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How can I influence my future? A study of using an app to strengthen mental health among young adults who are not in education or employment

Submission date
15/01/2021

Recruitment status
No longer recruiting

Registration date
12/02/2021

Overall study status
Completed

Last Edited
13/02/2026

Condition category
Mental and Behavioural Disorders

[X] Prospectively registered
[_] Protocol
[_] Statistical analysis plan
[X] Results
[_] Individual participant data

Plain English summary of protocol
Background and study aims
There are many causes to why youths and young adults have difficulties completing studies, pursue further studies or enter working life. Unemployment and interrupted studies can both be a consequence of, and lead to, mental ill-health among young adults.
The aim of the study is to examine whether an app to promote mental wellbeing can strengthen the ability of young adults who are not in education or employment to increase mental skills and capacities in order to gain employment, work experience placement or restart education.

Who can participate?
Young adults in the ages of 16-24 years who are not in education or employment.

What does the study involve?
The participants, 180 young adults in the ages of 16-24 years, will be randomly divided into two groups - intervention and control - by using simple randomization with computer-generated random numbers. The intervention group will be using an app for 6 weeks. The exercises in the app are based on 6 themes – self-esteem, stress, acceptance, relations, problem solving and life goals – and are designed to support the young adults to think in new ways and to get to know themselves and their feelings better. They will also share their thoughts and hear others' during weekly digital group meetings. The control group will receive film clips once a week for 6 weeks. Data from the participants will be collected via self-administered questionnaires at three-time points: before randomization and 8 weeks and 6 months after randomization. The questionnaire includes questions about their background and life situation followed by validated questions regarding their feelings and thoughts and their views on how they cope with those. Their replies will provide more knowledge of how mental skills and abilities are influenced by the use of the app. If the app is shown to be effective for young adults who are not in employment or education, it has good potential to be spread widely and could provide a valuable tool to reach a population that has a great need but who are many times difficult to reach.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The target group for the intervention is a very heterogeneous one but many of the young adults who are neither in employment nor in education are in a vulnerable situation and mental ill-health is widespread. Starting to think more in-depth about how one feels can initially be difficult, but the hope is that the intervention will strengthen the mental health of the participants which, in the longer run, could increase their chances for employment or future studies.

Where is the study run from?
Karolinska Institutet, Department of Global Public Health (Sweden)

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
March 2019 to August 2022

Who is funding the study?
Forskningsrådet om hälsa, arbetsliv och välfärd (Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare, FORTE)

Who is the main contact?
Associate Professor Lene Lindberg, lene.lindberg@ki.se
Dr Lisa Blom, lisa.blom@ki.se

Contact information

Type(s)
Scientific

Contact name
Dr Lisa Blom

ORCID ID
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3538-7159

Contact details
Prevention, Intervention and Mechanisms in Public Health (PRIME Health) research group
Solnavägen 1E
Stockholm
Sweden
113 65
+46 (8) 524 832 93
lisa.blom@ki.se

Type(s)
Scientific

Contact name
Dr Lene Lindberg

ORCID ID
https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9275-551X

Contact details
Prevention, Intervention and Mechanisms in Public Health (PRIME Health) research group
Solnavägen 1E
Stockholm
Sweden
113 65
+46 (8) 123 371 18
lene.lindberg@ki.se

Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title
How can I influence my future? A randomized controlled intervention study to strengthen mental health among young adults who are not in education or employment

Study objectives
1. Does participation in an app-based psychological intervention program influence self-esteem, coping abilities, stress and well-being among young adults who are not in education, employment or training?
2. Does participation in an intervention of that kind influence the ability to gain employment or work experience placement among young adults who are not in education, employment or training?
3. Does participation in such a program influence the ability to go into further education among young adults who are not in education, employment or training?

