



Do Internet self-harm discussion groups alleviate or exacerbate self-harming behaviour?

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Abstract

The Internet has proved a popular medium for persons with a variety of health-related complaints to provide one another with information and mutual support. However, although there are currently hundreds of Internet discussion groups dedicated to the issue of self-harm, there is disagreement as to whether these groups exacerbate or help alleviate self-harming behaviour. The present study sought to explore possible positive and negative aspects of membership of a self-harm discussion group. Members of one self-harm discussion group (n=102) completed a web-based questionnaire. The findings indicated that the majority of respondents viewed the discussion group as having positive effects, with many respondents reducing the frequency and severity of their self-harming behaviour as a consequence of group membership. Future work needs to address how typical the present findings are for Internet self-harm groups in general, and whether these groups are of any more (or less) benefit than current self-harm support groups that meet face-to-face.

Keywords

Internet, on-line, discussion group, mental health, self-harm, self-injury

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