



Article

Analyzing Intervention Strategies for the Well-being of Adolescent Mental Health in the New Media Environment

Yuhan Duan

Wuhan Britain China School, No. 10, Gusi Side Road, Qiaokou District, Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China

Correspondence: Yuki_duan2007@outlook.com

Abstract

The research study is focused on analyzing the intervention strategies for adolescents' mental well-being in the new media environment. It has suggested the best approaches to deal with the risks and improve the positive outcomes using digital media. The introduction chapter offers an overview of the significance of the research which is to develop an understanding of the mental health of adolescents in the context of the ever-changing digital environment. The next chapter on literature review offers a critical study of the subject using sources from different scholarly materials. The methodology chapter discusses the selection of research methods like content analysis data collection and thematic analysis for analyzing the websites and programs on digital intervention. This is followed by findings of data based on themes that enable the fulfilment of research objectives. It is found that interventions like hybrid digital platforms and gamification among other intervention strategies help in therapeutic engagement and empower adolescents respectively. The discussion chapter further provided an analysis of the collected data in a critical manner. Finally, the conclusion highlights the significance of possible intervention strategies in future with the inclusion of policies and education in the context of the mental health of adolescents.

Keywords: New media environment, mental health, cyberbullying, social comparison, screen time, peer influence, digital platforms

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Introduction

Background

Adolescents' mental health is a global concern, especially with the overuse of social media, video platforms, and other online tools, which expose them to addictions and bullying. Social media has distanced today's teenagers from the real world, significantly changing their ways of interaction, learning, and self-perception. (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). Digital platforms, although necessary for gathering new information and connecting with the world, also lead to cyberbullying, making a negative impact on the mental health of teenagers. Research on the impact of screen time on teenagers by Keles et al. shows how prolonged contact with social media, its unfiltered contents, causes psychological distress, resulting in chronic anxiety, depression, and feelings of detachment. (Keles et al., 2020). Social media sites like Instagram often promote unrealistic beauty standards, which can create a sense of self-doubt among adolescents who are still developing their self-esteem (Orben et al., 2019). A resulting factor of this is seen in present society in the form of eating disorders like bulimia and intermittent fasting among teenagers. Best et al. demonstrate the lasting impacts of cyberbullying and online harassment in youth (Best et al., 2014). Often, it is seen that teenagers who are exposed to violence online develop delinquent behavior. Mental health professionals have introduced several intervention strategies to address such problems. Educational programs focus on teaching teenagers the right way to use and analyze online content (Hollis et al., 2017). Thus, they are saved from the unfiltered content on various platforms. Cognitive-behavioral interventions help teenagers deal with stress by reducing their screen time and maintaining a balance between their virtual and real-world interactions (Livingstone & Stoilova, 2021). It helps them regain a sense of reality. Naslund et al. demonstrate that parental guidance can shape the minds of adolescents by openly discussing the vices of social media with them (Naslund et al., 2016). Therefore, without proper parental guidance, it is impossible to teach teenagers about the vices of technology.

Today, help is also provided by technology. Digital therapy enables individuals to access various cognitive-behavioral techniques and counseling sessions, and to seek professional help when needed. (Viner et al., 2019). Thus, the proper use of technology can help address mental health issues. The effectiveness of digital technology for mental health often depends on how much the user is open to accessing them and their effectiveness, and since many adolescents hesitate from accessing such facilities due to the social stigma associated with therapy and breach of privacy (Odgers & Jensen, 2020). Therefore, even when such digital platforms are available for therapeutic purposes, it depends on the user's comfort. The effectiveness of

interventions in the lives of adolescents depends on various factors, including their own personalities, family dynamics, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Orben et al., 2019). Therefore, a comprehensive analysis of various strategies can help determine the most effective way to train adolescents in this digital era.

Problem Statement

Adolescence is marked by rapid emotional and psychological development, during which exposure to the digital world can have harmful effects. Best et al. (2014) and Orben (2020) demonstrate how social media and other online platforms, such as gaming, can have both positive and negative effects on teenagers (Best et al., 2014; Orben, 2020). Thus, the digital world can yield both types of results, depending on how much and how teenagers use it. Twenge and Campbell showed how digitization resulted in cyberbullying and reduced self-esteem among teenagers (Twenge & Campbell, 2018). Adolescent minds are fragile, and exposure to harmful content on digital media can have a profoundly negative impact on them. An opposing result was produced by Naslund and team, whose study shows how the safe use of digital platforms helps teenagers by enhancing their mental health and creating awareness (Naslund et al., 2016). Thus, the controlled and safe use of digital platforms can prove beneficial for adolescents and help them prepare for the long term. Despite ongoing analytical research on intervention strategies and their impact on youth, the results remain inconsistent. The effectiveness of intervention, although dependent on cognitive patterns or parental guidance, can vary due to socio-cultural and psychological differences among individuals (Keles et al., 2020). Therefore, intervention techniques depend on many factors beyond correct implementation. There is an urgent need to address the problems of teenagers in a holistic manner and reach a common ground from which all types of problems can be mitigated, ensuring consistent results.

