

Youth Leadership Model

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ABSTRACT

Youth leadership education for young females is critical to develop leadership skills. A youth leadership training program by GLAD at one of the India's leading conglomerate group was conducted with a group of 60 females in Karnataka, India. The age range of the participants was between 20 to 35 years. The aim of the training program was to create future trainers in the community to promote sustainable leadership skills and capacity building in "Young Women". The objective focus was on knowledge, attitude & practice change, and building specific psychosocial skills to help people make informed decisions, regulate emotions, build confidence, communicate effectively, and develop coping and self-management skills. A mixed methodology with quantitative and qualitative components was used. A focus group discussion and semi structured interview were conducted, and themes were analyzed. The training program across the duration span of 6 months showed a movement from self-awareness, through self-management to creating a healthy and rewarding relationship.

Keywords: Leadership skills, Mindfulness, Youth leadership

India remains the world's largest democracy and the adolescent segment of its population has been exploding since the early 1950s. According to the latest census data of 2011, around 41 percent of India's population is below the age of 20 years. The proportion of youth population in India has increased steadily from 16.7% in 1961 to 19.2% in 2011. Today, every fifth person in India is an adolescent (10-19 years) and every third – a young person (10-24 years) (Census Report, 2011). Hence, working towards the betterment and well-being of this segment of population will result in influencing the nation's human capital.

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Youth Leadership Model

Leadership Training to Young Women

Today's youth are facing increased pressure to improve academic performance and to have a smooth college to career transition. Addressing these issues of young people, more than ever before, need concerted and holistic approach towards developing their strengths as leaders. Such approach must consider the personality strengths of the young person and also take the social environment into context. This is particularly critical in developing countries, where major factors converge – comparatively higher proportion of young people in the population and lack of resources (Ungar, M. 2004). Hence, their ability to utilize their personal strength of leadership skills in areas of personal growth and career development remains a challenge. Young adults in India today face many of the same problems as their peers in other countries, including various forms of juvenile delinquency, alcohol and drug abuse, illiteracy, school dropout and low educational attainment, and family violence (Agarwal, 1989; Parikh and Krishna, 1992; Sarkar, 1988). The problems worsen for young girls from lower socio-economic strata in a developing country like India. Due to societal pressures, they face risk in conforming and losing one's voice as well as important relationships. They are further hampered because there is enormous resistance by adults to listen to girls, especially marginalized girls. As a result, young adult girls often lose their voices. They are subjected to various gender-based inequalities, and are often forced into household work and sibling care, college dropout and low-educational attainment, trafficking for sexual exploitation, risk of HIV/ AIDS and discrimination even in terms of nutrition and food (Jha, 2012). Young adult girls are also increasing users' consumers of social media. Even though technology has consistent positive impacts studies have also proven that an adolescent's body image is greatly influenced by what they see on television and social media (Brandon, 2011; Gilmartin, 2009; Olson, 2009). The ability of media marketing to affect adolescents and young adults today has evolved through many different means and has taken a negative toll on many aspects of their lives. Studies also report increasing trends of drug addiction and suicide rates among girl students (Pirkis and Blood, 2010; Steffenak, 2014). The impacts of such changes on growing minds are so severe that they may develop a sense of helplessness, harmful body image issues, low self-esteem, feelings of insecurity and dependency. Most of the adolescent girls are unaware of their strengths and decision making may become problematic.

In recent years youth leadership has received growing attention both nationally and internationally as a way of preparing young people to contribute meaningfully to society (Anderson et al., 2007; Libby et al., 2006; Detzler et al., 2007; Lee et al., 2008; Klau, 2006; Shelton, 2009; Kahn et al., 2009; Nelson, 2010). Young leaders must have a strong ability to relate to others, this will help them in ensuring their cause or vision is relevant to the people they lead (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). Research shows that a leader's emotional resonance with others is a better predictor of effective executive leadership than their general intelligence (Hernez-Broome, 2004; Goleman et al., 2002). Roberts (2009) highlights that social and emotional competence is a critical component to youth leadership. Self-control and self-awareness helps reduce the chance of developing cognitive distortions such as taking things personally, mind reading or magnify situations (Department of Human Services, 2008). It is posited that social- emotional and cognitive skills strengthen significantly throughout childhood and adolescence and can be influenced by environmental enrichment (Best & Miller, 2010; M. C. Davidson, Amso, Anderson, & Diamond, 2006).

