

# Are Men Interested in Online Peer Support for Cancer-Related Infertility?

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## Introduction

- Many male cancer survivors will suffer from infertility after treatment.
- Fertility issues may affect the quality of life of male cancer survivors.
- There is limited research regarding online support interventions for men with cancer-related infertility.
- Male oncology patients may have preferences for certain features of online support, which could be used to develop an online support intervention for this population.

### Objective

To explore associations between patient variables and interest in online infertility peer support in men.

## Methods

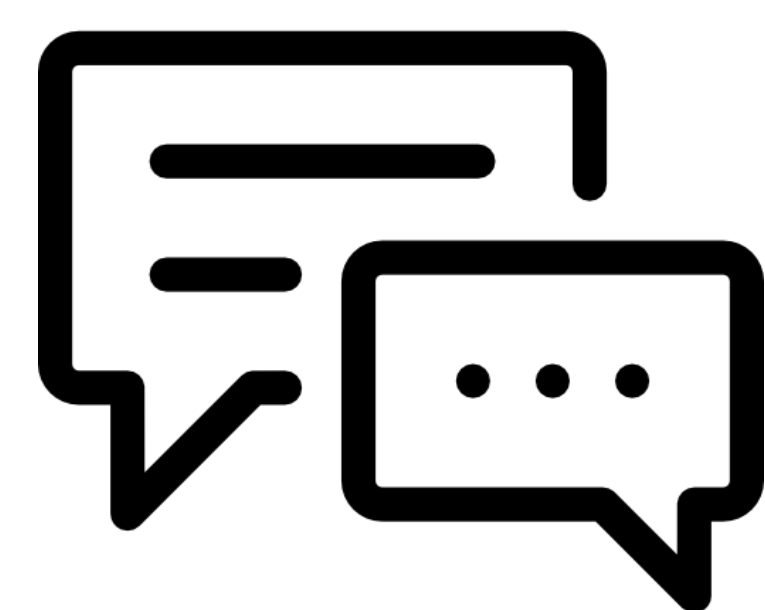
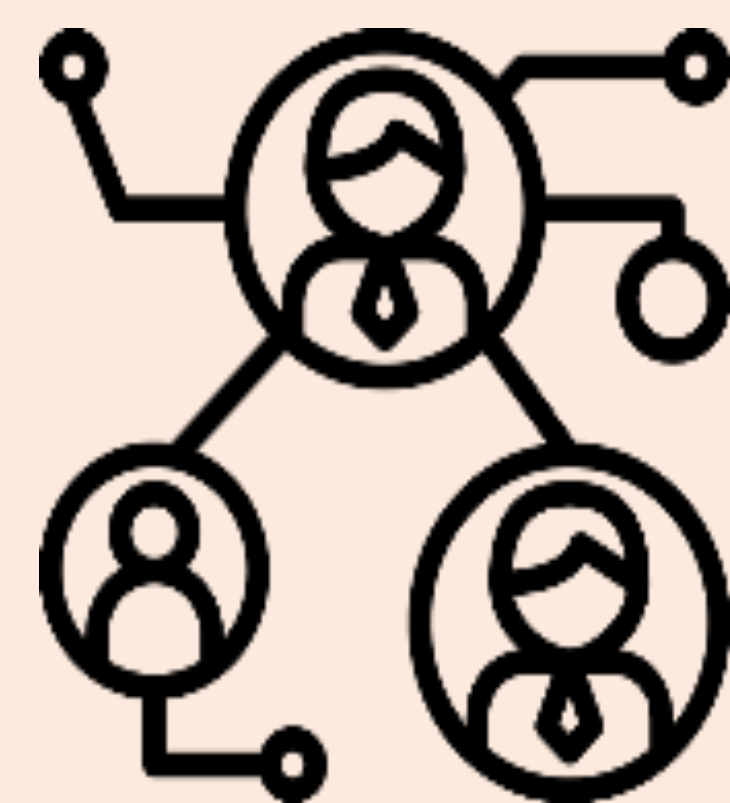
- Recruitment took place at 2 hospitals in Montreal and 1 in Toronto, Canada.
- **192 male oncology patients** completed an anonymous online **Needs Assessment Survey (NAS)**.
- Participants were asked to indicate their interest in online peer support.
- Participants were also asked to respond to the statement **“A fertility mobile health application should include...”**, which was followed by 13 items rated on a Likert scale from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree.
  - Items were categorized as belonging to: **Platform Format, Communication, Individual Support, and Monitoring.**
- The **Perceived Stress Scale-4 (PSS-4)** 4-item questionnaire asking participants. Sample items included:
  - *“In the last month, how often have you felt that you were unable to control important things in your life? (Never to Very Often)”*

## RESULTS

### Overall Interest in Online Fertility Peer Support

**65%**

of participants expressed interest in online peer support.



