

Research Article

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**Perceived Mattering, Resistance to Peer Influence, and Personal Growth Initiative
Among Older Adolescents in Pakistan**

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Abstract

Background. This study examined the relationships among perceived mattering, resistance to peer influence, and personal growth initiative (PGI) among older adolescents in Pakistan.

Method. A sample of 472 adolescents aged 16 to 20 years (249 males, 223 females) completed the Personal Growth Initiative Scale–II (PGIS-II; Robitschek et al., 2012), the Mattering to Others Questionnaire (MTOQ; Marshall, 2001), and the Resistance to Peer Influence Scale (RPI; Steinberg & Monahan, 2007). Data were collected using an online survey during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Results. Correlation analyses revealed that perceived mattering was positively and significantly associated with PGI, while resistance to peer influence was positively but non-significantly related to PGI. Further, regression analyses indicated that perceived mattering significantly predicted PGI, although the proportion of variance explained was modest. Subgroup analyses comparing adolescents with higher and lower levels of peer resistance showed consistent results, suggesting that the sense of being valued by others contributes to adolescents' motivation for self-directed growth, regardless of their susceptibility to peer pressure.

Conclusion. These findings emphasize the developmental relevance of social belonging and self-determination in adolescent identity formation. The study also highlights the value of examining adolescent development in underrepresented cultural contexts. Implications for intervention programs and identity development models are discussed, along with study limitations and directions for future research.

Keywords. Personal Growth Initiative, Perceived Mattering, Resistance to Peer Influence, Adolescence, Identity Development



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Introduction

Adolescence represents a pivotal stage in human development characterized by increased autonomy, identity exploration, and sensitivity to social relationships (Belsky et al., 2020; Steinberg, 2014). During this transitional period, adolescents begin to form a coherent sense of self, which involves the integration of personal goals, values, and relational experiences. Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory positions adolescence as the developmental crisis of "identity vs. role confusion," where individuals explore multiple roles to arrive at a stable identity. Central to this process is the adolescent's interaction with the social world, especially their relationships with peers and perceptions of how much they matter to others (Roy, 2024; Schachter & Galliher, 2018; Tonini et al., 2025).

The concept of perceived mattering, or the belief that one is significant and valued by others, has gained increasing attention in adolescent developmental research. According to Marshall (2001), mattering encompasses the feeling of being noticed, important, and relied upon. Research suggests that adolescents who feel they matter to others experience higher self-esteem, lower levels of depression, and more adaptive psychosocial outcomes (Dixon & Tucker, 2008; France & Finney, 2009; Paradisi et al., 2024). Mattering also serves as a protective factor against social exclusion and internalizing problems, especially during a developmental period where peer validation becomes central to one's self-concept (Flett et al., 2022). Recent work has also emphasized the protective role of perceived mattering and social connectedness in promoting adolescent psychological well-being (Levkovich & Shinan-Altman, 2022).

Mattering plays a critical role in the development of identity and agency. Marcia's (1980) identity status model posits that adolescents actively explore and commit to different roles and values to form a stable identity. Mattering can be seen as a social scaffold that supports this identity formation by reinforcing self-worth and purpose (Dixon & Tucker, 2008; France & Finney, 2009; Paradisi et al., 2024). Moreover, when adolescents perceive that they matter, they are more likely to develop a sense of relatedness, one of the three fundamental psychological needs outlined in Self-

Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Relatedness, alongside autonomy and competence, is essential for optimal development and self-motivated behavior. Thus, perceived mattering may enhance adolescents' intrinsic motivation to engage in personal development (Sheldon & Gunz, 2009; Martela, 2020).

Personal Growth Initiative (PGI) refers to an individual's active, intentional engagement in the process of personal development (Robitschek, 1998, 1999). PGI is not merely a reflection of positive affect or well-being but a goal-directed orientation toward self-improvement. The PGI construct is composed of four interrelated subdimensions (Robitschek et al., 2012), each of which reflects a critical skill set for adolescent self-development. *Readiness for change* captures an adolescent's openness to growth opportunities, while *planfulness* reflects the ability to strategize and set achievable goals. *Using resources* measures the capacity to seek support and information, and *intentional behavior* assesses the follow-through required to act on self-improvement goals. These subscales reflect both cognitive and behavioral competencies that are central to adaptive development during adolescence, particularly as youth face decisions related to academic transitions, peer relations, and future identity roles.