Moreover, research suggests that cognitive skills like control abilities depending on the prefrontal cortex that organize, sequence, and regulate behavior and self-regulation (i.e., the ability to regulate resources in the service of achieving goals) predict one's altruistic

Youth Leadership Model

behavior (Aguilar-Pardo, Martínez-Arias, & Colmenares, 2013) and long-term life success (Moffitt et al., 2011). Ultimately, what this means is that the leader must spend time on personal development and building an awareness of how they are in their interactions with others as well as how they relate their vision to others. The past decades have witnessed increasing interest in the importance of leadership, cognitive and emotional skills in school and college students. It is increasingly being recognized that effective education includes practices that strengthen students' social-emotional competencies in tandem with their academic knowledge (Committee on Defining Deeper Learning and 21st Century Skills, 2012; Schonert-Reichl & Weissberg, 2014).

Albeit, the growing awareness that females are capable leaders, females remain underrepresented in positions of leadership (Agar 2004, Brown 2005). Changes in perceptions about future aspirations for girls require targeted interventions. If special aims are not made to focus on the specific needs of girls, power dynamics are unlikely to change inside or outside the classroom, and girls stand a diminished chance of catching up or succeeding. There are existing models for young women leadership program, but they have been developed primarily in wealthier countries and there are not enough evidence to assess the impact of these models. Moreover, Leadership Programs that cater to student communities may be instrumental in creating more caring communities of learning by having students and teachers model these qualities for one another. There has been no such program especially designed keeping in mind the environmental constraints of young women from lower socio-economic strata that aims to develop them as leaders of tomorrow. Rosselli and Taylor (1997) highlight that youth leadership education for young females is critical to develop leadership skills, particularly as unlike their male peers they often attribute success to external forces rather than themselves. Brown and Gilligan (1992) identify early adolescence as a crossroads in female's lives displaying disconnection, reduced self-confidence and a drop in self-esteem. Gilligan (1981) highlights in her study of moral development that females come from a care perspective and focus on interpersonal relations of care, responsibility and interdependence, while males have a justice perspective focusing on abstract rights and separateness. These differing perspectives can have implications in terms of leadership decision-making. These findings highlight the benefit of leadership exposure for young females to encourage them to see themselves in leadership roles as well as to enable them to develop the requisite skills to challenge stereotypes and overcome barriers to take up these roles. Female leaders also bring with them a different way of working with people that is beneficial in decision making and also promote equality. Leadership programs when designed with sensitivity enable young women to find fulfillment in their lives despite their disadvantaged backgrounds, the problems or adversity they may have undergone or the pressures they may experience. After all, the amazing capacity of young women to adapt and recover from highly traumatic or stressful situations and thrive despite extremely deprived communities has led to the emergence of research in the field of leadership and resilience.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Unlocking Leadership

The key to unlocking individual creativity in businesses is leadership development. Leadership traditionally has been seen as skill of individuals and much focus is given to one's ability to influence others. It acts as prospective moderators of the links between creative self-efficacy, perceived support for creativity, and individual creativity. Kotter has remarked that people use the term "leadership" to refer to the people at the very top of hierarchies or often predispose the term to their personality characteristics or quite

Youth Leadership Model

commonly to what is known as 'charisma'. Scholars note that leadership develops from learning to lead self, to lead people and then to lead societies. It can be further explicated that developing personal mastery and relationship mastery evolve into leading change. Coping with change, controlling emotions, understanding own communication style, positive approach, open mindedness, being goal oriented and employing courtesies, tact, humor and patience are all what good leaders do (Dawson, 2007). Arguably, the edifice to leadership is in self-management, which is the core of human capital as well.