Research Aim and Objectives

This study aims to analyze intervention strategies designed to promote the mental and psychological well-being of adolescents in a rapidly digitizing environment. It will also highlight the best ways to mitigate risks and enhance the positive outcomes from digital media.

The objectives of the study are:

- Understanding the impact of the new media environment on adolescent mental health by examining its benefits and risks in psychological development.

- Addressing and examining key risk factors like cyberbullying, social comparison, excessive screen time, and online peer influence, which can contribute to mental health issues among adolescents.
- Identifying the existing intervention strategies targeted to promote adolescent mental well-being and their effectiveness.
- Exploring the role of digital platforms in providing positive mental health results.
- Providing opinions for improvement in the ever-evolving, newly digitized world.

Research Questions

The research questions of the study are:

1. What are the impacts of rapid digitization on the mental health of adolescents?
2. What are the risks associated with unguarded screen time for teenagers?
3. How do socio-cultural differences influence the effectiveness of mental health interventions for adolescents?
4. What is the role of digital platforms in rendering positive adolescent mental health outcomes?
5. How can existing intervention strategies support adolescent mental well-being in evolving digital landscapes?

Significance of the Study

The study will provide a holistic understanding of adolescent mental health and how it is vulnerable to changes in a new and evolving media environment. Digitization impacted teenagers in both positive and negative ways. The research will present both the risks and benefits of digital platforms, while also considering the valuable insights of mental health professionals, educators, policymakers, and parents in developing an evidence-based approach. The increased dependency on digital platforms has harmed the minds of teenagers, and intervention strategies must be developed to help them navigate this challenge. Additionally, an integrated approach combining digital and human-centric platforms is a more effective way to provide remedies. This study will demonstrate how a hybrid form of therapy helps teenagers optimize their lives with the fewest resources. The study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how teenagers can utilize new forms of media healthily to promote their own mental well-being.

Literature Review

The Impact of New Media on Adolescent Mental Health

The increased use of new forms of media in the day-to-day lives of adolescents results in negative impacts on their health. Twenge et al. in their study show how digital platforms not only provide opportunities for free expression, socialization, and access to much information, but also expose the adolescents to threats like cyberbullying, harassment, depression, and increased stress (Twenge et al., 2018). It is seen often in cases of too much usage of social media, where constant comparison between the achievements of peers can lead to the development of low self-esteem among individuals, and this often results in depression among them. The rapid evolution of digital platforms for communication and entertainment has led to these becoming irreplaceable in the lives of teenagers. Keles and team show how youth are drawn to unrealistic beauty standards portrayed by social media platforms and often indulge in unhealthy activities, such as improper sleep and prolonged screen time (Keles et al., 2020). The effect results in “doomscrolling,” where the individual consumes too much harmful content online, which results in sleep deprivation and depression in teenagers. The contrasting study of Naslund et al. demonstrates how online mental forums provide the needed mental support to adolescents who hesitate to seek help from traditional therapy (Naslund et al., 2016). Therefore, digital platforms can often serve as safe spaces for many teenagers who would otherwise shy away from seeking the help they need.

Additionally, young people may form strong peer groups with like-minded individuals they meet online. It helps them deal with their psychological and mental problems, which might be more beneficial than traditional modes of therapy. Thus, it can be concluded that with the meticulous use of digital platforms and proper guidance from adults, adolescents can protect themselves and even access the necessary psychological help.

