

Abstract

Parent Preferences for Peer Connection in eHealth Programs

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Abstract

Background: Social support and connection with other parents are important factors associated with parental mental health and parenting practices. These social connections can be integrated in parental eHealth programs through forums or group therapy sessions, but parental needs and preferences regarding these eHealth features are unknown.

Objective: This study aims to examine parents' preferences for connecting with other parents in eHealth programs.

Methods: In total, 162 parents of 0–5-year-old children in the United States were recruited through Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk; mean age 32.7, range 22–61 years; 80.2% White; 59.9% men, 39.5% women, and 0.6% nonbinary; 93.8% biological parents). Participants filled out a one-time survey. Best practice recommendations for using MTurk were employed (through captcha verification and attention checks). Descriptive statistics were run in SPSS (version 27; IBM Corp) on MacOS.

Results: Parents were asked to rate how likely they would be to use a digital program with weekly opportunities to connect with other parents in the program (1=very unlikely to 5=very likely). Overall, 13.4% of parents indicated that they would be (very) unlikely to use a program with that feature and 59.8% of them indicated that they would be (very) likely to use it, with the remaining 27.8% of them being neutral. On being asked specifically about their preference, 85% of parents indicated that they would prefer connecting with other parents in the program, with 70% of those preferring to connect anonymously. On a forum, 67% of parents indicated that they would be comfortable connecting with all parents (as opposed to mothers or fathers only); regarding videoconferencing, that number was 61%.

Conclusions: Considering that studies have shown the positive impact of social support for parental mental health and parenting practices, integrating anonymous connection with other parents should be considered in developing parental eHealth programs and would be in line with the preferences of most parents.

Conflicts of Interest: None declared.

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telemedicine; mobile health; mental health; parents; family; social interaction; eHealth

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