Leadership styles do not have to be in-born; they can be learnt. According to the study conducted by Hallinger (2011), values and beliefs, leadership focus, contexts for leadership, and sharing leadership are the four specific elements of leading. The best leadership style relies on the situations as well as the personalities of the people who would be participating to influence (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). There are though certain complexities while putting the model in action because of the variance present in terms of distinct words, conceptualizations, and applications that practitioners and researchers have to keep up with (Brondyk & Searby, 2013). Mentoring abilities can be categorized into three basic forms of behavior- counseling, socio-emotional support, and goal-setting (Thompson et al., 2010).

Mentoring Culture and Structure- Inclusion of Mindfulness

To be a leader, is to take risks and balance the risky work of change with the crucial importance of personal survival; intra-psyche processes, societal structural processes, and interpersonal processes, inclusion of ethno-cultural minorities, and globalization. A good leader gets things done; a great leader wants to do more, encourages others to do more, and accomplish more (Kouzes & Posner). This can help in bridging the gap between getting things done and making things happen by highlighting the differences between excellent and outstanding- more team-oriented work environment.

Youth encounter numerous difficult problems as they navigate the adolescence period, hence, adding on to the challenge of effective leadership plan implementation; the later needs to be in accordance with the cultural and societal contexts- for meeting the needs of young people for adult assistance and guidance throughout their development. As a result, the real-world environment appears to be crucial. Mentored adolescents show positive improvements on outcome measures- behavioral, social, emotional, and academic domains. These benefits are sustained at later stages of their development too (DuBoi, et al.), mutually beneficial partnerships (Andrews & Clark).

Peer mentorship in boosting student achievement in higher education is critical in developing transferrable employability skills such as self-management, leadership, communication skills, personal fulfillment, and the ability to "give back" (Andrews & Clark). Hall & Jaugietis (2010) developed a peer mentoring program based on 'social support theory' (Gala & Cullen) and evaluated the same through feedback from the mentees. The peer mentors' leadership, communication, and organizational abilities improved as a result of the peer mentorship program (Hall & Jaugietis, 2010). In a study conducted by Hastings et al. (2011), individual connections and common sentiments across cultures were mobilized into *social capital* by the adolescent and adult respondents which was then turned into individual and community results- area of learning transfer, ability to influence peers as a result of their experiences.

Mindfulness can help manage stress, as well as a happier and more focused involvement in daily activities. It can help both the coach and the coachee deal with the obstacles and

Youth Leadership Model

emotional strains that come with coaching and goal setting; it can open up new avenues for comprehending and engaging with change. International Coaching Journal (2013) described the four quadrants- known & individual, collective understanding, unknown & collective, unknown & individual; which can help in lateral thinking, intuitive understanding, content analysis, and individual narrative analysis.

Employing mindfulness as a preparatory tool for both coaches and coachees can improve the not only the coach's coaching practice but also the coachee's (Passmore & Marianetti, 2007). The benefits include reduced stress and increased performance. Moreover, a study conducted by Spence et al. (2008) showed that the integration of mindfulness training and health coaching can act as a facilitator rather than an expert, asking rather than telling, and guiding rather than directing- yielding better probability of being helpful. The pillars of mindful leadership include clarity, attention, creativity, and compassion- creating a *transformative experience* resulting in improved creativity, self-awareness, listening, and decision-making.

Mentoring connections are crucial to explore since they may provide adolescents with beneficial routes to support that are otherwise difficult to produce through isolated contact. The former can help in achieving *high quality immunizations* (Dubois & Karcher). Coaching helps in greater perceived realism and genuineness between the coach and the coachee. It is essential to *stay current, relevant, and effective*.

