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Cross-cultural Values in Online Information-seeking About Depression: the U.s. Vs. South Korea

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Abstract

Social question-and-answer (Q&A) platforms represent critical sources of mental health information due to their anonymity and accessibility. However, cross-cultural differences in persuasive elements on these platforms remain underexplored. This study compares rhetorical principles including ethos (credibility), pathos (emotion), and logos (logic) in depression-related answers on Quora (U.S.) and Naver Knowledge-iN (S. Korea). We developed manually annotated datasets comprising 3,286 U.S. sentences and 1,925 Korean sentences and fine-tuned a GPT-based classifier to detect rhetorical features. Logistic regression on 300 answers from each platform revealed significant cultural contrasts: S. Korean users preferred answers emphasizing personal experience, authority-based credibility, and emotional support (ethos and pathos), whereas U.S. users favored logical reasoning, evidence-based arguments, and external verification (logos). Although statistical evidence appeared in some S. Korean answers, logos remained less prevalent overall. These findings reflect broader cultural communication patterns and demonstrate the utility of integrating traditional content analysis with a large language model to design culturally responsive online mental health interventions.

Keywords: Crosscultural-Cultural Communication; Mental Health; Health Informationseeking-Seeking, Rhetorical Analysis, Large Language Model