Digital Interventions for Adolescent Mental Health

Traditional therapeutic methods come with many hurdles like high cost, inaccessibility, and taboo regarding counselling; contrary to that, digital platforms are often cheaper and easily accessible by people of all ages and communities. Internet-based Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (ICBT) and Mobile Health Applications (mHealth) help teenagers by providing them with access to a varied range of choices that can be accessed from anywhere (Hollis et al., 2017). Therefore, the intervention proves to be extremely helpful for teenagers regarding easy access. Ebert and team’s study demonstrates how face-to-face therapy and online therapy yield almost the same

results, with the latter being even better (Ebert et al., 2015). Digital platforms offer advantages over physical interaction in terms of accessibility, cost-effectiveness, and maintaining privacy. With Artificial Intelligence (AI), it is possible to personalize amenities and get recommendations regarding therapy. Peer-based health campaigns and AI chatbots on social media enable people to connect with individuals who provide support during times of distress (Grist et al., 2019). Platforms like Instagram often provide strategies that might not be medical in nature but are incredibly effective. There remains a concern that people might become too dependent on technology. Ridout and team suggested that professional guidelines should be made mandatory and that every piece of information should be supported by evidence to prevent the leakage of private information (Ridout et al., 2022). It will ensure the confidentiality of users' personal information when they use digital platforms for guidance. Therefore, it is essential to strike a balance by optimizing the use of digital platforms among adolescents.

The Role of Parental Mediation and Digital Literacy

Parental guidance is crucial in regulating adolescents' engagement with digital platforms and protecting them from potential threats. Hooft and Graafland demonstrate how parental interference, guided use of digital platforms, and setting screen time limits for teenagers can promote the positive aspects of digital media usage (Hooft & Graafland, 2018). Parents should talk about the negative aspects of social media. Digital literacy among teenagers is a prerequisite for accessing information online, as it can protect them from misinformation and cyberbullying. When teenagers are equipped with the necessary skills to make safe decisions while conducting online searches, they become responsible enough to protect their online identity. Schools should teach teenagers proper digital etiquette and help them avoid falling prey to online threats. Often, parents are technologically crippled, which does not provide an upper hand in understanding the risks associated with new media. Lwin and team demonstrate that parental literacy in using digital spaces can enable them to understand and have a shared and safe experience with their wards (Lwin et al., 2008). Therefore, strengthening parental literacy not only ensures a safe mode of online information transmission but also creates a safe space for everyone.

The Influence of Social Media Algorithms on Adolescent Well-being

Social media algorithms are designed in a manner that the content adolescents encounter influences their emotions and creates a perception about themselves. Often, platforms display content that can adversely affect the mental health of users (Orben

et al., 2019). These contents often involve showing disturbing materials that can traumatize them. The user's online engagement pattern often determines the algorithm. Continued exposure to such content, which demonstrates an ideal form of lifestyle and harmful imagery, can create a sense of self-doubt in teenagers, leading to the adoption of various unhealthy habits to live up to the unrealistic image portrayed by social media. Often, adolescents are exposed to unrealistic beauty standards on social media, leading them to adopt unhealthy habits like eating disorders, which adversely affect their physical and mental health (Fardouly et al., 2015). Body dissatisfaction among teenagers is a growing problem exacerbated by social media, which exposes them to unrealistic expectations. At this stage of identity formation, exposure to such harmful content often induces low self-esteem among adolescents, and they tend to feel unwelcome in their peer groups and consequently withdraw. Platforms like Facebook and Instagram have implemented certain features to create a user-friendly and safe experience. Screen time management tools that notify users about their time spent on social media, provide notifications regarding overuse, and issue consequent warnings from digital platforms themselves, along with content moderation by AI-driven tools to identify and eliminate harmful content online, are contributing to a better and healthier environment for online surfing (Montag et al., 2021). The introduction of night mode on Instagram, which silences push notifications after midnight, raises awareness among users about overuse. Even though amends are made to create a user-friendly browsing environment, digital platforms should maintain even more transparency to ensure the fullest use of these policies.

Future Directions for Adolescent Mental Health Interventions in the Digital Age

Digital platforms are now being designed in a manner that does not pose any threat to the growing community of young users, but this should also include the inclusion of mental health interventions. Additionally, incorporating learning and mental health tools, often based on real-time progress of users, makes browsing safer and more user-friendly (Baños et al., 2017). Users come from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds; therefore, one type of experience may not cater to the needs of everyone. A meaningful hybrid of Artificial Intelligence tools and a human-centric approach can be effective in providing personalized and comprehensive guidance to users in dealing with their issues. Artificial intelligence tools should be designed ethically to ensure maximum transparency and flexibility for users. Public awareness campaigns regarding the proper use of digital platforms will impart valuable knowledge to the masses, making them digitally literate and enabling them to handle online tools responsibly. Therefore, a balanced approach should be adopted to provide

maximum support for users of digital platforms. Policymakers should consider implementing mental health campaigns through social media, adopting a hybrid approach towards healthcare, creating peer groups to provide a safe space for users, and utilizing ethical means of data usage and storage by digital platforms to ensure maximum security for adolescent users of these platforms.

