Author's response to reviews

Title: Young men's attitudes and behaviour in relation to mental health and technology: implications for the development of online mental health services

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Author's response to reviews: see over
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Re MS: 4398953727869685

Please find attached a resubmission of the manuscript “Young men’s attitudes and behaviour in relation to mental health and technology: implications for the development of online mental health services”.

We thank you for the opportunity to submit a revised version of our article. Please find below our point-by-point responses to the reviewers’ comments/concerns.

1/ Methods: Overall all three reviewers highlighted that the methods sections needs some attention.

• Reviewer 1 Comment: It isn’t clear how participants were recruited to the survey – where on Facebook was an advert placed?
  Response: Further details have been added about how participants were recruited using Facebook:
  “An advertisement was placed on Facebook, a popular online social networking site, and participants were encouraged to promote the survey to their peers, who then completed the survey and further promoted the study through their networks. The Facebook advertisement was specifically targeted to appear on the pages of Australian Facebook users between the ages of 16 to 24.”

• Reviewer 1 and Reviewer 2 both stated that they would like to see more detail of the response options and scoring frames used for the survey sections.
  Response: We have added more detail about the measures. For example we have added the following detail:
  “The first set of questions asked respondents what they would do if they thought a friend might be experiencing a mental health problem. Respondents were asked how likely it would be that they would suggest to their friend that they seek help from particular sources (eg. ‘family’, ‘friends’, ‘websites’, “doctor”), with items being rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = ‘very likely’ to 5 = ‘very unlikely’). The second set of questions asked respondents whether they have ever talked about their problems on the Internet (“yes/no”), and if so, whether chatting with other people via the Internet helped (“yes/no”). Finally, respondents were asked how satisfied they were with the information/support they received on the Internet (1 = ‘very dissatisfied’ to 4 = ‘very satisfied’).”

• Reviewer 3 comment: The authors have to give more information to the reader regarding “sets of question”. Are the questions from a validated questionnaire? What are the psychometric properties?
  Response: As stated in the paper, the sets of questions were selected from a recent national survey on mental health in Australia, and we have supplied the reference. No psychometric properties are yet available on these particular questions.

• Reviewer 1 comment: It is not clear what demographic variables were collected for the survey.
  Response: We have added details about the demographic variables collected stating that “The survey also included a set of demographic questions relating to gender, age, location, ethnicity and employment status”.

• Reviewer 1: It isn’t clear how focus group participants were recruited.
  Response: We have now added the following: “Focus groups were advertised through a selection of youth serving organisations, including youth centres and clinics, schools, TAFEs, universities and businesses that hire young people, via a flyer.”

• Reviewer 3 comment: I wonder how the selection of young men that was done with purpose to develop the schedule of questions was done.
Response: We have added the following detail: “A schedule of questions developed in consultation with male Youth Ambassadors involved with Australia’s most accessed online youth mental health service (ReachOut.com) and was used for each focus group to explore the following themes: interests and technology use; knowledge of and attitudes towards help-seeking and mental health; as well as brainstorming innovative solutions to the problems identified.”

- Reviewer 2 comment: The issues the participants had to discuss are sometimes very personal and as young men tend not to talk about private topics, the method of focus groups might be highly contraindicative.
  Response: To overcome this problem focus group participants were asked to write down their answers to sensitive mental health questions on a piece of paper. We have added the following: “To address concerns regarding the willingness of participants to share their perspectives of sensitive topics in front of others, participants were asked to respond individually to questions about mental health by writing their answers down on a piece of paper.”

- Reviewer 3: Which variables may age be a predictor of?
  Response: We have changed the wording so that it now reads “Simple linear regression was used to investigate whether any significant age differences were present. Age was included as a continuous variable and a p-value of less than 0.05 was considered statistically significant.”

- Reviewer 1 comment: Did you use some guidance or any particular approach to the thematic analysis? A reference for the approach taken would be helpful. It would be helpful to report what kind in training/ expertise the 2 researchers who conducted the thematic analysis had in these methods.
  Response: Further detail has been added to explain focus group data analysis and we supply a reference to the approach taken: “The focus group data was analysed thematically using complete transcripts of each session. Separately, two researchers with prior qualitative research experience systematically coded the transcripts applying brief verbal descriptions to small chunks of data, and then identified themes which integrated substantial sets of these codings. The results were then compared and discussed until the generated themes were agreed upon [26]. This procedure was applied to ensure that the generated themes were identified and clustered in a way that was consistent with the views of more than one person and not simply a reflection of one researcher’s subjective interpretation.”

2/ Results:
- Reviewer 1 comment: Results paragraph 2. (and through-out the results section) Please don't report p=.000, change these to p<.001.
  Response: We have changed p=.000 to p<.001 throughout the MS.
- Reviewer 1 comment: You need to chose a level of detail with which to report info about your participants from whom you quote – e.g. in one case it says, high school student (occupation), 17 (age), and Sydney NSW (location), on the next it just says high school student(occupation).
  Response: We have now made the level of detail about participants from which we quote consistent throughout the MS.
- Reviewer 2 highlighted a number of inconsistencies with the citations throughout the MS.
  Response: These have now been fixed.

3/ Conclusion/discussion:
- Reviewer 3 comment: The authors mostly discuss the results from the focus groups and I miss a discussion about the comparison between the results from the survey and the focus group interviews.
  Response: We have now added much more detail to the discussion section about the
results from both the survey and focus groups and how the results compare.

- Reviewer 2 comment: With regard to the great amount of your data, the conclusion section is quite short and scanty. You should provide more details/ideas of how the high use of technology in combination with a great lack of knowledge and negative attitude towards mental health can be used to develop online mental health services for young men...As yet, the manuscript focuses too much on its details and partly fails to provide substantial new insights, theories or health care solutions in the discussion and conclusion sections.
  Response: We have expanded on the discussion section quite considerably to address this comment and have added the Barak et al. reference that the reviewer mentioned.

- Reviewer 2 comment: In the discussion section, two minor limitations of the study were listed. However, the most crucial limitation was not mentioned: the risk of biases that occur by using online snowball-sampling and focus groups. Whereas the snowball-method was used to prevent from social desirability and group processes, those processes were the profoundest thread for the results in the focus groups.
  Response: We have added an additional limitation stating that, “our survey sample was recruited via Facebook advertising and snowball sampling which again raises questions about the generalizability of the results”. However, with the focus groups to overcome issues associated with social desirability and group processes participants were asked to respond individually to questions about mental health by writing their answers down on a piece of paper.

- Reviewer 2 comment: This study suggests that there are powerful views towards mental health and help seeking that are gender specific.” As you didn’t have a control group consisting of girls in the same age, this conclusion is not supported by your data. Why didn’t you compare the quantitative data between young men and young women? At least for the online sample a gender comparison would lead to more information about your research question. Concerning the qualitative data, you can explicitly refer to literature focusing on gender differences that can support this assumption.
  Response: We are planning to present a separate paper looking specifically at gender differences in the quantitative data as there was simply not the room to look at this in detail in this paper. We do, however, refer to literature throughout the paper supporting our assumptions.

4/ Abstract/ Introduction:

- Reviewer 3 comment: The aims of the study are not clearly stated. Response: The aims of the study have now been stated more clearly.

We thank the reviewers for their helpful comments and look forward to hearing from you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Louise Ellis