

Self-Monitoring Mental Health Apps and the Promotion of Mental Wellbeing in India: Innovative Findings from a Critical Integrative Review

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Abstract:

India's growing mental health burden, merged with acute deficiencies in psychiatric infrastructure and rising smartphone penetration, has accelerated the advancement of self-monitoring mental health apps as an alternative and complementary way for promoting mental well-being. This review critically looks into the role of self-monitoring mental health

apps in India. Unlike conventional reviews, this paper generates 'innovative findings' by synthesising interdisciplinary evidence from psychiatry, behavioural science, psychology, digital public health, and human-computer interaction. The review identifies an inconsistency within digital mental health ecosystems: apps designed to boost emotional awareness may simultaneously raise

psychological hypervigilance, dependency on metrics, and data-driven self-stigmatising. The review proposes the "Adaptive Digital Wellbeing Continuum (ADWC)", a novel conceptual framework interpreting that self-monitoring apps may shift from therapeutic to maladaptive outcomes depending on engagement intensity, cultural adaptation, algorithmic transparency, and clinical

integration. The review further introduces the "Digital Emotional Dependency Hypothesis (DEDH)," suggesting that immoderate reliance on emotional tracking systems may reduce independent emotional regulation capacities over time. Findings suggest that self-monitoring apps show promising effects for mild-to-moderate anxiety, stress management, mindfulness enhancement, and emotion regulation; however, evidence remains inconsistent with long-term benefits, accessibility, cultural responsiveness, ethical governance, and sustained user engagement. Major gaps include: underreporting of serious outcomes, limited Indian longitudinal trials, insufficient language adaptation, and a lack of regulatory oversight. The paper concludes that self-monitoring mental health apps possess transformative public health potential in India only if future systems prioritise evidence-based design, culturally grounded intervention models, ethical governance and hybrid human-digital mental healthcare ecosystems.

Keywords:

Mental well-being, Self-monitoring mental health apps, Innovative findings, Digital Mental Health.