and informed by four sources of information- evidence-based research, sound theoretical frameworks, focus group discussions (FGD) that captured the lived experience of AGRSAF, and consultations with subject matter experts. A qualitative thematic analysis of the FGD data was conducted to identify key content and design elements that were meaningful and culturally relevant. The Go-Girls e-Huddle practice manual is submitted as a ready-to-use, comprehensive yet flexible resource guide, that includes sections on effective facilitation skills, seven detailed session plans, digitally available worksheets, and supporting PowerPoints.
# Table of Contents

DEDICATION .................................................................................................................. 2

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT ................................................................................................ 3

ABSTRACT ..................................................................................................................... 5

LIST OF FIGURES .......................................................................................................... 9

CHAPTER 1 ..................................................................................................................... 10

INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................ 10

  Problem Statement ................................................................................................... 10

  Research Question .................................................................................................. 11

  Background and Significance ................................................................................... 12

    Adolescence and Mental Health ................................................................. 12

    The Gender Disparity in Mental Health- The Female Adolescent .......... 13

    The South Asian Female Adolescent within Her Socio-Cultural Context .... 14

    South Asian Immigrants in the United States ......................................... 16

    The Case for Prevention and Promotive Based Interventions .......... 18

    The Social-Ecological Model ........................................................................... 19

    Resilience: A Social-Ecological Perspective .............................................. 22

    Harnessing the Therapeutic Benefits of Group Work with an Attachment Lens 24

    Reducing Barriers- Using the Digital Space ................................................. 27

    Evidence-Based Intervention for a Specific Population and Delivery Modality .... 28

CHAPTER 2 .................................................................................................................. 33

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY ............................................................... 33

  Brief Overview .......................................................................................................... 33

  Research Design .................................................................................................... 33

  Setting, Sample Size, and Recruitment ................................................................. 34
Inclusion criteria for FGD with AGRSAF ................................................................. 35
Exclusion Criteria for FGD with AGRSAF ................................................................. 36
Inclusion criteria for FGD with Young Adult Women Raised in South Asian Families
........................................................................................................................................ 36
Exclusion Criteria for FGD with Young Adult Women Raised in South Asian Families
........................................................................................................................................ 37
Background, Training and Qualifications of Researcher .............................................. 37
Data Analysis .................................................................................................................. 37
Administrative Arrangements .......................................................................................... 38
Human Subjects: Risk Reduction and Benefits .............................................................. 38
Budget ............................................................................................................................. 39
CHAPTER 3 ...................................................................................................................... 40
DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ......................................................... 40
Background, Training, and Qualifications of Researcher Error! Bookmark not defined.
Data Analysis .................................................................................................................. 40
Discussion and Findings ................................................................................................. 52
Theme 1: Impact of Patriarchy and Traditional Gender Roles .................................... 54
  Subtheme 1.1: Socio-Cultural Stereotypes Create Gender Inequality .................... 54
  Subtheme 1.2: Not Always Easy for Boys or the LGBTQ+ community ............... 56
Theme 2: Gender Inequality and Me ............................................................................. 58
  Sub-theme 2.1: Puberty Made Inequality More Apparent ..................................... 58
  Sub-theme 2.2: Impact of Gender Inequality on My Self Esteem ....................... 61
  Sub-theme 2.3: More Unequal for Mom Than for Me. ......................................... 65
Theme 3: Important to Raise Our Voice - Suggestions for an Online Group Program .... 67
  Sub-theme 3.1: Know That You Are Not Alone ..................................................... 67
Sub-theme 3.2: Shut Down Gender Stereotypes..............................................69

Sub-theme 3.3: Other Talking Points- Body Image, Mental Health, and LGBTQ+ ... 71

REFLEXIVITY AS A RESEARCHER........................................................................74

CONSULTATION WITH SUBJECT MATTER EXPERTS .......................................76

CHAPTER 4 STRENGTHS, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION..... 78

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS ........................................................................78

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE ........................................................................80

REFERENCES ....................................................................................................83

APPENDICES ....................................................................................................106

APPENDIX A - PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT FORM .................................106

APPENDIX B - ASSENT FORM .........................................................................114

APPENDIX C - INFORMED CONSENT FORM ..................................................116

APPENDIX D - SAMPLE RECRUITEMENT FLYER .........................................124

APPENDIX E - FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION- SCRIPT .....................................125

APPENDIX F– GO GIRLS E-HUDDLE PRACTICE MANUAL .............................128
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The Social-Ecological Model – Nesting Circles of Reciprocal Influence……20
Figure 2. Model for Cognitive Behavior Therapy………………………………………30
Figure 3. The Four Components of the Manual Development…………………………34
Figure 4. Six Phase Framework for Thematic Analysis .................................42
Figure 5. FGD Details: Duration, Participant Demographics and Description of Group..45
Figure 6. Worked Example- Process of Developing Codes.................................47
Figure 7. Worked Example- From Codes to Theme........................................52
Figure 8. Thematic Map .................................................................54
CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Problem Statement

Globally up to 20% of children and adolescents experience a mental illness, half of these start by the age of 14 years, and 50% of all adult mental disorders have their onset in adolescence. (World Health Organization [WHO], 2020). If left untreated, it has a lifelong impact manifesting as poor social skills, low educational achievement, substance use, high risk-taking behaviors, crime, poor sexual health, self-harm, and inadequate self-care (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2011). However, despite these detrimental consequences, the provision of mental health services for children and adolescents is lacking, especially in low and middle-income countries (Kieling et al., 2011). Research on the intersection of gender and mental health shows that starting at puberty, adolescent girls are at a greater risk for depression, anxiety, and mental disorders globally (Albert, 2015). The mental health gender divide widens when focusing on women and adolescent girls raised in South Asian middle-income countries (WHO, 2015). The increased mental health gender divide is a reflection of various socio-cultural factors. The entrenched patriarchal system disempowers women and limits their decision-making power and opportunities (Kapungu C et al., 2018). Often the birth of a girl child is seen as a negative due to a plethora of reasons, (Theerthaana & Manzoor, 2018), thereby placing a premium on a male child. While these sociocultural norms are mostly true for adolescent girls raised within the geographical boundaries that constitute the South Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, Afghanistan, Burma, and Bhutan), many of these aspects still hold true for those that are raised by first-generation South Asian immigrant families in the United States.
They are still exposed to their family’s traditional cultural views, and many must learn to negotiate this dual identity- at home and at school (Thakore-Dunlap & Velsor, 2014).

Given these realities, a concerted and intentional effort to meet the unique needs of adolescent girls raised in South Asian families- both in South Asian countries and South Asian immigrant families in the United States is needed. Recognizing this need, in recent years international agencies like the World Health Organization, the World Bank, the United Nations Population Fund, and UNICEF have focused on creating and implementing early intervention programs for adolescent girls in rural or poor urban areas in low and middle-income South Asian countries. However, most of them focus on issues of reproductive health, nutrition, education, and livelihoods. Programs focusing on psychosocial wellbeing have often been neglected. (Leventhal et al., 2016) and those for South Asian adolescent girls raised in urban low and middle-class families are scarce. To fill this significant gap, the researcher conducted a study that focused on creating an online group intervention called Go Girls e-Huddle Group, which was designed as a culturally appropriate program and aimed to enhance the protective and promotive factors that build resilience and self-esteem. Evidence-based research, clinical theories, a thematic analysis of focus group discussions with the adolescent girls and young women raised in South Asian families, and consultations with subject matter experts informed the content, pedagogical elements specific to online group curriculums and programs, and intervention design of the Go Girls e-Huddle practice manual.

**Research Question**

What components are needed to develop Go Girls e-Huddle Group, a culturally competent online group intervention to enhance the resilience and self-esteem of adolescent girls raised in South Asian families?
Background and Significance

Adolescence and Mental Health

Adolescence represents a critical stage of human growth with changes at physiological, mental, and social levels. This is also a period of rapid neurological development that increases the vulnerability to both positive and negative influences (WHO, 2020). All these changes occur almost simultaneously and cause this period of adolescence to be one of amplified stress (Romeo, 2013). It is also a period of fluctuating and intense emotions and potentially increased risk-taking behaviors (Blakemore, 2019) which impacts the way they navigate the physical, social, and psychological changes. If an adolescent faces added stressful issues such as gender inequality, poverty, bullying, violence, and familial conflict, they contribute to an increased risk for mental health problems which may negatively impact their well-being and later developmental outcomes (Arseneault, 2018). The more risk factors experienced the higher the predisposition to mental health conditions (Balvin & Banati, 2017). Adolescence has been identified as a vital period with rates of mental illness increasing dramatically from the early to late teen years (Brunwasser et al., 2009) with one in five adolescents facing depression, anxiety, or other mental illness (Belfer, 2008; WHO, 2020). When compared to adults, the health challenges faced by adolescents are more complicated and can compromise their growth and development (Lassi et al., 2017). Additional attention needs to be paid to their needs to increase their chances for a successful transition into adulthood.
The Gender Disparity in Mental Health- The Female Adolescent

The researcher strongly ascribes to the notion that gender identity is not confined to a binary (woman or man) and that it can change over time as it exists along a continuum. However, for the purpose of this study gender is being viewed as a binary that is based on socially constructed roles that produce inequalities and would depict a clearer reality of the gender-based discrimination a female adolescent raised in South Asian families might face. During the adolescent stage, gender role differentiation increases, thereby intensifying gender-based discrimination (Petroni et al., 2015). Though gender-based inequalities can negatively impact both girls and boys, they create a disproportionately larger disadvantage for girls, as it restricts their opportunities, status, and power (Kagesten et al., 2016).

Worldwide, while the rates of depression in early childhood are similar for both girls and boys, after puberty a girl’s risk of depression and suicide increases drastically (Patel, 2013; WHO, 2015; Yu, 2018). The female adolescent has a heightened psychological risk. They begin to "lose their vitality, their resilience, their immunity to depression, their sense of themselves, and their character" (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 2). Depression, which is predicted to be the second leading cause of global disability burden is twice as common in women, the lifetime risk of anxiety disorders is two-three times higher in females as compared to males, and girls and young women are three times more likely to attempt self-harm (International Center for Research on Women [ICRW], 2017; WHO, 2015). There are many factors identified that play a critical role in promoting or impeding mental health. Evidence gathered from a range of countries share these factors as related to economic policy, socio-cultural and environmental factors, community and social support, stressors and life events, poverty, social exclusion, educational disadvantage, and availability and access to health services (Aggarwal & Berk, 2014; Kagesten et al., 2016; Kapungu et al., 2018) Gender
is, therefore, a critical determinant of mental wellbeing and mental illness as it regulates and affects one's exposure and susceptibility to specific mental health risks (WHO, 2015).

**The South Asian Female Adolescent within Her Socio-Cultural Context**

The population of South Asia is about 1.9 billion or about one-fourth of the world's population, making it both the most populous and the most densely populated geographical region in the world (The World Bank, 2019). South Asians refer to individuals who can trace their ancestry to countries that were part of the Indian subcontinent: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, Afghanistan, Burma, and Bhutan (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014). All these countries are diverse in their socio-cultural, religious, political, and economic backgrounds. However, given that they have a long history of thousands of years of inhabiting the Indian subcontinent they have a longstanding common way of life that cuts across the diversity (Sharif, 2009). So, they still share a homogeneity in some common values that reflect in their family traditions and a collectivistic orientation to the way they live (Inman & Tummala-Narra, 2010). In most traditional South Asian families, the family identity is considered more important and primary than the individual self-identity, and the family in turn places a lot of importance on following the societal and community expectations and not challenging that predetermined status quo (Dupree et al., 2013).

When we examine the gender-based divide using a core social work ideology and concept - the person in environment theoretical framework- our understanding of the socio-cultural context and its implications on the nexus of gender, mental health, and environment deepens. Discriminatory gender norms in South Asian countries limit girls' ambitions and opportunities. Many of them remain invisible and voiceless and the government policies and programs do not adequately address these important issues (Kapungu et al., 2018). The socio-cultural context the female adolescents are raised in, impacts their sense of self, the way they perceive the world, and their place in it (Christie & Viner, 2005). So, the identity of
an adolescent raised in a western developed culture would be different from one raised in a
developing agrarian one. For a South Asian adolescent girl, this search for identity is heavily
influenced by her social context. Most South Asian girls are encouraged to see themselves as
dependent, a burden at times, and as being less valued than their male counterparts. She is not
encouraged to discover her full potential and has restricted self-expression, which may
impact her mental health (Niaz & Hassan, 2006), many of them have restrictions on their
physical movement and who they can meet which restricts their access to resources and
opportunities (Asghar, 2018) making the situation for a South Asian adolescent girl much
more challenging when compared to her female counterpart in developed countries (Malhotra
& Shah 2015).

Social systems like dowry where a woman entering an arranged marriage must bring
with her money and other material assets like jewelry, home appliances, a vehicle, and
sometimes even a residential property, create a perception of a girl child as an economic
burden. Further, her economic dependence on a male family member, starting from her
father to her husband and finally to her son, is established by cultural norms that validate the
virtue of a silent sacrificing woman who places family obligations over her individual or
career aspirations which limits her ambitions (Madaan et al., 2014). The pessimistic belief
about a daughter’s value is further amplified as Hindu rituals require a son to cremate the
parents, (Theerthaana & Manzoor, 2018), thereby placing a premium on a male child.

Another hallmark of patriarchal societies is the objectification of women – which translates
into the value and worth of a woman being linked mostly to her physical attributes. This has
led to colorism, especially for women, which is akin to an epidemic in South Asian
countries. This color-based discrimination permeates all aspects of life- be it a career choice
or marriage (Utley & Darity, 2016). Dark-skinned women are discriminated against when
it comes to professions like sales, news anchors, movie actresses, flight attendants, hotel
front desk and hospitality staff, and basically, any job that requires an interaction with the public, who will judge her as unattractive, unworthy, and incompetent. A fair skin tone grants a fair-skinned woman the privilege and power to enter and rise within such organizations (Sims & Hirudayaraj, 2016). The wide prevalence of colorism in South Asian countries further impacts body image issues.

Another socio-cultural gender-based inequity faced by South Asian women is reflected in the incidence of intimate partner violence (IPV). The reality is that IPV is experienced globally, however, its prevalence differs across countries. The World Health Organization (2010) estimates the highest prevalence of IPV, is in South Asian countries, with a rate of approximately 40%. Many South Asian women facing IPV do not reach out for help, as they feel a need to protect the ‘izzat’ (honor) of their families (Bhandari, 2018; Inman & Rao, 2018) which is one of the hallmarks of patriarchal cultures. Family violence that pervades the landscape of South Asian countries exists globally within South Asian families, that immigrate to other countries (Robertson et al., 2016; Mann et al., 2017). The gendered double standard and patriarchal attitudes play a central role in the propagation of IPV in South Asian immigrant communities in the United States (Ragavan et al., 2018).

**South Asian Immigrants in the United States**

As per the Pew Research Center analysis, the Asian American population is the fastest-growing racial group in the United States and nearly 60% of them were born outside the United States. The South Asian population is the second-largest within the broader category of the Asian American group (Budiman & Ruiz, 2021; Gebeloff et al., 2021). One of the most important and common reasons for immigrating to the United States is to create a better life for their families which includes career goals, a better quality of life, and providing their children with more opportunities for higher education (Dupree et al., 2013). Education is seen as a key to success, and this reflects in the high expectations South Asian immigrant
parents have of their children, causing stress and academic pressure, especially for older children (Inman et al., 2007). Unlike the Western understanding where adolescence is developmentally seen as a period of autonomy and separation, in most South Asian families, adolescence is viewed as an extension of childhood with the expectation that they will follow the family rules as laid down by the parent (Khanna et al., 2009). This causes acculturation stress and cultural conflicts between the parent and the South Asian American adolescent who is exposed to Western concepts of adolescence within their school or peer groups. (Tummala-Narra et al., 2016) as many of them attempt to deal with this dual identity - at home and outside of the home. This can lead to a sense of dissonance for the South Asian American adolescent as they are torn between the collectivistic demands of the immigrant family and the individualism encouraged and celebrated by their birth country (Dupree et al., 2013). Adolescent girls raised in immigrant South Asian families in the United States, often find themselves negotiating through these similar patriarchal social norms and biased gender-based role expectations. Children born into immigrant South Asian families in the United States, are exposed to their family’s traditional cultural views and many adolescent girls must learn to navigate this dual identity - at home and school (Thakore-Dunlap & Van Velsor, 2014) and this, in turn, influences critical life decisions around the pursuit of higher education, career choices, age of marriage, personal freedom and sexuality (Mann et al., 2017). An added issue is the problem of Asian American’s being labeled as the ‘model minority’ which feeds into their need to safeguard and uphold not only their familial but now their communal ‘izzat’ (honor) too. The pressure to be the ‘model minority’ is passed on to the children as the immigrant parent attempts to raise their child in the United States with the same traditional cultural value system (Venkataramani-Kothari, 2007).
The Case for Prevention and Promotive Based Interventions

Going by the adage—prevention is better than cure—for the purpose of this study, the researcher focussed on the preventive and promotive factors of building resilience and self-esteem that might reduce the risk of mental disorders. Preventive and protective factors are those that help reduce the probability of onset of mental health problems, and the promotive factors are those that are intentional in their approach to strengthen and actively boost positive psychological well-being (Patel et al., 2007). Addressing psychological needs at an early stage is of crucial importance to prevent the development of mental health problems and dysfunction later in life. Creating an environment to help vulnerable adolescents by teaching them skills to reduce stress, build self-esteem, and positive coping skills lowers the risk of depressive symptoms (Martyn-Nemeth et al., 2009). The WHO advocates the implementation of prevention-based programs as one of the most effective strategies to reduce the possible onset of mental disorders. Prevention and promotive-based approaches for adolescents become protective psychological factors as they promote and build resilience, self-esteem, and act as a buffer against the potential occurrence of an illness (Donavan & Spence, 2000; WHO, 2020). The adolescence period is seen as one of the optimal times for these preventive and promotive based interventions that are psychoeducational, as it provides a significant and dynamic developmental opportunity (Morton & Montgomery, 2013; Steinberg, 2014) to be able to come in at a time when most mental illnesses have an onset. It also provides an ideal opportunity to explore attitudes around gender before they become more lasting (Landry et al., 2020). It can also positively influence and foster strengths, skills, and attitudes that might have a long-term impact as they transition into adulthood (WHO, 2017). Hence, there are benefits of adopting this preventive and promotive approach towards not only reducing mental health but also enhancing mental well-being.
The Social-Ecological Model

The ecological perspective focuses on the interdependence of organisms and their environment. The Social-Ecological Model (SEM) is a theoretical framework that sheds light on the multifaceted and interactive quality of the person and environment, as it recognizes the reciprocity of these two exchanges (Gittermann & Germain, 2008). In his seminal work, Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979) elucidated:

The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which, the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded. (p. 2)

This bi-directional and cyclic relationship results in a transaction where the environment impacts a person’s development and in turn, the person’s unique response and behavior impacts the environment which ultimately again affects the person (Pardeck, 1988; Pelech, 2014). The degree to which these transactions between the person and their environment are mutually nutritive can be described in terms of the goodness of fit. This goodness of fit can be enhanced by helping the person to adapt to their environment, or by modifying the environment to fit the person, or by a blend of both (Hepworth et al., 2019).

Therefore, it is seen that the person does not exist in isolation and problems cannot be seen through the lens of individual pathology. Rather, there is an acknowledgment that people both shape and are shaped by individual, interpersonal, community, and societal level factors. The Social Ecological Model conceptualized these multiple levels of reciprocal influence on human development as nesting circles. As seen in Figure 1, the
model places the individual in the center, and they are surrounded by four systems with multiple levels of interacting influence.

**The Social Ecological Model** – Nesting Circles of Reciprocal Influence

The individual level of the Social-Ecological Model includes an individual’s inherent biological makeup, personality, knowledge, attitudes, behavior, self-efficacy, developmental history, age, racial/ethnic/caste identity, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. These factors play a role in how an individual behaves and responds in her environment. The interpersonal level refers to the formal and informal social networks and social support systems that might impact individual behavior. This level includes family, peers, and other social networks. The community level of the SEM relates to relationships among organizations and informal networks. It also includes societal beliefs, norms, and knowledge. The fourth circle of influence is the organizations, social institutions, and systems with rules.
and regulations and the final level of the Social Ecological Model is the societal level which is defined by local, state, national, and global laws, and policies (UNICEF, 2016).

The development of the Go Girls e-Huddle practice manual focused on incorporating multiple levels of influence that would include the individual, interpersonal, and community levels. The individual-level accounts for the adolescent girl’s biological makeup, personality, coping style, and includes her beliefs, values, culture, and history since these factors impact how she behaves and responds to her socio-cultural environment. The interpersonal and community refers to the social supports, interpersonal relationships, like the peer group, that impact her along with her community-based groups, schools, and other social networks. Given the social justice lens that is critical to the development of this practice manual, the goal was to achieve an augmented goodness of fit, by advocating for change that impacted both the person and environment. So, the emphasis was not merely to help the adolescent girl adjust or find a goodness of fit with the prevailing patriarchal norms, rather by using a strengths perspective it was to invest in her personal competence and sense of empowerment to deal with and rise above these prevailing norms. Through this journey of empowerment, the adolescent girl will be encouraged to build on her power and enhance her capacity to imagine, and to have hope as it affirms a shared human need for dignity (Miller, 2006; Hillenbrand et al., 2015). The aim was to help her seek a clearer and evolving understanding of herself, of her inherent worth and right for equality while also being able to critically examine the reality of the inequities in the patriarchal society she is raised in. This awareness will help her more effectively navigate her environment as she moves forward to achieve her goals (UNFPA, 2020). By attempting to create a positive influence in the interpersonal system through the use of this facilitator-led peer-based group, the hope was to strengthen the individual and collective voice of these adolescent girls to question the status quo and impact change at the community level (however small) by making their
socio-cultural environment more responsive and supportive of them. This process ensures that change is being expressed at both the person and environment level with each influencing and strengthening the other in a dynamic and reciprocal manner.

**Resilience: A Social-Ecological Perspective**

It is inevitable that everyone will face tough times, failures, and frustrations, but some people can cope with it better than others. The concept of resilience makes account for differential coping. Resilience is seen as the ability to thrive even in the face of hardship. It allows us to deal with inevitable life stressors and traumas, without it causing lifelong mental harm or unmanageable stress. A resilient person is mentally able to recover and return to healthy levels of functioning. According to Steinhardt and Dolbier, (2008) “The concept of resilience has received increased attention over the years from researchers studying why some individuals in populations experiencing adversity do not succumb to those difficult circumstances” (p. 445). While resilience has been studied for decades, there has been a developing understanding of resilience, with different researchers focusing on different aspects. It has been conceptualized within the framework of it being a trait, a process, and an outcome (Luthar et al., 2000). In the initial research, the focus was on traits, which defined resilience as a set of personal characteristics that enhance adaptation. Resilience was conceived as internal to an individual and as an innate ability and trait. (Ahern et al., 2006; Kelley, 2005). While this trait-based aspect of resilience can shed light on why only a certain percentage of any given population demonstrate resilience, it inadvertently sends a message that it is fixed at birth and cannot be learned or further enhanced. It further deepens the stigma of a supposedly inherent weakness of select social groups or an individual (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Luthar & Zelazo, 2003), which contradicts our understanding of human learning and the potential for growth and change. In the next wave of resilience research, it was defined as a dynamic process that involved the
interaction between the risk and protective factors and the focus was on interaction of the individual with their external environment rather than just the individual traits (Goldstein & Brooks, 2016; Luthar et al., 2000).

A protective factor of resilience for an adolescent could be an internal asset like coping skills, self-efficacy, and strong cognitive skills (Masten, 2014) or an external asset like parental support, positive peer groups, community organizations that support youth development (Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005). A protective factor has been defined as an attribute that could be at a psychological, biological, family, peer, community, or cultural level that can contribute to lessening the possibility of a problem outcome or that minimizes the potential negative impact of a risk factor on problem outcomes (O’Connell & Warner, 2009). In contrast, a risk factor is associated with a higher likelihood of problem outcomes. So, for an adolescent, it would be their interface with external environments like their family, school, peer group, and neighborhood that impacts how resilient they would be. The fewer the risk factors and more the protective factors, the higher would be the resilience level. Resilience has also been viewed as an outcome, where it is defined as a positive adaptation to adversity and as the ability to bounce back from negative experiences (Masten, 2014; Tugade & Frederickson, 2004). Resilience is seen as multidimensional, as it can change, and one can learn how to build resilience. It is not necessarily a pre-determined static inherent biological trait.

In this study, the researcher viewed resilience from this multidimensional perspective as a process and outcome, within the social-ecological paradigm, which expands the focus of resilience from individual traits to social-ecological resources across micro and macro systems (Henderson et al., 2016). As mentioned earlier the emphasis is on the dynamic bi-directional transactions of an individual and the systems in which her development is embedded (Goldstein & Brooks, 2016). Resilience is seen as the active outcome of an
adolescent’s individual assets which are shaped by their overlapping biological, psychological, and socio-cultural protective factors (Phillips et al., 2019). Therefore, looking at the resilience journey of an adolescent girl raised in a South Asian family through a social-ecological lens would necessitate the researcher to explore the protective and risk factors that exist within the nesting domains from micro to macro levels. The researcher also reviewed the adolescent girls’ interactions with her multiple reciprocating systems and how the quality of these systems might shed light on her developmental success of building resilience (Ungar, 2013). This was within the existing negative patriarchal and other socio-cultural norms that act as risk factors and at the same time explored the socio-cultural values that act as a protective factor. The group intervention model, Go Girl e-Huddle, was developed taking these influencing interactions as a foundational element.