Methodology

Introduction

The methodology of the study outlines the process that will be followed to analyze the effectiveness of three digital intervention strategies —SPARX, Headstrong, and ReachOut —in enhancing the mental well-being of adolescents in the new media environment. A properly structured methodology is necessary for confirming the reliability and validity of the research findings and ensuring that they contribute to the existing body of knowledge (Ziemba et al., 2013). The methodology adopted in this study is qualitative in nature, based on a content analysis method, directed towards examining digital strategies for improving the mental health of adolescents. Content analysis is one of the many techniques in qualitative data collection and analysis that helps identify trends and patterns in qualitative data collected (Krippendorff, 2018). This method will entail an in-depth analysis of the study, focusing on the three mental health interventions and their effectiveness in catering to the needs of teenagers. Analyzing the features and accessibility of such methods, the study will consider market trends, thematic patterns, and ethics that align with digital mental health. The insights gathered from the study will be valid, inclusive, and helpful in advancing research in this area in the future.

Research Philosophy

The research philosophy adopted in this study is interpretive, aligning it best with qualitative research. The interpretivist research philosophy is qualitative in nature, focusing on the in-depth depiction of experiences, understanding the background of the subjects, and analysis of other complex social phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2017). Interpretivism focuses on the detailed study of subjects' experiences to provide a well-rounded, subjective analysis. The research philosophy of a study encompasses the beliefs and human assumptions regarding the research process, including data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Saunders et al., 2009). Therefore, the research philosophy serves as the guide and rationale behind the research design, outlining its procedure and ensuring its validity and reliability.

Interpretivism is best suited for qualitative design, as it ensures the proper use of data in the research and ensures that the study incorporates every unique and nuanced detail of the lived experiences of adolescents.

Research Design

Research design is the plan that outlines how the research will be conducted, ensuring that the study's aims and objectives are appropriately addressed. An exploratory research design aligns perfectly with the qualitative body of research, which often lacks literature, by encompassing the details and uniqueness of each subject's lived experience (Stebbins, 2001). Therefore, the exploratory design of research works towards ensuring a well-rounded study that contributes to the evolving body of knowledge in a particular area of study. Due to the rapid digitization and introduction of new market trends, numerous innovative strategies for addressing mental health are emerging, which require in-depth study. It can be ensured only by implementing a proper exploratory research design. The study is entirely dependent on content analysis; therefore, exploring new market trends, themes, and patterns in the behavior of teenagers in the digital age will prove to be fruitful.

Research Approach

The research approach highlights the data collection techniques used to provide valid and purposeful insights. An inductive research approach incorporates new ideas to develop a broader perspective, inducing new patterns in the study that are based on evolving market trends, rather than testing older hypotheses (Thomas, 2006). Therefore, inductive methods of study contribute to the existing body of knowledge by incorporating new and established patterns and trends in an evolving field of study. Studying is growing in nature as technological advancements are not limited, thus making older bodies of research obsolete. Through a systematic analysis of digital intervention strategies, the study will identify recurring market trends based on the design and structure of mental health platforms, the types and overall framework of intervention strategies, and how well they can be accessed by everyone, as well as the ethical considerations of these interventions. An exploratory research approach ensures that the research remains open-ended, allowing it to evolve with the introduction of new studies and market trends.

Sample Selection

Data collection involves selecting a sample to capture the relevant data that aligns with the objectives set by the study. Purposive sampling techniques help

incorporate a wide range of programs based on digital healthcare, many of which are international in nature, making them all-inclusive (Etikan et al., 2016). The study will consider digital mental healthcare programs for adolescents who actively use mobile devices, artificial intelligence tools, and gadgets for mental health solutions, especially those on free sites that guarantee privacy and are ethical in nature. Selection should be pursued naturally, producing varied and unique results that contribute to the growing body of knowledge. Although it is impossible to capture the overall impact of technology and digital intervention strategies on teenagers' mental health, it will set a trend towards research in this area of study. Proper sample selection is crucial, as it will make the study more inclusive and ensure the use of relevant data that aligns with the body of research.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study focuses on content analysis, which identifies patterns and themes within qualitative data. Content analysis involves a nuanced examination of the characteristics, accessibility, and intervention strategies related to digital healthcare (Krippendorff, 2018). This process of data collection involves reviewing programs and websites related to digital intervention, analyzing the programs to generate data, and examining the ethics of these programs. The thematic analysis, which will categorize and interpret the qualitative data, will involve studying the programs to understand the content, identify key marketing themes and their effectiveness, and segregate the data into different groups according to similarity. Additionally, market trend analysis will identify how teenagers are using digital platforms for mental health purposes, demonstrating the popular patterns in their behavior. It will involve examining the applications utilized, such as artificial intelligence tools and chatbots, an evaluation of market trends, and how these strategies are gaining momentum, as well as identifying the gaps. Thus, analyzing market trends along with an understanding of and analyzing the relevant themes in the research will ensure its validity in the long run.

