# Article information:

Full article: An evaluation of a peer support intervention for student mental health  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09638237.2018.1437605?needAccess=true>

# Article summary:

1. Peer support groups for mental health may have particular value among university students, who tend to turn first to their peers for support.

2. A six-session structured, skills-based programme for depression delivered by students for students called Positive Minds was evaluated across eight project sites in England.

3. The evaluation found that the peer support intervention was acceptable and had a positive impact on mental wellbeing, with significant reductions in depressive symptoms and improvements in confidence talking about mental health and ability to look after one's own mental health.

# Article rating:

Appears moderately imbalanced: The article provides some useful information, but is missing several important points or pieces of evidence that would be required to present the discussed topics in a balanced and reliable way. You are encouraged to seek a more balanced perspective on the presented issues by exploring the provided research topics and looking at different information sources.

# Article analysis:

The article evaluates a peer support intervention for student mental health, focusing on peer-run self-help groups. The article highlights the prevalence of depression among university students and the low rates of early and appropriate help-seeking. The evaluation aims to understand who attended the groups, assess the acceptability of the program, and measure change in mental wellbeing over the course.

The article provides a comprehensive overview of peer support interventions for depression and their effectiveness. However, there are some potential biases in the article that need to be considered. Firstly, the study was conducted by Student Minds, a student mental health charity that runs peer support programs. This may lead to promotional content or partiality towards their own program's success.

Secondly, while the study acknowledges that requests for professional support have increased substantially in recent years, it does not explore why this is happening. It could be due to an increase in awareness and acceptance of mental health issues or an increase in stressors faced by students. Without exploring these factors, it is difficult to determine whether peer support interventions are sufficient or if more professional support is needed.

Thirdly, while the study highlights the positive findings of previous meta-analyses on peer-led interventions for depression, it does not explore any potential risks associated with such interventions. For example, if group leaders do not have adequate training or experience dealing with mental health issues, they may inadvertently harm participants.

Finally, while the study focuses on self-help groups as a form of peer support intervention, it does not explore other forms such as one-to-one mentoring or online forums. These alternative forms may be more accessible or appealing to some students and should be considered when evaluating different types of peer support interventions.

In conclusion, while the article provides valuable insights into peer support interventions for student mental health, there are potential biases and missing points of consideration that need to be addressed. Future research should explore different forms of peer support interventions and consider both their benefits and risks.

# Topics for further research:

* Factors contributing to the increase in requests for professional mental health support among university students
* Risks associated with peer-led interventions for depression
* Effectiveness of one-to-one mentoring as a form of peer support intervention for student mental health
* Accessibility of online forums as a form of peer support intervention for student mental health
* Comparison of peer support interventions to professional mental health support for university students
* Importance of adequate training and experience for peer support group leaders in student mental health interventions

# Report location:

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