
POSTER ABSTRACT**Use of technology during the Covid-19 pandemic in a program for re-enrolling high school dropouts**

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Introduction

Students that drop out of high school have a much larger chance of becoming unemployed and of health problems than those who complete high school [1]. A re-enrollment program (AFTung) is currently ongoing in North Norway. The program is a collaboration between the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration and a local not-for-profit company (INKO) and offers individualized guidance, job training and other interventions to improve the participants' chances of succeeding at school and at work.

Aims Objectives Theory or Methods

We briefly describe a Norwegian program for re-enrolling students and how the Covid pandemic lead to adjustments in the program with the increased use of technology. One frequent challenge in re-enrollment programs has been problems with absenteeism. When the Covid-19 pandemic reached North Norway in the winter of 2020 and the entire society was closed down [2]; the program's participants were particularly vulnerable being left alone in their homes. Social workers involved with the youth participating in the program worried that the participants would lose their motivation during the pandemic and not come back to the program later on.

Highlights or Results or Key Findings

An important development was that the program participants took the initiative to meet up on Microsoft Teams and continue the program. Through their technological competence, the participants became active co-entrepreneurs in the development of this new version of the re-enrollment program. The increased use of technology counteracted earlier attendance issues and gave the program a new impetus. Thus, when the Covid-related changes unfolded and technology was given a larger space, the attendance rate rose to 100%, according to staff members.

Those who struggled with social anxieties found participation in group meetings more manageable when technological solutions were used. Solving the new challenges together increased feelings of belonging and self-efficacy. New digital learning platforms were also applied, thus participants could access their learning videos when they felt like it and could watch them repeatedly and then ask questions at later group meetings.

Conclusions

In spite of problems with absenteeism and the added stress of the Covid pandemic during the winter-time, the use of digital learning and communication platforms instigated by the participating youth empowered the participants and improved the program attendance rate.

References

- [1] Ramsdal G, Bergvik S, Wynn R. Long-term dropout from school and work and mental health in young adults in Norway. *Cogent Psychol.* 2018;5:1455365.
- [2] Wynn R. E-health in Norway before and during the initial phase of the Covid-19 pandemic. *Stud Health Technol Inform.* 2020;272:9-12."