Investigating the Effect of Peer Support in Helping People with Similar Health Challenges

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Abstract

The aim of the **Nexus Digital Technology** is encouraging people to take actions proactively to **prevent illness**. The project is focusing on the **Nexus Community**, based on a problem-centric design, which aims to get rid of restrictions from traditional forms of socializing and explore new solutions of how **peer supports** fill a gap between **emotional support and information exchange**, to promote user's motivations persevering and exploring more health and wellbeing habits.

Introduction & Background

Peer support has been proven to be a **good intervention** for improving health, but how to apply different **peer support types** flexibly to different **health topics** to **enhance social and psychological impact** remains to be studied.

1. "Peer Support: What Is It and Does It Work?" (Nesta, 2015)

To understand differences of peer supports from dimensions of **who, what types, how, where, and when**.

2. "The Continued Use of Mobile Health Apps: Insights From a Longitudinal Study" (Vaghefi, 2019)

To get insights of what **factors** will influence users' **motivation using health apps**.

Research Methodology & Evaluation

After getting insights from previous studies, real data from users can be collected from conducting both quantitative and qualitative methodology. The purpose is to get detailed information related to people's current health, their understanding towards health themes, and their preference and acceptance of receiving peer supports.

1. **Survey**:
The survey covers **3 dimensions**, aiming to understand people's knowledge towards different functions of health and wellbeing app, by collecting quantitative results from over **90 participants**.

2. **Semi-structured interview**:
By collecting qualitative results from **8 participants**, it is valuable to get detailed perceptions of people's current health habits, constraints, and people who they always get advice from. Results help to build **empathy map** according to participants' features and requirements.

3. **Hybrid card sorting**:
By investigating testers behaviours and emotions of classifying **20 cards into 8 health and wellbeing categories**, which helps to build the **information structure**. Result indicated that most health and wellbeing themes are interconnected.

4. **Concept testing**:
The whole testing has **3 phases**, start from browsing information, select topics and finally choose communication ways, each process will be tested based on multiple concepts of mid-fidelity prototypes. Users will choose one of concepts in each phase and illustrate the reason why it is suitable for them. A **future-state journey map** is built to summarize user's expectations and ideal solutions.

Design

The final design of Nexus Community's function following dissection of feedbacks from real users of surveys, interviews, card sorting and concept testing.
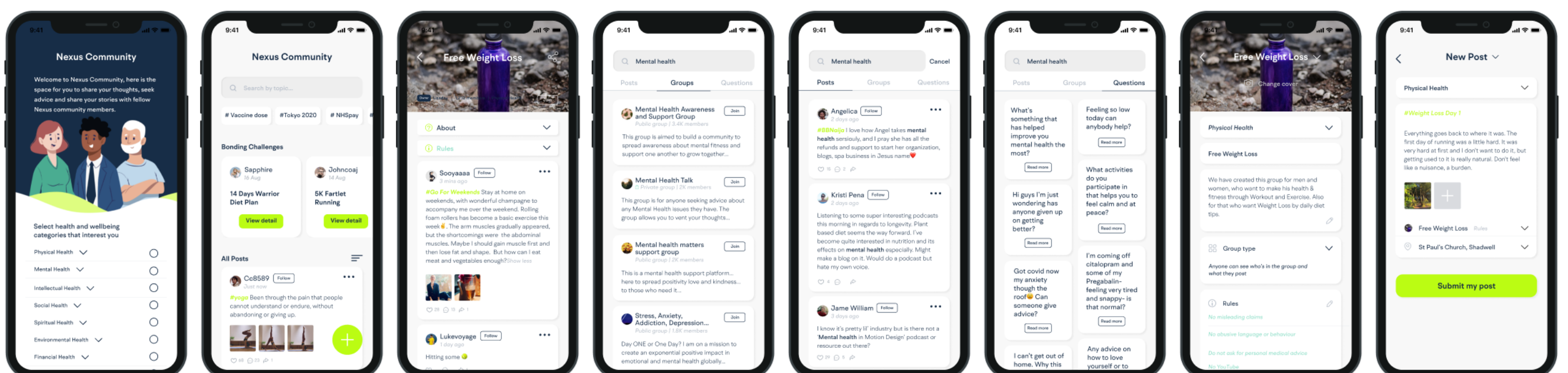
Conclusions & Future Work

1. The final project will be delivered by interactive **high-fidelity prototypes**, which visualizes valuable insformation getting from the research

2. The target auidence can be summarized by **2 user groups**. For those who are **inclined to achieve health goals** , the type of peer support can be **one-to-one support**, so that users can give **mutual supervision** with their friend to achieve goals together. For those who are more eager to **communicate with others and explore new health topics**, the type can be **groups of peer supports**.

Future Work:

Since people have different requirements in terms of health and wellbeing, users might feel hard to use when too many functions included, more **personalized settings** might cover wider range of users. The personalization should be considered from both **flexbile widgets and intelligent recommendation** system. Further research shoulld be done on **usability testing** and considering **business cost** on those technology.