

Exploring the Role of Chatbots and Virtual Assistants in Adolescent Mental Health Treatment: A Scoping Review

Introduction: Adolescence, characterized by profound physical, psychological and social changes, often brings challenges for mental health. Recent technological advances have popularized digital interventions, particularly conversational agents (CAs) that use artificial intelligence in healthcare, including mental health. CAs, colloquially known as chatbots or virtual assistants/agents, utilize multiple modes for user interaction, including text, voice, and images.

Methods: This study explores the challenges faced by adolescents in using CAs for mental health treatment. Following the PRISMA methodology, our scoping review examined 36 relevant studies through a comprehensive search of the following databases: Scopus, PsycInfo, Psy Article, and PubMed.

Results: The review emphasizes interest in the treatment of depressive and anxiety disorders while examining the general promotion of mental well-being and stress prevention. Smartphone-accessible CAs show promise as non-stigmatized channels for promoting healthy lifestyles or providing low-threshold interventions to prevent mental health problems. User experience, especially ease of use and satisfaction, is repeatedly emphasized, underlining its importance. However, the fact that usage drops off significantly after the first 10 days is an important topic for further investigation.

Conclusion: This scoping review provides an insight into the current landscape of conversational agent use in adolescent mental health. It highlights various applications, user experiences and challenges, and emphasizes the need for future research to fill knowledge gaps and improve the effectiveness of these innovative tools.

Keywords: Adolescence, Mental Health, Conversational Agents, Scoping Review

Referenze:

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