**Harnessing the Therapeutic Benefits of Group Work with an Attachment Lens**

The intervention proposed used a group format to benefit from the therapeutic advantages of group work. The interpersonal nature of group-based interventions creates opportunities for healing and growth, as it provides a safe, brave, and supportive space for adolescent girls (especially within a patriarchal society) to find their voice, share their anxieties and fears, as well as learn and practice healthy coping skills that strengthen their sense of psychological wellbeing (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2017). Groups also create an opportunity for mutual aid where members can feel supported and can also assist one another in reaching personal and collective goals. They can empathize and see their commonalities which fosters a sense of belonging which in turn increases self-expression and an improvement in the group members' self-esteem (Drumm, 2006). The principle of mutual aid has been suggested to be one of the most important benefits of group work as it is powerful yet subtle and prompts members' need for each other (Gitterman, 2004; Shulman, 2012). When this mutual aid is experienced by population groups that are usually oppressed and
vulnerable, like an adolescent girl raised in a South Asian male-controlled system, it helps them regain more control over their lives as it reduces isolation and mitigates social stigma (Gitterman & Shulman, 2005). Another key aspect of mutual aid in a group is that one can give to others by way of their reassurance, encouragement, and understanding, and while this is valuable to the recipient it is also affirming to the group member that is in this position of a provider and leaves them with an enhanced feeling of self-esteem (Huang & Wong, 2013). This would be critical to an adolescent girl who might have earlier questioned her worth within a disempowering social system.

Groups also promote an understanding that one is not alone in their life challenge by universalizing the issues members face, which can be empowering, liberating, and validating and it nurtures a sense of belonging (Gitterman & Knight 2016) and being known. This realization has been referred to as the “all-in-the-same-boat phenomenon” (Shulman, 2012, p. 679) and universality (Yalom & Leszcz, 2007). The application of the principle of universalization, where one experiences the reality that there are others in the same boat, helps an adolescent girl realize she is not alone in her struggles. In individual counseling, the therapist can normalize and universalize a clients’ difficult life experience. However, when this support comes from others who are in a similar experience, it becomes more convincing (Leitz & Strength, 2011) and it gives them a more realistic perspective on their situation, enhances self-awareness and possible ways forward which is an important element of resilience (Gitterman & Knight, 2016). Group modalities also create a nonjudgmental space for the sharing of one’s internal world and its subsequent acceptance by a group of peers. This is of paramount importance as it challenges an adolescent’s girl’s possible disempowering belief of self and her world (Yalom and Leszcz, 2005) and allows for a reframing of her internal thoughts to be more positive and hopeful. This, in turn, may help her feel heard, know that her life matters, and may empower her with a strengthened identity.
of being valued, positively affirmed, and having the capability to be more. These may act as a protective factor against later adult mental health problems and improve her personal wellbeing and productivity (Kieling et al., 2011).

These small supportive cohesive groups, called ‘e-Huddles’ will be further conceptualized within an attachment theory framework. Attachment theory describes how the connection between children and their caregivers creates a template for future relationships. John Bowlby, the chief architect of attachment theory proposed that relationships are influenced across the lifespan, “from the cradle to the grave” (Bowlby, 1982, p. 208). The nature of these relationships can enhance or diminish existing internal working models (IWM) of self as worthy and lovable and others as understanding and supportive as well as impact a person’s capacity for emotional regulation. When the emotional bond involves a caregiver, who is attuned and responsive to their child’s needs, there is a positive impact on the child’s IWM and emotion regulation (Bowlby, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). A secure base is created in which the child can explore their world knowing they have a safe haven to return to when distressed. These bonds and need for safe relationships are valuable across the lifespan of a person (Marmarosh et al., 2013).

Newer iterations of attachment theory focus on groups as providing a secure base from which individuals can explore both internal and external challenges, potentially enhancing their internal working models and emotion regulation through corrective emotional experiences (Marmarosh et al., 2013). The secure base can create the space for the adolescent girl to explore her concerns, inhibitions, and questions without fear of judgment or exploitation. In many ways, these girls might feel a sense of insecurity and disconnection that is born in and fueled by the inherent oppressive system of patriarchy that they are raised in. This intentional creation of a secure base could potentially be a way to shift the balance and find a way out of this disconnection. Hence, the secure base of the group and a responsive
group leader is essential and foundational as it creates and establishes a conducive group climate of consensual validation, acceptance, and positive regard from peers who have gone through similar challenges in their life (Gallagher et al., 2014). The e-Huddle groups can then be that secure relational space for adolescent girls raised in South Asian families and provide an opportunity for a corrective experience that counters the unhelpful IWMs, which in turn allows them to reframe their sense of self and others in a more accurate helpful manner (Marmarosh et al., 2013). Harnessing the benefits of group intervention via an attachment lens creates an inherent opportunity to get and give nurturance through a process of mutual aid, sharing of common experiences and this further cultivates relational growth and empowerment (Harper, 2010). For an adolescent girl raised in a South Asian family, this may help challenge earlier negative experiences of insecurity and disconnection that could possibly stem from the larger discriminatory norms and gender inequities of the socio-cultural system and reciprocal circles of influence as conceptualized within the Social Ecological Model.

**Reducing Barriers- Using the Digital Space**

As shared earlier, group work has many therapeutic benefits for its members, and internet-based interventions provide more accessibility, flexibility, anonymity, and reduced travel time and cost (Musiat & Tarrier, 2014; Hollinghurst et al., 2010) for all group participants. Given the Internet savviness of the younger generations, these advantages might be even more relevant for an adolescent group (Ebert et al., 2015). COVID-19 has further necessitated an increased adoption of e-therapy as evidenced by the robust shift to online mental health care (Asmundson & Taylor, 2020). This has further enabled a wider acceptance of web-based interventions by both providers and clients (Wind et al., 2020). In South Asian countries, there is an added advantage as it offers a more discreet option to avail of mental help, which helps to address the public stigma of mental health (Gaiha et al.,
While public stigma globally may prevent people from seeking mental health help, in South Asian populations this is drastically increased, due to the societal perception that it is a sign of weakness or that a disclosure will bring shame to the family (Karasz et al., 2019). Taking this into consideration, creating an online group intervention for adolescent girls raised in South Asian families, which provides an element of anonymity may help address this deeply ingrained issue of stigma against mental health. The hope is that once they and their families experience the benefits of addressing emotional well-being, their negative views on mental health will be more open to change.

The Go-Girls e-Huddle group intervention was designed for implementation on online meeting platforms like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, WebEx which are established secure platform for video conferencing. Many do not require the participants to open their account (thereby minimizing barriers to join), it allows for participants to see and engage with each other (which is critical to the group process and dynamic), it allows for sharing of PowerPoints and videos by the group facilitator (that will be used as instructional training material), and it allows for breakout rooms that, if required, can be used for small group processing. This makes a web-based group intervention a viable and effective mode of engagement for this population group.

Evidence-Based Intervention for a Specific Population and Delivery Modality

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is seen as a distinct category of present-focused interventions with a shared aim of changing cognition (thoughts, beliefs, and assumptions about the world), changing behavior, and building clients’ coping skills (Corcoran, 2005). Over the last few decades, CBT-based approaches and variations have evolved. CBT has a high degree of success and efficacy in preventing anxiety and depression among youth who exhibit sub-clinical distress (Padesky & Mooney 2012; Sansom-Daly et al., 2012). Further,
web-based CBT for youth experiencing anxiety and depression has demonstrated effectiveness (Davies et al., 2014; Sansom-Daly et al., 2012; Calear & Christensen, 2010). CBT theorizes that people’s emotions, behaviors, and physiology are affected by their assessment of an event. A given situation does not determine how a person might feel or act, rather it is their perception of this situation that impacts their thinking and response (Beck, 1964; Ellis, 1962). Individuals’ perceptions of a given situation are called automatic thoughts and are not the result of active consideration or reasoning. Hence, a person does not notice these thoughts, and as the name suggests they are automatic and usually brief and rapid and appear to spring up spontaneously (Beck, 1995). These automatic thoughts are based on one’s core belief, which usually begins to form in childhood. Core beliefs, are a fundamental level of belief, are usually global, fixed and a person regards them as absolute truths—just the way things “are” (Beck, 1987). The automatic thoughts that stem from core beliefs are actual words or images that go through a person’s mind, and they are usually more situation-specific and are theorized to be the most superficial level of cognition. Hence, automatic thoughts are considered closest to conscious awareness, making them open to change and a gateway for CBT interventions (Beck, 2005).

Based on one's lived experience, people form conclusions (beliefs, assumptions, and automatic thoughts) about themselves, other people, and the world. When the experience is negative, conclusions are also negative. So, for a South Asian adolescent girl, the faulty automatic negative thought that reflects her experience might be, 'It is no use to even try, I am a victim of this oppressive patriarchal system', 'I do not matter, I have less value than my male counterparts'. As illustrated in Figure 2, triggered by a situation, these negative automatic thoughts about themselves, others, or situations have a negative influence on their emotional, behavioral, and often physiological reactions.
As per CBT, these negative, distorted, and unhelpful thoughts and belief systems can be corrected using various CBT interventions like cognitive reframing, Socratic questioning, thought records, and guided imagery work. People can learn to identify, evaluate, and replace their negative automatic with healthier thinking patterns which typically reduces their level of distress and enhances a sense of empowerment. One way is by applying the ABCD Model.

Rational-Emotive Behavioral Therapy (REBT) developed by Albert Ellis is one of the main pillars of CBT (David et al., 2018) and the ABCD Model was conceived within the framework of REBT. It targets beliefs as the core component for treatment. In applying the ABCD model, the theoretical assumption is:

A: Activating event, which is what happens to someone.
B: Belief, the event activates or causes a person to have a certain belief. This belief may be rational or irrational.
C: Consequence, the rational or irrational belief caused by the event, leads to a certain consequence. Depending on the nature of the belief, it may be a healthy or unhealthy
consequence. An example of an unhealthy consequence is the feeling of not being valued or feeling capable.

D: Disputation, leads to a more rational or helpful thought. The clinician helps the person who has an irrational or unhelpful belief caused by the event which leads to unhealthy consequences, to dispute that irrational belief to change it into a rational, more effective belief.

In the case of a South Asian adolescent girl, when she sees a Hindi (the official language of India) movie, where the heroine is told not to act ‘bossy’ as girls are not meant to be bossy, that may serve as the activating event. The event may lead her to an irrational thought and belief that South Asian girls are to be submissive and can never be valued if they are assertive. The consequence of this belief is that she may feel confused or helpless about her life and career ambitions. Through a process of disputation, she may be able to challenge the negative and irrational belief, as she takes a macro view and discovers that despite the patriarchal ecosystem, there is a possibility to rise above, to feel confident in her value and that her world is changing and equal opportunities for women are being achieved.

Traditionally CBT focused on symptom alleviation, maintenance of treatment gains, and relapse management. However, recent studies have illustrated that CBT models can also enhance positive thinking attributes that build resilience and self-esteem and act not just as a protective factor against mental illness but also actively promote psychological wellbeing. (Padesky & Mooney, 2012; Victor et al., 2017). The researcher used this strengths perspective while designing CBT based interventions for the Go-Girls e- Huddle group intervention where there was an intentionally structured search for participants strengths and bringing them into their awareness (Padesky & Mooney, 2012). The strengths perspective in social work is an approach that has an inherent belief in human potential (Weick et al., 1989) and puts the strengths, capabilities, and resources of people and their
communities, rather than their problems and pathologies, at the center of the helping process (Saleebey, 2013). This dual focus on people and their environment acknowledges strengths and resilience even amid their hardships (Koenig et al., 2019). This strength-based approach allows for a recognition of the existing social injustices within the South Asian adolescent girl’s socio-cultural environment, while also acknowledging and embracing the belief in her capacity for growth, resilience, courage, and resourcefulness. This perspective was reflected in the design of the content of the program.
CHAPTER 2
Research Design and Methodology

Brief Overview

The dissertation focused on the development of the Go Girls e-Huddle Group as an online culturally competent intervention to promote the protective factors of resilience and self-esteem in AGRSAF. The design and development of the intervention was grounded in evidence-based research, clinical theory, the voices of the participant group, and consultation with subject matter experts. The researcher proposes that this practice manual can be used by facilitators, like coaches, counselors, and teachers, who engage with a nonclinical population of adolescent girls raised in South Asian families. This would be for girls raised in South Asian countries themselves or in countries where there is the largest immigration of South Asian families like the United States. The practice manual covers the goals of this online culturally competent group intervention, the guidelines and best practices of implementation, the session plans with objectives and activities, basic facilitation for group leaders, and suggests methods for feedback and evaluation.

Research Design

The development of the practice manual in terms of the intervention design, content, and methodology was based on four sources of information—evidence-based research, sound theoretical frameworks, Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to capture the lived experience of the participants, and consultations with subject matter experts. The FGD’s entailed a qualitative data collection method and reflected a participatory action research component. The data obtained from the FGD’s was analyzed and interpreted using the qualitative method of thematic analysis. Four FGD’s were conducted, using the encrypted digital platform of Zoom. One with young women raised in South Asian families that shared their inputs from a retrospective point of view and three FGD’s with AGRSAF. Two of the FGD’s with
AGRSAF were conducted for those raised within the geographies of a South Asian country and the third was conducted with those raised in the United States by South Asian immigrant parents. The FGD’s informed the design and content development of the Go-Girls e-Huddle practice manual. The researcher also consulted with three subject matter experts in areas of South Asian populations, girl-focused participatory research and program development, gender studies, instructional methods for virtual learning, and curriculum and program design. The consultations served the purpose of collateral information with regards to the content, methodology, and pedagogical aspects of the manual development. This has been captured in Figure 3 below.

**Figure 3: The Four Components of the Manual Development**

- Adolescent, Mental health and Gender Disparity
- The South Asian Female Adolescent within her Socio-Cultural Context
- South Asian Immigrants in the US
- Prevention and Promotive Interventions
- Significance and Designing of e-Group Interventions

- Ecological System Theoretical Framework
- Resilience within a Social-Ecological Perspective
- Harnessing the Therapeutic Benefits of Group Work with an Attachment Lens
- CBT with a Strengths Perspective

- Focus Group Discussions - South Asian Adolescents and Young Women Raised in South Asian Families
- Thematic Analysis to Interpret FGD Data

- Consultations with Subject Matter Experts to serve as collateral information: Sample Topics are on Resilience, South Asian populations, Gender studies and Online Learning

**Setting, Sample Size, and Recruitment**

The researcher conducted four Focus Group Discussions (FGD) to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of the participants and this informed the content of the
Each FGD comprised of four to six participants, with a total of 21 participants. On average each FGD was 100 minutes long. Two of the FGD’s were conducted with adolescent girls raised in India. India is the most populous South Asian country comprising approximately 75% of the South Asian population. It also represents varied ethnic groups as well as the main religious groups in South Asian countries- Hindu, Islam, Sikh, Christian, and Buddhist (Snedden, 2016) and in that regard may be representative of the general socio-cultural norms. One FGD was conducted with adolescent girls raised in South Asian immigrant families in the United States. One FGD was conducted with young adult women that were raised in South Asian families.

The sampling strategy for the FGD was a non-probability method of purposive sampling to obtain information-rich resources. In purposive sampling technique, there is a deliberate choice of participants based on their study-relevant qualities, their lived experience (Etikan, 2016). Since these FGD’s were conducted online, the recruitment also happened using the online space. The researcher recruited using known Facebook pages and websites that cater to young South Asian women as well as others that included parents of adolescent girls. The understanding was that it was important to first gain the trust of the parents and get their consent for the participation of their daughters. Obtaining an assent from the adolescents was equally important for this study, thereby also reflecting an attitude of equality and empowerment from the very first contact. The researcher conducted these FGD’s herself along with the administrative help of a student research assistant.

**Inclusion criteria for FGD with AGRSAF**

- South Asian Female Adolescents: 13-17 years of age.
- For two of the three FGD’s the participants were raised in South Asian families within the geographies of South Asian countries.
For one of the three FGD’s, the participants were raised in South Asian immigrant families outside the geographies of South Asian countries, like the United States (US). These included 1.5- and 2nd-generation South Asian adolescents raised by South Asian immigrant families in the US. 1.5 generation Americans are those that arrived in the US as children. Second-generation Americans are those that are born in the US to immigrant parents (PEW Research Center, 2012).

- English proficiency.
- Able to access a computer, which had a microphone and web camera.
- Willing to be part of the FGD that was recorded on Zoom, as this served as a record for the researcher.
- Willing to sign the adolescent-specific assent form and whose parents were also willing to sign the consent form.

**Exclusion Criteria for FGD with AGRSAF**

- Active psychiatric symptoms that impede an ability to understand and respond to the FGD questions.

**Inclusion criteria for FGD with Young Adult Women Raised in South Asian Families**

- Young adult women: 20-30 years of age.
- Raised in South Asian families within the geographies of South Asian countries or the US.
- English proficiency.
- Able to access a computer, which had a microphone and web camera.
- Willing to be part of the FGD that was recorded on Zoom, as this served as a record for the researcher.
- Willing to sign the consent form.
**Exclusion Criteria for FGD with Young Adult Women Raised in South Asian Families**

- Active psychiatric symptoms that impede an ability to understand and respond to the FGD questions.

**Background, Training, and Qualifications of Researcher**

The researcher is a South Asian woman, who was raised in India within a patriarchal system. Her adult life involved studying, living, working, and raising her own family in both India and the United States. She has spent 13 years in the United States and is a mother of a 21-year-old son and 16-year-old daughter, both of whom live in the United States. The researcher is a doctoral candidate and conducted the four FGD’s along with her research assistant, who is also of South Asian origin. The researcher has over 23 years of clinical experience including working with South Asian populations in both South Asian countries and the United States. Even before COVID, she had experience in creating and conducting webinars and e-therapy. She has completed online training with Columbia University’s School of Social Work (CSSW) and their Institute of Pedagogy and Technology, which was an intensive five-week course on program design for online courses, universal design for learning, innovative teaching strategies, effective instructor presence, building and managing inclusive online communities. She has been a teaching associate for four graduate-level courses, for both CSSW and the University of Pennsylvania, School of Social Policy and Practice (SP2), and a guest lecturer for CSSW where classes were conducted virtually. This further prepared the researcher to design and conduct effective online programs. The researcher has previous training and practice in CBT.

**Data Analysis**

The FGD’s were conducted by the researcher on Zoom and were recorded with the permission of the parents and the participants. The data was analyzed and interpreted using the method of thematic analysis, which helped the researcher in the process of identifying
patterns or themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These themes and interpretations represented the voices of the adolescent girls and were reflected in the development of the group intervention.

**Administrative Arrangements**

The FGD were conducted using Zoom. The researcher already had a Zoom account. The websites and Facebook pages from which recruitment took place were where the researcher had a membership or connect too.

**Human Subjects: Risk Reduction and Benefits**

The researcher obtained approval from the University of Pennsylvania’s Institutional Review Board to complete the study. Consent and assent forms were created, and participants were requested to complete the form as part of the requirement for the FGD. Once the parents’ consent for AGRSAF was obtained, only then was a connection made with the participants and they were requested to complete an assent form. Potential risks of harm to participants in the FGD was unlikely as the questions were meant to explore and reflect to gain their understanding. There was no forced answering or pressure to answer any question. The choice to answer or not was left to the participants. There were no right or wrong answers, and this was clearly articulated and emphasized to the participants. There were no questions that lead to any mental health diagnosis. However, if they were to feel some distress, the researcher, who is a trained clinician was ready to use grounding techniques and mindfulness to regulate and ease the distress.

Participant confidentiality was a top priority. All the standard ethical procedures that would apply to being in a counseling/psychoeducational group applied to those in the study. Since this was an online group connect, the participants signed on using Zoom, an established online platform. This link was provided by the researcher, who has a dedicated zoom room link. The researcher also kept her notes and data in a locked file drawer with no names.
attached to the data collected. A unique pseudonym was assigned to each person. This was kept in a locked file drawer in the locked office of the researcher. The data was entered into the researcher’s laptop with only the pseudonym and the laptop was password protected. No names or identifying descriptors were reported in the findings and discussions. The zoom sessions that were recorded for the purpose of the thematic analysis will be deleted after the dissertation is completed. These steps taken throughout the study process from start to finish will ensure that the participants’ anonymity will be protected. The benefits of being a participant in this FGD may be seen as an opportunity for them to feel heard and have their thoughts validated as they actively contribute and meaningfully influence the development of a group intervention that may benefit them and their peers in the near future.

**Budget**

No cost was incurred in the conducting of this study.
CHAPTER 3

Data Analysis, Results, and Discussion

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) is a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning, called ‘themes’ within qualitative data. The goal is to use these themes to identify and address patterns across the dataset in relation to the research question (Clarke & Braun, 2006, 2013, 2021). As a researcher, I adopted Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase framework for the thematic analysis, a well-established methodology in social sciences that provides a robust, systematic framework for coding qualitative data (Kiger & Lara Varpi, 2020; Maguire & Delahunt, 2017).

Figure 4 shares an overview of the six phases. It is critical to note that while these six steps are presented sequentially, it is not a linear process, and a researcher will find themselves moving back and forth. These are to be seen as a set of guidelines that allow for flexibility rather than a fixed set of rules that should be used to analyze the data and to answer the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2020).
Figure 4- Six Phase Framework for Thematic Analysis

Phase one: familiarisation with the data
- Immersing oneself in the data to understand depth and breadth of the content by transcribing the data, reading and re-reading it and taking notes and searching for patterns and meaning.

Phase two: generating initial codes
- Generate initial codes that represent important and interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set and collating data relevant to each code.

Phase three: generating themes
- Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme. Themes are seen as coherent and meaningful patterns in the data.

Reviewing themes
- Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic ‘map’ of the analysis.

Defining and naming themes
- Through the analysis there is a further refinement of each theme, clear definitions and names for each theme and focused on. The thematic map created should illustrate the overall story the analysis tells.

Producing the report
- Selection of vivid, compelling selected extracts connected to the themes, relating the analysis back to the research question and literature, and producing a scholarly report of the analysis.

Adapted from Braun & Clarke (2006)
While using thematic analysis there are several intentional decisions the researcher must reflect upon and make. Knowledge production requires the researcher’s active role (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Byrne, 2021). These theoretical assumptions are conceptualized and located across a continuum. Braun and Clarke (2006) distinguish between a deductive and an inductive approach to coding and data analysis. An inductive approach is driven by the data itself, where the codes and themes are derived directly from the content of the data. Whereas, a deductive or theoretical thematic analysis, is driven by the analyst’s focus. Here the researcher brings her concepts and ideas about the research topic to the data collected. So, this is more of a top-down approach. In reality, a thematic analysis incorporates both these approaches as it is hard to adopt a completely inductive approach, as we always bring something to the data when we analyze it (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013, 2019). At the same time, the researcher cannot ignore the content of the data when they code. While recognizing this reality, Braun and Clarke (2006) still encourage a researcher to be intentional about adopting either an inductive or deductive orientation.

My analysis of the FGD generated data was a combination of both the inductive and deductive, however, it was more explicitly driven by my theoretical and analytic interest and was, therefore, more of a ‘theoretical’ thematic analysis or a deductive approach to the data coding and analysis. An important factor in the validity of qualitative studies is reaching a data saturation point. Data saturation is described as the “conceptual yardstick” (Guest et al., 2020, p.1) which is used as a guide to estimate the sample size. Data saturation is the point in the data collection and analysis where obtaining new data does not generate new or additional information or themes (Ando et al., 2014; Saunders et al., 2017). For a homogeneous group, like the one in this study, a sample size of 12 is suggested to reach higher degrees of saturation (Guest et al., 2020), and a study by Ando, Cousins, and Young (2014) showed that
12 interviews provided 92.2% of the codes and all the themes. For a small project, like this research, the suggested sample size is six to ten participants for interviews and two to four for focus groups (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 50). This is in keeping with the four FGD’s facilitated in this study that included 21 participants. While facilitating the four FGD’s the researcher followed a semi-structured FGD interview guide that was created to ensure that the three key topics were addressed. These three topics were:

- Can you describe your experiences of growing up as a girl in a South Asian family?
- How does the environment and culture you grew up in impact your self-esteem and role expectations?
- What are your recommendations for the development of an online group-based program for enhancing self-esteem and resilience for girls like yourself?

However, the discussions that ensued were guided by what the participants shared and found meaningful to focus on. The researcher was also cognizant of her attitudes, experiences, and bias during this process. Examples of these are shared in the section on discussion and findings. So, while embracing this reflexive influence of the researchers’ interpretations, there was an intentional effort made to create a space that embraced and valued the voices of the participants.

The researcher conducted four FGD using Zoom, with a total of 21 participants. One with young women raised in South Asian families that shared their inputs from a retrospective point of view and three FGD’s with AGRSAF (adolescent girls raised in South Asian families). Two of these FGD’s with AGRSAF were conducted within the geographies of a South Asian country (India) and the third was conducted with those raised in countries outside South Asia, for example, raised in the United States by South Asian parents who were immigrants. The FGD’s discussions ranged from 93 minutes to 109 minutes. Apart from the verbal discussions, the researcher also leveraged the use of the chat function to capture the
participant’s responses. Since these FGD were conducted via video, they also had the advantage of being able to visually capture the non-verbal cues, body language, and tone of voice. These FGD’s were digitally recorded, the transcripts were automatically generated on the zoom platform, and these were saved on a notepad. The details on each of the four FGD’s is represented in Figure 5, as a table below:

### Figure 5- FGD Details: Duration, Participant Demographics and Description of Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Participant details</th>
<th>Description of the participant group</th>
<th>Duration of FGD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FGD 1</td>
<td>July 9, 2021</td>
<td>Ritu (pseudonym) 17</td>
<td>- South Asian adolescent girls brought up in a South Asian country</td>
<td>108 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 2021</td>
<td>Muntaz 16</td>
<td>- Middle to upper-middle socioeconomic strata</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 2021</td>
<td>Amrita 15</td>
<td>- Living in an urban city</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 2021</td>
<td>Aarti 15</td>
<td>- Age range 15-17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April 2021</td>
<td>Shanti 15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Jamun 16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD 2</td>
<td>July 16, 2021</td>
<td>Shubha 15</td>
<td>- South Asian adolescent girls brought up in a South Asian country</td>
<td>93 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Shruti 13</td>
<td>- Middle to upper-middle socioeconomic strata</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sumati 13</td>
<td>- Living in an urban city</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Radha 15</td>
<td>- Age range 13-15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD 3</td>
<td>July 23, 2021</td>
<td>Tara 14</td>
<td>- Adolescent girls brought up outside South Asia by South Asian parents who are immigrants</td>
<td>102 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Runa 15</td>
<td>- Both parents educated</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Kiran 15</td>
<td>- Age range 13-16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Sheeba 13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maya 16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Raya 15</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FGD 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Roja 28</td>
<td></td>
<td>109 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Nutan 27</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In keeping with Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase framework for the thematic analysis, the researcher began by immersing herself in the data, by viewing and reviewing the recorded zoom videos, and in parallel reading the corresponding verbatim transcripts for each FGD. This was followed by a process of coding, generating themes, naming them, providing descriptions for them along with supporting data extracts in the form of participant quotes.

