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Designing for Anonymity in Social Networking Platform for Student Mental Health and Well-Being

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Abstract

The rise of digital communication has transformed how students seek support for their mental health and well-being. However, stigma and fear of judgment continue to hinder open self-expression. This study presents the design and development of BeyondWords, a mobile application that serves as an anonymous social networking platform, providing university students with a safe space to share personal confessions, emotional expressions, life experiences, challenges, and vulnerabilities. The platform was developed based on a user requirements analysis conducted through interviews and questionnaires, which revealed that 80% of respondents considered

anonymity crucial for self-expression, while 90% believed it protects privacy and reduces fear of judgment. Participants emphasized that anonymity enables them to express their burdens and emotions freely, fostering a sense of relief and emotional support. To address these needs, BeyondWords incorporates features such as anonymous posting, interactive feedback, content moderation, and community engagement. This work highlights the pivotal role of anonymity in digital social platforms in creating safe spaces that effectively support student mental health and well-being. © 2025 IEEE.

Author keywords

digital safe space; mental health application; social networking platform; student well-being; user-centered design

Indexed keywords

Engineering controlled terms

Anonymity; Digital communication systems; Social networking (online); Students

Engineering uncontrolled terms

Design and Development; Digital communications; Digital safe space; Mental health; Mental health application; Social networking platform; Social-networking; Student well-being; User-centred; Well being

Engineering main heading

User centered design

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