Research Ethics

Research should always be conducted ethically, ensuring honesty and accuracy. Research ethics guarantee integrity and credibility. It also helps protect the transparency and originality of the work. Since the study does not involve direct interviews with individuals, maintaining the anonymity of participants is not a concern here. Instead, this will involve specific steps like using publicly available data only for study and data production, maintaining full-fledged transparency while delineating the objectives of the research and interpreting the findings, no result

should be fabricated, which can compromise the findings and hamper the uniqueness of the research, strictly abiding by the privacy policies of various regulations, particularly the ones adhering to minors. Therefore, the research should be conducted most ethically to protect and respect the interests of various stakeholders who are revolutionizing the field of mental health by integrating it with the digital world.

Findings and Analysis

Digital Engagement Supports Identity Formation and Mental Autonomy Among Adolescents

Digital modes of therapy like SPARX engage adolescent users in therapy to form their own identity, develop emotional intelligence, and face everyday challenges in life at ease. The program uses a gaming platform where users can create their own avatars and embark on journeys that reflect their everyday lives. A user remarked, *"I felt like I was the character...fighting my own sadness like it was a monster. It made me think about why I felt that way,"* in the New Zealand Government's health report regarding the impact of SPARX. According to the latest annual evaluation report of SPARX, another young user commented, *"It is easier than talking to someone at first. The game made it feel normal to feel that way."* It demonstrates precisely how gamified interventions made teenagers feel accepted and protected in society, where they might have previously felt ostracized due to unaddressed problems. A Māori user commented about how he praised the inclusion of Māori characters, making the platform localized and inclusive of all ethnicities. These features demonstrate that SPARX is culturally responsive, inclusive, and highly innovative in its approach.

ReachOut is an online mental health service designed to provide peer-led support to adolescents. ReachOut's forum is designed to support teenagers through self-guided modules, peer help, and a culture of openness without fear of judgment. One user remarked, *"I did not want to tell anyone at first. However, being able just to read what others said made me feel like I was not weird or broken."* Maintaining the privacy of the users is imperative, as the site states, *"We help young people feel better about today and the future, no matter what challenge they are facing."*

Additionally, storytelling sessions associated with this platform enhance the youth experience in the new digital age. The digital space becomes therapeutic by encouraging storytelling. Therefore, by creating an approachable platform for

adolescent mental health, these initiatives are empowering teenagers with self-help tools and guiding them towards breaking the stigma associated with therapy.

Safe Spaces for Creating Online Community and De-Stigmatization

A Canadian government-led program, Headstrong, aims to prioritize adolescent mental health through awareness, leadership, and stigma reduction. Headstrong is a peer-led initiative that is hybrid in nature. It collaborates with schools to incorporate mental health awareness into their curricula. The program's overview report stated that students felt *"more capable of supporting others"* and *"less afraid to talk about mental health issues openly."* Headstrong created a supportive environment where teenagers shared their vulnerabilities in a space guided and supported by their peers. Headstrong was successful in creating leaders who possessed this drive to promote mental health awareness and reduce stigma. According to the official Headstrong Overview Program's report, *"Headstrong is an initiative built to inspire youth to become leaders in their schools... [they] challenge stigma, raise mental health awareness, and promote mental wellness and early help-seeking."* It enables them to modify their behavior and empower their peers to improve their lives. According to Headstrong's Summit, *"Seventy per cent of mental illness in adults begins in childhood or adolescence."* The program equips teenagers with the needed education and empathy.