Need for the program: Moving from Ego-System to Eco-System Awareness

Youth development programs are gaining prominence to help adolescents become competent, engaged, and responsible adults. However, leadership has not been of central focus in many of these programs although concepts of resilience and social support is gaining interest as mechanisms of enabling youth cope with adversity and deal with challenges of everyday life (Masten, 2001; Ungar 2004; Cutrona, 2000; Pinkerton & Dolan, 2007). Not many studies to-date have explored whether involvement in youth leadership confers any additional benefits to youth especially women in terms of their capacity to enable resilience or enlist social support. The relatively meager research examining leadership training with college going women has focused mostly on reducing mental health problems like depressive symptoms (Biegel, Brown, Shapiro, & Schubert, 2009). Less research has examined leadership training in relation to cognitive, social and emotional skills.

Leadership in the context of the present study is operationalized as 'recognizing and regulating self and integrating into the process of social influence to enhance self-worth, while harmonizing legitimate interests of others. Further, we have identified ten essential concepts to the construct of leadership, which are- decision making, problem solving, analyzing facts, to develop coping strategies, self-confidence, social communication, self-awareness, team-work, goal setting and orientation to values.

Youth Leadership Model

Figure 1: Dimensions of Youth Leadership Model



Our program focused on young women from the lower economic strata. It is during this phase that they are faced with several challenges related to self-esteem, personal growth, relationships and career decisions. Accordingly, in this report, we examine the effectiveness of leadership training program to women for cognitive, social and emotional competencies, which would promote young women's decision-making abilities, regulation of stress, and well-being among other areas of development. Indeed, leadership programs that offer these skills to women students from lower socio-economic strata may be instrumental in creating more caring communities of learning by having individuals model these qualities for one another.

METHODOLOGY

Aim & Objectives

The aim of the program is to create future trainers in the community to promote sustainable leadership skills and capacity building in “Young Women”, and produce a positive change in the social system through an emotional well-being, behavioral change and professional transformation approach.

- To promote Youth Leadership
- To build Self-Awareness
- To promote Self-Management
- To Promote Relationship Skills

Program Overview- Youth Leadership Skills Pedagogy

Youth Leadership. Youth Leadership in this context refers to recognizing one's potential, enhancing it and using it in such a way so as to bring a change around oneself. It is about moving from self-awareness, through self-management to creating healthy and rewarding relationships.

Youth Leadership training will involve the use of interactive and participatory sessions and learning methods, and experiential and activity-centered pedagogy. Examples of interactive learning activities include: discussion, brainstorming, role play, games, case studies, debate

Youth Leadership Model

and storytelling. This range of activities also helps develop leadership skills and is closely related to self-expression, promotion of emotional intelligence, empathy, interpersonal communication, cooperation.

Each competency consists of two skills, hence, a total of 6 leadership skills.

Table 1: Skills to be developed by Focused Training in Youth Leadership Pedagogy

Self-Awareness	Self-Management	Relationship Skills
Understanding one's mood, values and interests.	Emotional regulation	Healthy communication
Understanding strengths and evaluating areas of growth.	Goal-setting	Resisting inappropriate social pressure

Participants

The participants (N=60) who volunteered for the youth leadership training were from 3 areas in Karnataka, India- Datahalli BPO I, Shankar Hill Town BPO II, and OPJ Nursing School. All the participants were female and in the age group of 20-35 years. Each group consisted of 10 participants and was spread over a duration span of 6 months. The trainers were experienced Mental Health Professionals in Applied Psychology and Community Mental Health.