Figure 6 below is a table that shows a worked example of the process of developing the codes. It includes data extracts taken from all the four FGD’s in response to the same question. The first column has the question, the second column has the data extract in response to the question and the third column shows the codes that were developed. The researcher used a color-coding system to easily match the data extract and the corresponding code.
### Question
Suppose you were in charge of the country/family and could rewrite the social-cultural rules and norms, what would you change and why?

### Data Extract- across all four FGDs

**FGD 1:**

*Shanti:* One of the things I would like to change is expecting only women to do cooking and laundry and other household chores...because when a male does these things, the people are usually surprised or tell him to not do all these things, so what I would want to change is expecting both the genders to learn basic house management chores like cooking and cleaning...

*Ritu (she/her):* I would talk about legal documentation in several pronouns, not just she/he, also have widely used disclaimers for advertising products that target body image, beauty, and our confidence. Would also say paid parental leave for both parents for 1 year and stricter laws for rape prosecution. Also, free basic menstrual hygiene products and widely implemented consent-based sex education.

### Codes

| Change socio-cultural stereotypes | Male stereotypes | Patriarchy and | How to create equality | Legal documentation in several pronouns, not just she/he | Disclaimers for advertising products that target body image, beauty, and our confidence | Parental leave for both parents for 1 year | Stricter laws for rape prosecution | Free basic menstrual hygiene products and widely implemented consent-based sex education | Create awareness and acceptance of LGBTQ+ | Unfair body image issue against women | How to create equality for women | Safety of women |
**Aarti:** I would change the beauty standards because all shapes and shades are beautiful and we should not encourage others to stick by the unfair standard of being thin, having clear skin, or being fair. I would break the stereotypical society of males being the head of the family or males can’t stay in touch with their emotions.

**Mumtaz:** I would get rid of the anti LGBTQ+ laws, I would make the system for women’s safety more robust, I would get rid of the childlike beauty standards for women because it is highly predatory, I would get rid of the system of clothing having a gender.

**Jamun:** If I were in charge of my family, I would want that the girls or women in the family could stay out late; wear short clothes and do whatever they want to. I would also change that a guy in the LGBTQ community could be

- Unfair body image issue against women
- Break gender stereotypes
- Patriarchy and male stereotypes
- Create awareness and acceptance of LGBTQ+
- Safety of women
- Unfair body image issue against women
- Break gender stereotypes
- Create awareness and acceptance of LGBTQ+
In the last few years, people have started to accept that every person is different from another but there's always a slight hint that people can't accept people from different religions or communities. The other thing that I would change is that it's not a rule for women to cook and do the household work.

Suppose you were in charge of the country/family and could rewrite the social-cultural rules and norms, what would you change and why?

**FDG 2**

*Shruti:* I would make the salary for women and men the same. If men in the same job get a raise, a woman should also. Also, there should be more amount of women working in the government to make people aware that a woman can make a change. There should also be workshops for women to help each other and to know they can change their mindsets about themselves. If they can't believe that they can't do it then society would also think the same.

*Shubha:* If I was the head of my family I would change people's opinion of only girls knowing how to cook and clean.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Radha:</th>
<th>I would make the same salary for men and women.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I would also change people’s opinions about body size, texture, skin, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How to create equality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unfair body image issue against women</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suppose you were in charge of the country/family and could rewrite the social-cultural rules and norms, what would you change and why?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>FGD 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheeba: I would change the concept of mental capability towards academics, and I would educate them about mental health. It's because we (South Asians) tend to put more pressure on kids, more than that person can handle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maya: I would change the differences in the expectations for men and women. They should be equal in most ways and society should expect the same things from all people, not just one gender or the other.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raya: I would rewrite the norm that a woman can't do everything a man can do because I think there's a bias in a man's head that has been stemmed from childhood that women aren't equal to men intellectually.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Talk about mental health |
| Change socio-cultural stereotypes against women Break gender stereotypes |
| Patriarchy and male stereotypes |
**Runa:** I would change the norm that women that are single/widowed should be looked down upon. Also, how they should not waste their life by themselves. As well as the fact that women can’t take the lead and or step up.

**Change socio-cultural stereotypes against women**

**Break gender stereotypes**

---

### FGD 4:

**Ida:** I know it is easier said than done but one thing that I would definitely rewrite is, how casually people accept something wrong being normal. It's okay to not be okay. Mental health issues are as real as physical health.

**Talk about mental health**

**Roja:** For me, there shouldn’t be defined expectations from any gender and that’s what I’d like to change- we should be able to do and behave how we like regardless of what gender we are.

**How to create equality**

**Madhu:** I would change the focus on appearance, looking attractive, thin, fair, etc also changes during puberty weight gain, body shifts, etc.

**Unfair body image issue against women**
Figure 7 illustrates the process of the final stage. The codes developed were reviewed and combined to generate sub-themes. These sub-themes led to the generation of one of the final themes that helped address the research question.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Codes</th>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
<th>Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Change Socio-cultural stereotypes against women</strong></td>
<td>Shut down gender stereotypes</td>
<td>Important to raise our voice - suggestions for an online group program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break gender stereotypes</td>
<td>Other talking points- body image, mental health, LGBTQ+</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patriarchy and male stereotypes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to create equality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unfair body image issue against women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talk about mental health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create awareness and acceptance - LGBTQ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared experiences - not alone</td>
<td>Know that you are not alone</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Discussion and Findings

The thematic analysis of the four FGD’s led to the generation of three themes and corresponding eight subthemes. Each of these themes and their subsequent subthemes is described along with data extracts in the form of the FGD participant quotes from across all the four FGD’s. Given my positionality and lived experience as a South Asian woman raised within a patriarchal society, for this section I have intentionally moved from a third person to the first-person style of documentation. This is in keeping with the reflexivity nature of a qualitative thematic analysis. To ensure confidentiality, the data extracts have been presented in an anonymized form, and FGD participants have been given pseudonyms. The themes, subthemes, and the relationships between the themes have been illustrated by a thematic map as shown in Figure 8.
Gender inequality and ME

Impact of patriarchy

Figure 8- Thematic Map

Socio-cultural stereotypes create gender inequality

Not always easy for boys or LGBTQ

Puberty made inequality more apparent

Impact of gender inequality on my self esteem

There is change…but more unequal for my mom than for me

Important to raise our voice - suggestions for an online group

Know that you are not alone

Shut down gender stereotypes

Other talking points- body image, mental health, LGBTQ+

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
<th>Relationship between themes</th>
<th>Link to sub-theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Theme 1: Impact of Patriarchy and Traditional Gender Roles

Subtheme 1.1: Socio-Cultural Stereotypes Create Gender Inequality

'Patriarchy' refers to the rule of the father, or patriarch, and is usually used to describe a traditional male-dominated family, where the father (or patriarch) is head of the house and the main role of the man within a patriarchal family system is that of a breadwinner while that of the woman is a homemaker (Kim, 2018). There is clear evidence of male domination, and all family members live under this rule of the patriarch, the dominant male. A patriarchal society gives priority to men and limits women's opportunities and rights across social, economic, and political processes in society (Sultana, 2010). This then limits her decision-making power, and the girl child is often seen as a burden, while there is a premium placed on a male child within the family structure (Theerthaana & Manzoor, 2018). The South Asian patriarchal and socio-cultural environment continues to exist for adolescent girls raised by first-generation South Asian immigrant families in the United States (Thakore-Dunlap & Velsor, 2014). These stereotypical gender-based roles that are rooted in patriarchy propagate gender-based inequalities. Talking about the typical roles expected of women in a patriarchal society, “Amrita,” a 15-year-old participant made a very matter of fact comment:

Some of it is so basic, like the head of the family [man] the breadwinner would sit at just at one place at the table and the female of the family have to like serve the males, as if you know they can't get up themselves, to get their food. You have to cook it for them, serve it to them and if they need anything you're supposed to leave your food in the middle, you know do whatever it is that they would like. That happens in my family as well.

Adolescent girls are often seen as “women in training” (Dasra, 2012) and they are expected to take on household chores like cooking and caring for younger siblings. While most boys are seen as future heads of families who will provide financial security for parents
in their old age (Hoq, 2020) and this places them at a higher status within the family hierarchical structure. This is in keeping with what I heard across all four FGD’s. Participants believed there was a high level of consensus that patriarchy created an environment that is disempowering to women. Few participants shared that they felt lucky that they were treated equally by their parents however they believed that within the larger society there was a gender inequality towards women. “Sumati,” 13-years-old spoke to this:

I personally have not faced any pressure to learn specific things, but I know some girls in India are pressured to learn how to cook, how to clean, like traditional things girls are supposed to do. It obviously limits them, and they feel like that their sole purpose in life is to keep the house clean, to find a good husband. Now it has become less but it still exists.

“Nutan,” a 27-year-old young woman raised in a South Asian family, shared an ironic insight, drawing attention to how internalized sexism is:

And sometimes misogyny is such a blind spot, like my father [participant is an only child] sometimes would proudly say things like, ‘my daughter is like a son’. And there's something so wrong with that. I know what he means. I know he means it from the best place and from a very empowered place, that she can do anything a boy can do, but the blind spot that exists is that she's like a son. But I’m a daughter and I’m good enough. That is a nuance that's very hard, that they don't get it and that shows up in a lot of things.

For the girls raised in families outside South Asian countries (like the United States) added stereotypes were of them being seen as ‘smart and nerdy’, ‘not good at sports’ or only having ‘arranged marriages.’ Some of them also shared that unlike their non-Asian female peers or their South Asian male peers, dating was still seen as a taboo. “Raya,” 15-years-old raised in the United States by South Asian parents who are immigrants vehemently expressed
her views on this, “It’s probably easier if you were a South Asian boy because it's more socially acceptable for a boy dating 100 girls versus a girl dating 100 boys, you know they have names for that and that’s sort of misogynistic!” As I reflected on this as a first-generation American and mother of a 16-year-old daughter, I admit that initially, I wrestled with this too. However, I have made a conscious effort to treat both my children—boy and girl—with the same ground rules where romantic relations are concerned. Nevertheless, what Raya shared are sentiments I often find echoed by other South Asian parents I meet in my social circles. They are more lenient to their son’s sexual escapades, however, the fear of how to keep their daughters from dating and sexual experimentation is real to many of them.

Subtheme 1.2: Not Always Easy for Boys or the LGBTQ + community

While all participants shared that patriarchy was exploitative of women and supported societal and familial roles that gave men the priority, some participants voiced that sometimes patriarchal attitudes and gender roles were unfair to South Asian boys too like the focus on getting a job, being a breadwinner, being a protector and acting ‘like a man.’ They shared this in the context of their male school friends and the stereotypes of masculinity that adolescent boys must adhere to. Patriarchal cultures can perpetuate the notion of toxic masculinity by keeping men in a box and holding them to outdated traditional gender roles (Tsuneta, 2019). Two data extracts are shared below that illustrate what participants expressed concerning the societal pressure on some South Asian boys and how they can get bullied for the ‘girly’ colors they wear, the ‘cute’ Instagram post they share, or the ‘soft’ emotions they express. “Shruti,” 13 years old expressed, “When boys cry, they are told ‘don’t act like a girl. That’s also a stereotype for both, they assume only a girl cries but it’s actually pretty normal to cry. It is so wrong to say don’t cry like a girl”. In keeping with this sentiment, “Ritu,” a 17-year-old participant shared:
Feminine is seen as worse than masculine. So, girls are not really brought down for exploring their masculine side, but men are so severely brought down if they explore their feminine traits, like if they have a cute aesthetic Instagram or put nail polish. I see them getting bullied for that.

Though the semi-structured FGD interview guide had not raised this topic, through the conversation on gender, participants in two out of the four FGD’s also spoke about the LGBTQ+ community. Homosexuality is still illegal in many South Asian countries (NQAPIA, 2018). Until 2018, homosexuality was a punishable crime in India. Participants shared that even though the law changed, awareness and acceptance are minimal. In their experiences, there is still a strong societal stigma and fear of harassment for those that identify as queer. It’s not easy being open about one’s sexual orientation and there are hardly any LGBTQ+ role models in the public domain. “Ida,” is a 24-year-old woman raised in a South Asian country but has lived and studied in the United Kingdom for five years. She shared her learning journey of awareness about the LGBTQ+ community:

Because of how I was brought up here in India, all these things are very you know hush-hush… it’s when you leave, and you go out you realize many things went wrong. Transgender people have been misinterpreted and LGBTQ too. I think children should be able to take pride that people are unique. This is very lacking in our country [India].

“Ritu,” the 17-year-old who had earlier spoken about how boys are severely bought down for exploring their feminine side, shared that many in her generation are more aware of diversity and sexual orientations, “A lot of us want to be more empathetic and accepting, so we need judgment-free zone where people can learn about different sexualities, genders, etc.” Of all the 21 FGD participants she was the only one who shared her pronouns in her
zoom screen name. I had initially not thought of including a specific module that addressed the stigma and issues the LGBTQ+ community faces or creating supportive spaces to have a conversation to build awareness. But clearly, there is an expressed and felt need. This is a pertinent example of how the data analysis from the FGD directly influenced the content for the Go-Girls e-Huddle Group.

**Theme 2: Gender Inequality and Me**

Theme two captured the direct experience of the participant groups across different aspects related to their lived experience and its impact on their self-esteem, sense of worth, and agency. Under this theme, three sub-themes were generated. Each of them is discussed below, along with data extracts that bring them to life.

**Sub-theme 2.1: Puberty Made Inequality More Apparent**

During the adolescent stage, gender role differentiation increases, thereby intensifying gender-based discrimination (Petroni et al., 2015). The onset of puberty brings physical, hormonal, and neurodevelopmental changes that relate to biological sex differences. However, equally critical is that it magnifies the process of gender socialization where gender identity, roles, and norms start to visibly diverge. For those that live in patriarchal societies, this means that the traditional gender norms start to impact day-to-day living, assigning a higher status to the adolescent male over the female (Kennedy et al., 2020). Participants expressed that once they hit puberty gender inequality becomes more apparent. Some participants noted that there was now a difference even in the expectations teachers had of them, in terms of acceptable behaviors from adolescent girls and this was unfair. “Shubha,” a 15-years-old, sounded annoyed as she shared, “Teachers tell us our skirts are too short. But, being a boy, I would not have to worry about how my dressing affects others and their way of looking at me!” As I reflect on my high school days, more than 30 years ago, it is apparent that not much has changed. Unlike the United States where a student can choose what to wear
to school, in India, schools have a set uniform, and the expectation is that both boys and girls must adhere to this uniform policy. I recall that when I moved into high school, our uniforms changed. We now had to wear skirts that were below our knees, our socks had to cover half our calves and our tops had to be loose fitting and buttoned all the way up to our necks! The idea is to hide ones maturing body.

Participants also expressed that they were now questioned more and in general society had more defined and stricter expectations of them. Restrictions put on girls further impede their access to resources and opportunities (Asghar, 2018). This increased scrutiny propagated a sense of uncertainty and feeling stifled. 16-year-old “Mumtaz,” described her experience:

There is a lot more scrutiny when you are a girl, while a lot of a guy’s behavior are just excused. But every single thing a girl does is questioned five times, like ‘why is she doing this, how she is allowed to do this, I think she should do that’ but when you are a guy they say, ‘okay, you should be fine, you know what you are doing.’ And it causes me to overthink, and I worry about what people will say, it’s a headache. I am not saying there are no expectations for boys too but it’s not suffocating on a daily basis.

Given the reality of sexual abuse and violent crimes against women, participants shared that now that they were older, safety also became an imminent issue and for some this instilled a sense of fear for their safety. “Madhu,” a 22-year-old young woman, passionately expressed, “I am aware of my body constantly from a safety angle, this whole thing of the male gaze. I am just conscious all the time. Am not sure if this is more of a shared challenge of women globally.” Participants also shared that they felt sexualized once they hit puberty. Some expressed a sense of shame and tried to dress in a way to hide their bodies and not call
attention to it, for example, no short skirts, tight-fitting clothes, or show of excessive skin. This feeds into a wrong sense of victim-blaming, as they are blamed for causing eve-teasing. In South Asia, eve-teasing is a euphemism for the public sexual harassment of women by men (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014). It causes a sense of humiliation and fear in the minds of the girls and their parents. It takes the form of staring at their breasts, catcalling and whistling, obscene gestures, singing songs with sexual overtones, passing sexual comments, and attempts to touch or brush up against women. As a result, once a girl hits puberty there are tighter restrictions on her mobility and often girls are made to feel responsible for the sexual harassment and are accused of being provocative in how they dress or act in public (Talboys et al., 2017). Eve teasing is not seen as an adverse outcome of misogyny. “Aarti,” a 15-year-old, spoke about this double standard and how the onus of not being sexualized fell on girls:

I have more guy friends and when I go down in my society [apartment building] and I see them and hug them, aunties or other elders give me the eye. They look me up and down, like ‘oh my God look at her’ but they never look at the guy. They never blame the guy, they say the girls should not do that [hug boys], girls should keep a distance.

“Madhu,” a 22-year-old who had spoken earlier about being conscious of her maturing body and the male gaze, went on to further elaborate on how she felt a sense of shame and therefore attempted to hide her body:

I did not want to be sexualized, so I would wear these really baggy t-shirts. I hated my curves showing. I used to feel really conscious of the way like my breasts look, I wanted to like hide it and cover it and also, I guess out of the desire that I hope nobody is thinking of me like that [in a sexual way].
As I heard these adolescent girls and young women share their experiences with being sexualized and feeling they are to blame, memories of the numerous eve-teasing incidents I and other girls of my generation had to deal with resurfaced. Be it in a crowded marketplace, where someone tried to pinch you as they walked by you or commuting to college via the public bus and having men trying to rub themselves against you. I recall the first time this happened to me I was 12 years old and there was an immense sense of confusion, humiliation, and helplessness. As we grew older the fear of calling them out reduced and many of us also learned ways to create a physical barrier like holding a knitting needle while traveling in a bus. However, even now as I write this section, I can feel the anger and disgust rise again and the need for social advocacy is awoken again. It calls attention to the socio-ecological model and the need for change at a macro level. The day-to-day reality of eve-teasing is still significant and has an adverse impact on women’s participation in public and causes an opportunity cost for them (Dhillon & Bakaya, 2014).

Sub-theme 2.2: Impact of Gender Inequality on My Self Esteem

Gender is a powerful determinant of health, and it shapes many aspects of wellbeing. Restrictive cultural and socially constructed gender norms cause inequalities and have a direct adverse impact on the state of wellbeing (Heise et al., 2019). Numerous longitudinal and cross-sequential studies, including a 2015 cross-cultural study across 48 nations (Bleidorn, 2016) found that men tend to have higher self-esteem than women and this gender gap emerges in adolescence. One contributing factor for this gender gap was the negative consequence of gender roles and stereotypes (Orth & Robins, 2014; Kennedy et al., 2020). Self-esteem is described as an individual’s subjective perception of their worth as a person, (Orth & Robine, 2014). It is seen as the “feeling that one is good enough,” (Rosenberg, 1965, p.31). Self-esteem is a protective factor and is seen as an individual asset that builds resilience (Masten, 2014). As discussed in detail earlier in the literature review, within the
social-ecological paradigm, there is an expansion of resilience and its protective factors like self-esteem, from just an individual biological trait to the social-ecological resources across micro and macro systems (Henderson et al., 2016) that shape the development of individual assets (Phillips et al., 2019).

When I asked the participants if they had personally faced gender-based discrimination the conversation was rich with examples and as one participant opened up it seemed to encourage the others to share too. Participants shared various examples of how they directly experienced gender-based disparity that stemmed from ingrained traditional role expectations and stereotypes and how this impacted their sense of esteem and agency. These societal stereotypes influenced the way they were supposed to:

- sit (*legs closed or crossed*)
- act (*studious, obedient, good girl, cannot use swear words or not have a loud voice*)
- think (*not good at STEM, sports, must put family first, priority is marriage, not career*) and
- look (*fair, thin, clear skin, long hair, hairless smooth arms and leg*)

As participants shared their personal narratives about gender inequality, this feeling of not being good enough was evident. “Ritu,” 17-years-old, shared that due to gender stereotyping she was put down for asking questions and this led her to feel that something was wrong with her capability to understand STEM-related subjects. She went on to share that as a girl she was not given the right tools to learn science and is now faced with a possible lost opportunity in STEM-related careers:

If I was a boy, I feel I would have been trusted more by my teacher. For example, just this year I realized I am very deeply inclined towards science, but for the longest time, I thought I was just simply not, because whenever I had a doubt, and I had many, I was so severely put down for it instead of being uplifted for wanting to learn more. I
realize my learning style for different and I was simply never given the skills to be in touch with possible career choices, but I feel if I was a male, I would have been given those tools much earlier in life and would not have to fend for myself and possibly have a career in the sciences, as opposed to what I am doing right now [she is in the humanities section].

This loss of agency and impact on one’s sense of esteem and capabilities was echoed by other participants too. “Mumtaz,” a 16-year-old shared from her experience at school, located near the capital of India, Delhi, and perceived as a progressive school in urban India. She shared that seeing how the school was placing more value on the male voice, left her and other girls feeling that their voice was not good enough or important enough to be heard. This negatively impacts their subjective sense of worth and self-esteem:

In our school, we have like one head boy, one head girl, and one boy and one girl sports captain. But the head boy and boy sports captain always give like the more important speeches! In like a very subtle way they're (boys) given more importance and more power.

Despite being a progressive urban school, systemic gender inequality is still alive and woven into the very fabric of the school functioning and even for girls in leadership positions, there is no escape. Using the socio-ecological lens, an adolescent girls’ interactions with these reciprocating systems within the school, can prove to be counter-productive in her development of positive self-esteem. Some of the participants also shared how these gender stereotypes were also reflected in the media and Bollywood (Indian film industry) narratives, where the actresses usually need rescuing and invariably had to be good looking by South Asian standard, which meant, slim with a light-toned complexion. “Radha,” a 15-year-old emphatically shared “I have two things to say about Bollywood movies, actresses are always fair-skinned, and the female characters are rarely badass, they always are meant to be saved.”
This notion of needing a man to protect her reflects a patriarchal mindset, where a woman is defined by the man in her life—be it the father, brother, husband, and then son (Madaan et al., 2014). This sends a message that she is not capable of being self-sufficient, further impacting her sense of self-respect and self-esteem. This in turn is a predictor of a person’s subjective level of wellbeing (Ackerman et al., 2011; Du et al., 2017). The second point that “Radha”, raised reflects the definition of what constitutes female beauty in the South Asian context. Self-acceptance is seen as an integral part of self-esteem (Orth & Robins, 2014). Given the media messages that have this rigid definition of the ideal female body type, when a South Asian adolescent finds that she does not fit this predetermined and biased mold, her sense of self-acceptance is adversely impacted. She starts to believe that she is not good enough and it can lead to negative body images issues, especially if she is dark-skinned, does not have a clear complexion, or is not on the thin side. This has prevailed for decades. I recall as a teenager, I was often told by extended family members and family friends, that I had ‘good features, but it was a pity I was so dark skinned’ and many well-intentioned aunties would recommend I use skin lightening products, like ‘Fair and Lovely,’ which till date is one of the fastest-selling beauty product in South Asian countries. This color-based discrimination permeates all aspects of life—be it a career choice or marriage (Sims & Hirudayaraj, 2016). “Raya,” a 15-year-old participant raised in the United States by South Asian parents who are immigrants, spoke of this Eurocentric beauty standard and how it negatively impacts the sense of self for many South Asian girls:

I think that we all try to fit into the Eurocentric beauty standard, which is like fair, blue eyes, blonde hair, you know, and I always see that a lot of Indian girls hate their nose, and I don't understand why because one billion people share our noses so it's not an ugly nose! I think we just need to embrace the way we look more because we always feel less than.
The conversation on gender stereotypes and their direct impact on them was a spirited and rich discussion. I have been intentional about ensuring that the quotes shared above reflect voices from across all FGD’s. These pertain to her reality across her family, school, and neighborhood (usually referred to as ‘society’ by the participants). This fits into the Social-Ecological Model that has been discussed earlier. The focus is on exploring the multiple levels of influence that would include the individual, interpersonal, and community.

**Sub-theme 2.3: More Unequal for Mom Than for Me.**

Many participants shared they were mostly treated equally by their parents and were given the same access to opportunities as their male siblings/cousins. This might also reflect the middle to upper-middle-class socioeconomic strata that the participants came from as evidenced by them being educated in English medium schools (in most South Asian countries, the medium of instruction is English for private schools whereas the government or less expensive schools usually have the medium of instruction in Hindi or the local regional language). They all also have access to family or personal computers, and connectivity to the internet. These sociodemographic characteristics were part of the inclusion criteria. However, for many, this was not how their mothers (role models within the family system) were perceived and treated. It was interesting to note that many made a distinction between their and their mother’s generation. They expressed that for their mothers there was an inequality that existed both inside and outside the home, they voiced that this was unfair and how they would not make the choices and sacrifices their mother made. Kiran, a 15-year-old raised outside India by South Asian parents who are immigrants shared, “My mom says that even if the wife earns more than the husband, the wife would be the one to leave her job because the family is too concerned about what society will think about the husband, leaving his job”.

“Raya,” a 15-year-old raised in the United States by South Asian parents who are immigrants spoke of the same scenario where her mom had to leave her job to take care of them and she
went on to add, “I think that was sort of unfair. I feel if I was ever in that situation, I would not leave my job.” ‘Roja,’ a 28-year-old young woman who is a practicing corporate lawyer shared an intriguing observation about how her father treats her mother and how that is different from the way he treats her, his daughter, as well as how that perhaps has influenced her mother’s advice to her:

I do think it’s very interesting that you know my father has certain expectations from my mother, but he would never expect me to kind of be like that. I don't know if that's a generational difference like he would not want me to compromise my career …my mom was a housewife for the majority of her life, and it was very important to her to raise me to be financially independent.

