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Development and evaluation of a German suicide prevention website for men

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Development and evaluation of a German suicide prevention website for men

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Abstract

Background: Men face a substantially higher risk of suicide. Effective suicide prevention strategies for men should specifically target gender-related risk factors, such as their lower likelihood of seeking professional help.

Objective: The present study investigates the use and impact of a suicide prevention website for men using a mixed-methods approach, covering the period from March 1, 2023, to December 31, 2024. The website www.maenner-staerken.de is the first suicide prevention platform for men in Germany, with the primary aim of facilitating help-seeking behavior. The development of the platform was informed by interviews with men who had attempted suicide, as well as by existing evidence on effective communication strategies for engaging men at risk.

Methods: Using the web analytics tool Matomo, data were collected on the number of visitors to the website and the subpages they accessed. In addition, 291 anonymous feedback forms were analysed regarding visitors' perceptions of the website's helpfulness and its potential to strengthen help-seeking behavior. A further component involved an online survey (n = 40) examining whether a short suicide prevention film featured on the website could increase the intention to seek help.

Results: During the study period, the website recorded 29,279 visits. A majority of respondents reported via the feedback form (n = 291) that they found the website helpful (69.1%, n = 201) and believe it could encourage help-seeking behavior (59.8%). In the evaluation of the short film, a significant increase in participants' intentions to seek help was observed in situations involving suicidal ideation, personal difficulties, and when considering professional support services. This effect was not observed with regard to informal sources of support, such as friends or family.

Conclusions: The data suggest that the website is being used and that a majority of visitors perceive it as fulfilling its primary aim - offering helpful pathways into support services. The evaluation of the short film further supports this conclusion. However, certain limitations must be acknowledged: since the data were collected in a field setting, the ability to draw firm conclusions about the characteristics or representativeness of the visitor sample is limited. In addition, the sample size for the short film evaluation was small. Nevertheless, the findings point to a clear need for gender-specific suicide prevention initiatives. They indicate promising directions for the development of effective, low-threshold measures, which merit further investigation in future research. Clinical Trial: Ethical approval was granted by the ethics committee of the Medical Faculty of Leipzig University (365/21-ek).

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Development and evaluation of a German suicide prevention website for men

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Keywords: suicide, men, suicide prevention, e-mental-health, evaluation

Abstract
Background: Men face a substantially higher risk of suicide. Effective suicide prevention strategies for men should specifically target gender-related risk factors, such as their lower likelihood of seeking professional help.
Objective: The present study investigates the use and impact of a suicide prevention website for men using a mixed-methods approach, covering the period from March 1, 2023, to December 31, 2024. The website www.maenner-staerken.de is the first suicide prevention platform for men in Germany, with the primary aim of facilitating help-seeking behavior. The development of the platform was informed by interviews with men who had attempted suicide, as well as by existing evidence on effective communication strategies for engaging men at risk.
Methods: Using the web analytics tool Matomo, data were collected on the number of visitors to the website and the subpages they accessed. In addition, 291 anonymous feedback forms were analysed regarding visitors' perceptions of the website's helpfulness and its potential to strengthen help-seeking behavior. A further component involved an online survey (n = 40) examining whether a short suicide prevention film featured on the website could increase the intention to seek help.
Results: During the study period, the website recorded 29,279 visits. A majority of respondents reported via the feedback form (n = 291) that they found the website helpful (69.1%, n = 201) and believe it could encourage help-seeking behavior (59.8%). In the evaluation of the short film, a significant increase in participants' intentions to seek help was observed in situations involving suicidal ideation, personal difficulties, and when considering professional support services. This effect was not observed with regard to informal sources of support, such as friends or family.
Conclusion: The data suggest that the website is being used and that a majority of visitors perceive it as fulfilling its primary aim - offering helpful pathways into support services. The evaluation of the short film further supports this conclusion. However, certain limitations must be acknowledged: since the data were collected in a field setting, the ability to draw firm conclusions about the characteristics or representativeness of the visitor sample is limited. In addition, the sample size for the short film evaluation was small. Nevertheless, the findings point to a clear need for gender-specific suicide prevention initiatives. They indicate promising directions for the development of effective, low-threshold measures, which merit further investigation in future research.

