Sarah Lawrence College  
Mind Over Matter: The Peer Support Chapter  
Team: Nandini Sinha  
Period: June 1st, 2021 - August 1st, 2021  
Location: PAN India  

Introduction  
Mind Over Matter (MoM) is a pro bono volunteer organisation in New Delhi founded and run by me along with a team of volunteers. We aim to equip the youth with resources to look after their mental health by providing the following services:

- **Peer Support**: A peer supporter is a person who knows from their own experience with a condition, or from helping others, or has received training to be empathic and understanding. Currently, MoM has 12 peer supporters that have undergone the training program which has a training manual supplemented by interactive webinars and practical training calls with the organisation’s mental health professionals.

- **Professional Referrals**: MoM recognises that they will encounter individuals who require professional support. When this occurs, MoM relies on their network of 18 professional partners in helping such individuals. For ongoing sessions with their professionals, a subsidised rate is charged by the professional directly with the user.

MoM seeks to facilitate peer support chapters in universities across India. While professional counsellors and psychologists are powerful resources for students, the services provided by them are accompanied by high costs and wait times. Hence, while providing these services for students who require them would be ideal, it is not feasible. Reports conducted by (Ng, Jeremy Y, 2012) suggested that peer support is more feasible when professional services cannot be utilised.

The Peer Support Chapter: Program Details  
We will pilot our peer support service in a total of 6 publicly and privately financed universities across India by training a cohort of student volunteers from each university. To facilitate this, we will provide a structured course conducted by the organisation’s professionals: this would include a pre-existing training manual that has been developed and approved by professional psychologists and counsellors. This would further be supplemented by interactive webinars and practice calls conducted by the professionals.

*Training of Peer Support Volunteers*  
The training of each university’s peer support volunteers will be conducted by 2 professionals over a 3 week period. The following timeline is subject to change dependent on the availability of relevant professionals and university schedules.

Universities A&B: June 1st to June 21st  
Universities C&D: June 22nd to July 11th  
Universities E&F: July 12th to August 1st  

*Week 1* (June 1st - June 7th, June 22nd - June 28th, July 12th - July 18th): Week 1 will cover the selection process of peer support volunteers to ensure the suitability of volunteers introduced into the peer support team. Selected volunteers will then be given MoM’s training manual along with self-evaluation resources.
Week 2 (June 8th - June 14th, June 28th - July 4th, July 19th - July 25th): Week 2 will mark the onset of the training programme conducted by the professionals. Selected volunteers will attend interactive webinars with the objective of providing a strong theoretical base.

Week 3 (June 15th - June 21st, July 5th - July 11th, July 26th - August 1st): Week 3 will mark the onset of the final phase of training consisting of practice calls with the professionals. This would be followed by exit interviews in order to ascertain the suitability of each volunteer and ensure that the standard level of readiness has been met by all volunteers.

Continued Presence
MoM will be in regular contact with the campus ambassadors, enquiring about the status of the peer support chapter and providing continued support to volunteers. We will also be posting regular updates on our social media handles and website.

Objectives
- To raise awareness about and destigmatize mental health challenges
- To provide affordable, accessible, and appropriate support to the Indian youth
- To further the concept of peer support in Indian universities

Partnerships
MoM has partnered with The Hearth Advisors, a consulting firm based between Europe and Asia, focusing on education, healthcare, and sustainability. This will allow us to establish contact with universities and provide administrative support for the facilitation of the peer support chapters. MoM has also partnered with Healthmine, a UK based firm that uses AI to match a client seeking help with the professional best suited to them. They are altering their code to include peer supporters in order to fit into MoM’s framework of services.

Relevance to Peace and Sustainability
The WHO recognizes the need to promote mental health awareness as a human rights issue. Societies can only function if they have a stable social and political framework. Despite mental health issues being viewed through an individualistic lens, it is often socio-political and economic pressures that lead to them.

The past decade has seen a significant rise in internal tensions across India as well as conflict with neighbouring countries and terrorist groups. These conflicts have adversely affected the mental health of numerous Indian families and exacerbated the turmoil between different religious communities. The economic and social ramifications of the COVID-19 pandemic have further heightened these issues making mental health more relevant than ever.

A positive frame of mind and a healthy mental state has been proven to increase productivity and thereby increase economic growth. Providing mental health support is of utmost importance and must be incorporated in developmental frameworks (Halkos and Bousinakis, 2010).

As Mind Over Matter was founded towards the end of last year, it is still in its initial stages. Hence, if this project is granted the funds, the organisation would be able to go beyond its current capability of making a difference and would take a large step towards realising its goal of making a tangible difference to the way mental health is viewed in Indian society.