Adolescents high in PGI tend to approach life's challenges as opportunities for growth, demonstrating proactive coping, emotional regulation, and strategic decision-making (Weigold et al., 2013; 2020). While PGI has been examined in relation to mental health, academic performance, and self-efficacy, its intersection with social experiences like mattering and peer influence has received limited attention. Given the importance of both autonomy and social validation during adolescence, examining PGI through these lenses offers a more integrative perspective on adolescent development.

Another critical social variable is resistance to peer influence (RPI), the ability to act autonomously despite peer pressure. Adolescents are particularly susceptible to peer norms, which can be either prosocial or deviant. According to Steinberg and Monahan (2007), resistance to peer influence increases with age but varies widely across individuals. High resistance is associated with self-discipline, goal orientation, and lower

engagement in risky behaviors (Laursen & Faur, 2022). Furthermore, longitudinal studies suggest that balancing peer influence and personal agency plays a pivotal role in shaping identity development during adolescence (Lee & McLean, 2022). Conversely, adolescents with low resistance may engage in behaviors that contradict their personal values in order to gain social acceptance, potentially undermining identity formation and personal growth (Bell & Baron, 2015).

The balance between peer conformity and autonomy is culturally nuanced. In collectivist cultures like Pakistan, where social harmony and interdependence are emphasized, peer conformity may be viewed positively (Triandis, 2001; Han & Balabanis, 2024).

Adolescents in such societies often navigate competing demands: to fulfill collective expectations while developing personal goals. Consequently, resistance to peer influence might not always be interpreted as a sign of maturity but rather as social deviation. Likewise, the perception of mattering in collectivist societies may derive more from fulfilling group obligations than from personal validation, making it crucial to study these constructs in non-Western contexts.

Despite the centrality of mattering and peer influence in adolescence, few studies have examined their joint role in shaping PGI. Flett et al. (2022) recently called for more research into how social experiences impact personal initiative, particularly in culturally diverse populations. The Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework also emphasizes that youth thrive when provided with both personal agency and supportive relationships (Lerner et al., 2015, 2025).

Pakistan is a traditional culture. Like other South Asian societies, adolescence in Pakistan is also marked by strong family and societal expectations regarding academic achievement, gender roles, and social behavior (Siddiqui & Durrani, 2020). These expectations may interact with individual traits like PGI and perceived mattering, influencing the way adolescents set and pursue goals. For example, a highly goal-oriented adolescent who lacks social validation or is highly susceptible to peer norms may struggle to sustain motivation for self-driven development. Conversely, adolescents who perceive

strong social support and maintain autonomy from peer pressure may demonstrate greater resilience and initiative.

Given these considerations, the present study aimed to investigate how perceived mattering and resistance to peer influence relate to personal growth initiative among adolescents in Pakistan. Specifically, the study examined whether these variables predict PGI and its subcomponents. Adolescents aged 16 to 20 years were selected, representing a developmental period referred to as late adolescence, during which identity consolidation and long-term goal formation become especially salient. By situating this study within a collectivist cultural context, it seeks to contribute to the global understanding of adolescent development and identity formation.

Method

Objectives

The present study aimed to examine how perceived mattering and resistance to peer influence relate to personal growth initiative (PGI) among older adolescents in Pakistan.

Specifically, the study explored the following objectives:

1. To examine the association between perceived mattering and personal growth initiative.
2. To assess whether perceived mattering and resistance to peer influence significantly predict personal growth initiative and its subcomponents.

Hypotheses

Based on developmental theory and existing literature, the study tested the following hypotheses:

1. Perceived mattering will be positively associated with personal growth initiative among adolescents.
2. Resistance to peer influence will be positively associated with personal growth initiative among adolescents.
3. Perceived mattering and resistance to peer influence will significantly predict personal growth initiative and its subdimensions.