Introduction

Worldwide, men are at significantly greater risk of dying by suicide. In Germany, men are approximately three times more likely to die by suicide than women (1). Various risk factors for suicide in men are discussed in

connection with this markedly increased risk. In a review of gender-specific risk factors, Richardson et al. (2) found the strongest evidence for diagnosed depression, alcohol and/or drug use/dependence, and being single or widowed. Men also tend to use more lethal methods when attempting suicide (3–5). Another important risk factor is that men are less likely to seek psychosocial help during suicidal crises and are less inclined to disclose suicidal thoughts within the support system (6–8). Studies indicate that stigma and masculinity norms that discourage help-seeking (e.g., self-reliance) may constitute barriers to seeking and accessing support (9–11).

The significantly higher suicide risk among men points out that they are an important target group for suicide prevention. However, men are less likely than women to be reached by general, non-gender-specific suicide prevention efforts (12). To date, only few suicide prevention programs worldwide specifically address men and their gender-specific risk factors. Promising examples from Australia include the MOVEMBER men's health promotion initiative (13) and the 2016 suicide prevention campaign MAN-UP (14–16). The MAN-UP program consists of a three-part documentary and a related website (www.manup.org.au), both of which focus on masculinity, mental health/suicidality, and help-seeking. King et al. (15,17) demonstrated that the website is used as a gateway to access support organizations and helps men to engage with the MAN UP team on topics such as suicidality and mental health.

In March 2023, the first German-language website dedicated to suicide prevention among men was launched (www.maenner-staerken.de). The website was developed as part of the MEN-ACCESS project. In addition to the website for men at risk of suicide, an online program for gatekeepers was developed as part of the MEN-ACCESS project (18), and both offerings were initially evaluated through qualitative interviews (19).

The website incorporates aspects and techniques that have been shown to improve help-seeking behavior among men (20). These include the use of role models to deliver information, psychoeducation to enhance knowledge about mental health as well as problem-solving strategies, support in identifying symptoms, motivation for behavioral change, the introduction of and information about available support services, and the positive reframing of masculine traits in the context of help-seeking (e.g., responsibility and strength). To inform the content development of the website, 14 qualitative problem-centered interviews (21) were conducted with men who had personal experiences of suicidal thoughts and behaviors and who had each attempted suicide at least once. The participants were between 19 to 61 years old. The interviews focused on various topics, including the development/signs of suicidal behavior, problem-solving behavior, communication of suicidal intent, support systems, protective factors, stigmatization of suicidal behavior, and possibilities for suicide prevention. The data were analysed using structured qualitative content analysis (22). The findings of Spahn et al. (23) on facilitating and hindering aspects of help-seeking among men with suicidal behavior were directly incorporated into the development of the website’s content. In line with a participatory design approach, the website content was also reviewed not only by experts (including therapists) but also by three men with lived experiences of suicidality. Their feedback was incorporated, and the content was further refined in a joint iterative process.

The primary goal of the website www.maenner-staerken.de is to encourage men at risk of suicide to seek help, but it also aims to inform and reduce stigma. The website addresses and supports various steps of the help-seeking process (24): recognizing the problem, assessing one’s own situation (e.g., subpages “Warning Signs”/“Assessing Your Own Situation”), deciding to seek help and overcoming barriers to help-seeking (e.g., subpages/films on fear of stigma, fear of (involuntary) hospitalization, lack of trust in help services), and finding and accessing help (e.g., the subpage “Navigating the Support System”, communicating suicidal intentions).

Figure 1 illustrates the website's structure and provides an overview of the content presented on its subpages.

The website provides content in the form of text, graphics, and short films. The homepage features three main short films portraying three male protagonists – one younger, one middle-aged, and one older. The subpages include additional short films in which the three protagonists talk about specific topics, such as masculinity norms and seeking help. In the short films on the homepage, men talk about their own experiences with mental health crises, suicidal ideation, seeking help, and recovery. Studies have shown that positive narratives about coping with suicidal ideation can reduce suicidal thoughts (the “Papageno effect”) (25). Films can also have a destigmatizing effect. However, the findings regarding changes in attitudes toward help-seeking remain inconclusive (15,26–28).

