Project title:

Exploring the needs and preferences for eMental health information among prospect healthcare providers: an exploratory sequential mixed methods pilot study applying a discrete choice conjoint experiment (e-Ment-In-Inform-DCE)

Project description:

Mental health problems are relatively prevalent among university students compared to the general population. Although one in three students is concerned, only few seek professional support. To overcome common attitudinal barriers such as the fear of stigmatization, anonymously accessible electronic mental health services (eMHSs) have been suggested as promising options for university students. Although several meta-analyses have demonstrated the efficacy of eMHSs for dealing with distress among different target groups such as university students, the real-world uptake of such evidence-based interventions remains rather low. Subjective reasons for the poor utilization include lacking awareness of quality-approved eMHSs and a mismatch between expectations and preferences, which can be addressed with tailored information, e.g. provided via multi-component acceptance-facilitating interventions (AFIs). However, little is known about the optimal design of AFIs on eMHSs from the user perspective based on their specific information preferences and needs. Thus, the purpose of this study applying a discrete choice conjoint experiment (DCE) is to explore information preferences regarding AFIs on eMHSs among medical and healthcare students, as they represent both potential users of eMHSs and future healthcare providers. We will apply an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design to determine information preferences among medical students and other student groups from healthcare-related subjects, such as public health or clinical psychology. In the "subproject 1", semi-structured interviews (qualitative study 1: "e-Ment-In-QS1", conceptual development, specifying attributes and levels) and further participatory methods, applied in co-design workshops on choice sets (qualitative study 2: "e-Ment-In-QS2", methodological development), will be used to optimize the design of choice sets on eMHS information for the preference elicitation (c.f., pre-registration of the formative research: https://osf.io/kemw8). Based on an integration of qualitative data, we will formulate a conceptual model on preferences regarding the most important attributes of AFIs on eMHSs that will guide the subsequent methodological development and help derive hypotheses that will be tested in the subsequent DCE as the quantitative main study ("subproject 2").

Funding:	Forschungskommission (FoKo) of the Faculty of Medicine at the Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf
Duration:	August 1, 2021 – July 31, 2023
Project members:	Dr. Jennifer Apolinário-Hagen (PI), Pia Braun M.Sc. (doctoral researcher), Prof. Dr. Adrian Loerbroks, Prof. Dr. Peter Angerer, various external cooperation partners

Publications:

Apolinário-Hagen J, Fritsche L, Bierhals C, Salewski C. Improving attitudes toward e-mental health services in the general population via psychoeducational information material. Internet Interventions 2018;12:141-149. doi:10.1016/j.invent.2017.12.002

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Dederichs M, Weber J, Pischke CR, Angerer P, Apolinário-Hagen J. Exploring medical students' views on digital mental health interventions: A qualitative study. Internet Interventions 2021;25:100398. doi:10.1016/j.invent.2021.100398

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Apolinário-Hagen J, Harrer M, Dederichs M, Fritsche L, Wopperer J, Wals F, Loerbroks A, Lehr D, Salewski C, Angerer P, Ebert DD. Exploring the influence of testimonial source on attitudes towards e-mental health interventions among university students: Four-group randomized controlled trial. PloS one 2021;16(5):e0252012. PMID:34038455