Facilitating these conversations was an enriching experience for me. It reminded me of the road women of my generation in India had traveled and how far we had come. Our daughters and girls have a better chance. Globally, there is evidence of reducing gender disparities and while there is change even in South Asian countries like India, we still have some ways to go. The current sex ratio at birth in India is evidence of that. The sex ratio at birth is the number of females per thousand males and is an important indicator to assess gender-based inequality (Kumar et al., 2020; Rawat et al., 2021). Due to biological reasons, globally, more boys are born than females. In the absence of any gender discrimination, the WHO estimates the sex ratio at birth to be 952 female live births to 1000 male live births. However, in countries that prefer a son, this sex ratio at birth is often skewed, one of the reasons being sex-selective abortion and female feticide (Rawat et al., 2021; Ritchie & Roser, 2019). The latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) data for 2019-21 indicates that in India the sex ratio at birth is at 929 females per 1000 males, an improvement from 919 in 2015-16, but still lower than the natural sex ratio at birth that is estimated at 952 (The Time of India, 2021). This suggests that prenatal sex-selection abortion continues.
**Theme 3: Important to Raise Our Voice - Suggestions for an Online Group Program**

In recent years South Asia has made progress in terms of human development, however, the inequitable social norms and structural factors seeded in patriarchy continue to create a disempowering environment for girls and women, leading to a neglect of their rights, impact on wellbeing, and missed opportunities across all areas of their lives (Tebaldi & Bilo, 2019). The United Nations Development Program’s (UNDP) Gender Development Index measures the gaps in female and male achievements, and it shows that the largest gap worldwide is in South Asia (UNDP, 2018). There continue to be high levels of gender inequality that negatively impact South Asian adolescent girls. Prevention and promotive-based approaches for adolescents have proven to promote and build resilience and self-esteem, adding to protective psychological factors (Donavan & Spence, 2000; WHO, 2020). The adolescence period is seen as an ideal time for these preventive and promotive-based interventions that are psychoeducational, as it provides a significant and dynamic developmental opportunity (Morton & Montgomery, 2013; Steinberg, 2014).

The third theme from the FGD data analysis reflects the responses to the semi-structured questions related to the content and design for an online group-based program for enhancing self-esteem and resilience skills for South Asian adolescent girls. Apart from the ongoing verbal discussion, the researcher requested all the participants to share their suggestions via the chat function. This was done to ensure that everyone had an equal opportunity to share their inputs. This theme, therefore, incorporates data from both the verbal sharing as well as the text chat responses and has three sub-themes.

**Sub-theme 3.1: Know That You Are Not Alone**

Building a community where they could connect, relate, and support each other was seen as a significant benefit by participants across all four FGD’s. The interpersonal nature of group-based interventions creates opportunities for healing and growth, as it provides a safe,
brave, and supportive space for adolescent girls (especially within a patriarchal society) to find their voice, share their anxieties and fears, as well as learn and practice healthy coping skills that strengthen their sense of psychological wellbeing (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2017). Knowing that others are going through similar challenges helps and provides a space where together they can brainstorm ideas and solutions. This could also be a space where they could share with no fear of judgment, or even just laugh and bring their frustrations. Use of breakout rooms, smaller groups, fun interactive activities, and time to share was suggested.

Since this line of thought was evidenced across all four FGD’s, data extracts from each FGD have been shared below. “Radha,” 15-years old shared that it was, “Important to share our stories, as we will learn from each other and get a perspective of what others have been through and that’s really helpful”. “Maya,” a 16-year-old raised in the United States, who was part of the third FGD for adolescents raised outside a South Asian country added another dimension of meeting new people across the globe who shared a similar life experience, “I kind of like the idea that we get to meet new people from everywhere and connect to a whole bunch of people who share the same issue and want to talk and share.” Others shared similar sentiments about it being online and spoke to the element of anonymity. “Tara,” a 14-year-old spoke about how, “We can relate on many things and kind of understand each other but since we do not all go to the same school or live in the same state, its good, as then no one can go around saying stuff!”

Groups also promote an understanding that one is not alone in their life challenge by universalizing the issues members face, which can be empowering, liberating, and validating and it nurtures a sense of belonging (Gitterman & Knight 2016). Harnessing the benefits of group intervention via an attachment lens creates an inherent opportunity to get and give nurturance through a process of mutual aid, sharing of common experiences and this further cultivates relational growth and empowerment (Harper, 2010; Knight, 2006). “Roja” the
oldest participant at 28 years old emphatically shared from both her personal and professional space:

I think that change can only happen when women stand for other women, and I think we as women need to make conscious efforts to support each other … I mean I know everyone says that it's so much easier working for a male boss than working for a female boss, but I’ve had the most amazing women bosses in my career.

From a reflexive lens, I echo what I heard across these FGD’s. Even before I joined this Doctoral program, I knew that for my thesis, I wanted to create a group program for young girls and women raised in a South Asian culture, similar to mine. The driving force was that I had benefited from a supportive nonjudgmental group and had learned to navigate through the patriarchal system to come out feeling equipped. The intent is the creation of a similar modality, which reflects a secure base in the form of a group and a responsive group leader. This would help provide a beneficial group climate for consensual validation, acceptance, and positive regard from peers who have gone through similar challenges in their life (Gallagher et al., 2014; Knight, 2006).

**Sub-theme 3.2: Shut Down Gender Stereotypes**

Stereotypes about South Asian girls was another rich and animated discussion, with many participants sharing from their own lived experiences. This was a key issue that most wanted to address through this online group program. Programs that discuss gender roles to question stereotypes, can help build their sense of agency, enhance negotiation and communication skills, and counter gender disparities (Dasra, 2012). The idea of critical consciousness, developed by Paulo Freire, spoke of being intentional and educating people in a way that creates the opportunity for them to “deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (Freire, 2000, p. 34). When
people are made aware of the ways the interdependent macro-level systems and institutions perpetuate systemic inequity, they can resist it and attempt to break the oppressive cycle (Jemal, 2017). “Mumtaz,” 16-years-old spoke to this psychoeducational element being a part of the program content. She stressed the need to help women understand the origin of patriarchy and be able to question it, knowing that it’s not personal but more systemic:

Educate women on how the system is built to favor men and make women feel insufficient no matter what they do because once they realize that they are good enough and it's just the system that makes them feel bad, they'll be much happier. So, telling girls that they have the power to do whatever they want and that they don't have to follow the life society wants them to, is important.

“Runa,” 15-years-old and raised in the United States by South Asian parents and part of another FGD, shared a similar view, stressing the need for women to stand up and not be worried about stereotypical societal expectations, “As a woman, you can step up and take charge you don't have to back down from a challenge because you’re afraid of what others will say.” ‘Sheeba,” also, raised in the United States by a South Asian mother, spoke from her personal experience about what she would like to see in this program, “Break stereotypes about intelligence and barriers about relationships like living life being single or remarrying after being a widow.” “Shanti,” had a practical suggestion that reflected an egalitarian approach, sharing that both genders should learn basic household chores. While this might seem a basic expectation in the United States, in a country like India the onus usually falls on the female gender, and to expect a man to help in the house, is seen as unthinkable (Dasra, 2012):

One of the things I would like to change is expecting only women to do cooking, laundry, and other household chores because when a male does these things, the
people are usually surprised or tell him to not do all these things! So, what I would want to change is expecting both genders to learn basic house management chores like cooking and cleaning.

Bringing in women guest speakers, who could offer an alternate narrative to the stereotypes, like those in leadership positions was suggested by a few participants. “Sumati,” 13-years-old shared, “A lot of girls don’t actually believe because of the stereotypes around then. They do not think they can succeed or be something different. So having workshops can show them and help them believe they can do it and push them forward.” “Shruti”, another 13-year-old in the same FGD, added to “Sumati’s,” point by suggesting, “Show videos, like about how women stood up against society. Also, bring in someone who is an inspiration”. As I heard these young girls share, including the youngest participants, I could not help but feel excited about the possibilities. They had the awareness and courage to question the status quo. The seeds that were planted by previous generations of women, had taken root. Social advocacy works and change is imminent.

Sub-theme 3.3: Other Talking Points- Body Image, Mental Health, and LGBTQ+

Three other topics emerged as important and relevant to discuss through an online group program, relating to body image, mental health, and the LGBTQ+ community. Focusing on the first aspect that arose across all the four FGD’s was body image issues and the South Asian woman. A hallmark of patriarchal societies is the objectification of women – which translates into the value and worth of a woman being linked mostly to her physical attributes. For example, a lighter skin tone is like a form of social capital, especially when women enter the arranged marriage market (Utley & Darity, 2016). One of India’s most-read English language magazines is called ‘Femina’ (Gopaldas & Siebert, 2018), its main audience is women and covers topics on fashion, health, relationships, and beauty. A study conducted by Gopaldas and Siebert (2018), reviewed the images marketed in Femina and the
results showed that the images were mostly of women who were thin, young, and light-skinned, re-enforcing the stereotypical definition of female beauty within a South Asian context. Reflecting on this reality, the other topic that surfaced through the FDG discussions was a need to address body image issues and help girls embrace their physical bodies.

“Aarti,” a 15-year-old participant categorically shared:

I would change the beauty standards because all shapes and shades are beautiful and we should not encourage others to stick by the unfair standard of being thin, having clear skin, or being fair. And would also want the beauty companies to be inclusive of all shades.

Participants across all four FGD’s echoed the same as they spoke about the need to “accept one’s body, focusing on health over looks” (“Ritu,” a 17-year-old) and sharing that “media must include more representation of skin types, body types, etc” (“Sumati,” 13-year-old).

“Nutan,” a 27-year young woman who was preparing for her upcoming marriage in two months, shared how she was trying to lose weight before her marriage. She spoke from her own lived experience dealing with her weight over the years and the pressure one can feel due to societal stereotypes of beauty:

This has just really screwed with my relationship with food, there have been times in my life, where I found myself just binging to and I have friends who are dealing with years and years of anorexia caused by the fact that we, as a society keep commenting very freely on each other’s bodies like it's all right!

When asked the question what participants think are key points to address in the program content, the need to de-stigmatize mental health also came up. Creating spaces to have conversations around, “mental wellbeing, being just as important as physical health”, was voiced by “Shanti,” a 15-year-old participant and she continued to add that the platform
for “this conversation should be at a larger societal level, schools as well as with our families.” Ida, a 24-year-young woman raised in a South Asian family, but who had spent five years in the United Kingdom studying shared that it is important to:

Teach everybody that normal is relative, there is no such thing as normal that you have to, you know stick by the book. That's something that I struggle with and feel really strongly about it… it's okay to not be okay.

As I heard a few participants share about the need to raise awareness about mental health, it clearly spoke to the felt needs of the participant group. In most South Asian countries, which are collectivist, mental illness is still stigmatized, and people are likely to keep their problems to themselves, rather than seek professional mental health services or counseling as seeking help is perceived as a failure of the family and bringing shame to the family (Karasz et al., 2019; Chadda & Deb, 2013). I had initially not thought of including a session that addressed mental health, but through the data analysis, it became evident that this was a need. Given the increasing toll on mental wellbeing as the world globally navigates through the uncertainty of COVID, this need has become more visible and amplified. Globally, adolescents have experienced higher rates of anxiety, depression, and stress due to the pandemic (Jones et al., 2021; Salima et al., 2021). This is another example of how the data analysis from the FGD directly influenced the content for the Go-Girls e-Huddle Group.

Another talking point few participants shared was the need to build awareness about the LGBTQ+ community. “Raya,” a 15-year-old raised in the United States by South Asian parents who are immigrants shared her suggestion as:
My recommendations for an online group that aims to increase self-esteem is to address the messy things that no one really talks about because if we never address it, we will never move past it, things like gender inequality, unfair prejudice to women, and the LGBTQ+ community.

Ritu, a 17-year-old and the only participant that used pronouns, shared that she would like to talk about, the “legal documentation in several pronouns, not just she/he.” As shared earlier in the discussion under ‘Subtheme 1.2: Not Always Easy for Other Gender too…Boys and LGBTQ+’ while the law in India changed in 2018 with the Supreme Court, decriminalizing homosexuality, the reality is that socially there is still a need to enact these rights and the LGBTQ+ community continues to face discrimination, stigma, and even a threat of violence (Wareham, 2020; Majumdar & Kar, 2021). Though this came up only in two of the four FGD’s, thanks to this expressed felt need, I strongly believe we must include a section on gender and sexual diversity in one of the modules. The idea is to create a non-judgmental space to build awareness, ask questions, and feel accepted.

**Reflexivity as a Researcher**

The self is always present in qualitative research. In qualitative research, there is an acknowledgment and dependence on the subjectivity of the researcher, as they draw upon their own values and background to further understand what their participants mean and bring in their narration (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Byrne, 2021; Holloway & Brown, 2012). The researcher has pre-existing knowledge and sometimes even lived experience and that forms an integral resource for the research. Since like the participants I have my roots in a South Asian culture, there was a sense of a shared experience and understanding of patriarchy, which eased the process for sharing in a non-judgmental space and not having to spend time explaining customs or concepts that a person who has lived in a South Asian country will relate to, for example, the role of ‘aunties’, products like ‘Fair and Lovely’, the changing
school uniforms, how the school system is set up or living in close quarters in urban apartment buildings called societies. However, at the same time, there is a need for the researcher to also be aware of their own bias and call these out. Reflexivity allowed me to introspect and recognize my bias in the data collection and interpretation and be intentional about creating space to hear the participant's voice over my subjectivity. For example, when a few of them shared that it was sometimes hard on boys too as they had to live up to stereotypical masculine roles, I found myself asking for more examples as I could not instinctively and easily relate to that, as compared to how I did when they spoke about the gender inequality they faced as the female gender. As I introspected, I realize that reflected my generation of women, who were so burdened by patriarchy and chauvinistic men that there was little space to empathize with them. However, I know this is important and we need to bring men alongside this journey and understand how patriarchy does not benefit them either, in the hope of raising boys who are feminist too.

I was also aware of my subjectivity in the FGD that consisted of adolescent girls raised outside a South Asian country. When the participants raised in the United States by South Asian parents who were immigrants, just like myself, spoke about the unfair restrictions put on their sexual expression as girls, whether it be in the clothes they wanted to wear or going on dates in high school, for a second, I was tempted to speak on behalf of their parents. I made a conscious effort to provide a supportive space for open dialogue and anchored myself in my professional role as a social worker, rather than try to engage from my role as a South Asian mother, who is an immigrant herself raising children in the United States. Overall, as I reflect back, the data collection process through the FGD’s was an enriching and invigorating experience for me. As a South Asian woman who grew up in a patriarchal environment, albeit over 30 years ago, I felt a close connection to the points that came up and I could relate to the personal examples of gender stereotyping and its impact on
their sense of self. Sadly, some were the same examples that I grew up with but I also, recognized that there was also positive change, and these young girls were not passively accepting the gender inequality but rather were demanding change. Hearing them further incentivized me to give my best in the creation of the Go-Girls e-huddle group program. It reminded me of how our lived experiences form an invisible but tangible and palpable presence across the different domains of our life and the words of Malala Yousafzai, said during her Nobel Peace prize speech in 2014, come alive. “I tell my story, not because it is unique, but because it is not. It is the story of many girls.”

Consultation with Subject Matter Experts

The researcher consulted with three subject matter experts (SME) that covered a spectrum of gender studies and the South Asian population, clinical practice with South Asian families, girl-focused participatory research and program development, online course design, learning and pedagogy, and management of online teaching environments. These consultations served the purpose of collateral information and have been reflected in the content, methodology, and pedagogical aspects of the manual development. The consultations ranged from 50 to 75 minutes and were conducted online. Two of the three SMEs were social workers. A brief description of the three SME’s has been captured in the table below:
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<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Dr. Inderjit (Vicky) Basra, DSW</td>
<td>Social worker of South Asian descent, raised in Canada in a first-generation immigrant family. They are currently the President and CEO of the Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center, a US-based organization that engages communities, organizations, and individuals through research, advocacy, training, and model programming to advance the rights of girls and young women especially those impacted or at risk of being impacted by the juvenile justice system.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Dr. Ramani Sundaresan, M.B.B.S. (Christian Medical College, Ludhiana, India).</td>
<td>An eminent social activist, seasoned medical doctor, and clinical practitioner based in India with over 40 years of direct client work and advocacy. They have held leadership positions in the development sector, with a focus on gender-based violence, mental health, crisis intervention, human rights and custodial care, and women-centric initiatives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Dr. Lia W.Marshall, MSW, Ph.D.</td>
<td>Social work researcher in gerontology, Lecturer, and Manager of Course Development for the Columbia School of Social Work, online campus. They have years of experience in qualitative research and program evaluation, as well as expertise in pedagogy for online course curriculum development, best practices for the creation of inclusive and collaborative virtual learning environments, and strategies to practice critically reflective teaching.</td>
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CHAPTER 4
Strengths, Limitations, Implications, and Conclusion

Strengths and Limitations

A key strength of the study was the comprehensive approach of incorporating four key components that informed the design, content, and methodology of the program. Apart from being based on CBT strategies typically seen in empirically supported CBT protocols and sound theoretical frameworks, the study was intentional about embodying a participatory approach and strength-based lens. This is reflected in the seeking of a spectrum of voices of the end-users and getting inputs from subject matter experts. As part of this participatory research approach, the design included four FGD’s that comprised of 21 participants; eleven South Asian adolescent girls, between the ages of 13 to 17 years who were raised within a South Asian country; six South Asian adolescent girls, between the ages of 13 to 16 years raised outside South Asia by South Asian parents who are immigrants; and, five young South Asian women between the ages of 22 to 28 who were raised in South Asian families and shared their experience from a retrospective lens. These 21 participants represented most of the major religions found in South Asia- Hinduism, Islam, Sikhism, and Christianity. Three consultations were held with SME’s. Two of them shared inputs from a macro advocacy and micro clinical perspective and the third shared insights from a pedagogy aspect for virtual curriculums and learning environments. Using these four sources of information to develop the Go-Girls e-Huddle Practice Manual as a culturally component program is a fundamental strength.

The positionality of the researcher as an insider as a South Asian woman, who was raised in India within a patriarchal system, and was now raising a South Asian adolescent girl helped in creating a bridge with the participant groups. The researcher’s prior clinical
experience with this population group as well as her own lived narrative served as pre-existing knowledge (Holmes, 2020; Sanghera & Bjokert 2008) and helped in asking more meaningful questions and being better able to understand the colloquial language. Another inherent strength lies in the implementation design of the manual. Given the need to invest in e-models of intervention, as we have seen amplified through the pandemic, this manual has been created with digitally accessible resources- in the form of the facilitator guide, supporting PowerPoints, worksheets, and other interactive activities. The creation of e-huddle groups using virtual platforms reduces geographical barriers making it more accessible to South Asian adolescent girls’ groups globally. Lastly, the suggested methodology and resources allow for flexibility to meet the evolving needs of the group and can be adapted across different adolescent age groups.

The limitations of this study included a small sample size of 21 participants, across 4 FGD’s. While this number of relatively homogeneous participants meets the criteria for data saturation, given that they represent an urban middle-class population, it limits the generalization across other South Asian populations that are rural and/or from lower socio-economic strata. As shared earlier, South Asians refer to individuals who can trace their ancestry to countries that were part of the Indian subcontinent: India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Maldives, Afghanistan, Burma, and Bhutan (Central Intelligence Agency, 2014). All these countries are diverse in their socio-cultural, religious, political, and economic backgrounds. However, given that they have a long history of thousands of years of inhabiting the Indian subcontinent, they have a longstanding common way of life that cuts across the diversity (Sharif, 2009). India accounts for 69.8 % of the South Asian population and all except two of the 21 participants have their roots in India. So, while South Asian countries, share a homogeneity in some common values that reflect in their family traditions and a collectivistic orientation to the way they live (Inman & Tummala-Narra, 2010), there
are definite cultural, economic, religious, and political differences that impact the lived experience of a South Asian girl. This is a limitation of the study, and it is recommended that future research incorporate a larger sample that allows for proportional representation across all South Asian countries. Lastly, the manual has been written in English which limits its ease of use across various South Asian adolescent groups, that may not be as fluent in English, as their first language. It is acknowledged that while a language translation can be done using a digital application like google translate, it will have to be validated for accuracy and regional language nuances.

Implications for Practice

The population of South Asia is about 1.9 billion or about one-fourth of the world's population, making it both the most populous and the most densely populated geographical region in the world (The World Bank, 2019). South Asia also has high levels of gender inequality. The United Nations Development Program’s Gender Development Index found that the largest gap worldwide in female and male achievements is in South Asia (Tebaldi & Bilo, 2019). Patriarchy is a deeply rooted cultural phenomenon in South Asian countries which leads to an explicit preference for the male child and discriminatory practices against the female child. Girls are seen as an economic burden, requiring her parents to give a dowry for her to be suitably married, and then she moves into her husband’s home and family and becomes part of them. When we examine the gender-based divide using a core social work ideology and concept - the ‘person in environment’ theoretical framework- our understanding of the socio-cultural context and its implications on the nexus of gender, mental health, and environment deepens. Discriminatory gender norms in South Asian countries limit girls’ ambitions and opportunities, leaving many invisible and voiceless.

To counter this reality, there is a need for prevention and promotive based approaches that can serve as protective psychological factors as they promote and build resilience and
self-esteem (Donavan & Spence, 2000; WHO, 2020) and can also positively influence and foster strengths, skills, and attitudes that might have a long-term impact as these South Asian adolescent girl’s transition into adulthood (WHO, 2017). The Go-Girls e-Huddle program is one such proposed initiative that creates a safe and supportive platform for the adolescent girl to have her voice heard and be visible, to connect with others like her and feel accepted, and to brainstorm ways to navigate through the socio-cultural patriarchal norms and mindset. Through the use of this facilitator-led peer-based group, the hope is to strengthen the individual and collective voice of these adolescent girls to question the status quo and impact change at the community level (however small) by making their socio-cultural environment more responsive and supportive of them.

Looking at the practical implications for practice, several points are important to highlight. The Go-Girls e-Huddle group was intentionally designed to be a digital resource that would allow for increased accessibility for both facilitators and participants. The pandemic has further necessitated an increased adoption of e-therapy as evidenced by the robust shift to online mental health care (Asmundson & Taylor, 2020). This has further enabled a wider acceptance of web-based interventions by both providers and clients (Wind et al., 2020). There is a zero to minimal cost element, making it extremely affordable to implement. Given that there is no physical space that is required, it helps participants across geographical boundaries to connect, adding to the richness of discussions and building of virtual social support networks. It also provides an element of anonymity that enhances the sense of safety. The Go-Girls e-Huddle group has been designed for a non-clinical population and can be facilitated by culturally responsive group facilitators that already engage with adolescent populations, like schoolteachers and counselors. Given that this manual incorporates the experiences of adolescent girls raised in immigrant South Asian families in the United States, it can be a culturally relevant resource for those working with
this population group. It also has an element of flexibility so it can be easily adapted for different age groups and encourages the active participation of all stakeholders, including bringing in current and additional resources.

**Conclusion**

South Asia has made considerable overall progress in terms of its human development, but the reality of the continuing patriarchal and socio-cultural environment South Asian adolescent girls are raised in, creates a system of significant gender inequalities (Tebaldi & Bilo, 2019; Theerthaana & Manzoor, 2018). South Asian American youth born of immigrant parents also face this gendered double standard and patriarchal attitude (Ragavan et al., 2018). The adolescence period is seen as one of the optimal times for preventive and promotive-based interventions that are psychoeducational, as it provides a significant and dynamic developmental opportunity (Morton & Montgomery, 2013; Steinberg, 2014) for positive influence and augmenting self-esteem and resilience. Harnessing virtual platforms to facilitate such group programs, allows for enhanced accessibility and affordability.

The Go-Girls e-Huddle Group program was created as an online culturally component program in response to this need, for a non-clinical population and easy to use and adapt resource for facilitators that already engage with adolescent groups. It was intentional in its design, using a participatory and strengths-based approach and incorporating evidence-based practices like techniques based on cognitive behavioral therapy and positive psychology to create the scope for increased self-esteem and resilience. The group modality through the lens of attachment theory generates opportunities for healing and growth, as it provides a safe, brave, and supportive space for adolescent girls (especially within a patriarchal society) to find their voice, share their anxieties and fears, as well as learn and practice healthy coping skills that strengthen their sense of psychological wellbeing (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2017).
The hope is that the Go-Girls e-Huddle group program can act as a catalyst and create a platform to have candid conversations for South Asian adolescent girls to support each other and share ideas for collective growth and change. Through a journey of empowerment, they will be encouraged to seek a clearer and evolving understanding of themselves, of their inherent worth and right for equality. This awareness will inspire South Asian adolescent girls to effectively navigate their socio-cultural environment and collectively strengthen their voice to question the status quo and impact change at a personal, familial, and community level. They will get in touch and know the ‘Shakti’ that resides within each of them. Shakti is the name of a female Hindu goddess and worshipped by millions as a goddess of creation, a conqueror, and a goddess of destruction. The song lyrics from the Hindi movie, ‘Aakhir Kyon?’ [But Why?], released in 1985, about a woman’s journey through a patriarchal world aptly captures the essence of the Go-Girls e-Huddle practice manual. “कोमल है कमजोर नहीं तू, शक्ति का नाम ही नारी है” [‘You are gentle, but not weak, The very name of a woman (Shakti) is divine power’] (Indeever, 1985).