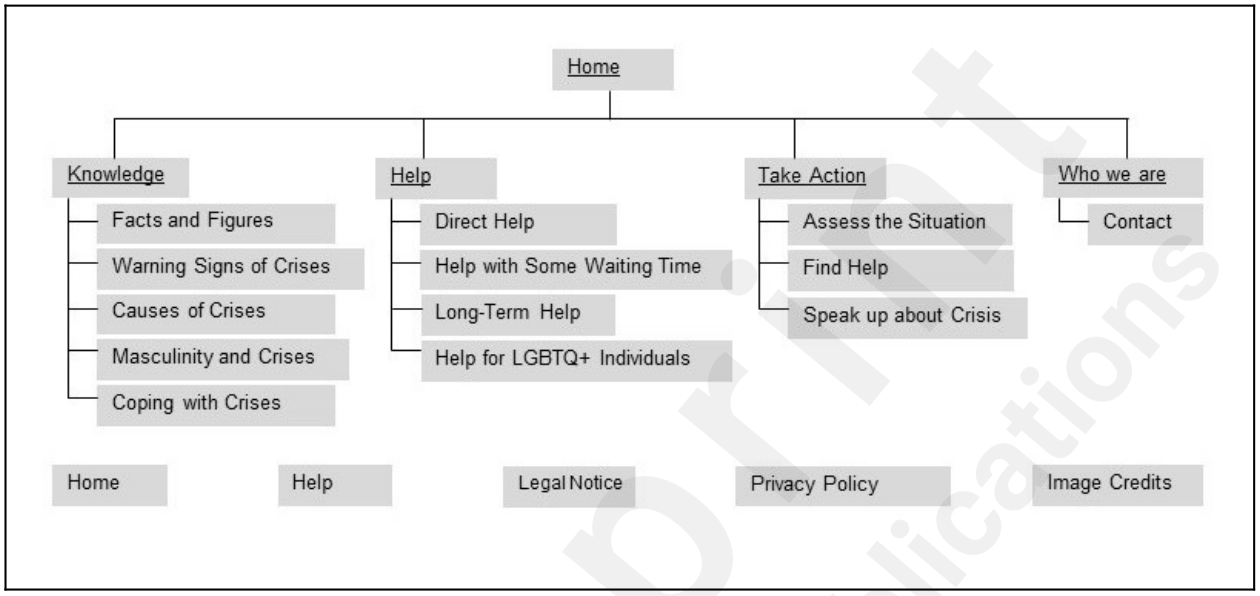


Figure 1: Sitemap www.maenner-staerken.de

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Figure 2: Webpage “Home” www.maenner-staerken.de

The present study examines the extent to which the website and its content achieved its goals based on three research questions:

1. How is the website accessed (number of visits/visitors and page views)?
2. Is the site perceived as helpful, and can it encourage men to seek help?
3. Does a short film on suicide prevention increase the intention to seek help?

Methods

Website access

Matomo (29), a web behavior analysis tool, was installed to study the website usage by collecting data on user behaviour. Specifically, it records, among other things, when a visitor accesses the site, which subpages are visited, how much time is spent on each subpage, and from which subpage the visitor exits the website. For both practical use and data protection reasons, it was important to ensure the anonymity of website visitors. Therefore, a data collection method was chosen using Matomo that does not allow the unique identification of individuals and makes it possible to dispense with a cookie banner.

This study examines the number of users and how they used individual subpages from March 1, 2023 to December 31, 2024.

Feedback on helpfulness and encouragement of help-seeking

The website includes a feedback form on 13 out of 21 subpages. The form contains the following introductory text: “Please answer the following questions. Your response will help us further develop this website. Your responses will be stored anonymously. Thank you!”. This is followed by three questions (“Is this website

helpful to you?", "Can this website motivate you to use support services?", and "Do you need further information? If yes, what kind?"), each of which can be answered with "Yes", "No" or, "Maybe". After the last question, there is a free-text field with the note "Add ideas." This study analyses feedback received via the form from March 1, 2023 to December 31, 2024. A mixed-methods approach is used here: the responses to the three questions were analysed quantitatively, and the responses from the free-text field were evaluated using thematic analysis (30). Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within qualitative data.