### Factors Associated with Interest

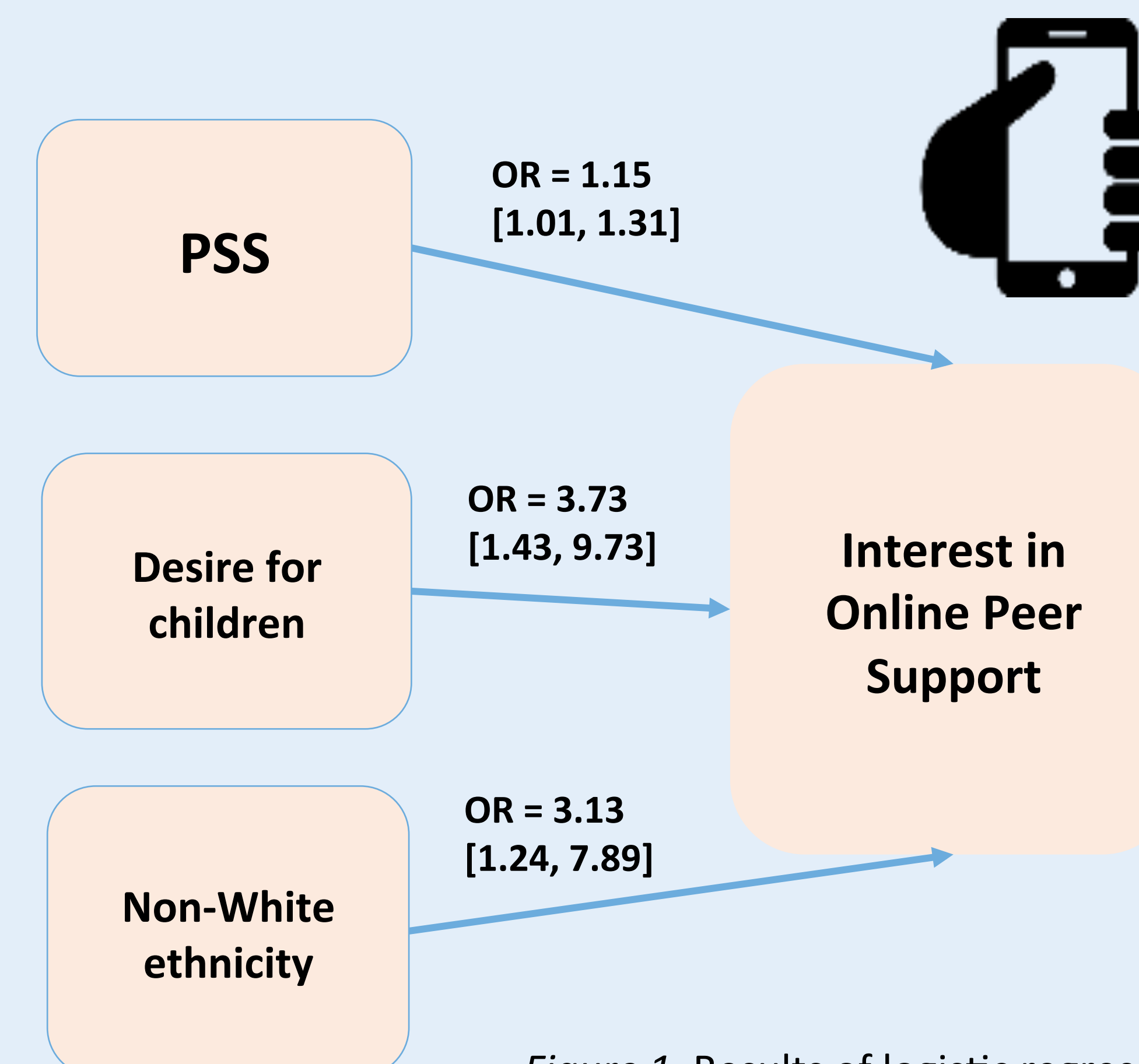
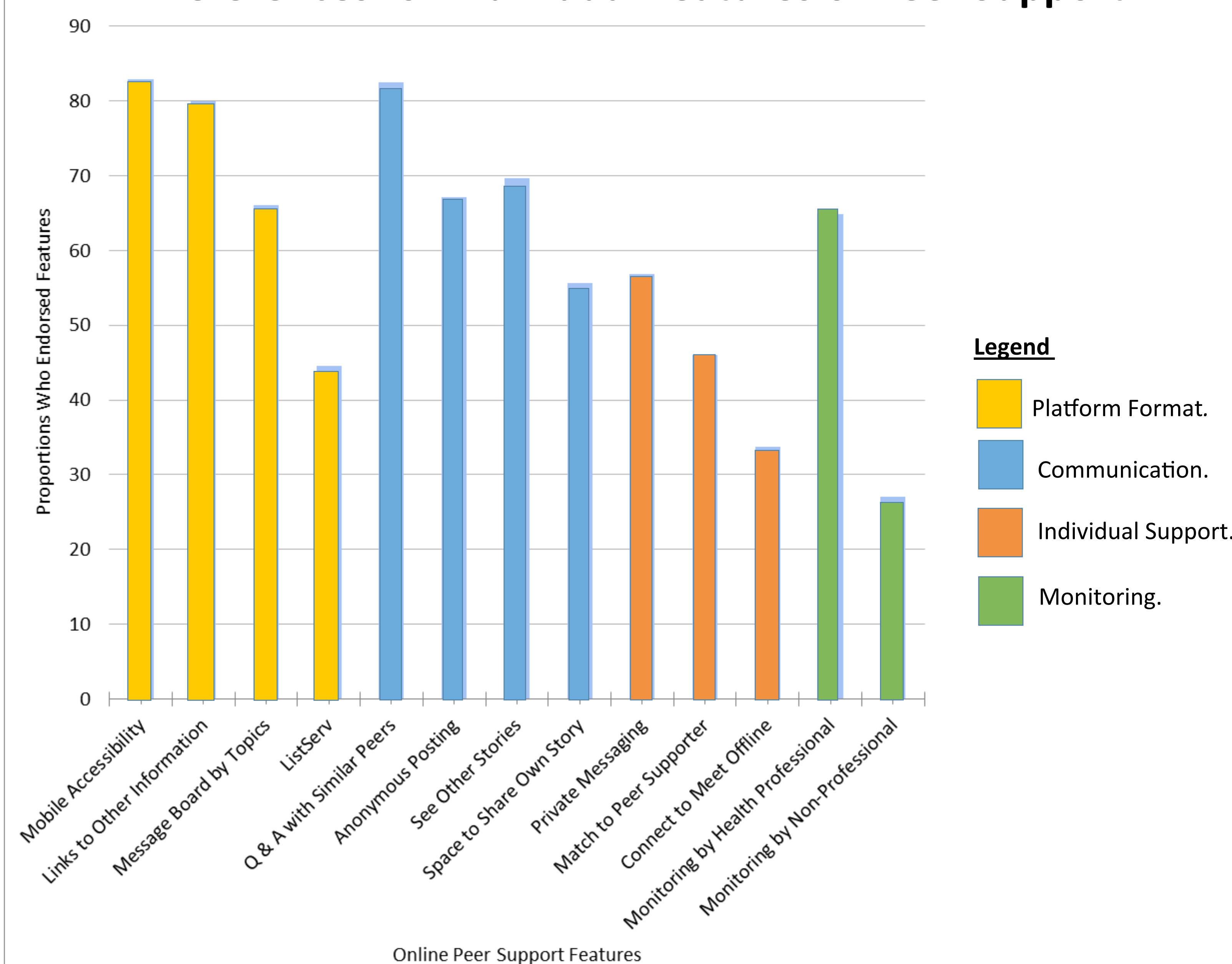