ReachOut Australia fosters a sense of belonging and understanding through peer-led initiatives. One post read, *"This is the first place I have talked about this. It is scary but also free. Reading your replies made me cry but also feel stronger."* Such peer validation plays a significant role in shifting narratives around anxiety and depression from one of shame to understanding. The platform ensures total anonymity and easy accessibility, and is centered entirely on providing the necessary help to adolescents through interactive sessions. The program's official webpage says, *"ReachOut is the leading online mental health service in Australia supporting young people... Anonymous, free and 100% online, ReachOut has been designed specifically for, and with, young people."* It speaks of co-creation as a method of digital approach.

Gamification Enhances Engagement Without Undermining Seriousness

SPARX is formatted on the Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) model to address mental health challenges in a gamified platform, supported by the New Zealand Ministry of Health. The Ministry of Health's evaluation report on SPARX shows, *"Users were more likely to complete sessions because it felt like a game rather than therapy."* A participant shared, *"It did not feel preachy. It felt like something made for people my age, not adults telling us what to do."* This immersive learning balances engagement

with evidence-based interventions. SPARX also gained popularity for being an inclusive and thoughtful platform, engaging Māori youth in its design to create culturally appropriate, inclusive, and sensitive content. Digital interventions can reach the remote and marginalized population easily, who might have no access to traditional modes of therapy. The youth of New Zealand who used SPARX for therapeutic measures had improved mental health compared to their contemporaries who did not take measures to check their mental health.

Similarly, ReachOut is actively working in Australia, and due to physical proximity, people from both these countries can use these platforms equally at times. One such parent thus said, *"We live two hours from the nearest town. My daughter used SPARX during the lockdown, and it really helped her stay connected,"* showing that such proximity often leads to people from one nation using the platforms of another nation. ReachOut is a platform where people share their lived experiences, distress, and seek solutions from like-minded people in a shared, anonymous, and safe environment. ReachOut ensures complete confidentiality for users, providing a safe access experience. Thus, the platform ensures control and flexibility in a safe environment.

Shared Spaces Help Ease Mental Health Issues.

Headstrong works on creating a safe place for teenagers to learn and handle their battles with mental illnesses. One of the program's initiators thus stated, *"When students shared their own stories during summits, it created a wave of connection... It is youth speaking to youth."* A feature unique to Headstrong is its ability to build its own youth campaigns. They run with the motto of building a body of youth who can lead anti-stigma campaigns. Students who receive help from the initiative extend that to their peers and contemporaries from other institutions. One adolescent participant in this program thus remarked, *"For the first time, I felt like my experience was not something to hide but something to share so others do not feel alone."* It shows that the teens found their peers who dealt with the same mental health issues, which encouraged them to acknowledge, voice their problems, and seek the needful solution. Therefore, such programs promote a sense of community by encouraging youth to engage with their contemporaries, rather than letting them suffer silently.

ReachOut Australia is modelled on sharing personal experiences in peer groups. The program's motto is to support the youth and create a better tomorrow. *"We help young people feel better about today and the future, no matter what challenge they are facing."* Through shared feelings in a peer-based community, young people find a non-judgmental, empathetic, and safe environment, and learn to tackle their problems. Interaction occurs through storytelling, reading tips and tricks for better mental health,

and engaging with a trained group of people to address mental health issues. It leads to the development of a community feeling where adolescents feel seen, as stated by one user, *“Reading other people’s stories helped me realize I was not alone.”* Therefore, teenagers become aware of their issues, find the necessary solution, and can utilize it to render help to others when required.

Discussion

Hybrid Digital Platforms Strengthen Agency and Empowerment Among Adolescents

The analysis of SPARX, Headstrong, and ReachOut highlights the need for digital platforms to provide mental health support to adolescents. These interventions provide self-help tools as well as therapy through interaction and gaming, ensuring that teenagers identify and reach out for help in a supportive environment. SPARX utilizes Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) through gaming platforms that help adolescents who are struggling with depression. Customizable avatars and smooth digital flow allow them to process their emotions through visual aids. Users often responded saying that the platform made them understand why and how they felt, leading to deep introspection. ReachOut is a peer-based digital intervention that is entirely anonymous, allowing teenagers to share their problems with people without divulging their identity. It empowers them by making them feel that they are not alone and that help can be provided without judgment. It creates a sense of solidarity, making them feel seen. Headstrong is another initiative that advocates the need to guide teenagers into identifying and dealing with mental health issues. The program is integrated into the school curriculum, enabling students to seek help in a familiar and secure environment. Headstrong thus establishes the need for therapeutic help, making teenagers aware of it through schools.