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Appendices

Appendix A - Parental Informed Consent Form

- A Culturally Competent Online Group Intervention for
Enhancing Resilience and Self Esteem of Adolescent Girls
Raised in South Asian Families

Principal Investigator: Dr. Melanie Masin-Moyer, DSW, LCSW
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E-mail: aparnaba@upenn.edu
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E-mail: mmas@upenn.edu
Aparna Samuel Balasundaram
E-mail: aparnaba@upenn.edu
Phone USA: 512-705-2501
Phone India- via WhatsApp- 9582800790

Sponsor None
Research Study Summary for Potential Participants

This study is being conducted by a graduate student in the Doctorate of Clinical Social Work (DSW) program at the School of Social Policy & Practice at the University of Pennsylvania. Your daughter is being invited to participate in Focus Group Discussion (FGD), as part of a research study. Her participation is voluntary, and you should only give consent for her to participate if you completely understand what the study requires and what the potential risks and benefits of participation are. If you have any questions about your daughter's rights as a human research participant at any time before, during, or after participation, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (215) 898-2614 for assistance.

Adolescent girls raised in South Asian families and who are between the ages of 13 to 16 are being invited to participate in a FGD using Zoom. The FGD group size will be a maximum of up to eight adolescent girls, it will be conducted by the researcher and will last up to 90 minutes. This FGD is being conducted to get a deeper understanding of the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of Adolescent girls raised in South Asian families. The FGD’s are not supposed to detect a disease or find something wrong. Your daughter’s participation is voluntary which means you and/or she can choose whether she should participate. If you decide to participate or not to participate there will be no loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Before you decide, you will need to know the purpose of the study, the possible risks, and benefits of being in the study, and what you will have to do if you decide to participate. You do not have to decide now; you can discuss it with family and your daughter and then make your decision.

If you do not understand what you are reading, do not sign it. Please ask the researcher to explain anything you do not understand, including any language contained in this form. If you decide that your daughter can participate, you will be asked to sign this form and a copy
will be given to you. If you decide to give consent for your daughter to participate, we will then also reach out to her to get her written consent. This form will be emailed to her, with a copy for you too. Keep both these forms, in it, you will find contact information and answers to questions about the study. You may ask to have this form read to you.

If you agree to join the study, you will be asked to complete the following research procedures:

Your daughter’s participation will last for 90 minutes. This will be done during a mutually agreed upon time and there is no financial cost to you. These will be done via an established digital platform, called Zoom. These Zoom sessions will be recorded for the purpose of ensuring the program was run as intended on the part of the researcher. They will be deleted after the thesis is accepted and passed. There are no known common risks of participation.

If you are interested in your daughter participating, and you have any questions please do reach out to the researcher, and she will review the information with you. You are free to decline or stop participation at any time during or after the initial consenting process.

**Why am I being asked to volunteer?**

Your daughter is being invited to participate in a FGD to provide data that will form part of a research study. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of this study is to better understand if we might increase the self-esteem and resilience of South Asian adolescent girls, by conducting an online group program that is informed by evidence-based research and sound clinical theory. Research has shown that by increasing self-esteem and resilience, we might be able to promote positive well-being.

Adolescence is a time of many changes and for the female adolescent, these changes happen within a socio-cultural system that sometimes may not be supportive of her entire potential.

This study is focused on the development of an online strength-focused group intervention.
program that may help counter the inhibiting beliefs by providing an adolescent girl raised in South Asian families the supportive space to share, learn and build skills to enhance her resilience and self-esteem. This study is being conducted for a dissertation for a Doctorate in Clinical Social Work degree at the University of Pennsylvania.

**Why was I asked to participate in the study?**

Your daughter is being invited to participate in a FGD as part of a research study because we propose to engage with the adolescent girls between the ages of 13 to 16 who are raised in South Asian families. The information analyzed from these FGD’s will be used in the development of the Go Girls e-Huddle Group, an online culturally competent group intervention to promote the protective factors of resilience and self-esteem for adolescent girls raised in South Asian families. These FGD’s are in keeping with the participatory approach the researcher is utilizing and ensures that their voices are being heard and it may also be seen as an opportunity for them to actively contribute and meaningfully influence the development of a group intervention that may benefit them and their peers in the near future.

**How long will I be in the FGD?**

The FGD will last up to 90 minutes. This will be up to eight girls per FGD and all are invited to participate equally. However, no one will be forced or obligated to respond to any question. The choice to answer or not is totally up to your daughter and this will be clearly shared with them.

**Where will the FGD take place?**

The FGD will take place over zoom at a mutually agreed upon time. The researcher will share her Zoom account details and link.

**What will I be asked to do?**
Your daughter along with the other group members will be invited to be part of a conversation to explore and better understand their perception and experiences of being raised as an adolescent in a South Asian family.

**What are the risks?**

Potential harm to participants in the FGD is unlikely as the questions are meant to explore and reflect to gain their understanding. There will be no forced answering or pressure to answer any question. There are no right or wrong answers, and this will be clearly articulated and emphasized at the start as well as during the FGD. There are no questions that lead to any mental health diagnosis. However, if they were to feel some distress, the researcher, who is a trained clinician will use grounding techniques and mindfulness to regulate and ease the distress. Participant confidentiality is a top priority, and the study is designed for minimal risk of any breach in confidentiality. The notes and study data will be kept with the researcher in a locked file drawer. The data will be entered into the researcher’s laptop with only the identification number, and the laptop is password protected. The Zoom sessions will be recorded for the purpose of data analysis. They will be deleted after the thesis is accepted and passed.

**How will I benefit from the study?**

The benefits of being a participant in this FGD may be seen as an opportunity for your daughter to feel heard and have her thoughts validated as she meaningfully influences the development of a group intervention that may benefit her and her peers in the near future.

**Will I receive the results of the research?**

Once the final dissertation is done and approved, it will be uploaded on the University website and will be open to public access and download.

**What other choices do I have?**
The alternative to being in the study is to not be in the study. This is not a mandated program, and there are no negative consequences for not participating.

**What happens if I do not choose to join the research study?**

You may choose to let your daughter join the FGD or you may choose not to consent for her to join the FGD. Your consent is voluntary. There is no penalty if you choose not to join the research study.

**When is the FGD over? Can I leave the FGD before it ends?**

The FGD is expected to end in 90 minutes. The FGD may be stopped without your consent for the following reasons:

- The PI feels it is best keeping you and your daughters’ interests in mind-you will be informed of the reasons why.
- The participants have not followed the study instructions.
- The PI, co-investigator, or the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Pennsylvania can stop the study anytime.

You have the right to drop out of the research study and the FGD at any time during your participation. There is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you decide to do so. If you no longer wish to be in the research study, please contact the researcher- Aparna Samuel Balasundaram, at her email- aparnaba@upenn.edu and let her know your decision to withdraw from the study. Nothing else needs to be done.

**How will my personal information be protected during the study?**

We will do our best to make sure that the personal information obtained during this research study will be kept private. However, we cannot guarantee total privacy. Your personal information may be given out if required by law. If information from this study is published or presented at scientific meetings, your name and other personal information will not be
used. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Pennsylvania will have access to a de-identified version of the data records.

Participant confidentiality is a top priority. Study data will be kept with the researcher in a locked file drawer with no names attached, just an identification number that will be assigned. The list of names attached to the study identification numbers will be kept in a locked file drawer in the office of the researcher. The data will be entered into the researcher’s laptop with only the identification number, and the laptop is password protected. No names or identifying descriptors will be reported. The zoom sessions that were recorded for the purpose of data collection and analysis, will be deleted after the thesis is accepted and passed. However, given that this is a FGD and there will be other participants present we cannot guarantee total confidentiality on behalf of those group members. As a group norm, the importance to maintain confidentiality will be emphasized, however, it cannot be guaranteed.

An exception to confidentiality is if your daughter reports any suicidal or homicidal ideation or intent to the researcher. This will be shared, keeping in interest the safety and well-being of your child.

**Future Use of Data**

There is no future use of the date, it will be used only for the purpose of this dissertation study.

**What happens if I am injured from being in the study?**

There is no anticipated injury that will take place as the FGD is being held on an online platform. There are no plans for the University of Pennsylvania to pay you or give you other compensation for any injury. You do not give up your legal rights by signing this form. If you think you have been injured because of taking part in this research study, tell the person
in charge of the research study as soon as possible. The researcher’s name, email, and phone number are listed in the consent form.

**Will I have to pay for anything?** There are no costs for this study.

**Will I be paid for being in this study?** There is no compensation for this study.

**Who can I call with questions or if I am concerned about my rights as a research subject?**

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints regarding your participation in this research study or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you should speak with the principal researcher listed on page one of this form. If a member of the research team cannot be reached or you want to talk to someone other than those working on the study, you may contact the Office of Regulatory Affairs with any questions, concerns, or complaints at the University of Pennsylvania by calling (215) 898-2614.

When you sign this document, you are agreeing to take part in this research study. If you have any questions or there is something you do not understand, please ask. You will receive a copy of this consent document.

_____________________________  ________________
Parent Date

_____________________________  ________________
Researcher Date
Appendix B

ASSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH


1. My name is Ms. Aparna Samuel Balasundaram and I work with young people like yourself.

2. I am asking you to take part in a research study because we are trying to learn more about possible ways to increase a South Asian teenage girls’ sense of esteem, confidence, and ability to bounce back from stress or negative events. We hope this will help improve positive well-being.

3. If you agree to be in this Focus Group Discussion that forms a part of this study, you will be invited to be part of a 90-minute group discussion along with a maximum of seven other teen girl raised in South Asian families. This meeting will take part on Zoom.

4. The zoom sessions will be recorded so that I can listen to them later as I process the key information you share. This recording will be deleted after my dissertation is accepted. Your information will be secret, and no personal data will be shared.

5. The benefits of being a participant in this FGD may be seen as an opportunity for you to share your voice, actively contribute, and meaningfully influence the development of a group intervention that may benefit you and your peers in the near future.

6. Results of this study may help us better understand a way to create, improve and implement culturally appropriate online programs for teenage girls, with the purpose of
increasing their self-esteem and resilience. The findings may be used to inform best practices and explore ways it may benefit other adolescent girls in the future.

7. Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether to participate. But even if your parents say “yes” you can still decide not to be in this study.

8. If you don’t want to be in this study, you do not have to participate. Remember, being in this study is up to you and no one will be upset if you do not want to participate or even if you change your mind later and want to stop.

9. You can ask any questions that you have about this study by emailing me at aparnaba@upenn.edu with your question.

10. Signing your name below means that you agree to be in this study. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form after you sign it. Thank you.

________________________________________  __________________
Participant                       Date

________________________________________  __________________
Researcher                        Date
Appendix C - Informed Consent Form


Principal Investigator: Dr. Melanie Masin-Moyer, DSW, LCSW  
E-mail: mmas@upenn.edu

Co-Investigator: Aparna Samuel Balasundaram  
E-mail: aparnaba@upenn.edu  
Phone USA: 512-705-2501

Emergency Contact: Dr. Melanie Masin-Moyer, DSW, LCSW  
E-mail: mmas@upenn.edu  
Aparna Samuel Balasundaram  
E-mail: aparnaba@upenn.edu  
Phone USA: 512-705-2501  
Via WhatsApp- 512-705-2501

Sponsor None
Research Study Summary for Potential Subjects

This study is being conducted by a graduate student in the Doctorate of Clinical Social Work (DSW) program at the School of Social Policy & Practice at the University of Pennsylvania. You are being invited to participate in Focus Group Discussion (FGD), as part of a research study. Your participation is voluntary, and you should only give consent to participate if you completely understand what the study requires and what the potential risks and benefits of participation are. If you have any questions about your rights as a human research participant at any time before, during, or after participation, please contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at (215) 898-2614 for assistance.

Young adult women raised in South Asian families and who are between the ages of 20 to 30 are being invited to participate in a FGD using Zoom. The FGD group size will be a maximum of up to eight participants, it will be conducted by the researcher and will last up to 90 minutes. This FGD is being conducted to get a deeper understanding of the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of Adolescent girls raised in South Asian families. The FGD’s are not supposed to detect a disease or find something wrong. Your participation is voluntary which means you can choose whether you should participate. If you decide to participate or not to participate there will be no loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Before you decide, you will need to know the purpose of the study, the possible risks, and benefits of being in the study, and what you will have to do if you decide to participate.

If you do not understand what you are reading, do not sign it. Please ask the researcher to explain anything you do not understand, including any language contained in this form. If you decide that you can participate, you will be asked to sign this form and a copy will be given to you. This form will be emailed to you, in it, you will find contact information and answers to questions about the study. You may ask to have this form read to you.
If you agree to join the study, you will be asked to complete the following research procedures:

Your participation will last for 90 minutes. This will be done during a mutually agreed upon time and there is no financial cost to you. These will be done via an established digital platform, called Zoom. These Zoom sessions will be recorded for the purpose of ensuring the program was run as intended on the part of the researcher. They will be deleted after the thesis is accepted and passed. There are no known common risks of participation.

If you are interested in participating, and you have any questions please do reach out to the researcher and she will review the information with you. You are free to decline or stop participation at any time during or after the initial consenting process.

**Why am I being asked to volunteer?**

You are being invited to participate in a FGD to provide data that will form part of a research study. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form.

**What is the purpose of the study?**

The purpose of this study is to better understand if we might increase the self-esteem and resilience of South Asian adolescent girls, by conducting an online group program that is informed by evidence-based research and sound clinical theory. Research has shown that by increasing self-esteem and resilience, we might be able to promote positive well-being.

Adolescence is a time of many changes and for the female adolescent, these changes happen within a socio-cultural system that sometimes may not be supportive of her entire potential. This study is focused on the development of an online strength-focused group intervention program that may help counter the inhibiting beliefs by providing an adolescent girl raised in South Asian families the supportive space to share, learn and build skills to enhance her resilience and self-esteem. This study is being conducted for a dissertation for a Doctorate in Clinical Social Work degree at the University of Pennsylvania.
Why was I asked to participate in the study?
You are being invited to participate in a FGD as part of a research study. The information analyzed from these FGD’s will be used in the development of the Go Girls e-Huddle Group, an online culturally competent group intervention to promote the protective factors of resilience and self-esteem for adolescent girls raised in South Asian families. These FGD’s are in keeping with the participatory approach the researcher is utilizing and ensures that lived experiences and voices are being heard and it may also be seen as an opportunity for you to actively contribute and meaningfully influence the development of a group intervention that may benefit adolescent girls raised in South Asian families.

How long will I be in the FGD?
The FGD will last up to 90 minutes. This will be up to eight participants in the FGD and all are invited to participate equally. However, no one will be forced or obligated to respond to any question. The choice to answer or not is totally up to you.

Where will the FGD take place?
The FGD will take place over zoom at a mutually agreed upon time. The researcher will share her Zoom account details and link.

What will I be asked to do?
You along with the other group members will be invited to be part of a conversation to explore and better understand your perception and experiences of being raised in a South Asian family

What are the risks?
Potential harm to you unlikely as the questions are meant to explore and reflect on your understanding. There will be no forced answering or pressure to answer any question. There are no right or wrong answers, and this will be clearly articulated and emphasized at the start as well as during the FGD. There are no questions that lead to any mental health diagnosis.
However, if you were to feel some distress, the researcher, who is a trained clinician will use grounding techniques and mindfulness to regulate and ease the distress. Participant confidentiality is a top priority, and the study is designed for minimal risk of any breach in confidentiality. The notes and study data will be kept with the researcher in a locked file drawer. The data will be entered into the researcher’s laptop with only the identification number, and the laptop is password protected. The Zoom sessions will be recorded for the purpose of data analysis. They will be deleted after the thesis is accepted and passed.

**How will I benefit from the study?**

The benefits of being a participant in this FGD may be seen as an opportunity for you to feel heard and have your thoughts validated as you meaningfully influence the development of a group intervention that may benefit adolescent girls raised in South Asian families.

**Will I receive the results of the research?**

Once the final dissertation is done and approved, it will be uploaded on the University website and will be open to public access and download.

**What other choices do I have?**

The alternative to being in the study is to not be in the study. This is not a mandated program, and there are no negative consequences for not participating.

**What happens if I do not choose to join the research study?**

You may choose to join the FGD or you may choose not to consent to join the FGD. Your consent is voluntary. There is no penalty if you choose not to join the research study.

**When is the FGD over? Can I leave the FGD before it ends?**

The FGD is expected to end in 90 minutes. The FGD may be stopped without your consent for the following reasons:

- The PI feels it is best keeping your interests in mind and you will be informed of the reasons why.
• The participants have not followed the study instructions.
• The PI, co-investigator, or the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Pennsylvania can stop the study anytime.

You have the right to drop out of the research study and the FGD at any time during your participation. There is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled if you decide to do so. If you no longer wish to be in the research study, please contact the researcher- Aparna Samuel Balasundaram, at her email- aparnaba@upenn.edu and let her know your decision to withdraw from the study. Nothing else needs to be done.

**How will my personal information be protected during the study?**

We will do our best to make sure that the personal information obtained during this research study will be kept private. However, we cannot guarantee total privacy. Your personal information may be given out if required by law. If information from this study is published or presented at scientific meetings, your name and other personal information will not be used. The Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of Pennsylvania will have access to a de-identified version of the data records.

Participant confidentiality is a top priority. Study data will be kept with the researcher in a locked file drawer with no names attached, just an identification number that will be assigned. The list of names attached to the study identification numbers will be kept in a locked file drawer in the office of the researcher. The data will be entered into the researcher’s laptop with only the identification number, and the laptop is password protected. No names or identifying descriptors will be reported. The zoom sessions that were recorded for the purpose of data collection and analysis, will be deleted after the thesis is accepted and passed. However, given that this is a FGD and there will be other participants present we cannot guarantee total confidentiality on behalf of those group members. As a group norm,
the importance to maintain confidentiality will be emphasized, however, it cannot be

An exception to confidentiality is if you report any suicidal or homicidal ideation or intent to

the researcher. This will be shared, in the interest of your safety and well-being.

**Future Use of Data**

There is no future use of the date, it will be used only for the purpose of this dissertation study.

**What happens if I am injured from being in the study?**

There is no anticipated injury that will take place as the FGD is being held on an online

platform. There are no plans for the University of Pennsylvania to pay you or give you other compensation for any injury. You do not give up your legal rights by signing this form. If you think you have been injured because of taking part in this research study, tell the person in charge of the research study as soon as possible. The researcher’s name, email, and phone number are listed in the consent form.

**Will I have to pay for anything?** There are no costs for this study.

**Will I be paid for being in this study?** There is no compensation for this study.

**Who can I call with questions or if I am concerned about my rights as a research subject?**

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints regarding your participation in this research study or if you have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you should speak with the principal researcher listed on page one of this form. If a member of the research team cannot be reached or you want to talk to someone other than those working on the study, you may contact the Office of Regulatory Affairs with any questions, concerns, or complaints at the University of Pennsylvania by calling (215) 898-2614.
When you sign this document, you are agreeing to take part in this research study. If you have any questions or there is something you do not understand, please ask. You will receive a copy of this consent document.

______________________________  ________________________
Participant                        Date

______________________________  ________________________
Researcher                         Date
CALLING PARENTS OF SOUTH-ASIAN TEEN GIRLS 13 to 16 YEARS...

YOUR DAUGHTERS ARE INVITED TO JOIN A FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION IN SUPPORT OF A DOCTORAL THESIS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

WHY
To share ideas on an online group that builds resilience and self-esteem in South-Asian girls

WHEN
Wednesday
20 May 2021
6:00pm IST

HOW
Secure ZOOM video call.
Duration: 90 min

IF INTERESTED
Send an email to aparnaba@upenn.edu
Appendix E - FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION- SCRIPT

Introduction and Welcome

Thank you all for being here and welcome to our group discussion. We are doing three such sessions with teenage girls like yourself that are raised in South Asian families, within South Asian countries or countries like the United States where their parents immigrated to. You were invited to this discussion as you all have a shared understanding or have experienced what it means to live in a patriarchal culture, like ours. Here is a slide to remind us, how we are describing patriarchy. I am so glad you decided to join this FGD.

Please know that there are no right or wrong answers. All your answers are equally important to me, so please feel comfortable to share your views even if you feel it is different from what others have already shared. Sometimes your view might be what someone else is thinking too but has not shared yet. Your inputs are very important as they will go into the creation of the ‘e-Huddle Girls Group’ an online support space for adolescent girls like you, that aims to build your self-esteem, sense of hope and prepares you for success in the larger world. More details on this were shared on the consent forms that I had sent you and your family. I will share that again at the end of our session.

Our discussion today will take about 90 minutes and it will be recorded, as I do not want to miss any of your comments, and I will not be able to write them all down fast enough. Please be assured of complete confidentiality. So, what this means is that what is shared in this digital room stays here! So, even if we use a quote from what you say, we will not use your name. We have five simple group rules for us to follow and these are in this slide I am sharing:

- respect each other,
- listen to each other without judgment,
- raise your hand if you would like to speak,
• we all will take turns as everyone’s voice is equally important and
• one person will speak at a time.

Do you have any questions before we start?

Let’s start by first learning a little more about each other. You can share your name, where you live, and which grade you are in. Since my name starts with A, the first alphabet, I can start.

And then, anyone else with the letter A can go next and we will go clockwise from there.

Sample Semi-Structured FGD Questions

1. Can you describe your experiences of growing up as a girl in a South Asian family?
   a. What do you understand by the term patriarchy? Is it negative or positive?
   b. How was your growing up experience different from your male peers in your family, school, or neighborhood?
   c. Can you share how your life might have been different if you were born a boy? Would it have been harder or easier? How?
   d. How does media (including Bollywood movies) portray girls/women?

   **Alternate Question for FGD conducted in the United States**
   How was your experience different from your non-South Asian/Asian female or/and male peers in your school or neighborhood?

2. How does the environment and culture you grew up in impact your self-esteem and role expectations?
   a) What are some examples of social-cultural norms that you or other South Asian teenage girls face?
   b) What are some examples of typical roles expected of women in patriarchal societies?
   c) Is there a certain way you are ideally supposed to look as per your family? Are there any body image issues you might face (like colorism)?
   d) Suppose you were in charge of the country/family and could rewrite the social-cultural rules and norms, what would you change and why?

3. What are your recommendations for the development of an online group-based program for enhancing self-esteem and resilience/coping skills for girls like yourself?
a) What do you think girls need to believe so that they might rise above the limitations put on them? How can girls support each other and build confidence and esteem in each other?
b) Can you identify three key issues a program like this must address?
c) What would make the kind of group program fun and interesting to you?
d) How long do you think a session should be?
e) What do you think about it being an online program?
f) How do we highlight the positives of being a girl in this program?
APPENDIX - F

GO GIRLS E-HUDDLE PRACTICE MANUAL

A Culturally Competent Online Group Intervention for Enhancing Resilience and Self Esteem of Adolescent Girls Raised in South Asian Families

FACILITATOR MANUAL

APARNA SAMUEL BALASUNDARAM, DSW CANDIDATE

School of Social Policy and Practice, University of Pennsylvania
TABLE OF CONTENT

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE GO-GIRLS E-HUDDLE GROUP

Why the Program was Developed ............................................................. 131
How the Program was Developed ......................................................... 133
What is in this Program ........................................................................ 135

SECTION 2: FACILITATORS GUIDE

Key Theoretical Frameworks of the Program ......................................... 137
Strategies for Effective Facilitation ....................................................... 147
What If? FAQ Section ........................................................................ 150

SECTION 3: SESSION PLANS FOR THE GO-GIRLS E-HUDDLE GROUP

Design of the Sessions .......................................................................... 154
Seven Session Plan Overview ............................................................... 156
  o Session 1- And It’s a Beginning: Introduction and Knowing Each Other ..... 158
  o Session 2- Shutting Down Stereotypes ............................................. 172
  o Session 3- I Am Strong: I Can Lead .............................................. 184
  o Session 4- Mental Health Matters: Our Resilience Building Toolkit ....... 196
  o Session 5- Embracing All of Me: Our Bodies, Sexuality, and Orientation ... 212
  o Session 6- You Matter - We Matter: The Big Deal About Self Esteem .... 224
  o Session 7- And It’s a Beginning: The Road Ahead ............................. 236

Reference List ....................................................................................... 249
SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION
GO-GIRLS E-HUDDLE GROUP

CONTENT

- WHY THE PROGRAM WAS DEVELOPED
- HOW THE PROGRAM WAS DEVELOPED
- WHAT IS IN THIS PROGRAM
WHY THE GO-GIRLS E-HUDDLE GROUP PROGRAM WAS DEVELOPED

Globally up to 20% of children and adolescents experience a mental illness, half of these start by the age of 14 years, and 50% of all adult mental disorders have their onset in adolescence. (World Health Organization, 2020). If left untreated, it has a lifelong impact manifesting as poor social skills, low educational achievement, substance use, high risk-taking behaviors, crime, poor sexual health, self-harm, and inadequate self-care (United Nations Children's Fund, 2011). Despite this understanding, the provision of mental health services for children and adolescents is neglected, especially in low and middle-income countries (Kieling et al., 2011). Research on the intersection of gender and mental health shows that starting at puberty, adolescent girls are at a greater risk for depression, anxiety, and mental disorders globally (Albert, 2015). The mental health gender divide widens when focusing on women and adolescent girls raised in South Asian middle-income countries (WHO, 2015). The increased mental health gender divide reflects various socio-cultural factors. The entrenched patriarchal system disempowers women and limits their decision-making power and opportunities (Kapungu C et al., 2018). Often the birth of a girl child is seen as a negative due to a plethora of reasons, (Theerthaana & Manzoor, 2018), thereby placing a premium on a male child. While these sociocultural norms are mostly true for adolescent girls raised within the geographical boundaries that constitute the South Asian countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka), many of these aspects still hold true for those that are raised by first-generation South Asian immigrant families in the United States. They are still exposed to their family’s traditional cultural views, and many must learn to negotiate this dual identity- at home and school (Thakore-Dunlap & Velsor, 2014).
Prevention and promotive-based programs for adolescents become a protective factor as it promotes and builds resilience, self-esteem and acts as a buffer against the potential occurrence of a mental illness (Martyn-Nemeth et al., 2009; WHO, 2020). The adolescence period provides a significant and dynamic developmental opportunity (Morton & Montgomery, 2013; Steinberg, 2014) to positively influence and foster strengths, skills, and attitudes that might have a long-term impact as they transition into adulthood. Despite South Asia having the largest population of adolescent girls worldwide (UNICEF, 2011), there is a paucity of such initiatives. Given these realities, a concerted and intentional effort to meet the unique needs of adolescent girls raised in South Asian families- both in South Asian countries and South Asian immigrant families in the United States is needed. In recent years international agencies like the World Health Organization, the World Bank, the United Nations Population Fund, and UNICEF have focused on creating and implementing early intervention programs for adolescent girls in rural or poor urban areas in low and middle-income South Asian countries. However, most of them focus on issues of reproductive health, nutrition, education, and livelihoods. Programs focusing on psychosocial wellbeing have often been neglected. (Leventhal et al., 2016) and those for South Asian adolescent girls raised in urban low and middle-class families are scarce.