Study Design

This study employed a cross-sectional, correlational design using standardized self-report instruments to assess perceived mattering, resistance to peer influence, and personal growth initiative among adolescents.

Participants

The sample comprised 472 adolescents (249 males, 223 females) aged 16 to 20 years ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 0.43$), recruited from multiple cities across Pakistan through online convenience sampling. Participants were eligible if they were currently enrolled in secondary or higher secondary education and fell within the defined age range representing late adolescence.

Operational Definitions

Personal Growth Initiative

Personal growth initiative is defined as a person's ability to change and develop as a person. It includes skills like planning, utilizing of resources, intentional behavior and readiness for change. For the present research PGI is defined as the score obtained on PGIS-II (Robitschek et al., 2012). High scores indicate a conscious effort to enhance one's capability for personal change, self-development, and achieving personal goals.

Mattering to Others Questionnaire

Mattering to others is a subjective evaluation that a person is important, valued, and cared for by important people in one's life. Mattering to others is explained as scores conducted on the Mattering to Others Questionnaire (Marshall, 2001). High scores indicate a strong perception that a person is important for significant others in their lives and feels valued, loved and appreciated.

Resistance To Peer Influence

Resistance to peer influence is defined as a person trait to maintain a sperate identity and mode of action despite pressure from one's peer; this includes friends and agemates. For the present research resistance to peer influence is measured by scores on the Resistance to Peer Influence Scale (Steinberg & Monahan, 2007). High scores indicate

their capacity to resist peer pressure.

Measures

Personal Growth Initiative Scale-II (PGIS-II)

The PGIS-II (Robitschek et al., 2012; Weigold et al., 2013) is a 16-item self-report measure assessing active, intentional involvement in personal development. Items are rated on a 6-point Likert scale (0 = *Strongly Disagree* to 5 = *Strongly Agree*). The scale comprises four subscales: (a) Readiness for Change, (b) Planfulness, (c) Using Resources, and (d) Intentional Behavior. Higher scores reflect greater personal growth initiative. Cronbach's alpha in this sample was .79 for the total scale.

Mattering to Others Questionnaire (MTOQ)

The MTOQ (Marshall, 2001) consists of 11 items measuring the perceived importance of the self to others. Participants rate each item on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Not at all* to 5 = *A lot*). Higher scores indicate stronger perceived mattering. Internal consistency in the current sample was .86.

Resistance to Peer Influence Scale (RPI)

The RPI scale (Steinberg & Monahan, 2007) includes 10 forced-choice items presented in paired format, allowing participants to choose between opposing statements and rate how true each is for them. Scores range from 1 to 4 per item, with higher scores indicating greater resistance to peer influence. Cronbach's alpha in this sample was .86.

Procedure

Data were collected via Google Forms between July and August 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants were informed about the voluntary nature of participation, confidentiality of responses, and the purpose of the study. Informed consent was obtained electronically before survey access. Efforts were made to ensure that online administration of the scale was as valid as possible. For this reason, the questions were randomized, so that a response se does not occur while answering the questions, the respondents were limited to one-time response only and data was cleaned after the stated time period of data collection was completed. The

presentation of data was checked on different devices like the computer, laptops and mobiles (Salama, 2020). Of the 605 initial responses, 133 were excluded due to age mismatch or incomplete data, resulting in a final sample of 472 valid cases. Ethics approval was obtained from the host institution's research committee prior to data collection. This committee consists of PHDs in Psychology.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Reliability of Study Variables (N = 472)

Variable	<i>k</i>	α	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	Skewness	Kurtosis
Personal Growth Initiative	16	.79	59.15	10.18	31–80	-.25	-.30
Readiness for Change	4	.56	15.21	3.22	6–20	-.47	-.30
Planfulness	5	.66	19.09	3.99	8–25	-.46	-.42
Using Resources	3	.59	8.72	3.64	0–15	-.32	-.62
Intentional Behavior	4	.53	16.12	2.90	7–20	-.65	-.22
Mattering to Others	11	.86	39.88	9.06	15–55	-.53	-.28
Resistance to Peer Influence	10	.86	22.17	7.42	10–40	.43	-.52

Note. α = Cronbach's alpha; *M* = Mean; *SD* = Standard Deviation.

