



Cognitive Behavioural Therapy Apps in Addressing Depression Among University Students in South African Universities: An Exploratory Study

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Abstract

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a widely used psychological treatment for depression. However, its implementation in digital formats has not been extensively explored among university students in South African settings. A mixed-methods approach was employed, including a survey targeting 300 university students with depressive symptoms and semi-structured interviews with 20 participants. Data were analysed using thematic analysis for qualitative insights and descriptive statistics for quantitative data. CBT apps showed an average improvement of 15% in depression symptoms at post-intervention compared to baseline, with a statistically significant $t(298) = -3.45$, two-tailed p -value $< .01$. The findings suggest that CBT apps can be effective tools for managing depression among university students but require further validation and tailored implementation strategies. Further research should focus on developing culturally adapted versions of these apps and exploring their integration into existing mental health services. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Apps, Depression, University Students, South Africa

Keywords: *Sub-Saharan, CBT apps, digital mental health, university populations, cognitive interventions, e-therapy, South Africa*

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