Change in the intention to seek help

The three short films are documentary-style interviews without a visible or audible interviewer ("talking head"). They included elements as recommended by Sagar-Ouriaghli et al. (20) for interventions in men's suicide prevention. One of these three short films, featuring a young male protagonist (approximately 25–30 years old), was tested in an online survey to determine its effect on the male participants' intention to seek help. For the study, ethical approval was granted by the ethics committee of the Medical Faculty of Leipzig University (365/21-ek).

The short film, lasting 6 minutes and 47 seconds, features an actor portraying a man who recounts how high-performance pressure and overwhelming work demands led to social withdrawal and depressive symptoms. After a breakup with his partner, he attempted suicide. He then describes seeking professional help and engaging in a recovery process marked by experiences of empathy, the rediscovery of personal strengths, and the development of new coping strategies. His narrative is accompanied by brief informational inserts on male suicidality and help-seeking behavior. The film concludes with contact details for professional support services.

Male-identified participants were recruited among students and academic networks at the University of Magdeburg between June and August 2023. A total of 64 people started the online survey on their intention to seek help. Of these, 57 completed the first phase. In the follow-up survey, 47 participants took part and were therefore included in the data analysis. Another 7 individuals were excluded from the analysis because the recorded time spent watching the short film indicated that they had not watched it, or because they did not identify as male.

The study was conducted using the online tool Social Science Survey (www.soscisurvey.de). Socio-demographic data were collected from the participants who also answered the General Help-Seeking Questionnaire (GHSQ; (31,32) before viewing the short film, immediately afterwards, and again 14 days later.

The 20-item GHSQ assesses self-reported intentions to seek help. It includes two 10-item scales addressing personal/emotional problems and suicidal ideation. Eight of the 20 items refer to private sources of help and six to professional sources. Thus, across problem types (personal/emotional problems, suicidal ideation), two subscales can be constructed for private and professional sources of help. The remaining items cannot be clearly assigned to either category (e.g., "spiritual support"). Participants rated the likelihood of seeking help (e.g., from a friend, doctor, or psychologist) on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = extremely unlikely to 7 = extremely likely). Item 10 (free-text) was excluded. Mean scores were calculated for each scale, with higher scores indicating stronger help-seeking intentions. The GHSQ demonstrates good psychometric properties. Internal consistency. Test-retest reliability for the two problem scales were acceptable (α = .83/.70; r = .88/.86; Wilson et al., 2005). Convergent validity has been shown with actual help-seeking and perceived quality of prior care. In our sample, internal consistency was α = .73 (suicidal ideation), α = .76 (private), and α = .79 (professional). The GHSQ was originally developed in English and was therefore translated for the German-speaking participants using a forward–backward translation procedure.

Before watching the film, the participants completed the Suicidal Ideation and Behavior Scale (SIBS; (33)) and the Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9; (34)). The SIBS comprises six items assessing the frequency of suicidal thoughts, intentions, reparation, and planning, rated from 1 (never) to 6 (many times every day). Two

additional dichotomous (yes/no) items assess suicide attempts in the past four weeks and lifetime. One item on the frequency of past attempts was excluded. A sum score was calculated from items 1–6; suicide attempt items were reported separately. The SIBS shows excellent internal consistency (α = .92) and strong test-retest reliability (r = .83) (33). In our sample, internal consistency was good (α = .77). The PHQ-9 is a 9-item self-report instrument for screening and assessing depressive symptoms over the past two weeks. The validated German version was used (35). Items (e.g., "little interest or pleasure in doing things") are rated on a 4-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 4 (nearly every day). Total scores above 9 indicate minor, and above 14 moderate to severe depression. The PHQ-9 is a reliable and valid instrument (34,35), with good internal consistency (α = .88). In our sample internal consistency was α = .83.

Data analyses were conducted with the software R (Version 4.3.0; R Core Team, 2023) in the RStudio environment using the R package “rstatix” (Version 0.7.2; (36)). To test for significant differences between measurement time points, a one-way repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed for each target variable. As a total of four tests were carried out, a Bonferroni correction was made by multiplying the p-values by the number of comparisons. The reported p-values reflect this adjustment. Prior to the analysis, the model assumptions for each ANOVA were checked. Post hoc analyses were performed using paired t-tests comparing the three time points pairwise; here, too, p-values were adjusted with the Bonferroni correction.