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics, internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha), and distribution characteristics for all study variables. Skewness and kurtosis values were within acceptable ranges (± 1), indicating normal distribution of the data. All measures demonstrated acceptable to high internal consistency. PGI and MTO were slightly negatively skewed, typical for psychological well-being constructs.

Table 2

Correlations Among Study Variables (N = 472)

Variable	1	2	3
1. Personal Growth Initiative	-		
2. Mattering to Others	.21**	-	
3. Peer Resistance	.02	-.05	-

** $p < .01$.

To test Hypotheses 1 and 2, Pearson product-moment correlations were computed. As shown in Table 2, perceived mattering (MTO) was positively and significantly associated with personal growth initiative (PGI), supporting H1. However, resistance to peer influence (RPI) was not significantly

Results

The results section is organized around the three study hypotheses. All analyses were conducted using SPSS 26. Descriptive statistics, reliability coefficients, Pearson correlations, and multiple regression analyses were computed to evaluate the relationships among perceived mattering, resistance to peer influence, and personal growth initiative (PGI).

correlated with PGI, offering limited support for H2. These findings indicate that adolescents who feel they matter to others are more likely to engage in self-directed growth, while peer resistance alone is not strongly associated with PGI. Table 3 presents the regression coefficients for the overall PGI score. To address Hypothesis 3, a multiple regression analysis was conducted with personal growth initiative (PGI) as the outcome and perceived mattering (MTO) and resistance to peer influence (RPI) as predictors. This model tested the joint explanatory power of these two social constructs.

Table 3

Multiple Regression Predicting PGI from MTO and RPI (N = 472)

Predictor	B	SEB	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Mattering to Others	0.23	0.05	.20	4.61	.00
Resistance to Peer Influence	0.06	0.04	.07	1.41	.16
Model Summary					
<i>R</i> = .22					
<i>R</i> ² = .05					
<i>F</i> (2, 469) = 12.67, $p < .00$					

The overall regression model was statistically significant, $R = .22$, $R^2 = .05$, $F(2, 469) = 12.67$, $p < .00$, indicating that the combination of perceived mattering and peer resistance accounted for 5% of the variance in PGI. However, only perceived mattering emerged as a significant unique predictor ($\beta = .20$, $p < .00$), while resistance to peer influence did not ($\beta = .07$, $p = .16$). These results partially support Hypothesis 3: while the model as a whole was

significant, the predictive value was largely driven by mattering. The relatively low R^2 indicates that additional factors likely contribute to PGI beyond the two predictors examined. Nevertheless, the model shows that social validation (mattering) plays a more consistent role than autonomy (peer resistance) in predicting adolescent self-development.

Table 4

Multiple Regression Predicting PGI Subscales from MTO and RPI (N = 472)

PGI Subscale	Predictor	B	SEB	β	t	p
Readiness for Change	Mattering to Others	0.09	0.06	.08	1.50	.16
	Resistance to Peer Influence	0.03	0.05	.04	0.65	.52
Planfulness	Mattering to Others	0.17	0.05	.17	3.32	.00
	Resistance to Peer Influence	0.04	0.04	.05	1.12	.26
Using Resources	Mattering to Others	0.07	0.06	.06	1.19	.23
	Resistance to Peer Influence	0.01	0.05	.01	0.18	.86
Intentional Behavior	Mattering to Others	0.21	0.05	.20	4.42	.00
	Resistance to Peer Influence	0.05	0.04	.06	1.24	.217

To further explore Hypothesis 3, separate regression analyses were conducted using each PGI subscale, Readiness for Change, Planfulness, Using Resources, and Intentional Behavior, as dependent variables, with MTO and RPI entered as predictors. Table 4 presents the regression coefficients for each PGI subscale as predicted by MTO and RPI. Mattering to others significantly predicted Planfulness ($\beta = .17$, $p < .01$) and Intentional Behavior ($\beta = .20$, $p < .00$), while its predictive effects on Readiness for Change and Using Resources were weaker and non-significant. Resistance to peer influence did not significantly predict any of the PGI subscales. These results suggest that the effect of mattering is strongest in domains involving planning and intentionality, which are crucial for adolescent goal-setting and follow-through.

