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A Systematic Review of Technology Interventions for Justice-Involved People

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A Systematic Review of Technology Interventions for Justice-Involved People

TREO Talk Paper

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Abstract

More than 2.3 million people are held in incarceration in the US with a high recidivism rate, high substance use disorders (SUD) percentage, and 3 times higher HIV infection than normal Americans. Unfortunately, this group receives inadequate preparation opportunities and assistance during their reentry into their communities. Smartphones and other mobile devices are widely accessible for justice-involved people (JIP) post-incarceration despite the variations of socioeconomic groups. Mobile phone ownership reached 96% in 2019 in the US, 71% of the low-income population have smartphones. Hence, technology interventions may be a way to reach out to this group and effectively intervene and assist them with their needs. Multiple technology intervention studies for the post-incarceration period were identified for JIP. To the best of our knowledge, there are no systematic reviews that evaluated the effectiveness of the current technology interventions targeting the needs of JIP post-incarceration. The purpose of this research is to identify the gaps in the current knowledge base and determine new research questions to advance the technology interventions targeting JIP post-incarceration.

To achieve our goal, we conducted a systematic literature review following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) checklist. The search queries include "mobile phone" or app or smartphone or "mobile app*" or mHealth or "mobile health" with incarcerat* or recidivis* or justice-involve* or jail or prison* or parole* or probat* or reentry, with either (SUD or OUD or "substance use disorder*" or addict* or intervention) or (Job or employ* or housing or food or transport* or child* or *care or course* or financ* or support or educat*). We limited our search to (i) titles and abstracts, (ii) full-text English-language articles, (iii) published from 2010 (the smartphone era started in 2007 and had been prevailing since 2010) to 2021, (iv) in peer-reviewed journals and conferences. A total of 610 papers were identified, after removing duplicates and papers that do not meet the inclusion criteria, 22 papers were included for our literature review.

Multiple technology interventions focused on SUD, HIV, other diseases, and their feasibility and effectiveness. Only a few interventions targeted job search, technical literacy, and case management. No study focused on other important areas, such as housing, financial support, childcare, food, and transportation. Three main research themes were identified: access to treatment, access to employment, and self-management support. In conclusion, mobile technology interventions are feasible and effective in assisting people post-incarceration. However, studies that were applied in isolation may limit the effectiveness of new interventions, because all the factors are dependent on each other. A holistic technology intervention platform to addresses different needs and provide diverse assistance simultaneously to support a successful reentry is recommended for future research.

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