Results

Website access

A total of 29,279 unique visits/visitors were registered on the website via the Matomo analysis tool. Due to the degree of anonymization of visitors in the analysis tool (shortening of the IP address by the last three digits), it is not possible to determine how many visitors accessed the website repeatedly. Visitors spent an average of 1 minute and 35 seconds on the website. They carried out an average of 2.1 actions on the website (page views, downloads, outbound links, and internal searches). Table 1 shows the most frequently visited subpages; the average time spent on the respective subpages; the bounce rate, which describes the proportion of visitors who view only this subpage (without visiting any other subpages before or after); and the exit rate. This describes how often the subpage was the last subpage visited on the website.

Page title	Page Views	Bounce Rate	Average Time on Page	Exit Rate
Home	31.019	73 %	00:00:35	88 %
Help	3.077	68 %	00:00:46	29 %
Help - Direct Help	1.993	80 %	00:01:08	49 %
Knowledge - Warning Signs of Crisis	1.375	77 %	00:01:10	42 %
Knowledge - Masculinity and Crisis	1.233	76 %	00:00:47	47 %
Help - Help with some Waiting Time	1.047	79 %	00:01:11	45 %

Table 1: Page views

Feedback on helpfulness and encouragement of help-seeking

During the study period, a total of 291 completed feedback forms were analyzed. There were no indications that any of these forms were completed for advertising purposes or any similar purpose. As the feedback form was completed anonymously, it is not possible to provide any information about the individuals who completed it. However, the thematic feedback in the free-text field allows cautious conclusions to be drawn about the respondents. The feedback was analysed using a mixed-methods approach. The number of yes–no–maybe responses to the three questions is shown in Table 2.

	1.: "Is this website helpful to you?"		2.: "Can this website motivate you to use support services?"		3.: "Do you need further information?"	
Total n=291	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	201	69.1	174	59.8	85	29.2

No	42	14.4	42	14.4	109	37.5
Maybe	48	16.5	75	25.8	97	33.3

Table 2: Feedback form

A total of 69.1% (n = 201) report that the website was helpful to them, and 59.8% (n = 174) confirm that the website could motivate them to seek help. 14.4% (n = 42) answered “no” to both questions. The free-text field after the last question was used by n = 75 (25.8%) of the respondents to provide thematic feedback. Of these 75 thematic responses, n = 57 (76%) referred to a positive assessment of the website (answering either “yes” or “maybe” to questions 1 and 2) and n = 18 (24%) referred to a negative assessment of the website (answering “no” to questions 1 and/or 2). This means that 42.9% of the negative responses to questions 1 and/or 2 also provided thematic feedback. The thematic analysis of the feedback indicates that it was primarily provided by men affected by suicidality, relatives, and professionals working in psychosocial care. For the sake of clarity, only the main points of the thematic feedback are presented below. The positive feedback relates in particular to the importance and need for suicide prevention services specifically aimed at men. This feedback was provided by affected individuals, as well as by relatives and professionals.

One example reads: “I think the site is great and highly relevant. From my own experience, I know how long it can take to admit that you need help. It is incredibly important that men, too, dare to talk more about depression and suicidal thoughts ... Thank you for the website and your work! …”

The focus of the negative feedback was on anger and frustration/despair that individuals experience in connection with the psychosocial support system recommended on the website. In their feedback, respondents reported having negative experiences with the support system, or described situations in which they did not receive support from the system despite being in need.

This is illustrated by the following example: "I’ve already tried all the support services you mentioned, but unfortunately none of them provided any relief. Sometimes I even felt stigmatized or retraumatized by therapists. ... The support services you mentioned are just the same old system, a revolving door that people keep ending up in …”

Some negative responses reflected differing expectations and needs among users regarding the website. While some found the amount of information overwhelming, others expressed a desire for more detailed content. Some respondents also reported that the information provided on the website was already familiar to them. In addition, some users reported difficulties locating specific support services listed on the site. Further critical feedback related to technical issues, such as problems with viewing the videos.