Procedure

The study adopted a mixed design using both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The first phase consisted of taking a survey (16 item likert-scale; baseline questionnaire) attending to the dimensions of self-awareness, self-management, and relationship skills. The following methods were inculcated to aid the further steps:

- **Knowledge:** Multiple-choice questions, Quiz cards or Poems, Essay, Posters.
- **Attitudes:** Through post-test measurement tools (baseline data collected prior to introducing each skill), Direct observation by supervisors, Open ended questions and closed question interviews, Focus group discussions (FGDs).
- **Skills:** Participant self-reports, Supervisor report, Checklists, Through close-ended questions, Role plays.
- **Behavioral intent:** Through close-ended questions, Case studies, Checklists, Interviews.

The following points were used in the baseline questionnaire:

- Difficulty in talking to people.
- Difficulty in continuing a conversation with a person who is upset.
- Do you apologize to people that you have hurt?
- Does disagreement upset you?
- Tendency to change subject when feelings are talked about.
- Difficulty in complimenting others.
- Difficulty in disagreeing with others in fear of anger.
- Discussing feelings with people who have hurt you.
- Difficulty in accepting constructive criticism.
- Lack of attention when conversing with others.
- Tendency to finish other people's sentences.
- Do they clarify doubts in a conversation?
- Early recognition of what is said to you.

Youth Leadership Model

- Tendency to listen less.
- Difficulty expressing different ideas.
- Aware of effects of their voice tone.

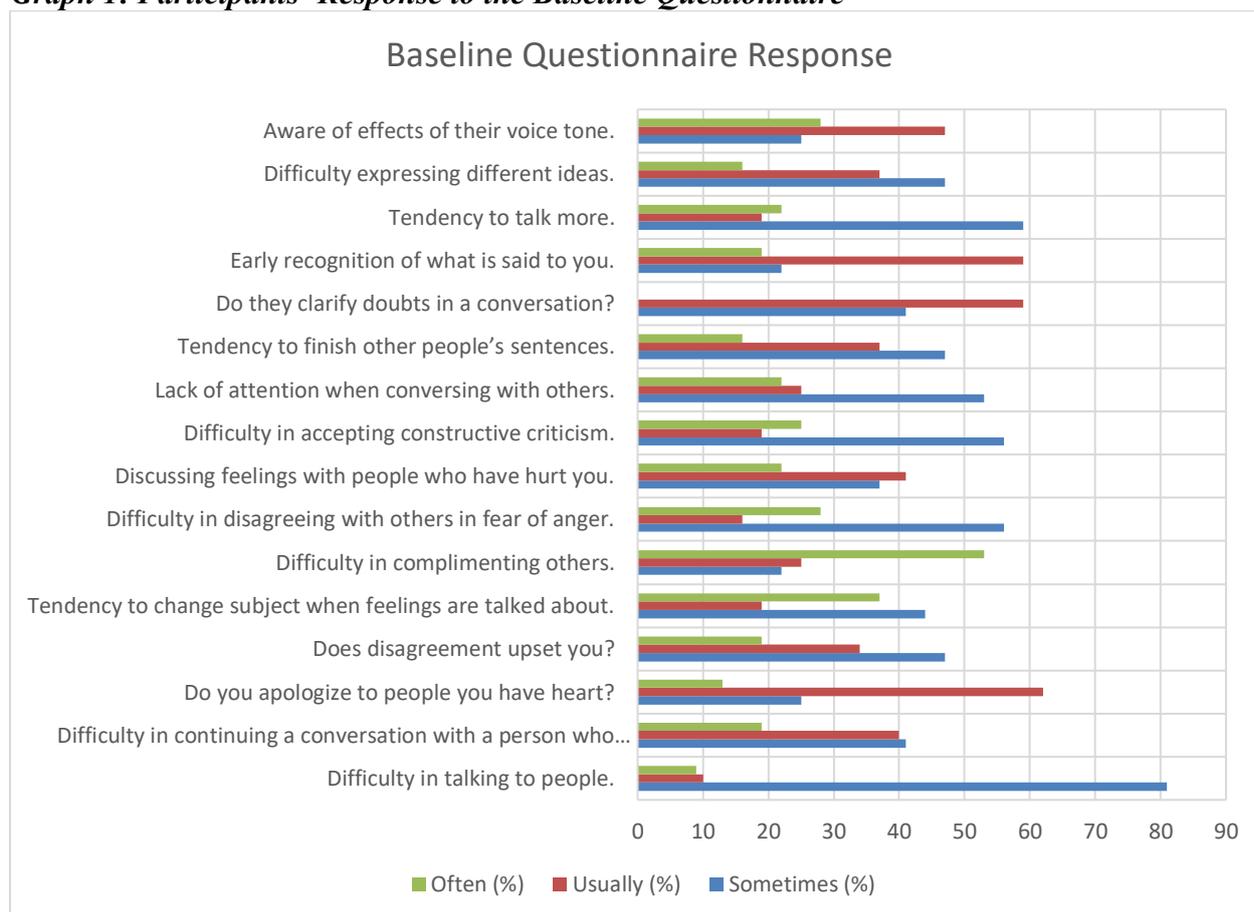
Based on the survey and initial interactions with the group, different field visits serving different purposes were created in order to train the women in specific areas. The areas can be broadly categorized into:

