PROMOTING ENGAGEMENT WITH DIGITAL HEALTH INTERVENTIONS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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Introduction: Engagement has received increasing attention as it has been linked to the effectiveness of digital health interventions (DHIs). As such, intervention developers use strategies to promote engagement with the intervention. However, inconsistent reporting of engagement strategies and related design decisions has led to fragmented research and a lack of clarity about what strategy to use, how and for whom.

Objectives: This study explores how intervention developers promote engagement with interventions, focusing on strategies, design considerations, challenges encountered, and factors influencing decision-making.

Methods: We conducted 13 semi-structured interviews with intervention developers. Participants were recruited using convenience sampling and came from different backgrounds, including computer science, psychology, and HCI. The number of DHIs created ranged from 1 to 150. The interviews lasted between 31 and 66 minutes and were transcribed verbatim. The transcripts are analyzed using thematic analysis.

Preliminary results: Participants used a variety of engagement strategies, including chatbots, human support, or seamless integration of DHIs into daily life. Reasons for choosing strategies ranged from theory-based decisions to those informed by design methods and insights from the professional network. Participants highlighted the challenge of addressing individual differences, limited knowledge about what engagement is, how to design for it, and the lack of priority given to engagement in intervention development.

Conclusion: The findings highlight different approaches to designing for engagement in DHIs, with various factors shaping strategy selection. These insights contribute to our understanding of the DHI design practice and can inform the development of a tool to support decision-making.