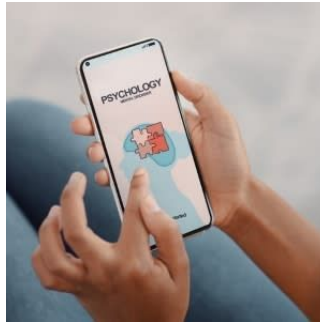## Consumer and Professional Ratings Differ for Mental Health Apps

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, the number of mental health apps has vastly increased. Recent efforts have been focused on collecting the views of clinicians and academics to learn what is needed from them to improve the apps. However, understanding the views of those with mental health issues is equally important and required to ensure high quality mobile mental health support.

A recent study, published in JMIR, assessed 11 mental health apps using a web-based survey administered between December 2020 and April 2021.

Individuals who had experienced mental health issues were recruited to detail their history of their condition, and were requested to download three of the chosen apps to use for three days. After the three days, they rated the apps, which were then compared with the ratings from clinicians and academics.

Comparing the results showed that professionals gave the apps higher ratings, and were more likely to recommend the apps to consumers and companies. By contrast, consumers felt frustrated by the need to pay for access to premium content. Despite this, they enjoyed measuring their progress across the three days, and having access to educational content, including information on symptoms and coping methods.

Participants voiced their appreciation for easy-to-use and interactive features, as well as the capacity to personalise. They found aesthetics were an important element, favouring engaging colours, simple structures and professional layouts. Additionally, several participants found the apps were difficult to use. However,professionals believed the apps were easy to navigate.

The team considered several limitations with the study. Firstly, participants reported general mental health issues, instead of specific diagnoses, which would be important information for further research on mental health apps. In addition, it is not certain whether these users have already used these apps in the study, which may have impacted the results of the study. Lastly, the team added that future studies should use a larger and more diverse sample of users.

The study suggested that,"app rating measures must include the perspectives of mental health service users to ensure ratings represent their priorities. Additional work should be done to incorporate the features most important to mental health service users into mental health apps".

Source: JMIR

Image Credit: iStock

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