Ethics approval required
Old ethics approval format

Ethics approval(s)
Approved 24/11/2020, Swedish Ethical Review Authority (Box 2110, 750 02 Uppsala, Sweden; +46 (0) 10 475 08 00; registrator@etikprovning.se), ref. 2020-03952

Primary study design
Interventional

Study design
Interventional two-armed randomized controlled trial

Study type(s)
Prevention

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Mental health among young adults who are not in education or employment

Interventions
Participants will be assigned to either the intervention or the control group by using simple randomization with computer-generated random numbers.

The intervention group will be invited to sign up for a youth version of the app 29k (https://29k.org/youths) consisting of 6 modules taken during 6 weeks with weekly compliance reminders sent out via email/sms. When registering in the app, participants will be asked a few questions and based on that, provided tailored propositions on how to use the app. The content of the 6 modules will focus on the following themes: self-compassion, stress, goal setting, problem solving, interpersonal skills and emotional regulation. The use of the app will include individual exercises, digital group meetings and a possibility to individual follow-ups. It is expected to take about 60 minutes per week of the participants in the intervention group.

The control group will be sent links via push notifications through sms or emails to film clips once a week during 6 weeks. The films will be focusing on the same content as the modules in the intervention group. Participants will be asked to look at the films at a time of their convenience. It is expected to take in total 10-15 minutes per week.

Intervention Type
Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)
Collected through self-administered questionnaires at three time points: at baseline, directly after the intervention (8 weeks after randomization) and 6 months after randomization.
1. Coping measured by using a selection of 14 of the original 28 items from a Swedish version of the Brief COPE
2. Self-esteem measured with the Swedish version of the Rosenberg self-esteem scale
3. Well-being measured with the Swedish version of the 5-item World Health Organisation Well-Being Index (WHO5)
4. Performance anxiety measured with the Swedish version of the General Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7)
5. Stress measured with the Swedish version of the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS10)
6. Career adapt-abilities will be measured with a translated version of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale Short form
7. Depression will be measured with the Swedish version of the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9)

Key secondary outcome(s)
Collected at time point 2 and 3 (T2 and T3), i.e. at 8 weeks and at 6 months after randomization:
1. Employment status measured by asking questions regarding current employment or work experience placement
2. Education status will be measured with questions regarding if they are currently studying or have applied for studies
3. Questions regarding their perception whether the program has affected their motivation, goal setting and sustainable behaviours will also be asked at T2 and T3

Completion date
15/08/2022

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Adolescents and young adults in the ages of 16 - 24 years
2. Unemployed and not in education or training for at least two months
3. Willingness and possibility to participate in the full program
4. Sufficient level of Swedish to take part in the intervention

Participant type(s)
Healthy volunteer

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
151

Key exclusion criteria
High values on screening for depression and/or symptoms of suicidal ideation. Screening will be done by using the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ9). In the case of values of 15 points or more, the individual will be referred to health care and provided contact details on where to seek care.

Date of first enrolment
15/02/2021

Date of final enrolment
22/10/2021

Locations

Countries of recruitment
Sweden

Study participating centre
29k
Norrsken House
Birger Jarlsgatan 57C
Stockholm
Sweden
113 56

Sponsor information

Organisation
Karolinska Institute

ROR
https://ror.org/056d84691

Funder(s)

Funder type
Government

Funder Name
Forskningsrådet om Hälsa, Arbetsliv och Välfärd

Alternative Name(s)
Swedish Research Council for Health, Working Life and Welfare, Forskningsrådet om Hälsa, Arbetsliv och Välfärd, FORTE

Funding Body Type
Government organisation

Funding Body Subtype
Local government

Location
Sweden

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan
The datasets generated during and/or analysed during the current study will be available in a de-identified format upon request from Lene Lindberg (lene.lindberg@ki.se) until end of the year 2027. Ethical permission is required.

IPD sharing plan summary
Available on request

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Results article		12/02/2026	13/02/2026	Yes	No
Participant information sheet			12/02/2021	No	Yes
Study website	Study website	11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes