

Using games to promote women's health and well-being in India

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A new paper in *Oxford Open Digital Health* indicates that it may be possible to use mobile game apps to induce young women to make active decision choices to improve their health and welfare.

A team of programmers and researchers based in India and the United States worked to create a direct-to-consumer [digital platform](#) for [mobile games](#), called Game of Choice, Not Chance, with their first game for adolescent girls called Go Nisha Go. The game uses discovery and play

to try to empower young girls to become active decision makers. The game involves a travel adventure story and presents players with challenges, conflicts, and negotiations analogous to what they might encounter in their own lives.

Drawing on principles of game-based learning, a player experiences the outcome of her in-game decisions through her avatar, the game's protagonist. Players also receive feedback on their decisions with the option to play again and experience a different outcome. Throughout the [game players](#) also received access to real-world resources that could provide [relevant information](#), skill-building opportunities, and links to healthcare products to help them navigate issues such as menstrual hygiene management and building career skills.

The objective of this study was to develop psychographic profiles to help game developers create relatable characters. Researchers conducted the study in four Indian cities using a qualitative survey of 105 women ages 15 to 19. They used the survey to collect information on the [role models](#), families, education, dreams, fears, and decision-making powers of the [young women](#).

Primarily, the researchers note, participants wished to be seen as obedient, respectful toward parents, and a follower of prevalent social norms. Participants also expressed a desire to remain in school as long as possible and enjoy full careers as adults. While the desire to remain in education and pursue a career was widespread, the young women often lacked the necessary means to execute these goals.

The participants seemed to have unclear priorities, limited guidance, and an obscure understanding of the impact of small or big choices on their future. The researchers note that developing skills involving being clear about goals, improving negotiation strategies, and understanding the connections between choices and outcomes will be used to improve the

game.

The study's authors identified four personas of [adolescent girls](#). They will use the traits of these personas to align the game with the intended audience so that the narrative of the game and the scenarios players explore will be relatable and engaging.

"This study represents a novel approach to research for an equally innovative game for agency-building and health awareness among adolescents," said the paper's lead author, Aparna Raj.

More information: Aparna Raj et al, Psychographic profiling—a method for developing relatable avatars for a direct-to-consumer mobile game for adolescent girls on mobile in India, *Oxford Open Digital Health* (2023). [DOI: 10.1093/oodh/oqad001](https://doi.org/10.1093/oodh/oqad001)

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