Figure 1. Results of logistic regression predicting interest in online peer support, controlling for age, income, and parity, ( $\chi^2(6) = 18.235, p < .0005$ . Model explains **15.9% of the variance** in interest in peer participant interest.

Table 1: Sample Demographics (n = 192)

Characteristics	n (%)
<b>Education</b>	
College or Less	112 (58.3)
University	77 (40.1)
<b>Average Annual Household (CAD)</b>	
≤ \$79,999	108 (57.4)
> \$79,999	80 (42.6)
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
Non-White	47 (28.0)
White	135 (72.0)
<b>Immigrant Status</b>	
Born in Canada	137 (72.5)
Born outside	52 (27.5)
<b>Religion</b>	
Yes	87 (46.0)
No	102 (54.0)
<b>Relationship Status</b>	
Partnered	111 (59.0)
Non-Partnered	77 (41.0)
<b>Parity</b>	
Children	75 (39.1)
No Children	112 (58.3)
<b>Desire for Children</b>	
Yes	97 (61.0)
No	62 (39.0)
<b>Mean (SD)</b>	
PSS	M = 6.4 (3.0)
Age	M = 33.6 (10.0)

### Preferences for Individual Features of Peer Support



## Discussion

- **Two thirds of our sample** expressed interest in online peer support, suggesting men with cancer may utilize this kind of psychosocial intervention.
- The three most endorsed app features were:
  - “Mobile Accessibility”. This may be a result of the **convenience, privacy, and ease** provided by a mobile platform.
  - “Q&A with Peers”. This suggests that potential users are interested in one of the central premises of peer support: **connecting with similar people**.
  - “Links to other Information”. This may indicate that men desire **trusted and high quality sources of fertility information**, that may otherwise not be available to them.
- Greater stress, non-White ethnicity, and desire for children predicted interest in online peer support. This may suggest that:
  - Online support may be more desirable for patients with **increased stress levels**, who may desire immediate and anonymous support.
  - The intervention may be preferred by **non-White patients**, by providing a platform to circumvent potentially heightened stigma surrounding infertility and counselling.
  - This resource may be helpful for men who **desire children**, potentially because an online fertility community may be particularly relevant for their current or potential needs.
- A supportive online fertility intervention should be accessible through multiple technologies, including smart phones and provide contact with other male oncology patients.
- The present study adds to previous work which found that men have interest in online peer support by showing that many male oncology patients would like access to fertility information and support.
- These results could be used in the development of an online fertility peer support intervention for male oncology patients in order to increase relevance and acceptability.