Change in the intention to seek help

Table 3 presents the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample (n = 40). The sample is relatively young (age: M = 24.53, SD = 5.03), shows elevated depression scores (PHQ-9), and more than one third reports prior experiences with suicidal thoughts and behaviors.

Variable	n (%)	M (SD)
Age		24.53 (5.03)
Gender (Free-text gender identity / assigned gender at birth)		
Cis male (male, men, cis male / male)	35 (87.5%)	
Trans-masculine (male, trans-masculine / female)	3 (7.5%)	
Other (Not provided, “Doesn’t Matter” / male)	2 (5.0%)	
Participants with elevated PHQ-9 scores		
moderate depression (PHQ-9 = 10-14)	9 (22.5%)	
moderate severe depression (PHQ-9 = 15-19)	3 (7.5%)	
PHQ-9-Score		7.36 (4.43)
Participants who attempted suicide		
In the last 4 weeks	0 (0%)	
Lifetime	5 (12.5%)	
Participants with SIBS-Score > 0	14 (35.0%)	

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of sample characteristics

The intention to seek help, in the case of suicidal ideation (F(1.49, 58.16) = 10.51, $p^{adjusted}$ = .002) as well as in the case of a personal problem (F(2, 78) = 9.50, $p^{adjusted}$ = .001), increased significantly. This significant increase in intention was also evident at follow-up. The same applies to the intention to seek professional help (F(2, 78) = 11.20, $p^{adjusted}$ < .001). There was no significant increase in the intention to seek help from private sources directly after watching the film or at follow-up (F(1.74, 67.93) = 4.56; $p^{adjusted}$ = .072). The exact data of the analyses can be found in Figure 3 and Table 4.