Community-Centered Interventions Promote Belonging and Reduce Stigma

The three intervention strategies, SPARX, ReachOut, and Headstrong, are all community-based platforms designed to accept therapy by decimating the associated stigma regarding mental health issues. ReachOut, being anonymous, helps teenagers seek help by validating their feelings through a peer-led platform. In this process, they develop a sense of community feeling in a judgment-free environment. It reduces the stigma attached to therapy, since people connect with them to provide the needed help. It feels more relaxed than a traditional clinical environment. Headstrong, too, is guided by peer support, as they provide teenagers with the much-needed education on mental health issues and self-help. Once a group of teenagers becomes aware of their issues and understands how to deal with them, they take turns teaching their

peers from their own schools and other schools about the need for therapy and the process to tackle their daily problems. Thus, the program aims to empower youth in addressing their psychological issues by providing guidance and motivation. It also helps break down stigma as they learn to voice their emotions. These programs encourage teenagers to be brave, learn, and express their emotions without fear of being mocked by society.

Gamification and Digital Familiarity Enhance Therapeutic Engagement

SPARX utilizes gamified platforms to deliver therapy by engaging adolescents and fostering their interest. This era of digitization is dominated by mobile applications, gaming devices, iPads, etc. It is easier and cheaper to seek help via such devices instead of traditional methods. SPARX has successfully made therapy enjoyable by involving teenagers in gaming and helping them identify and deal with their problems through games. They can virtually assist themselves, thus providing the necessary help without the need for outside guidance. It resonated extremely well with teenagers as they felt better after playing games on SPARX. It did not feel like clinical therapy at all. It helped them bust the myth surrounding therapy and made them a lot more proactive in dealing with their everyday problems. It helps them locate and diagnose their problems in the long run, mostly by themselves. Creating avatars that resembled them on SPARX helped them identify and diagnose their conditions. SPARX is also inclusive in its approach, as seen in the introduction of Māori avatars and their language. Thus, not only is the platform susceptible to the issues of adolescents, but it also takes into consideration the representation of various communities, thereby fostering a sense of demographic inclusion.

Shared Narratives and Peer Validation as Emotional Anchors

The intervention platforms work on shared narratives and how sharing leads to community benefit. Users on ReachOut, for instance, not only receive help but also share powerful insights that can be helpful for the next batch. They are also empowered by the feeling of inclusion in a community where their issues are acknowledged and addressed without prejudice. Storytelling models, such as ReachOut, provide group and individual therapy through anonymous platforms. It reduces the feelings of anxiety, leading to deeper introspection. Users do not feel pressured or scared when sharing their issues. Similarly, in Headstrong's youth-led summits, students from various institutions come together and share their issues in an environment guided by purpose and without judgment. This unstigmatized approach towards mental health problems educates the upcoming generations to be more

empathetic, tolerant, and respectful of everyone's feelings and thought processes. These traits do not develop if platforms work only digitally; therefore, Headstrong is hybrid in approach, encouraging face-to-face interactions. Headstrong, although it does not provide clinical therapy, strengthens emotional bonds by promoting emotional literacy. It is deemed as important as school syllabi, thus infusing the program with the school curriculum. Teenagers learn to articulate and support others when needed.

Toward Sustainable and Inclusive Mental Health Support in a Digital World

All three platforms, SPARX, ReachOut, and Headstrong, are highly efficient in their methods of delivering therapy through digital platforms. Success can be measured in the long run only through the involvement of parents, the integration of therapy with formal education, and the ethical use of personal data. SPARX and ReachOut ensure complete anonymity and privacy; however, it is found that teenagers often shy away from using them out of fear of being exposed. They often do not feel like sharing information with their families due to the fear of getting judged. The ethical use of data and full protection of user privacy should be taken into consideration by such interventions. Headstrong implements hybrid models that allow students to come together as a community to share and learn about mental health issues. It can be a teachable moment for them, as they often develop traits that they might not receive from formal education. Such interventions guide them towards becoming tolerant individuals, free from prejudice. Proper accessibility and digital literacy remain two significant challenges on the path to digital interventions. Proper internet facilities should be provided in remote areas so that people from all around the country can access and benefit from digital mental health interventions. Thus, proper guidance, security, and tolerance can provide for the best results through digital interventions.