- Self-Management
- Self-Awareness
- Social Influence

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

I. Quantitative Analysis

Graph 1: Participants' Response to the Baseline Questionnaire



Baseline questionnaire analysis for all the 16 items can be summarized as below:

Self-Awareness (Most of the times)

- 28% of the participants are aware of the effects of their voice tone.
- 37% of the participants have a tendency to change the subject when feelings are talked about.
- 53% of the participants find it difficult to compliment others.
- 22% of the participants reported having lack of attention when conversing with others.
- 19% of the participants have early recognition of what is said to him/her.
- 22% of the participants have a tendency to listen less.

Youth Leadership Model

Self-Management (Most of the times)

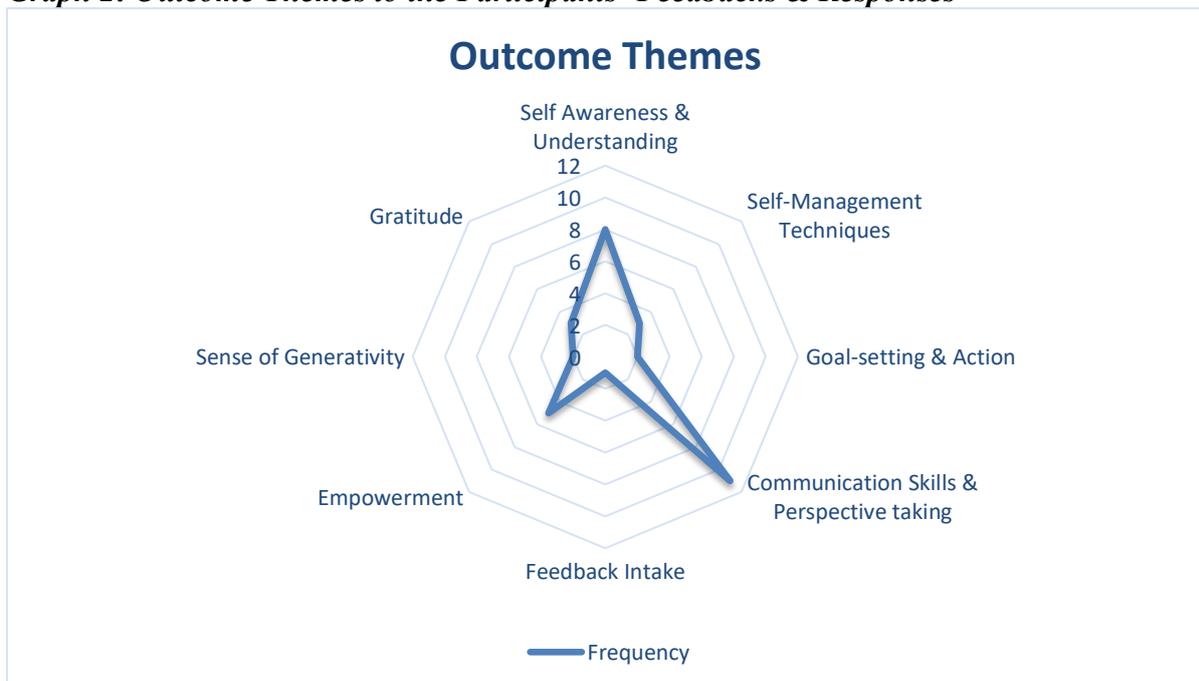
- 22% of the participants discuss their feelings with people who have hurt them.
- 25% of the people have difficulty in accepting constructive criticism.
- 16% of the participants have a tendency to finish other people's sentences.
- 16% of the participants have difficulty in expressing different ideas.
- 19% of the participants feel upset upon disagreement.

