

## Potential Positive Impacts of Online Communities on Mental Health of Women Who Have Experienced Miscarriage

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**Abstract :** With the advent of technology over the last decades, participation in online communities and discussion forums has become increasingly popular. Many studies have been done on the negative role of the online world on human beings' psychological well-being and mental health, while relatively less attention has been given to the potentially positive role of technology in promoting mental health. Miscarriage is a common and emotionally challenging experience for women, and online communities seem to be a potential source of support for them. This study aimed to firstly find the most common types of support communicated in online communities of women who have miscarried and, secondly, investigate if there is a relationship between participation in online communities and mental health outcomes after miscarriage. In this study, three research methodologies, including content analysis, survey and interview, were employed to answer the research questions. With the analysis of 158 messages, including postings and comments in the online community of Mumsnet, it can be concluded that informational support and emotional support are the most prevalent types of support women share in the online community. Analysis of data gathered from the survey of 19 women who had experienced a miscarriage during the last year showed that participation in online communities makes a significant improvement in their mental health. Interviews also highlighted the helpful role of the online community in relieving emotional disorders, such as trauma, hopelessness, loneliness, stress, depression and anxiety about miscarriage.

**Keywords :** mental health, miscarriage, online community, support

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