Selection of Apps for Depression in a Community Sample
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Over 240 apps have been developed to manage depressive symptoms (Shen et al., 2015), resulting in a rapidly changing marketplace that makes identification and selection of apps challenging for users (Larsen et al., 2016). Limited evidence exists regarding factors that predict app selection (Huang & Bashir, 2017). However, no study has examined this process in real-time with community participants, which was the goal of the current study.

Participants were twenty community members experiencing mild to moderate depressive symptoms who reported never having used a mental health app. During individual meetings, they were asked to select a depression app and to complete a survey and interview about factors used when selecting that app. Participants were between 19 to 50 (M=29.12; SD=11.15), predominantly White (45%), non-Hispanic/Latino(a) (80%), and female (55%).

Results indicated that participants initially searched for apps by navigating the app store (n=16), conducting a Google search (n=3), or contacting a friend (n=1). Common search terms included “Mental Health” (n=6), “Depression” (n=3), and “anxiety” (n=2). Factors considered while choosing an app were rated from 1 (Not important) to 5 (Very important). App functions (M=4.7), description (M=4.6), and price (M=4.6) were rated as the most important factors, while research support (M=3.3) was rated as moderately important. Participants qualitatively reported selecting apps based on their preferences for app features. Results have implications for app developers and health care professionals invested promoting the adoption of mental health apps.

Keywords: m-Health, Depression, Apps