Subgroup Analyses by Peer Resistance Level (Exploratory)

Although not a formal hypothesis, participants were categorized into two groups based on median split of RPI scores: “lower peer resistance” ($n = 269$) and “higher peer resistance” ($n = 203$). Regression

analyses were conducted separately for both groups.

- **Low resistance group ($n = 269$):**
MTO $\rightarrow$ PGI: $\beta = .13$, $p = .02$, $R^2 = .01$
- **High resistance group ($n = 203$):**
MTO $\rightarrow$ PGI: $\beta = .33$, $p < .00$, $R^2 = .11$

Discussion

The present study explored the relationships among perceived mattering, resistance to peer influence, and personal growth initiative (PGI) in a sample of older adolescents in Pakistan. Guided by developmental theories and grounded in the Positive Youth Development framework, the study tested three hypotheses. The findings offer important insights into how social validation and peer dynamics interact with adolescents’ motivation for intentional self-development in a collectivist cultural context.

The research is grounded in the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework, which shifts attention away from adolescent problems and deficits and instead emphasizes their strengths, skills, and

developmental resources. Within this framework, perceived mattering serves as a relational resource that helps young people feel a sense of belonging, worth, and connection to others. Resistance to peer influence reflects an adolescent's ability to think and act independently, even when facing pressure from friends. And PGI captures a person's tendency to actively pursue self-improvement and personal development (Robitschek, 1998; Burkhard, 2019). According to PYD theory, healthy development emerges from the interplay between supportive social environments and an individual's own strengths and capacities.

Keeping this point in consideration, the present research focused on factors that affect the self-concept of adolescence and how they function under peer pressure and how it shapes their motivation and capacity to pursue personal growth. The results are meaningful and give an insight into how social relationships and individual qualities work together to support positive development among adolescents in a collectivist cultural setting. These findings are discussed in detail below.

Perceived mattering was found to be positively and significantly associated with PGI. This result aligns with prior research suggesting that feeling valued by others enhances adolescents' confidence, goal setting, and willingness to engage in self-growth (France & Finney, 2009; Flett et al., 2022). As theorized by self-determination theory, mattering satisfies the basic psychological need for relatedness, which is essential for intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2020). In collectivist societies like Pakistan, where adolescents are often socialized to prioritize familial and communal bonds (Siddiqui & Durrani, 2020), the sense of mattering may be especially influential in shaping self-directed development. This finding is consistent with the first hypothesis of the research.

In contrast, it was surprising to find that the second hypothesis of the study received limited support. The study hypothesized that resistance to peer influence would be related to PGI. However, it was found that Resistance to Peer Influence was not significantly associated with PGI, neither in the bivariate correlations nor in the regression model. This result diverges from some prior findings suggesting that peer resistance is associated

with greater autonomy and positive adjustment outcomes (Steinberg & Monahan, 2007). A possible explanation may lie in cultural context. In collectivist cultures, peer conformity may be normative and even valued, and resisting peer norms might not translate directly into self-growth (Triandis, 2001). However, as an additional analysis, an exploratory subgroup analyses was conducted to compare the impact of mattering to others on PGI in two groups that contrasted with peer pressure. Among adolescents with higher resistance to peer influence, mattering was a significantly stronger predictor of PGI compared to those with lower peer resistance. This finding suggests a potential interaction effect: adolescents who are socially autonomous may benefit more from perceived validation, as they are better positioned to act on internalized self-worth and pursue meaningful goals. Such interactions align with the Positive Youth Development framework, which highlights the synergy between internal strengths and external supports (Lerner et al., 2015; 2025). Therefore, the construct of RPI may have different developmental implications in Western vs. non-Western societies. Future studies may benefit from assessing culturally adapted measures of autonomy or peer influence that better reflect local norms.

