

Exploratory Study of Individual User Characteristics That Predict Attraction to Computer-Mediated Social Support Platforms and Mental Health Apps

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Abstract : Introduction: The current study investigates several user characteristics that may predict the adoption of digital mental health supports. The extent to which individual characteristics predict preferences for functional elements of computer-mediated social support (CMSS) platforms and mental health (MH) apps is relatively unstudied. Aims: The present study seeks to illuminate the relationship between broad user characteristics and perceived attraction to CMSS platforms and MH apps. Methods: Participants (n=353) were recruited using convenience sampling methods (i.e., digital flyers, email distribution, and online survey forums). The sample was 68% male, and 32% female, with a mean age of 29. Participant racial and ethnic breakdown was 75% White, 7%, 5% Asian, and 5% Black or African American. Participants were asked to complete a 25-minute self-report questionnaire that included empirically validated measures assessing a battery of characteristics (i.e., subjective levels of anxiety/depression via PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire 9-item) and GAD-7 (Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item); attachment style via MAQ (Measure of Attachment Qualities); personality types via TIPI (The 10-Item Personality Inventory); growth mindset and mental health-seeking attitudes via GM (Growth Mindset Scale) and MHSAS (Mental Help Seeking Attitudes Scale)) and subsequent attitudes toward CMSS platforms and MH apps. Results: A stepwise linear regression was used to test if user characteristics significantly predicted attitudes towards key features of CMSS platforms and MH apps. The overall regression was statistically significant ($R^2 = .20$, $F(1,344)=14.49$, $p<.000$). Conclusion: This original study examines the clinical and sociocultural factors influencing decisions to use CMSS platforms and MH apps. Findings provide valuable insight for increasing adoption and engagement with digital mental health support. Fostering a growth mindset may be a method of increasing participant/patient engagement. In addition, CMSS platforms and MH apps may empower under-resourced and minority groups to gain basic access to mental health support. We do not assume this final model contains the best predictors of use; this is merely a preliminary step toward understanding the psychology and attitudes of CMSS platform/MH app users.

Keywords : computer-mediated social support platforms, digital mental health, growth mindset, health-seeking attitudes, mental health apps, user characteristics

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