

## **Empowering girls, embracing movement: A COM-B examination of the Girls Empowering Movement**

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The Girls Empowering Movement (GEM) is an out-of-school time program aimed at providing adolescent girls with the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to develop sustainable habits for mental and physical health. Considering the physical activity deficit among this population, the focus of GEM is to encourage adolescent girls to engage in and lead physical activity. The purpose of this study was to examine participant experiences through the lens of the COM-B model for behavior change. Participants included adolescent girls ( $n = 30$ ), adult facilitators ( $n = 21$ ), and guardians ( $n = 4$ ). Data were collected during the third year of implementation through focus group interviews, critical incident reflections, and non-participant observation. Data were analyzed collaboratively through a multiphase approach. Data analysis involved initial open coding and preliminary codebook development, refinement through two rounds of pilot testing, and final coding of the complete dataset. Finally, codes were categorized into themes. Data analysis led to the generation of four themes: (a) cultivating capability, (b) opportunities for growth, (c) motivating through a supportive environment, and (d) recommendations for future programming. Results indicated increased confidence in emotional regulation, leadership skills, and ability to engage in physical activities among adolescent girls and adult facilitators. The supportive environment and flexible programming reinforced engagement. Recommendations for future GEM programming included training for adult facilitators

and expansion. Findings indicate that GEM programming motivated adolescent girls and adult facilitators to engage in physical activity and leadership skill development. The supportive environment encouraged skill development, autonomy, and application. Findings underscore the importance of facilitator training focused on emotional support and skill development.