Conclusions

The Transformative Potential of Digital Interventions in Breaking Stigma

Digital mode of therapy is an evolving trend in the arena of technological boom, helping break the stigma associated with therapy. Digital intervention platforms like ReachOut, SPARX, and headstrong proved to be viable alternatives to traditional modes of therapy, as they exhibited far better results. The stigma and high cost associated with traditional modes of therapy are absent here. Instead, such platforms work towards educating teenagers about mental health problems and the need for therapy, making them socially aware and tolerant. SPARX utilizes a gamified platform

to stimulate excitement and engagement among teenagers while offering therapeutic support.

Additionally, the platform has demonstrated cultural inclusivity, thereby reducing bias. ReachOut is an entirely anonymous platform led by people for those in need. Here, teenagers feel validated when they face the constant mental agony that they face in their daily lives. Due to its anonymity, users do not feel exposed and vulnerable. Headstrong is a hybrid platform that teaches students about mental health problems and solutions, complementing the school curriculum. Therefore, it breaks down the social stigma associated with therapy through education. Therefore, the tolerance, inclusivity, and education that digital interventions provide can break down the stigma associated with mental health problems.

Inclusivity and Cultural Sensitivity as Catalysts for Effective Engagement

The three interventions discussed —Headstrong, SPARX, and ReachOut — have exhibited cultural inclusivity, making them extremely popular among all groups of teenagers. Adolescents hail from various socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and they may struggle to fit into the mainstream. It can hurt their mental health. SPARX has demonstrated cultural awareness in this regard. The introduction of indigenous characters as avatars has proven to be extremely effective. The introduction of Māori avatars and language has made the program highly popular among Māori teenagers as well. ReachOut is a peer-led platform where people from various ethnic communities are welcome to join. The fully anonymous setting of this program ensures the privacy of users, providing them with complete anonymity. It, in turn, reduces bias based on race, ethnicity, gender, and other factors, making the platform extremely inclusive. Headstrong also helps in this regard, as it is educational in its approach. The introduction of mental health issues into the school curriculum helps students understand and identify problems in an unbiased environment. The hybrid model of Headstrong is culturally sensitive, since students come together to teach and learn, irrespective of their cultural differences.

Empowerment Through Peer Support and Community-Building

SPARX, Headstrong, and ReachOut strive to create a community of supportive individuals, free from judgment. Both ReachOut and Headstrong are community-led platforms, focusing on the need to create a new generation of individuals who are supportive and free from judgment. The processes of storytelling, group involvement, cultural inclusivity, and peer narratives break down the barriers of social differences, making individuals more tolerant and impartial in their approach. Adolescents learn

about others' problems, relate to them, and become benevolent and empathetic adults. ReachOut is entirely anonymous, thereby protecting the cultural, ethnic, and gender identities of its users. They may come from any walk of life and are entirely free to access the programs without the fear of getting bullied. The process of anonymous interaction teaches adolescents to be tolerant and strive to improve themselves and others. It leads to deeper introspection in a shared environment driven by emotions and empathy, fostering a sense of community among them. Thus, a sense of community develops among teenagers who use digital interventions, which aim to break biases and build an unbiased community.

Challenges of Access, Privacy, and Over-Reliance in Technology

The success of digital intervention platforms comes with limitations, including issues of accessibility, ethical data use, privacy preservation, and digital literacy. It must be taken into consideration that not all adolescents come from places where there is internet access. There is also the concern of bias and fear in many due to the stigma associated with therapy. Despite platforms like ReachOut guaranteeing complete anonymity, it is imperative that they build trust among users regarding the potential consequences of leaving a digital footprint and the proper storage of personal information. Adolescents often fear involving their parents, which limits the trust and effectiveness of interventions.

Additionally, teenagers may become overly reliant on digital modes of therapy, which can hinder their creative and imaginative problem-solving capabilities. It can also impair the development of thought processes, making them highly vulnerable in the real world. Therefore, digitization should be supplemented with traditional modes of therapy to gain success.

The Path Forward: Integrating Hybrid Models with Policy and Education

Digital mental health intervention platforms should pair up with traditional modes of therapy to provide the best possible therapy. Hybridization of mental health programs will be effective in the long run, as they will incorporate both clinical and personalized models, along with a community-centric approach. Headstrong can be a good example in this regard. The intervention works with the school curriculum to educate teenagers about the mental health issues that are typically common. They also equip them with self-help tools to tackle such problems. Headstrong also organizes summits where students from various institutions participate to break down the negative narratives surrounding mental health problems and develop an empathetic approach towards life. Even then, Headstrong falls short of providing clinical therapy

modes to students. It is the need of the hour to combine two different modes and move forward. Hybrid models of therapy can prove to be highly effective in the long run.

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