Relationship Skills (Most of the times)

- 9% of the participants find it difficult in talking with other people.
- 19% of the participants find it difficult in continuing conversation with a person who is upset.
- 13% of the participants apologize to people they have hurt.
- 28% of the participants have a difficulty in disagreeing with others in fear of anger.
- Most of the times, participants do not clarify their doubts in conversation.

II. Qualitative Analysis

Graph 2: Outcome Themes to the Participants' Feedbacks & Responses



As research driven model, an integral part consisted of collecting testimonials from participants to improve and strive to maintain a standard in implementation. Qualitative anecdotes helped to understand the level of improvement, impact on participants, and help in planning for future sessions. The major themes that emerged out were:

- Increased self-awareness and understanding of emotions.
- Self-management techniques pertaining to time, stress, anger, focusing skills, etc.
- Goal-setting, prioritizing, action plan.
- Communicating own feelings and thoughts and considering the same for others too; being perspective.
- Receiving feedback constructively.
- Empowerment
- Sense of generativity
- Gratitude.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The leadership program conducted by GLAD at one of the India's leading conglomerate group received overwhelming positive feedback from the participants. Majority of the participants expressed their eagerness to be a part of such an intervention. They were highly motivated and interested in self-improvement. Based on the feedback and interaction with participants during the sessions, the imperative need for this program and similar interventions were established. The sessions were focused on identifying and tending to the emotional and personal needs of these women. The three primary areas of focus were: Self-awareness, Relationship skills, and Self-management. The sessions further revealed that the women benefited from the session plans that targeted effective communication, stress management, and anger management.

In today's global context, we need women leaders who can act with empathy and integrity; take on difficult challenges, build trust, and empower others in their community through commitment. There is increasing emphasis on emotional well-being as a target for mental health promotion, especially during the formative period of adolescence. It has been described as a fundamental human right and an essential ingredient for a sustainable and functional society. Our core values lie in supporting and nurturing collective talents in youth, commitment towards training them to build their '*Psychological Capital*' and becoming youth leaders. Youth leadership training program adopted showed to be helpful in strengthening participant's sense of self, fostering self-confidence, providing opportunities for self-growth; *empowering* them to play an important role in their communities.

The implementation of the GLAD program can be extended to other target groups as an ongoing research implementation. The duration of the program would be for two years with the purpose of continuous enrichment to the lives of the participants, creating a sustainable group of empowered women who form a community of leaders while fostering a culture of leadership at the foundation.

- The program can be executed to cover participants from different gender groups and across different geographies.
- Communities and colleges need to find ways of involving young adults trained as leaders by seeing them as resources and enabling them to contribute towards problem solving.
- Future youth leadership programs should ensure that young adults are involved in leading their own community action project, service learning or internship.
- Engaging parents, siblings and other community members to help young people involved may support them further through their leadership journey.

A culturally relevant questionnaire can be developed to study the prevalence of Leadership as traits on a continuum for a population of young adults.

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Conflict of Interest

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