

ABSTRACT



INTEGRATING DIGITAL INNOVATIONS IN THE PROMOTION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND MENTAL HEALTH: THE CASE OF SULIWEKHA WEB-APPLICATION

Health is the complete state of physical, mental and social wellbeing. It exceeds the mere definition of disease absence as social, spiritual and mental factors are involved. When one or more of these factors are compromised, health is at risk and medical care is required as a support system. Mental health as a dimension an individual wellness, it includes a person's emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It affects how we think, feel, and act (About mental health, 2021). Mental health determines how we handle stress, relate with the environment, and make decisions.

A person's mental state if not maintained could be fatal. Studies have associated mental disorders such as severe depression emerging from various stresses, to be the major cause of suicides. For instance, covid-19 pandemic is said to have amplified much more serious mental health problems and a great number of people were reported to have psychological distress and exhibited symptoms of depression, anxiety or post-traumatic stress (WHO, 2022). This was especially true early on in the pandemic when staff and infrastructure were often redeployed to covid-19 relief. Social distancing measures disrupted the mental health care measures that were being practiced hence, creation of widespread suicidal thoughts and behaviors (WHO, 2022). Thus, during the covid-19 pandemic, great need arose to tackle the suicide epidemic holistically, on all tiers of intervention. People needed to be equipped with socially acceptable coping mechanisms which are easily adaptable.

In this postcovid-19 era, there is need for initiatives to manage mental health without overwhelming the world's health systems. Needs that will prioritize mental health issues, in perception that there is no health without mental health. These initiatives should focus on tackling

a person's ability to open up about mental problems. People often find it difficult to open up about mental health problems in fear of not wanting to be treated differently; worries that people may think they are weird or discriminated and worries that people might destroy their reputation. Therefore, it becomes difficult to help people with mental health problems because they do not voice out their problems. Thus, it is from this background that me and my team took an advantage of the digital evolution and integrated digital innovations in the promotion psychological and mental health by creating a ***suliwekha webapp*** that seeks to address mental health challenges particularly in Malawi.

Suliwekha App - (voice out)

Suliwekha is a Chichewa word that means “*you are not alone*”. It is a mental health platform that seeks to equip individuals with the necessary tools to cope up with mental health problems through online real time interactive sessions without compromising an individual's identity and privacy. This app was designed in a way that people may send their mental health problems through a voice note or text anonymously, upon signing in with a dummy account. The text or voice note is sent to the administrators who are trained psychologists and counsellors. The administrators respond with the professional counsel. Besides, clients are also given an opportunity to book face-to-face sessions or upgrade their online account to a known identity to build a client-counsellor confidence.

Suliwekha being in its development stage, carries our hope to address the mental health challenges people face daily by confiding in us through the guaranteeing of their privacy and identity so that the suicide cases are scaled down and people are psychologically health and productive.

In conclusion, mental health is crucial dimension for the sustainability of the overall human's health and unlike physical health it can be integrated to be accessed from every corner of the world through digitalization. It is in this view that **Suliwekha** is envisioned to promote psychology and mental health through integrating digitalization even to global society at large.

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