Regarding Hypothesis 3, the regression model showed that perceived mattering and resistance to peer influence jointly predicted PGI, although the effect was modest ($R^2 = .05$). Notably, only mattering emerged as a significant individual predictor. These findings partially support Hypothesis 3 and reinforce the conclusion that mattering plays a stronger and more consistent role in fostering adolescents' intentional growth than resistance to peer pressure. While the overall model reached statistical significance, the small effect size ($R^2 = .05$) indicates that perceived mattering and peer resistance account for only a modest portion of the variance in PGI. This suggests that additional psychological, relational, and contextual factors such as emotional regulation, family support, or academic motivation may also play important roles in predicting adolescent self-growth. This underscores the centrality of relational factors in adolescent development, particularly in settings where identity is shaped within interconnected social systems.

Collectively, these results contribute to the growing literature on adolescent personal growth by highlighting the importance of social connectedness over autonomy in promoting PGI within collectivist cultures. This study contributes to recent calls for greater inclusion of underrepresented cultural contexts in adolescent development research (Lee & McLean, 2022; Levkovich & Shinan-Altman, 2022). While the role of autonomy remains relevant, especially in Western frameworks, these findings suggest that relational factors like mattering may be more universally foundational for adolescent self-development. Further cross-cultural research is needed to clarify the interplay of autonomy, relatedness, and initiative across diverse populations.

Implications

The present findings hold meaningful implications for both research and practice. First, they underscore the critical role of perceived mattering in fostering adolescents' personal growth initiative. This suggests that interventions targeting adolescent development—whether in school counseling, youth programs, or community settings—should prioritize strategies that enhance youths' sense of being valued and significant to others. Educators and mental health professionals working in collectivist societies may particularly benefit from culturally sensitive programming that cultivates relational connectedness alongside self-development.

Additionally, the study's results point to the limited standalone value of resistance to peer influence in predicting self-directed growth. While peer autonomy is still important, fostering a strong sense of social belonging may be more immediately actionable in shaping adolescents' motivational pathways. This insight can inform Positive Youth Development (PYD) programs that aim to balance individual agency with supportive relational contexts.

Limitations and Future Directions

Despite its contributions, this study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design prevents any claims about causality. Longitudinal studies are needed to assess how mattering and peer resistance influence personal growth over time. Second, self-

report measures may be subject to social desirability or self-perception biases, especially in collectivist cultures where conformity and impression management are valued. Third, while the sample was diverse in terms of geography, it may not fully represent the range of socioeconomic, religious, or linguistic backgrounds present in Pakistan. Future studies should aim for more representative sampling and include contextual variables such as family support, school climate, and peer relationship quality. Lastly, while this study focused on Pakistani adolescents, replication across other non-Western and Western societies is necessary to assess cultural generalizability and refine theoretical models. Future research may also explore mediators or moderators such as gender, academic pressure, or emotion regulation that could explain the pathways from social experiences to self-development. A mixed-methods approach may provide richer insight into how adolescents understand and interpret mattering and peer influence in their daily lives.

Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence that perceived mattering is a key predictor of personal growth initiative among older adolescents in Pakistan, while resistance to peer influence plays a more limited role. These findings suggest that adolescents' motivation for self-improvement is more strongly linked to feeling valued and recognized by others than to the capacity to resist peer pressure. The significance of mattering was further amplified among adolescents with greater peer resistance, indicating that social validation and autonomy may interact in complex ways to influence adolescent growth.

From a practical standpoint, the results support the value of fostering inclusive, affirming environments in schools, families, and peer networks to enhance adolescents' personal growth. Intervention programs that emphasize belongingness and relational affirmation may be particularly effective in collectivist cultures. Educational institutions and mental health practitioners should recognize that helping adolescents feel valued can be a powerful driver of resilience and motivation.

Future research should explore additional mediators and moderators such as gender, family

structure, and academic stress to better understand the pathways from social experiences to personal development. Longitudinal and culturally comparative studies are also recommended to track how these relationships evolve over time and across sociocultural settings.

Declarations

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Conflict of Interest: The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Ethical Approval: This study was approved by the Ethical Review Committee of the National Institute of Psychology, Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad Pakistan.

Data Availability: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author, upon reasonable request. Data will be shared in anonymized form to protect participant confidentiality and in accordance with institutional ethics guidelines.

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