To fill this significant gap, the Go Girls e-Huddle Group was designed as a culturally appropriate online group program to enhance protective and promotive factors that build resilience and self-esteem.

What is the GO-GIRLS e-HUDDLE Group?
- Online group for adolescent girls raised in South Asian Families
- Space to share, support and strive
- Know you are not alone, we get you!

Go-Girls e-Huddle Practice Manual  © Aparna Samuel Balasundaram 132 | P a g e
The development of the Go-Girls e-Huddle Group, in terms of the intervention design, content, and methodology was based on four sources of information: evidence-based research, sound theoretical frameworks, focus group discussions (FGD) to capture the lived experience of the participants and consultations with subject matter experts. This has been captured in Figure 1 below.
Four FGD’s that included a total of 21 participants were conducted to explore the perceptions, attitudes, and experiences of adolescent girls raised in South Asian families. One FGD with young women raised in South Asian families that shared their inputs from a retrospective point of view and three FGD’s with AGRSAF (adolescent girls raised in South Asian families). Two of these three FGD’s with AGRSAF were conducted within the geographies of a South Asian country (India) and the third was conducted with raised in countries outside those South Asia, for example, raised in the United States by South Asian parents who were immigrants. The data obtained from the FGD’s was analyzed and interpreted using the qualitative method of thematic analysis. The analysis highlighted key content issues as well as design elements that would be meaningful and culturally relevant to the development of the Go-Girls e-Huddle Practice Manual. The practice manual can be used by facilitators, like coaches, counselors, and teachers, who can engage with a nonclinical population of adolescent girls raised in patriarchal South Asian families. This would be for girls raised in South Asian countries themselves or in countries where there is the largest immigration of South Asian families like the United States. The practice manual will cover the goals of this online culturally competent group intervention, the guidelines and best practices of implementation, the session plans with objectives and activities, basic facilitation for group leaders, and suggest methods for feedback and evaluation.
WHAT IS IN THE GO-GIRLS E-HUDDLE GROUP PROGRAM

The Go-Girls e-Huddle practice manual is a comprehensive package that consists of three sections. Section one shares the introduction to the practice manual and answers the questions of why this program was developed, how it was designed as well as what is included in the practice manual. The second section includes a facilitator guide, which shares the theoretical frameworks on which the manual was created as well as suggested facilitation strategies to enhance the group facilitation process. The third and final section includes seven-session plans built as a 90-minute session each, suggested resources, and corresponding PowerPoint slides for each of the seven sessions. Each session has been designed keeping an experiential participatory approach, creating a supportive space for sharing and discussion, as this helps to build ownership to and of the program.

It is envisaged that the Go-Girls e-Huddle Group program can be used by facilitators, like coaches, counselors, and teachers, who engage with a nonclinical population of adolescent girls raised in patriarchal South Asian families. This would be for girls raised in South Asian countries themselves or in countries where there is the largest immigration of South Asian families like the United States.
SECTION 2

FACILITATOR GUIDE
Go-Girls e-Huddle Group

CONTENT

- KEY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS
- STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE FACILITATION
- WHAT IF? FAQ SECTION
KEY THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF THE PROGRAM

The Go-Girls e-Huddle Group program incorporates three key theoretical frameworks. It is housed within the Social Ecological Model; the interventions have a strength-based focus and are informed by cognitive behavioral techniques and it harnesses the therapeutic benefits of group work through the lens of attachment theory.

HOUSED WITHIN THE SOCIAL-ECOLOGICAL MODEL (SEM)

The SEM is a theoretical framework that sheds light on the multifaceted and interactive quality of the person and environment, as it recognizes the reciprocity of these two exchanges (Gittermann and Germain, 2008). This bi-directional and cyclic relationship results in a transaction where the environment impacts a person’s development and in turn, the person’s unique response and behavior impacts the environment which ultimately again affects the person (Pardeck, 1988; Pelech, 2014). Therefore, it is seen that the person does not exist in isolation and problems cannot be merely seen through the lens of individual
pathology. Rather, there is an acknowledgment that people both shape and are shaped by individual, interpersonal, community, and societal level factors. The Social Ecological Model conceptualized these multiple levels of reciprocal influence on human development as nesting circles. As seen in Figure 2, the model places the individual in the center, and they are surrounded by four systems with multiple levels of interacting influence.

Figure 2
Source: Adapted from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC),
The individual level of the Social-Ecological Model includes an individual’s inherent biological makeup, personality, knowledge, attitudes, behavior, self-efficacy, developmental history, age, racial/ethnic/caste identity, sexual orientation, socio-economic status. These factors play a role in how an individual behaves and responds in her environment. The interpersonal level refers to the formal and informal social networks and social support systems that might impact individual behavior. This level includes family, peers, and other social networks. The community level of the SEM relates to relationships among organizations and informal networks. It also includes societal beliefs, norms, and knowledge. The fourth circle of influence is the organizations, social institutions, and systems with rules and regulations and the final level of the Social Ecological Model is the societal level which is defined by local, state, national, and global laws, and policies (UNICEF, 2016).

The development of the Go Girls e-Huddle practice manual focused on incorporating multiple levels of influence that would include the individual, interpersonal, and community levels. The individual-level accounts for the adolescent girl’s biological makeup, personality, coping style, and includes her beliefs, values, culture, and history since these factors impact how she behaves and responds to her socio-cultural environment. The interpersonal and community refers to the social supports, interpersonal relationships, like the peer group, that impact her along with her community-based groups, schools, and other social networks. Given the social justice lens that was critical to the development of the practice manual, the goal was using a strengths perspective to invest in her personal competence and sense of empowerment to deal with and rise above the prevailing patriarchal and other disempowering social-cultural norms. By attempting to create a positive influence in the interpersonal system using this facilitator-led peer-based group, the hope was to strengthen the individual and collective voice of these adolescent girls to
question the status quo and impact change at the community-level (however small) by making their socio-cultural environment more responsive and supportive of them. This process ensures that change is being expressed at both the person and environment level with each influencing and strengthening the other dynamically and reciprocally.

EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTION - COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)

CBT theorizes that people’s emotions, behaviors, and physiology are affected by their assessment of an event. A given situation does not determine how a person might feel or act, rather it is their perception of this situation that impacts their thinking and response (Beck, 1964; Ellis, 1962). Individuals’ perceptions of a given situation are called automatic thoughts and are not the result of active consideration or reasoning. Hence, a person does not notice these thoughts, and as the name suggests they are automatic and usually brief and rapid and appear to spring up spontaneously (Beck, 1995). These automatic thoughts are based on one’s core belief, which usually begins to form in childhood. Core beliefs, which are a fundamental level of belief, are usually global, fixed and a person regards them as absolute truths—just the way things “are” (Beck, 1987). The automatic thoughts that stem from core beliefs are actual words or images that go through a person’s mind, and they are usually more situation-specific and are theorized to be the most superficial level of cognition. Hence, automatic thoughts are considered closest to conscious awareness, making them open to change and a gateway for CBT interventions (Beck, 2005)

Based on one's lived experience, people form conclusions (beliefs, assumptions, and automatic thoughts) about themselves, other people, and the world. When the experience is negative, conclusions are also negative. So, for a South Asian adolescent girl, the faulty
automatic negative thought that reflects her experience might be, ‘It is no use to even try, I am a victim of this oppressive patriarchal system’, ‘I do not matter, I have less value than my male counterparts’. As illustrated in Figure 3, triggered by a situation, these negative automatic thoughts about themselves, others, or situations have a negative influence on their emotional, behavioral, and often physiological reactions.

As per CBT, these negative, distorted, and unhelpful thoughts and belief systems can be corrected using various CBT interventions where a person can learn to identify, evaluate, and replace their negative automatic with healthier thinking patterns which typically reduces their level of distress and enhances a sense of empowerment. One way is by applying the ABCD Model. Rational- Emotive Behavioural Therapy (REBT) developed by Albert Ellis is one of the main pillars of CBT (David et al., 2017) and the ABCD Model was conceived.
within the framework of REBT. It targets beliefs as the core component for treatment. In applying the ABCD model, the theoretical assumption is:

- **A**: Activating event, which is what happens to someone.
- **B**: Belief, the event that activates or causes a person to have a certain belief. This belief may be rational or irrational.
- **C**: Consequence, the rational or irrational belief caused by the event, leads to a certain consequence. Depending on the nature of the belief, it may be a healthy or unhealthy consequence. An example of an unhealthy consequence is the feeling of not being valued or feeling capable.
- **D**: Disputation, as part of this model, leads to a more rational or helpful thought. The clinician helps the person who has an irrational or unhelpful belief caused by the event which leads to unhealthy consequences, to dispute that irrational belief to change it into a rational, more effective belief.

In the case of a South Asian adolescent girl, when she sees a Hindi (the official language of India) movie, where the heroine is told not to act ‘bossy’ as girls are not meant to be bossy, that may serve as the activating event. The event may lead her to an irrational thought and belief that South Asian girls are to be submissive and can never be valued if they are assertive. The consequence of this belief is that she may feel confused or helpless about her life and career ambitions. Through a process of disputation, she may be able to challenge the negative and irrational belief, as she takes a macro view and discovers that despite the patriarchal ecosystem, there is a possibility to rise above, to feel confident in her value and that her world is changing and equal opportunities for women are being achieved.

CBT models can also enhance positive thinking attributes that build resilience and self-esteem and act not just as a protective factor against mental illness but also actively
promote psychological wellbeing. (Padesky & Mooney, 2012; Victor, Teismann, & Willutzki, 2017). A strengths perspective has been used while designing CBT-based interventions for the Go Girls e-Huddle group intervention. Session plans include an intentional structured search for participants' strengths and bringing them into their awareness (Padesky & Mooney, 2012). This strength-based approach allows for a recognition of the existing social injustices within the South Asian adolescent girl’s socio-cultural environment, while also acknowledging and embracing the belief in her capacity for growth, resilience, courage, and resourcefulness.

THERAPEUTIC BENEFITS OF GROUP WORK WITH AN ATTACHMENT LENS

The Go-Girls e-Huddle program uses a group format to benefit from the therapeutic advantages of group work. The interpersonal nature of group-based interventions creates opportunities for healing and growth, as it provides a safe, brave, and supportive space for adolescent girls (especially within a patriarchal society) to find their voice, share their anxieties and fears, as well as learn and practice healthy coping skills that strengthen their sense of psychological wellbeing (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2017). Groups also create an opportunity for mutual aid where members can feel supported and can also assist one another in reaching personal and collective goals. They can empathize and see their commonalities which fosters a sense of belonging which in turn increases self-expression and an improvement in the group members' self-esteem (Drumm, 2006). The principle of mutual aid has been suggested to be one of the most important benefits of group work as it is powerful yet subtle and prompts members' need for each other (Gitterman, 2004; Shulman, 2012). When this mutual aid is experienced by population groups that are usually oppressed and
vulnerable, like an adolescent girl raised in a South Asian male-controlled system, it helps them regain more control over their lives as it reduces isolation and mitigates social stigma (Gitterman & Shulman, 2005). Another key aspect of mutual aid in a group is that one can give to others by way of their reassurance, encouragement, and understanding, and while this is valuable to the recipient it is also affirming to the group member that is in this position of a provider and leaves them with an enhanced feeling of self-esteem (Huang & Wong, 2013). This would be critical to an adolescent girl who might have earlier questioned her worth within a disempowering social system.

Groups also promote an understanding that one is not alone in their life challenge by universalizing the issues members face, which can be empowering, liberating, and validating and it nurtures a sense of belonging (Gitterman & Knight 2016) and being known. This realization has been referred to as the “all-in-the-same-boat phenomenon” (Shulman, 2012, p. 679) and universality (Yalom & Leszcz, 2007). The application of the principle of universalization, where one experiences the reality that there are others in the same boat, helps an adolescent girl realize she is not alone in her struggles. Group modalities also create a nonjudgmental space for the sharing of one’s internal world and its subsequent acceptance by a group of peers. This is of paramount importance as it challenges an adolescent girl's possible disempowering belief of self and her world (Yalom and Leszcz, 2005) and allows for a reframing of her internal thoughts to be more positive and hopeful. This, in turn, may help her feel heard, know that her life matters, and may empower her with a strengthened identity of being valued, positively affirmed, and having the capability to be more.

These small supportive cohesive groups, called ‘e-Huddles’ have been conceptualized within an attachment theory framework. Attachment theory describes how the connection between children and their caregivers creates a template for future relationships. John
Bowlby, the chief architect of attachment theory proposed that relationships are influenced across the lifespan, “from the cradle to the grave” (Bowlby, 1982, p. 208). The nature of these relationships can enhance or diminish existing internal working models (IWM) of self as worthy and lovable and others as understanding and supportive as well as impact a person’s capacity for emotional regulation. When the emotional bond involves a caregiver, who is attuned and responsive to their child’s needs, there is a positive impact on the child’s IWM and emotion regulation (Bowlby, 1988; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2005). A secure base is created in which the child can explore their world knowing they have a safe haven to return to when distressed. These bonds and the need for safe relationships are valuable across the lifespan of a person (Marmarosh, Markin & Spiegel, 2013).

Newer iterations of attachment theory focus on groups as providing a secure base from which individuals can explore both internal and external challenges, potentially enhancing their internal working models and emotion regulation through corrective emotional experiences (Marmarosh et al., 2013). The secure base can create the space for the adolescent girl to explore her concerns, inhibitions, and questions without fear of judgment or exploitation. In many ways, these girls might feel a sense of insecurity and disconnection that is born in and fueled by the inherent oppressive system of patriarchy that they are raised in. This intentional creation of a secure base could potentially be a way to shift the balance and find a way out of this disconnection. Hence, the secure base of the group and a responsive group leader is essential and foundational as it creates and establishes a conducive group climate of consensual validation, acceptance, and positive regard from peers who have gone through similar challenges in their life (Gallagher et al., 2014; Knight, 2006). The e-Huddle groups can then be that secure relational space for adolescent girls raised in South Asian families and provide an opportunity for a corrective experience that counters the unhelpful
IWMs, which in turn allows them to reframe their sense of self and others in a more accurate helpful manner (Knight, 2006; Marmarosh et al., 2013). Harnessing the benefits of group intervention via an attachment lens creates an inherent opportunity to get and give nurturance through a process of mutual aid, sharing of common experiences and this further cultivates relational growth and empowerment (Harper, 2010; Knight, 2006). For an adolescent girl, this can help challenge earlier negative experiences of insecurity and disconnection that could possibly stem from the larger discriminatory norms and gender inequities of the socio-cultural system and reciprocal circles of influence as conceptualized within the Social Ecological Model.
Active participation of the e-huddle group members is critical to the program being meaningful and effective. Given the participatory and strengths-based approach that is foundational to the program, it is imperative that as facilitators you create an environment that encourages active ownership and co-creation of the group process and the outcomes. This will require an intentional stance on your end. As you demonstrate through your words and action that you are taking a stance of being less directive and more facilitative, the e-huddle participants will be more participative. This will ensure the program is more participant-centered, and rather than it being for them, it is by them.

Figure 4 illustrates some characteristics for effective facilitation and communication.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>• Create an atmosphere of respect and trust. Non-judgmental of participants' lifestyles or decisions</th>
<th>• Communicate clearly; speak using simple words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Give them time to answer questions. Be comfortable with silences and do not jump in with possible answers</td>
<td>• Encourage different answers to the same question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Adapt sessions according to the needs of the group</td>
<td>• Be calm and balanced; provide security and stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Educate yourself on current topics that concern them for example music, books, movies, games, people they follow on social media</td>
<td>• Understand how children participate. Overview on Hart’s Ladder of Participation has been shared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Educate yourself on the technologies and digital platforms they use</td>
<td>• Manage conflict and tension in the group in a positive manner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be open and authentic when you do not know something. Be open to learning from them.</td>
<td>Ask for participant input starting with the first session (e.g., in setting ground rules). This approach sets the tone for the rest of the sessions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Skills cannot be taught from a textbook; they have to be experienced hands-on within a supportive peer group setting. Active methods of engagement lead to active learning, which requires the session to be experiential and interactive, encouraging active participation. When facilitators working with youth focus on building mutual trust, respect and take an inclusive and collaborative approach, it creates a positive environment for sustainable action (Brian, 2011). As facilitators, one way to understand and assess participation is using Roger Harts’s Ladder of Participation (1992). The ladder’s rungs do not imply a progressive sequential order or stage of participation where one has to begin at one level to reach the next (Hart, 2008). Rather, it shares a framework to assess how youth can demonstrate agency, by partnering with an adult(facilitator) in the decisions making process, as they take an active part in a youth-centered program (Botchwey et al., 2019). As seen in Figure 5, the first three lower rungs of the ladder manipulation, decoration, and tokenism represent what does not count as participation. Rungs four to eight illustrate different degrees of partnership between the youth participants and adult facilitators. As a facilitator of the Go-Girls e-Huddle Group, the aim is to only use participatory methods of engagement.
ROGER HART’S LADDER OF PARTICIPATION

**RUNG 8 - Youth initiated shared decisions with adults:** Youth-led activities, in which decision making is shared between youth and adults working as equal partners.

**RUNG 7 - Youth initiated and directed:** Youth-led activities with little input from adults.

**RUNG 6 - Adult initiated shared decisions with youth:** Adult-led activities, in which decision making is shared with youth.

**RUNG 5 - Consulted and informed:** Adult-led activities, in which youth are consulted and informed about how their input will be used and the outcomes of adult decisions.

**RUNG 4 - Assigned, but informed:** Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, decision-making process, and have a role.

**RUNG 3 - Tokenism:** Adult-led activities, in which youth may be consulted with minimal opportunities for feedback.

**RUNG 2 - Decoration:** Adult-led activities, in which youth understand purpose, but have no input in how they are planned.

**RUNG 1 - Manipulation:** Adult-led activities, in which youth do as directed without understanding of the purpose for the activities.


Figure 4

Source: https://www.youthpower.org/youth-drg-toolkit-3-models-roger-hart-ladder
As a group facilitator, you might come across certain sticky situations. These could be technology-related or people-related. As you navigate through them refer back to the section on strategies for effective communication on page 20.

The table below captures some of these ‘what if’ situations you might encounter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>What if…</th>
<th>I can…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Something goes wrong with my technology, and I get dropped off?</td>
<td>In the very first session, discuss this with the group. Share what the expected course of action will be in case you as a facilitator are having technology and connectivity issues. A suggested course of action could be to explore an alternate way to connect (like the WhatsApp platform that can be accessed using mobile data and your phone), talk about how long they should wait for you on a bridge as you try to connect back?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>What if a participant constantly joins late?</td>
<td>Joining late can interrupt the flow and take away from the group experience. Given the use of videos and breakout rooms, it becomes even more critical that all join on time. Share this as you talk about group norms. If a certain participant is constantly joining late, reach out to them via email to see if there is anything they need help with? Remind them of what they and the group miss out on when participants join late.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>What if a participant shares something</td>
<td>Even though the group is for a non-clinical population, it creates a space for sharing that can be triggering and emotionally intense for some. While creating a supportive non-judgmental space to receive, witness, and honor individual sharing, remember this is not a therapy session. So,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>What if a certain participant is taking up too much airtime?</td>
<td>If there are participants that are constantly leaning in, and as a result, there is less space and time for others to share, gently redirect them to the larger group process. You could create an opportunity for others to share, by calling out the sameness of the said sharing. For example, ‘Radha, I would like to step in at this time and thank you for the point you got up. I am wondering who else in the group can connect and talk to this?’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>What if a certain participant is very quiet?</td>
<td>There will always be participants who are quieter and may not engage verbally as much. And that is fine, as they may prefer to engage using the chat function or connect in the smaller breakout activities. However, if you feel that they are keen to share and need a little nudge, (once the group rapport is built), you could reach out to them. Perhaps meet/email with the person outside of the group to let them know active listening is a wonderful way to participate, AND if they want support in talking more you can do that. Then, ask how you can support them--this may be your idea of asking for elaboration of something in the chat or perhaps eye contact or a signal (with the caveat that you may not always be able to catch it) or some other idea they have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>What if a participant shares something that is offensive?</td>
<td>The group space must be as safe and non-judgmental as possible. If someone shares something that is offensive, as the facilitator you will have to call that out in a non-threatening manner. For example, ‘Pami, I know your intent was not to say anything that might be interpreted as hurtful, but if someone...’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
was to find it hurtful, why might that be?’ If appropriate use this as an opening to facilitate a contained discussion, as it may be important to the group to process a little (not always but sometimes). Especially, if it relates to themes around patriarchy and socio-cultural stereotypes. It is also recommended that you set up some time after the session and connect with this person on a one to one. Explore what their intent was and help them see how unconscious biases can lead to hurtful remarks. Gently remind them to be aware and sensitive to others’ sentiments, while sharing.
SECTION 3

SESSION PLANS
Go-Girls e-Huddle Group

CONTENT

- Design of the Session
- Seven Session Plans: Overview, G.I.R.L Flow, Resources & PowerPoint Slides
The Go-Girls e-Huddle group sessions have been designed to be experiential and interactive. Each session will have components that include personal reflection, video reviews, small group discussions in breakout rooms, larger group processing, brainstorming, and sharing back in the main e-huddle room.

At its foundation, it is designed to incorporate a strength-focused lens, encourage active participation, and allow for flexibility in the use of resources, so it can be adapted as per the group needs. They include seven sessions, that are 90 minutes each.

Each session has been broken down into four sections:

- Section One: Session Objectives
- Section Two: Session Notes to Facilitator
- Section Three: Session Flow, 90 minutes. This is the actual content for each session. Using the acronym G.I.R.L each session content has detailed instructions, suggested time allocation, slides to be used, methodology and activity plan, and suggested resources. At the end is a link to the PowerPoint slides as well as thumbnail images of all the slides corresponding to that session plan.
- Section Four: Session Debrief
The use of the G.I.R.L acronym reflects the program being participant-centered and shares what is covered over the 90 minutes of each session.

The table below shares the acronym G.I.R.L and what it entails:

<p>| | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Get Ready</td>
<td>Warm-up with a ‘minute to arrive’ activity and review the last session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Involve and Explore</td>
<td>Set context for the session, share session plan and facilitate exploration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Reflect and Relate</td>
<td>Encourage them to reflect, process, share and support each other while linking to their own life and reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Log Off</td>
<td>Wrap up with a check-in, capture key takeaways as a ‘Golden Nugget’ moment and create a bridge to the next session (share briefly what’s coming next)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
OVERVIEW OF THE SEVEN SESSIONS

As shared earlier the development of the Go-Girls e-Huddle Group, in terms of the intervention design, content, and methodology was based on four sources of information-evidence-based research, sound theoretical frameworks, focus group discussions (FGD) to capture the lived experience of the participants and consultations with subject matter experts. This led to the creation of seven sessions of 90 minutes each. It is suggested that each session be done on a weekly or bi-weekly basis at a time that is convenient to the participant group. The seven-session topics are illustrated in the table below:

Go- Girls e-Huddle Group: Seven Session Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>And It’s a Beginning: <em>Introduction and Knowing Each Other</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Shutting Down Stereotypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I Am Strong: I Can Lead</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mental Health Matters: <em>Our Resilience Building Toolkit</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Embracing All of Me: <em>Bodies, Sexuality, and Orientation</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>You Matter - We Matter: <em>The Big Deal About Self Esteem</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>And It’s a Beginning: <em>The Road Ahead</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each of these seven sessions has been shared in detail in the following pages.
Go-Girls e-Huddle Group

SESSION PLANS
And It’s a Beginning: Introduction and Knowing Each Other

**SESSION OBJECTIVES**

- Introduce yourself (facilitator) and the Go Girls e-Huddle program
- To make this space as non-threatening as possible, create and clarify group rules
- Introduce participants to each other, build group rapport and create ownership for the program
- To help participants share common experiences and expectations from this program
- Introduce the concept of patriarchy and discussion around it

**SESSION NOTE TO FACILITATOR**

As you get ready to facilitate the Go Girls e-Huddle program, remind yourself why being involved in this group is meaningful to you and how you could share that with the group. Also, try and place yourself in the position of the adolescent girls who will be joining. The idea being to enhance your sense of empathy and understanding of what they might be bringing to the group and looking to take away. This helps to meet them where they are.

As with all sessions, the methodology and facilitation embody a participatory approach, so that the participants know and feel that this group is theirs to shape. The goal is to enhance the sense of ownership of the process, as it makes it more relevant to their felt needs.
# Session Flow - 90 Minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION AND TIME</th>
<th>SLIDES</th>
<th>PLAN &amp; ACTIVITY</th>
<th>RESOURCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Get Ready 10 minutes | 1-6 | Welcome  
- Join in at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start  
- Welcome each participant using the chat function or verbally as they come online.  
- Can play some music as you wait for all to join. Ask them for suggestions on what songs they might like for the next time. They can share in the chat or email it to you later (*helps to enhance a sense of ownership to and of the group*). | |

**Activity 1**

Check-In: *How are You Feeling?*

---

*Activity 1:*

*Slide 3-5*

*Doggy Scale Time*
- The goal is to keep it light and help the participants ease in.
- Use this slide to ask everyone which dog picture they choose and how it reflects what they are feeling. Encourage them ALL to share that in the chatbox (*no pressure for them to speak*).
- This helps to break the ice, even without them having to start speaking, and creates an equal space for all to engage and be heard, and not just the more vocal participants.

**Minute to Arrive: 2-to-3-minute mindfulness**

- Facilitate a mindfulness practice like a meditation or relaxation technique. You could search the web for examples.
- OR you could play a video or audio clip of a mindfulness practice. Sample clip in resource column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLIDE 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Body-Sound Meditation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audio Clip: 3.06 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="https://www.uclalhealth.org/marc/meditation.mp3">https://www.uclalhealth.org/marc/meditation.mp3</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|   |   |   | - Share with them what the program is, who it is for, what they can expect over the seven sessions, and that it is interactive.  
|   |   |   | - Share that it will be interactive and fun  
|   |   |   | - Share the ‘GIRL’ acronym that makes up each session flow.  
|   |   |   | - Tell them that you all are already done with step 1- G-Get Ready and are now in Step 2- I- Involve and Engage.  

**Introduce yourself**  
- Briefly, share details about yourself. It is recommended to share some personal details too, like your hobbies, favorite food, music, etc. The goal is to build rapport.  
- Do remember to share WHY you are interested in facilitating this group.

**ACTIVITY 2:**

| Activity 2: SLIDES 14-16  
Icebreaker:  
- Partner participants in pairs (2) |
Icebreaker: *Know each other*

- Conduct the icebreaker using a small breakout room activity, so they start to get used to this format too.
- Next, ask them what their expectations from this group experience are and/or what they hope to gain from this program. They can share this in the chat.
- Ensure that you capture and look for opportunities to connect what they have shared as their expectations to ongoing conversations (*throughout the 7 sessions*).
- The goal is to set a supportive and positive tone. After each participant introduces themselves ensure that you acknowledge their introduction and once again welcome them to the group.

- Give them 5 minutes to learn something about the other person.
- When they return to the main room, they take turns to introduce their partner to
Creation of Group Rules/Norms

- Introduce the concept of setting group norms, by sharing that just like we have rules while driving we also have group rules to ensure the e-huddle group is as supportive and safe as can be for everyone. Share that there are two non-negotiable rules:
  - *Maintaining Confidentiality: what is said here stays here*
  - *Showing Respect: to each other by listening attentively and making space for all to share*

**ACTIVITY 3:**

- Apart from these ask them what they need from each other to feel that this is a safe supportive group space.
They can write in the chat or share verbally what other group norms they would like to see included.

- Even if there are only a few added by them, it is fine, as you will be revisiting them every week

- You can add some of these common group norms:
  - What is shared here stays here, what's learned here leaves here
  - Be mindful of where each person is coming from and respect each other's religion, culture, and values
  - Try to understand before trying to be understood
  - Willing to feel uncomfortable and ask questions in a respectful way
  - Assume questions are always from a positive & curious place
  - Lean in & Lean Out - be mindful about occupying/not occupying space in the group
  - Intent Vs Impact- Remember your intent may not be to harm, but sometimes what we say can have a negative impact

- Remember to update the slide with the group norms shared by them along with some of the above suggestions, so you have it ready before session 2.
Conversation Starter: Patriarchy at its best...or worst?!

- Introduce the concept of patriarchy and define what that means, as this may be a new term for some.
- There are two video links. They both are in ‘Hinglish’ (a combination of Hindi and English language). It is recommended that you preview both and choose either one.

These video clips are meant to be conversation starters. Start the conversation in the larger group, before you move to the next section of ‘Reflect and Relate’

Video Clip 1: 2.20 minutes-
Comebacks Every Indian Woman NeedsFeat. Rani Mukerji
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-46YZIjMTq_Q

Video Clip 2: 1.51 minutes-
FilterCopy | Stuff Women AreTired OfHearing | End to Gender Stereotyping
### ACTIVITY 4: Discussion Time

- Now that the video was shown and a conversation started, tell them to continue the discussion in smaller breakout rooms.
- **Recommended size is 4-5 participants per breakout room. The suggested time is 15 minutes in the breakout room.**
- Tell them to self-choose a role of group scribe, facilitator, or reporter. Everyone in the group must have a role, so, there can be more than two people in one role.
- Each group can capture their thoughts in the shared Google doc, which includes suggested questions to start the discussion.
- Once they come back to the main room, each group may present key discussion points for 2-3 minutes each.

**Google Doc:**
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1gXQafCOrIks9m-eQqWXIlYyy--63QuuupqRc3h_9C0e0/edit?usp=sharing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACTIVITY 5:</strong></td>
<td>It is recommended that ALL participants share at least one key takeaway in the chat box</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Golden Nugget Moment: Temperature check**
- The ‘golden nugget moment’ is an opportunity for the participants to capture and share their key takeaways from the session today.
- It also helps the participants own their learnings and is a way to obtain feedback and evaluate if the key objectives are being met.

**Suggested time 15 to 20 minutes**

**Log Off**
- 15 minutes

**SLIDES**
- SLIDES 30-39
• Check if there are any leftover questions or any other comments.

Fast Forward: *Bridge to Next Session*

• Share the ‘Bridge to Next Session’ slide 35.
• Session 2: Shutting Down Stereotypes.
• As a reminder of what each session looks like share the slide on the session flow (GIRL acronym). Slide 37.

Time for a Quote

• Wrap up the session with a quote and encourage the participants to send you some quotes that you/they can share in the next session (*helps to enhance a sense of ownership to and of the group*).

Thank everyone again and let them know you will be staying back for 10 minutes or so, in case any of them would like to connect on a one to one.
DEBRIEF

• Congratulations on your second session! Every group is different and brings its own dynamic character into the mix. Assess to see which participants are more vocal than the others and while you continue to encourage their active participation, think of ways to start drawing in the quieter participants.

• This can be done in non-obvious ways, like highlighting a contribution they made, even if as a text in the chat. If they stay back after the session, get to know them on a one to one.

• Also, take time to debrief and self-reflect on how you felt in this session.

• Every session will give you an opportunity to think of these five questions:
  1. Think about what is working well
  2. What went differently from what you expected (pleasantly or unpleasantly)
  3. Areas you felt stuck at, times participants looked disengaged or what you would do differently
  4. What moments felt charged and participation seemed to peak
  5. Write down what you need to bring back to the group in the next session to process. Was there any leftover talking points?

• Use the key takeaways from the polls, to get an idea of whether the objectives are being met (as an evaluation aspect)
SLIDE DECK - 39 Slides.
Link to access the ppt: Go-Girls e-Huddle Group Deck- Session 1- Final. pptx
Thumbnail images are below:
Shutting down Stereotypes

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- To create a common space to talk and call out any gender-based stereotypes they might have seen or experienced—both outside and inside their homes/families/community
- Share personal or other examples that illustrate the myth of these stereotypes
- To explore how patriarchy can also adversely impact boys and fuel masculine toxicity
- To identify strategies to ‘shut’ down these stereotypes

SESSION NOTE TO FACILITATOR

Given the focus of this session which involves a deeper exploration of the adverse effects of patriarchy, think back to your own life and reflect on how the socio-cultural-political environment you were raised in impacted you. This will help you tune into where your e-huddle participants might find themselves. Think of specific appropriate examples you could share with the group, while also staying cognizant of not taking up too much emotional space or airtime. The aim of your sharing is to start or add to the conversation, role model being vulnerable within this brave space, and continue to build trust and rapport within the group. Remember to go over the group norms again. As with all sessions, the methodology embodies a participatory approach, so that the participants know and feel that this group is theirs to shape.
### Session Flow - 90 Minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section and Time</th>
<th>Slides</th>
<th>Plan &amp; Activity</th>
<th>Resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Get Ready 10 minutes | 2-6 | Welcome  
- Join in at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start  
- Welcome each participant using the chat function or verbally as they come online.  
- Can play some music as you wait for all to join. Ask them for suggestions on what songs they might like for the next time. They can share in the chat or email it to you later (*helps to enhance a sense of ownership to and of the group*). | Activity 1:  
**ACTIVITY 1**  
Check-In: *How are You Feeling?*  
*Kitty Scale Time* |
Since this is only the second session, the goal is to continue to keep it light and help the participants ease in.

Similar to last session’s warm where the Doggy Scale Time was used, this time ask everyone which cat picture they choose and how it reflects what they are feeling. Encourage them ALL to share that in the chat box (*no pressure for them to speak*).

This helps to continue to break the ice, even without them having to start speaking, and creates an equal space for all to engage and be heard, and not just the more vocal participants.

**Minute to Arrive: 2-to-3-minute *mindfulness***

- Facilitate a mindfulness practice like a meditation or relaxation technique. You could search the web for examples.
- OR you could play a video or audio clip of a mindfulness practice. Sample clip in resource column.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLIDE 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reducing Stress Through Deep Breathing John Hopkins Clip: 2.59 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
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</table>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wemm-i6XHr8

| SLIDE 9-10

| SLIDE 11-14
• Brief review of the previous session, key takeaways, and process any leftovers thoughts from the last session

And Today
• Set the context for the session today. Introduce the session topic- Shutting Down Stereotypes.
• Remind them of the ‘GIRL’ acronym that makes up each session flow.

ACTIVITY 2:
Conversation Starter:
Like a girl...what does that mean?
Pause and Reflect:
• In the larger group, ask the question- What do people mean when they say ‘act like a girl’
• Encourage them to share in the chat or talk.
• Introduce the concept of stereotypes, define what that means and link it to the examples they shared in the previous question.

Activity 2:
SLIDES 17-21

Video Clip: 3.18 minutes
#LikeAGirl
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XijQBJWyDTs&t=6s
Introduce the concept of ‘Toxic Masculinity’ and how in the evolving cultural landscape, patriarchy can also impact boys adversely.

The video clip is meant to help further explore gender-based stereotypes. Start the conversation in the larger group, before you move to the next section of ‘Reflect and Relate’.

Activity 3:
Discussion Time

Now that the video was shown and a conversation started, tell them to continue the discussion in smaller breakout rooms.

Recommended size is 4-5 participants per breakout room. The suggested time is 15 minutes in the breakout room.

Tell them to self-choose a role of group scribe, facilitator, or reporter. Everyone in the group must have a role, so, there can be more than two people in one role.

Activity 3:
SLIDE 22-26
GOOGLE DOC: https://docs.google.com/document/d/19c8zuuSWEC-SIXnMEbqfo1tpodvJhAUyxxVGCv_LBA/edit#heading=h.2gazcsgmxkub
- Each group can capture their thoughts in a shared Google doc, which includes suggested questions to start the discussion.
- Encourage them to think of ways to start shutting down gender-based stereotypes
- Once they come back to the main room, each group may present key discussion points for 2-3 minutes each.
- Return to the main room and provide space for each group to share.
- Ensure you acknowledge each group presentation, give positive feedback, and highlight back a point they shared.
  Suggested time 15 to 20 minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>L</th>
<th>Log Off 15 minutes</th>
<th>SLIDES 27-35</th>
<th>The Golden Nugget Moment: Temperature check</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The ‘golden nugget moment’ is an opportunity for the participants to capture and share their key takeaways from the session today.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- It also helps the participants own their learnings and is a way to obtain feedback and evaluate if the key objectives are being met.

**ACTIVITY 4:**

**Our Golden Nugget**

- It is recommended that ALL participants share at least one key takeaway in the chat box
- Check if there are any leftover questions or any other comments.

**Fast Forward: Bridge to Next Session**

- Share the ‘Bridge to Next Session’ slide 34.
- Session 3: I Am Strong: I Can Lead

**Time for a Quote**

- Wrap up the session with a quote. If participants had shared a quote with you earlier use that. Else use the backup quote provided or one that you would like to share.
• Remind and encourage the participants to send you quotes that you/ they can share in the next session (*helps to enhance a sense of ownership to and of the group*).

• Thank everyone again and let them know you will be staying back for 10 minutes or so, in case any of them would like to connect on a one to one.
SESSION DEBRIEF

- Congratulations on your second session! Every group is different and brings its own dynamic character into the mix. Assess to see which participants are more vocal than the others and while you continue to encourage their active participation, think of ways to start drawing in the quieter participants.
- This can be done in non-obvious ways, like highlighting a contribution they made, even if as a text in the chat. If they stay back after the session, get to know them on a one to one.
- Also, take time to debrief and self-reflect on how you felt in this session.
- Every session will give you an opportunity to think of these five questions:
  1. Think about what is working well
  2. What went differently from what you expected (pleasantly or unpleasantly)
  3. Areas you felt stuck at, times participants looked disengaged or what you would do differently
  4. What moments felt charged and participation seemed to peak
  5. Write down what you need to bring back to the group in the next session to process. Was there any leftover talking points?
- Use the key takeaways from the polls, to get an idea of whether the objectives are being met (as an evaluation aspect)
SLIDE DECK - 35 Slides.
Link to access the ppt: Go-Girls e-Huddle Group- Session 2 .pptx

Thumbnail images are below:
Session Plan 3

Step 3
- Reflect and Relate

Step 4
- Log Off

Golden Nugget Moment
- What is a key take away from today?

Share in Chat Box
- Go Girls e-Huddle Group
- I Am Strong I Can Lead

Until Next Time!
**I Am Strong: I Can Lead**

**SESSION OBJECTIVES**

- To help participants know that despite the gender biased socio-cultural messaging, they can rise above the negative gender stereotypes, they have inherent strengths and the capability to lead
- Share concrete examples of South Asian women role models, who have demonstrated leadership and an entrepreneurial spirit across different spheres of life
- Help participants introspect, raise awareness of their personal strengths and experience of success moments. Provide an opportunity for them to document the same, as a visual reminder to access later.

**SESSION NOTE TO FACILITATOR**

In the previous session there was an exploration of the adverse effects of patriarchy and gender stereotypes. The focus on this session is to start building a positive mindset and instilling hope. Reflect on ways you have demonstrated leadership or been intentional about developing your strengths. Also think of women role models, those in the public space as well as those everyday heroines who have risen above the patriarchal mindset to make a difference and chart their own lifepath. The level of rapport and trust within the group might be growing more, and participants may be more open to sharing. While you continue to support participants that have been speaking up, do be intentional about creating space and encouraging the others to lean in more too.
## SESSION FLOW - 90 MINUTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION AND TIME</th>
<th>SLIDES</th>
<th>PLAN &amp; ACTIVITY</th>
<th>RESOURCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get Ready</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td>- Join in at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Welcome each participant using the chat function or verbally as they come online.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Can play some music as you wait for all to join. If suggestions have been made by participants on what music they would like to hear, ensure you can incorporate them. Do keep reminding them they can share suggestions in the chat or email them to you later (<em>helps to enhance a sense of ownership to and of the group</em>).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ACTIVITY 1

**Check-In:** *If I were an animal*...
The session today incorporates an element of introspection and self-awareness. You can start to set that tone through this warmup activity.

- Ask participants, ‘If you were an animal, what animal would you be and why?’
- Encourage them ALL to write in the chat box.
- As an acknowledgement, you could quickly sum up all the different animal families that are shared and corresponding reasons.

If I were an animal...

Minute to Arrive: 2-to-3-minute mindfulness
- Facilitate a mindfulness practice like a meditation or relaxation technique. You could search the web for examples.
- OR you could play a video or audio clip of a mindfulness practice. Sample clip in resource column.

SLIDE 6
3 Most Effective Pranayamas - Deep Breathing Exercises
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=39ZIoN4Rr8
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Involve &amp; Engage</th>
<th>SLIDES 7-20</th>
<th>Review of Group Norms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 minutes</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Go over the group norms Check if any changes need to be made. If they agree with the norms, tell them to use a thumps up (or similar) icon to show their agreement.

Rewind and Recap
- Brief review of the previous session, key takeaways, and process any leftovers thoughts from the last session

And Today
- Set the context for the session today. Introduce the session topic- I am Strong, I Can Lead
- Remind them of the ‘GIRL’ acronym that makes up each session flow.

ACTIVITY 2
Conversation Starter:

*Woman Idol - The Hunt is On!*
• Acknowledge the fact that gender-based stereotypes exist that limit opportunities for women and connect it back to examples that were shared in the last session.

• However, also open the dialogue that despite these inherent injustices, many women have challenged the system to rise above. These are women in the public spheres like in politics, entrepreneurship, corporate space as well as many unsung female heroines that we come across in our day-to-day life. Perhaps, even within their own families (*mothers, grandmother, aunts*) or neighborhood (*female storekeeper, cab driver, or domestic help*)

• Create a space for brainstorming within the larger group of these ‘women idols’ we all know or have heard of

• Share these article links before you move to the next section of ‘Reflect and Relate’

<p>| g/endpovertyinsouthasia/celebrating- south-asias-women-leaders |
| <a href="https://www.scoopwhoop.com/women/young-indian-women-better-role-models-than-bollywood-heroes/">https://www.scoopwhoop.com/women/young-indian-women-better-role-models-than-bollywood-heroes/</a> |
| <a href="https://www.vogue.in/magazine-story/6-indian-">https://www.vogue.in/magazine-story/6-indian-</a> |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>R</th>
<th>Reflect &amp; Relate 50 minutes</th>
<th>SLIDES 21-28</th>
<th>ACTIVITY 2 continued</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Breakout Room Discussion Time</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The goal is for each group to do an internet hunt for South Asian women idols. They can use the articles or look at others</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Recommended size is 4-5 participants per breakout room. The suggested time is 15 minutes in the breakout room.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• As before, remind them to self-choose a role of group scribe, facilitator, or reporter. Everyone in the group must have a role, so, there can be more than two people in one role.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Each group can capture their thoughts in a shared Google doc, which includes suggested questions to start the discussion.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Activity 2: SLIDE 23-26

Google Doc: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1RBfMXmdq0E1j_xiG4evJi0H
Once they come back to the main room, each group may present key discussion points for 2-3 minutes each.
Return to the main room and provide space for each group to share.
Ensure you acknowledge each group presentation, give positive feedback, and highlight back a point they shared.

ACTIVITY 3
Individual Activity
My Strengths Pictogram

• The goal is for each participant to introspect and think about their strengths and/or ‘success’ moments they have already experienced. Encourage them to think of strengths and/or success moments, not in terms of ‘big’ achievements, but also think about how they have shown strength in day-to-day moments, like overcoming a challenge, showing compassion, and being a good friend, in organizing things, perseverance in learning something, stepping up to help someone, etc.
• This is an individual activity. They can use the link to the worksheet – My Strengths Pictogram.
**The suggested time is 10 minutes.** Since this is the first individual activity experience in this program, sharing is optional. Request a few participants to volunteer to share in the larger group.

**Log Off**  
15 minutes  

**SLIDES**  
29-36  

**The Golden Nugget Moment: Temperature check**  
- The ‘golden nugget moment’ is an opportunity for the participants to capture and share their key takeaways from the session today.  
- It also helps the participants own their learnings and is a way to obtain feedback and evaluate if the key objectives are being met.

**ACTIVITY 4**  
Golden Nugget  
- It is recommended that ALL participants share at least one key takeaway in the chat box  
- Check if there are any leftover questions or any other comments.

**Fast Forward: Bridge to Next Session**
• Share the ‘Bridge to Next Session’
• Session 4: Mental Health Matters- Our Resilience Building Toolkit

Time for a Quote

• Wrap up the session with a quote. If participants had shared a quote with you earlier use that. Else use the backup quote provided or one that you would like to share.
• Remind and encourage the participants to send you quotes that you/they can share in the next session (helps to enhance a sense of ownership to and of the group).
• Thank everyone again and let them know you will be staying back for 10 minutes or so, in case any of them would like to connect on a one to one.

SLIDE 35
BACK-UP QUOTE: AUDRE LORDE
SESSION DEBRIEF

• There may have been more personal sharing in this session, as participants get to know each other and you better. Think about your own comfort level and how you are feeling about each individual participant as well as the group as an entity.

• Now would be a good time to refer back to the ‘What if’ section earlier in the manual, as you might deal with some sticky situations like participants logging in late, or someone says something offensive, or a disagreement arises in the group etc.

• Make a note of some of the sharing’s that you can bring back to future sessions.

• As always, every session will give you an opportunity to think of these five questions:
  6. Think about what is working well
  7. What went differently from what you expected (pleasantly or unpleasantly)
  8. Areas you felt stuck at, times participants looked disengaged or what you would do differently
  9. What moments felt charged and participation seemed to peak
  10. Write down what you need to bring back to the group in the next session to process. Was there any leftover talking points?

• Use the key takeaways from the polls, to get an idea of whether the objectives are being met (as an evaluation aspect) and if there are any unanswered or open items to bring into the next session.
SLIDE DECK - 36 Slides.

Link to access the ppt: Go-Girls e-Huddle Group- Session 3 .pptx

Thumbnail images are below:
SESSION OBJECTIVES

- To help participants realise that stress, is a normal reaction to life’s challenges. It is okay to not feel okay.
- Know that their mental health matters. So, it is important to build awareness of what triggers their stress and how it might impact them.
- Learn two ways to build resilience as they navigate through stress.
- Know they are not alone and know that help is always available. They should talk to trusted adults about their stress. If requires, seek professional help just as they would if they had a physical illness.

SESSION NOTE TO FACILITATOR

Given the topic of this session, know that it can be triggering to you as well as other participants. Re-enforcing the group norms will be extra critical. While you create a supportive and non-judgemental holding space for participants to share, remember this is not a therapy session. So, you will have to also balance it by containing any sharing that takes away from the larger group process and sharing. Review the section on what to do if someone shares traumatic information or is taking up a lot of sharing space. While you acknowledge the reality of stress, also try to normalise stress, and assure the group that there are ways to deal with stress and build resilience. They are not alone. Help is always available.
**SESSION FLOW- 90 MINUTES**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION AND TIME</th>
<th>SLIDES</th>
<th>PLAN &amp; ACTIVITY</th>
<th>RESOURCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get Ready</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Join in at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Welcome each participant using the chat function or verbally as they come online.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Can play some music as you wait for all to join. If suggestions have been made by participants on what music they would like to hear, ensure you can incorporate them. Do keep reminding them they can share suggestions in the chat or email them to you later (<em>helps to enhance a sense of ownership to and of the group</em>).</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ACTIVITY 1**

Check-In:  *Rose, Bud, and Thorn*  

Activity 1: Slide 3-5
The session today focused on mental well-being, stress, and building resilience. It requires a level of introspection and self-awareness. You can start to set that tone through this warm up activity.

- Ask participants, *Think of something you are grateful for or what is positive in your life right now (ROSE), a challenge/stress you are facing and could use support (THORN), as well as something you are looking forward to that, gives you hope (BUD)*

- Encourage them ALL to write in the chat box
- As an acknowledgment, stress the point that each of us has this range of moments that include a rose, bud, and thorn.

**Minute to Arrive:** 2-to-3-minute *mindfulness*

- Facilitate a mindfulness practice like a meditation or relaxation technique. You could search the web for examples.
- OR you could play a video or audio clip of a mindfulness practice. Sample clip in resource column.

**SLIDE 6**
Waterfall Meditation - Guided Imagery
Clip: 3.21 minutes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>Involve &amp; Engage</th>
<th>SLIDES 7-19</th>
<th>Review of Group Norms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Given the potential sensitivity of the session topic, call out that this should be a supportive and non-judgemental space and they all take ownership and accountability for that. Check if any changes need to be made. If they agree with the norms, tell them to use a thumps up (or similar) icon to show their agreement.</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rewind and Recap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Brief review of the previous session, key takeaways, and process any leftovers thoughts from the last session</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>And Today</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Set the context for the session today. Introduce the session topic: Mental Health Matters - Our Resilience Building Toolkit</td>
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</table>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBYYFbStfHM
Given the nature of this session, a detailed suggested script has been shared to help set the context

- The reality of life is that STRESS is inevitable. We ALL have faced stress at some point or the other. And across the globe, the pandemic has only magnified that reality. So, the first point is that we embrace and accept the fact that stress is universal and unavoidable.
- The second point is based on what research says. Stress is linked to our survival instinct and in small doses and in some situations, it creates a burst of energy, gets us excited, keeps us alert, and helps us meet challenges more efficiently.
- Even ‘positive/ happy events’ in our life cause stress, for example, going for a holiday or taking part in your favorite school activity. Know that stress is normal and part of the human experience. It is okay to not feel okay.
- So, the REAL issue is when stress enters that zone where it becomes a constant, almost like we are always running on the ‘stress treadmill’ and it becomes uncontrolled, and we are unable to hit the stop button! And I think many of us find ourselves in that zone of uncontrolled stress!
- So, what do we do about it? How do we manage this bad stress and build resilience?
- Well, the good news is that, unlike our physical characteristics that we are born with and remain fixed and are naturally NOT capable of change, say the color of my eyes is black, it will always remain naturally black, BUT, when it comes to our thought patterns and coping skills, we
ALL are capable of change and growth. And sure, while this might come easier and more naturally to some than others, the bottom line is we are capable of building resilience.

**ACTIVITY 2**

Conversation Starter:

*Stressed about Stress?*

- The goal is for each group to briefly discuss what situations trigger stress and how this impacts their emotions (feelings), behaviors as well as any physical manifestations.
- Review Slide 19 on Common Signs of Stress
- Set this context within the larger group before you move to the next section of ‘Reflect and Relate’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflect &amp; Relate</th>
<th>SLIDES 20-42</th>
<th><strong>ACTIVITY 2 - continued</strong></th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>50 minutes</strong></td>
<td>Breakout Room Discussion Time</td>
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</table>

- Recommended size is 4-5 participants per breakout room.
- They will self-choose a role of group scribe, facilitator, or reporter. Everyone in the group must have a role, so, there can be more than two people in one role.

Activity 2:

SLIDE 22-24
Each group can capture their thoughts in a shared Google doc, which includes suggested questions to start the discussion.

Once they come back to the main room, each group may present key discussion points for 2-3 minutes each.

Return to the main room and provide space for each group to share.

Ensure you acknowledge each group presentation, give positive feedback, and highlight back a point they shared.

Suggested time in breakout rooms is 15 minutes with 10 minutes for group sharing.

**ACTIVITY 3 – Resilience Building Toolkit**

This section consists of TWO techniques to help build resilience.

The methodology for this section will be via larger group processing (no breakout rooms or individual introspection)

**Pause and Reflect:**

- First set context. Show them with the image of the plant sprouting through the cracked mud and ask them to share via chat what it makes them think of.
- Use this to introduce the concept of ‘Resilience’
- Be sure to point out that resilience does not mean we pretend to only feel happy and positive all the time and deny our ‘negative’ emotions. It’s okay to not feel okay. And we should reach out for help.
- Invest in your emotional wellbeing, just like you do in your physical wellbeing. Build your emotional resilience.
- Tell them you will be sharing TWO techniques to build resilience.

**Technique 1**

*The 3 C’s- Catch it, Check it and Change it*

- As a resource for yourself, review the earlier section on CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) in Section 2 of the guide. This technique of the 3C’s is informed by CBT.
- Pre-read more on this specific technique - BBC provided link as well as video.
- The goal is to share that we are capable of reframing our unhelpful and negative thoughts. It requires an intentional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRE-READ RESOURCES FOR FACILITATOR:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="HTTP://DOWNLOAD">HTTP://DOWNLOAD</a> ADS.BBC.CO.UK/HEADROOM/CBT/CATCH_IT.PDF</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
process of becoming aware of them (Catch it), question it for its validity and gather evidence for feeling that way (Check it) and then try to replace it by reframing it with a neutral or a positive thought (Change it)

- Example: When I do not do well in math, I think I am useless with numbers. So, catch the negative thought, check to see if that is 100% accurate, and change it to something neutral (I am not that good, but I am not that bad either. With help I can get better) or positive (when I was younger, I was really good at math, so I know I am capable. Maybe I just need to study another way)

- The suggested time is 10 minutes. Since this activity is done as a larger group processing, encourage active participation via the chat function.

**Technique 2**

A Mousy Story - Perspective Lens

- This technique draws our attention to the link between how we perceive things and their impact on our thoughts, feelings, and actions.
After showing the video, process it within the larger group. Ask them to share examples of when a perspective change helped them deal with a stressor. Think of an example you can share from your own life journey.

- The key message is that changing one’s perspective helps to build resilience and a capacity to bounce back and move forward.

Video Clip:
1.25 minutes
Nolan
Seriously
Strong Cheese-Advert.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqabqH0TZr0

L
Log Off 15 minutes
SLIDES 43-52

The Golden Nugget Moment: Temperature check
- The ‘golden nugget moment’ is an opportunity for the participants to capture and share their key takeaways from the session today.
• It also helps the participants own their learnings and is a way to obtain feedback and evaluate if the key objectives are being met.

**ACTIVITY 4:**

**Golden Nugget**
- It is recommended that ALL participants share at least one key takeaway in the chat
- Check if there are any leftover questions or any other comments.

**Fast Forward: Bridge to Next Session**
- Share the ‘Bridge to Next Session’ slide 34.
- Session 5: Embracing All of Me- Our Bodies, Sexuality, and Orientation

**Time for a Quote**
- Wrap up the session with a quote. If participants had shared a quote with you earlier use that. Else use the backup quote provided or one that you would like to share.
• Remind and encourage the participants to send you quotes that you/they can share in the next session (*helps to enhance a sense of ownership to and of the group*).

• Remind them they are not alone and if they need help, they should reach out to their family or school counselor. If there is a local reliable hotline counseling number or a non-profit organization that works in this space, you could share that resource too.

• Thank everyone again and let them know you will be staying back for 10 minutes or so, in case any of them would like to connect on a one to one.
SESSION DEBRIEF

- This session created an opportunity and space for a lot of personal sharing, including stressful situations and how they impact them. How did it make you feel? Make sure you take the time to reflect and process your emotions too.
- If there was any particular sharing that requires a follow up, ensure you reach out to the participant after the session, via an email/text. Let them know they are not alone, and while you cannot provide professional counselling, if that is required encourage them to talk to their families or school teacher/counsellor.
- Make a note of some of the sharing’s that you can bring back to future sessions.
- As always, every session will give you an opportunity to think of these five questions:
  11. Think about what is working well
  12. What went differently from what you expected (pleasantly or unpleasantly)
  13. Areas you felt stuck at, times participants looked disengaged or what you would do differently
  14. What moments felt charged and participation seemed to peak
  15. Write down what you need to bring back to the group in the next session to process. Was there any leftover talking points?
- Use the key takeaways from the polls, to get an idea of whether the objectives are being met (as an evaluation aspect) and if there are any unanswered or open items to bring into the next session.
SLIDE DECK - 52 Slides.

Link to access the ppt: Go-Girls e-Huddle Group- Session 4 .pptx

Thumbnail images are below:
Embracing All of Me - Bodies, Sexuality and Orientation

SESSION OBJECTIVES

- To start a dialogue around how we view ourselves through the lens of our body image and sexual orientation
- To build media literacy skills- educate and build awareness on how the media propagates stereotypes of beauty and often manipulates the truth (airbrushed images)- for example around size, color, body shape, skin, hair
- To create a brave space for participants to share their personal journeys around body image issues and ways to counter negative perceptions, moving from body shaming to embracing their bodies
- Build awareness around sexual orientation and gender identity and share relevant resources

SESSION NOTE TO FACILITATOR

Globally, many adolescents struggle with body images issues, especially girls. To add to that, when patriarchal socio-cultural norms assign worth to a girl based on her physical appearance, it further deepens the damage and self-worth. In many South Asian countries, unfortunately homosexuality is still a crime and is associated with shame. Be aware of the group sentiments as you build awareness on sexual orientation and gender identity. Suggested resources have been shared to read before the session. This session can be triggering for many as they share from their personal journeys. Like the previous session, you will have to be intentional about creating a non-judgemental space for individual sharing while still focusing on the larger group need and processing. Remember to re-enforce that even thought they might feel alone, they are not alone. Help is always available.
## SESSION FLOW - 90 MINUTES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SECTION AND TIME</th>
<th>SLIDES</th>
<th>PLAN &amp; ACTIVITY</th>
<th>RESOURCE</th>
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<td>G</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>Get Ready</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Welcome</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Join in at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start</td>
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<td>ACTIVITY 1: SLIDE 3-5 Moment of Gratitude</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Check-In: Moment of Gratitude</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• The session today focuses on topics that may be triggering for some. This warmup activity helps set the tone and reminds</td>
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</table>
them, that despite the struggles, each of them has something to be grateful for.
- Ask participants, *'Think of something you are grateful for today'*
- Encourage them ALL to write in the chat box
- As an acknowledgment, stress the point that each of us has something to be grateful for.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minute to Arrive: 2-to-3-minute <em>mindfulness</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Facilitate a mindfulness practice like a meditation or relaxation technique. You could search the web for examples.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• OR you could play a video or audio clip of a mindfulness practice. Sample clip in resource column.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Slide 6</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gratitude Meditation Clip: 3.30 minutes <a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qpxWpGH11Q">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_qpxWpGH11Q</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>SLIDES 7-21</th>
<th>Review of Group Norms</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Involve &amp; Engage</td>
<td>Review of Group Norms</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 minutes</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACTIVITY 2</strong> Conversation Starter:</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Scars to your Beautiful, Song by Alessia Cara</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Use this popular song to start the conversation in the larger group. Ask them what in the song resonated with them- <em>as this</em></td>
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</table>

- Given the potential sensitivity of the session topic, call out that this should be a supportive and non-judgmental space and they all take ownership and accountability for that. Check if any changes need to be made. If they agree with the norms, tell them to use a thumps up (or similar) icon to show their agreement.

**Rewind and Recap**

- Brief review of the previous session, key takeaways, and process any leftovers thoughts from the last session

**And Today**

- Set the context for the session today. Introduce the session topic: Embracing All of Me- Bodies, Sexuality, and Orientation
song represents a range of stereotypes around body types and beauty standards.

- Bring into awareness that the media propagates these unfair beauty standards, whether it be Bollywood movies, magazines that only model certain body shapes, advertisements for skin lightening creams, or the chase for size zero, the perfect clear skin or hair!
- Introduce the concept of ‘Body Image’ and what that means, using the video Why don’t I like the way I look?
- Set this context within the larger group before you move to the next section of ‘Reflect and Relate’

| R  | Reflect & Relate 45 | SLIDES 20-42 | ACTIVITY 3  
| Body Shaming to Body Embracing  
Breakout Room Discussion Time | HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?v=WASEAYUHZO  
WHAT DOES BODY IMAGE MEAN?  
Why don’t I like the way I look?  
HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?v=V7ZUHOEYLN8  
Activity 3: SLIDE 22-24  
GOOGLE DOC: |
minutes

- The goal is for each group to do an internet hunt for movies, advertisements, magazines that propagate these stereotypes and fuel body shaming.
- Each group is to also discuss ways they can bust these beauty myths
- Recommended size is 4-5 participants per breakout room.
- They will self-choose a role of group scribe, facilitator, or reporter. Everyone in the group must have a role, so, there can be more than two people in one role.
- Each group can capture their thoughts in a shared Google doc, which includes suggested questions to start the discussion.
- Once they come back to the main room, each group may present key discussion points for 2-3 minutes each.
- Return to the main room and provide space for each group to share.
- Ensure you acknowledge each group presentation, give positive feedback, and highlight back a point they shared.
- Suggested time in breakout rooms is 15 minutes with 10 minutes for group sharing.

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1y81rQzSuzKXp_O VXUuoUExCzgYxyv_MK6G7dN4hkMBN/A/edit#
## ACTIVITY 4

### Conversation Starter

- **As a resource for yourself, review the pre-read section. Ensure that you educate yourself on sexual orientation, gender identity, and the use of pronouns. These resources also include those specific to South Asian populations.**

- Use the video to set the context and start a conversation
- Be sure to point out that this may be a new topic for many and might sound confusing and that is okay. The key is to build awareness and be open
- Suggested time is 10 minutes. Since this activity is done as a larger group processing, encourage active participation

![What is Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation?](HTTPS://AA PAONLINE. ORG/RESOURCES/LGBTQ-AAPI-RESOURCES/HTTPS://WWW.CDC.GOV/LGBTHEALTH/YOUTH-RESOURCES.HTM)
The Golden Nugget Moment: Temperature check

- The ‘golden nugget moment’ is an opportunity for the participants to capture and share their key takeaways from the session today.
- It also helps the participants own their learnings and is a way to obtain feedback and evaluate if the key objectives are being met.

**ACTIVITY 5:**

Golden Nugget

- It is recommended that ALL participants share at least one key takeaway in the chat
- Check if there are any leftover questions or any other comments.

Fast Forward: *Bridge to Next Session*
• Share the ‘Bridge to Next Session’.
• Session 6: You Matter- We Matter: The Big Deal about Self Esteem!

**Time for a Quote**

• Wrap up the session with a quote. If participants had shared a quote with you earlier use that. Else use the backup quote provided or one that you would like to share.
• Remind and encourage the participants to send you quotes that you/they can share in the next session (*helps to enhance a sense of ownership to and of the group*).
• Remind them they are not alone and if they need help, they should reach out to their family or school counselor.
• Thank everyone again and let them know you will be staying back for 10 minutes or so, in case any of them would like to connect on a one to one.
SESSION DEBRIEF

- The group is at a stage where the rapport and level of comfort to share might be higher. In this session too, there might have been a lot of personal sharing, and it could be potentially triggering to some, including yourself. Make sure you take the time to reflect and process your emotions too.

- If there was any sharing that requires a follow up, ensure you reach out to the participant after the session, via an email/text. Let them know they are not alone, and while you cannot provide professional counselling, if that is required encourage them to talk to their families or schoolteacher/counsellor.

- Make a note of some of the sharing’s that you can bring back to future sessions.

- As always, every session will give you an opportunity to think of these five questions:
  
  **16. Think about what is working well**
  **17. What went differently from what you expected (pleasantly or unpleasantly)**
  **18. Areas you felt stuck at, times participants looked disengaged or what you would do differently**
  **19. What moments felt charged and participation seemed to peak**
  **20. Write down what you need to bring back to the group in the next session to process. Was there any leftover talking points?**

- Use the key takeaways from the polls, to get an idea of whether the objectives are being met (as an evaluation aspect) and if there are any unanswered or open items to bring into the next session.
SLIDE DECK- 38 Slides.

Link to access the ppt: Go-Girls e-Huddle Group- Session 5. pptx

Thumbnail images are below:
SESSION OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the concept of self-esteem, self-talk and how it impacts us
- To build awareness of their self-esteem through a personal inventory and introduce four negative self-talk traps: personalization, mental filter, should/musts, and catastrophizing
- To create a brave space for participants to explore negative self-talk that contributes to low self-esteem and ways to counter it. Re-introduce the technique of 3C’s from session 4
- To help each participant create a personalized ‘positive self-talk’ mantra and script

SESSION NOTE TO FACILITATOR

This session builds on sessions 4 and 5, where we explored mental health and body image issues. Without drawing attention to any specific individual sharing, remember to link back to the group sharing’s from last two sessions, using them as examples to explore self-esteem and self-talk. Like the previous two sessions, you will have to be intentional about facilitating a supportive space for receiving and accepting individual life stories, without losing the focus of containing overwhelming emotions, and bringing the focus back to the larger group processing. This is the second last session, actively start thinking of ‘wrapping’ up. Ask the group for ideas for a special ‘wrap up’ section. This session too can be triggering, so do re-enforce that they are not alone. Help is always available.
### Session Flow - 90 Minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section and Time</th>
<th>Slides</th>
<th>Plan &amp; Activity</th>
<th>Resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get Ready</td>
<td>1-5</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Join in at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Welcome each participant using the chat function or verbally as they come online.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Play some music as you wait for all to join. If suggestions have been made by participants on what music they would like to hear, ensure you can incorporate them. Do keep reminding them they can share suggestions in the chat or email them to you later</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity 1**

Check-In: *Our Laughter Gym!*

- The session today may be triggering for some. Laughter creates positive sensations and can help reduce stress.

**Activity 1: SLIDE 3-4**

*Our Laughter Gym!*
Tell participants that today as a group you are going to try something different. You all are going to act silly and laugh! Remind them this is a no-judgment zone; they have known each other for a while now and it's okay to let loose!

As part of our Laughter Gym exercise, you can do two things:

- **Simultaneously, for 20 seconds everyone will imitate the sounds and movement of any animal they choose and then say freeze, capturing funny positions, and after unfreezing allow for all to laugh.**

- **Ask all participants to make their funniest face possible, and if they are comfortable, you can take a picture/screenshot that you could share with them. Simultaneously, everyone does that and holds that pose for 5 seconds. Allow space for all to laugh.smile.**

**Minute to Arrive: 2-to-3-minute mindfulness**

- For today’s session, you could play this suggested video clip that shows a laughing meditation practice.

**SLIDE 5**
Laughing Meditation Clip: 3.38 minutes
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Slides</th>
<th>Review of Group Norms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Involve &amp; Engage 20 minutes</td>
<td>6-18</td>
<td>Given the potential sensitivity of the session topic, call out that this should be a supportive and non-judgemental space and they all take ownership and accountability for that. Check if any changes need to be made. If they agree with the norms, tell them to use a thumps up (or similar) icon to show their agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Rewind and Recap</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Brief review of the previous session, key takeaways, and process any leftovers thoughts from the last session</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>And Today</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Set the context for the session today. Introduce the session topic: You Matter-We Matter: The Big Deal about Self Esteem!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ACTIVITY 2**

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZMJbRtx2gI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZMJbRtx2gI)
### Conversation Starter:

*The Mixed-Up Chameleon, Eric Carle*

- Use this animation of the popular children’s story to start the conversation in the larger group. Process what they took away from this and what resonated with them.
- Introduce the concept of Self Esteem and Self Talk. Key focus being - *It's how much you value yourself and how significant you think you are. It is how you see yourself. Self-esteem isn't bragging about how great you are. It's more like quietly knowing that you're worth a lot.*
- Introduce the FOUR negative self-talk traps
- Set this context within the larger group before you move to the next section of ‘Reflect and Relate’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflect &amp; Relate</th>
<th>SLIDES 19-36</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ACTIVITY 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>My Self Esteem Inventory</em>- The Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Activity</td>
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<tr>
<td>- The goal is for each member to do this individually, to build individual awareness and there will be NO sharing of scores.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity 3:**

- SLIDE 21
- LINK TO ROSENBERG SELF ESTEEM SCALE

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*The Mixed-Up Chameleon – Animated Video*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrmZxeXf7ScU
**ACTIVITY 4**

**Conversation Starter:**

*The Big Deal About Positive Self Talk!*

- Build on the concept of Positive Self Talk, using this video.
- Process the video in the larger group, by also reminding them of the 3C’s technique that they learned in Session 4 and how it can be used to reframe negative self-talk to more realistic or positive self-talk.

**Breakout Room Discussion Time**

- Recommended size is 4-5 participants per breakout room.
- They will self-choose a role of group scribe, facilitator, or reporter. Everyone in the group must have a role, so, there can be more than two people in one role.

Remind them that while the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale is a widely used measure, it is not a diagnostic tool. The goal is to reflect and not to compare or label.

https://wwnor ton.com/college/psych/psychsci/media/rosenberg.htm

*Positive Self-Talk*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=71_NkXgAK1g

SLIDE 31-33

GOOGLE DOC:
• Each group can capture their thoughts in a shared Google doc, which includes suggested questions to start the discussion.
• Once they come back to the main room, each group may present key discussion points for 2-3 minutes each.
• Return to the main room and provide space for each group to share.
• Ensure you acknowledge each group presentation, give positive feedback, and highlight back a point they shared.
• Suggested time in breakout rooms is 15 minutes with 10 minutes for group sharing.

ACTIVITY 5
Pause and Reflect: My Positive Self Talk Mantra
• The goal is for each participant to create a personalized ‘Positive Self Talk’ Script
• Share sample ‘Self Talk Scripts’ that they can use as inspiration.
• Participants to share their mantra via the chat box feature
The Golden Nugget Moment: *Temperature check*

- The ‘golden nugget moment’ is an opportunity for the participants to capture and share their key takeaways from the session today.
- It also helps the participants own their learnings and is a way to obtain feedback and evaluate if the key objectives are being met.

**ACTIVITY 6:**

Golden Nugget

- It is recommended that ALL participants share at least one key takeaway in the chat
- Check if there are any leftover questions or any other comments.

**Fast Forward: Bridge to Next Session**

- Share the ‘Bridge to Next Session’
- Ask the group for suggestions for a special ‘wrap-up’ as the next session will be the last session.
Session 7: And it’s a Beginning: The Road Ahead

Time for a Quote

- Wrap up the session with a quote. If participants had shared a quote with you earlier use that. Else use the backup quote provided or one that you would like to share.
- Remind and encourage the participants to send you quotes that you/ they can share in the next session (*helps to enhance a sense of ownership to and of the group*).
- Remind them they are not alone and if they need help, they should reach out to their family or school counselor.
- Thank everyone again and let them know you will be staying back for 10 minutes or so, in case any of them would like to connect on a one to one.

Slide 45
Back-Up Quote:
Brene Brown
SESSION DEBRIEF

- The last three sessions created opportunities for a lot of personal sharing. Reviewing section two, theoretical framework of the Go-Girls e-Huddle Group, think of how you were able to affirm their experiences, while also, trying to build on the concept of mutual aid, universalization of experiences (all in the same boat), where you can normalize some experiences and help them see the source of the issue/problem as outside of themselves, rather than as a problem with them personally. This helps to tap into the social ecological model (discussed under section two) which helps locate the issues more as a systematic and structural issue that requires problem solving to happen through advocacy at a larger level.

- If there was any sharing that requires a follow up, ensure you reach out via an email/text. Let them know they are not alone, and if required encourage them to talk to their families or schoolteacher/counsellor.

- The next session will be the last session, how are you feeling? What key messages do you think need to re-enforced?

- As always, every session will give you an opportunity to think of these five questions:
  21. Think about what is working well
  22. What went differently from what you expected (pleasantly or unpleasantly)
  23. Areas you felt stuck at, times participants looked disengaged or what you would do differently
  24. What moments felt charged and participation seemed to peak
  25. Was there any leftover talking points?

- Use the key takeaways from the polls, to get an idea of whether the objectives are being met (as an evaluation aspect) and if there are any unanswered or open items to bring into the next session.)
SLIDE DECK - 40 Slides.

Link to access the ppt: Go-Girls e-Huddle Group- Session 6 .pptx

Thumbnail images are below:
SESSION OBJECTIVES

- To re-enforce the ‘why’ of the Go-Girls e-Huddle Group
- To recap the journey thus far- calling out the key objectives and takeaways from each of the previous 6 sessions
- To facilitate a group termination activity
- To assure them that even though this is the last session of the program, in a way, its also the beginning to the road ahead and the rest of the journey that lies ahead of them

SESSION NOTE TO FACILITATOR

This is the last session, so it will be important to revisit the journey so far. Bonds between group members might have formed, so create the space for them to share their goodbyes. The focus is on how this is just a beginning to seeing things in a different perspective and practicing some of the skills they might have learnt here. While there will be a wrap up session that you will facilitate, in response to the request from the last session, the group might share a ‘wrap up’ activity they would like to conduct. Ensure, there is time for that. If you are comfortable, you can share your contact details with them.
# Session Flow - 90 Minutes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section and Time</th>
<th>Slides</th>
<th>Plan &amp; Activity</th>
<th>Resource</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get Ready</td>
<td>1-6</td>
<td>Welcome</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Join in at least 15 minutes before the scheduled start</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Welcome each participant using the chat function or verbally as they come online.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Play some music as you wait for all to join. If suggestions have been made by participants on what music they would like to hear, ensure you can incorporate them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Activity 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Check-In: <em>How are You Feeling?</em></td>
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<td>• This is the last session. As part of a symbolic closing ritual, use the same check-in activity from week 1.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Ask everyone which dog picture they choose and how it reflects what they are feeling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Activity 1:**

*Slide 3-5*

*Doggy Scale Time*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SLIDES 7-14</th>
<th>Review of Group Norms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- Spend more time in this section than you usually would. Encourage them ALL to share by unmuting and talking or through the chatbox.

**Minute to Arrive: 2-to-3-minute mindfulness**
- Facilitate a mindfulness practice like a meditation or relaxation technique. You could search the web for examples.
- OR you could play a video or audio clip of a mindfulness practice. Sample clip in resource column

**SLIDE 6**

**The 5-4-3-2-1 Method: A Grounding Exercise to Manage Anxiety**

Clip: 3.50 minutes
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=30VMIEmA114
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflect &amp; Relate</th>
<th>SLIDES 15-74</th>
<th>ACTIVITY 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>45 minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Rewind and Recap</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Group Processing- 20 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- The goal is to go over the key objectives and takeaways from Session 1 to 6. Plan to spend approx. 3 minutes on each session.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Encourage conversations- verbally as well as through the chat box function</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SLIDE 70-74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Check if any changes need to be made. If they agree with the norms, tell them to use a thumps up (or similar) icon to show their agreement.

**Rewind and Recap**

- Brief review of the previous session, key takeaways, and process any leftovers thoughts from the last session

**And Today**

- Set the context for the last session today. Journey Thus Far- Recap for all 6 sessions
Wrap Up Activity- 25 minutes

My Compliment Book- Go-Girls Encouragement Circle

- As part of the termination activity, it is suggested that space be created for all the participants to share an encouraging word/compliment about their peers in the breakout room.

- Remind them the focus is not on a physical feature, rather it should be a characteristic they observed in their time together in this program.

Rotating Breakout Room Discussion Time

- This activity will be different from the previous breakout rooms. Smaller breakout rooms are to be created and they remain in the breakout room for only 5 minutes. Recommended size is 3 participants per breakout room.

- As a prep for this activity ensure that you make a copy for the google ppt doc

- Share the link before the activity with all the participants. Each participant should save a copy for themselves and rename the doc, using their name. This will be easier to use during the breakout room exercise.
• They should share a copy of their personalized google doc in a folder you have access to.
• Each participant should have their own google doc (*My Compliment Book*) which they share with each other in the breakout room, so they can write a compliment for each other.
• Once all 3 have written/received a compliment they come back to the main room.
• A new breakout room is created with new members and the process is repeated.
• Depending on the number of participants this rotating breakout can be done till at least half the group has had a chance to connect in a breakout room. So, for example, if there are 15 participants, there would be at least 3 rotating breakout rooms, covering 3 per group, a total of 9.
• Remind them to share a ‘self-compliment’ too on the last page
• Once this is done and everyone is back in the main room, process it as a group.
### Activity 4: Golden Nugget

- It is recommended that ALL participants share at least one key takeaway in the chat.
- Check if there are any leftover questions or any other comments.

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### The Golden Nugget Moment: Temperature check

- The ‘golden nugget moment’ is an opportunity for the participants to capture and share their key takeaways from the session today.
- It also helps the participants own their learnings and is a way to obtain feedback and evaluate if the key objectives are being met.

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**Journey Ahead:** Disney
Fast Forward: *Bridge to the Road Ahead*
- The Journey Ahead- Share this video and process it in the larger group.
- Share your thoughts on the journey so far (broad feedback), wishing them all the best, and if comfortable you can share your contact details. The participants that are open to staying in touch with each other can share their emails in the chat too.

Time for a Quote
- Wrap up the session with a quote. If participants had shared a quote with you earlier use that. Else use the backup quote provided or one that you would like to share.
- Remind them they are not alone and if they need help, they should reach out to their family or school counselor.
- Thank everyone again and stay back, to allow for any processing.

*Motivational Video:*
Clip: 3.12 minutes
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WOo6CXhYJgI

SLIDE 82
BACK-UP QUOTE: RALPH WALDO EMERSON
SESSION DEBRIEF

- Congratulations! Take a deep breath and absorb how the process has been for you! Remind yourself of this unique opportunity and space you co-created with the participant group. Process and debrief how this journey has been for you.
- What have been the highlights and the lowlights?
- If you were to conduct this program with another group, what would you keep, what you remove, and what new element could you add in?
- If there was any sharing that requires a follow up, ensure you reach out via an email/text. Let them know they are not alone, and if required encourage them to talk to their families or schoolteacher/counsellor.
SLIDE DECK - 82 Slides.

Link to access the ppt: Go-Girls e-Huddle Group- Session 7. pptx

Thumbnail images are below:
References


UNICEF. (2011). *THE STATE OF THE WORLD’S CHILDREN*

UNICEF. (2011). *THE STATE OF THE WORLD’S CHILDREN*


https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/336864/9789240011854-eng.pdf