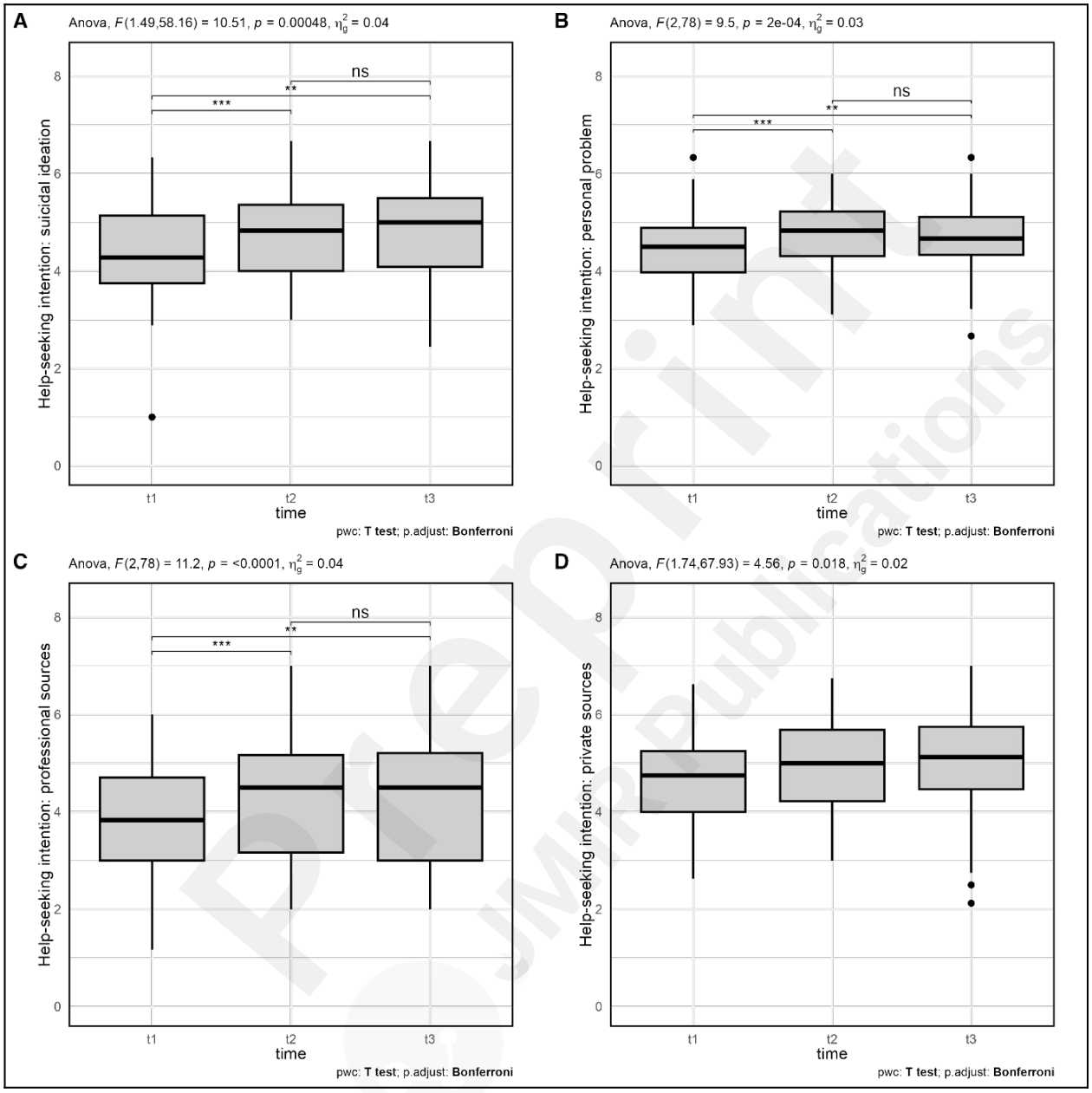


Figure 3: Boxplots of GHSQ-scores by time. ** < .01 *** < .001.

Outcome			Paired t-test t_1 - t_2				Paired t-test t_1 – t_3		
	M_{t1} (*SD*)	M_{t2} (*SD*)	M_{diff}	$p^{(adjusted)}$	*d*	M_{t3} (*SD*)	M_{diff}	$P^{(adjusted)}$	*d*
GHSQ									
suicidal ideation	4.34 (1.03)	4.75 (0.93)	0.41	**< .001*** **	0.67	4.80 (1.03)	0.46	**.006** **	0.52
personal problem	4.42 (0.70)	4.70 (0.76)	0.28	**< .001*** **	0.71	4.72 (0.84)	0.30	**.005** **	0.54

professional subscale	3.82 (1.12)	4.30 (1.28)	0.48	**< .001*** **	0.72	4.36 (1.34)	0.54	**.002** **	0.59
private subscale	4.66 (0.89)	4.95 (1.01)	0.29	n.s.		4.95 (1.21)	0.29	n.s.	

Table 4: Post-hoc tests for intention to seek help before, immediately after watching the film as well as 2 weeks later (n.s. = not significant)

Discussion

Online services are extremely important in suicide prevention, especially for target groups that are difficult to reach, like men (37–39). Websites can be accessed anonymously, from any location and at any time. The website www.maenner-staerken.de is the first suicide prevention website for men in Germany. The website was developed with consideration of the limited research on how to effectively address men in online settings to prevent suicide. In line with a participatory approach, men with lived experience were actively involved in the development process. This study employs a mixed-methods design to examine the extent to which the website achieves its primary objectives: encouraging men at risk of suicide to seek help, providing information, and reducing stigma. This study builds upon the investigation by Reifegerste et al. (19), who demonstrated through qualitative interviews that the videos on the website www.maenner-staerken.de were perceived by men as engaging, clear, and empathetic. However, they were also considered too lengthy for a brief introduction. The balance between emotional and informational content was regarded as appropriate and supportive. Furthermore, the health information provided was viewed as credible and trustworthy.

In the period under review, the website received almost 30,000 visitors. The information from the feedback form indicates that the website's target groups ((affected) men, relatives, and professionals working in psychosocial care) were reached. The number of visitors is difficult to interpret, as very few studies report usage figures for prevention websites (40), and therefore no comparative data are available. Moreover, the informative value of the number of visitors is limited because data protection and anonymity were prioritized over gaining insights when selecting the analysis software. As a result, visitors cannot be identified, and repeated visits by the same individuals cannot be ruled out. An analysis of which thematic subpages were accessed shows that visitors primarily selected the help pages (short-term and medium-term support) as well as pages addressing gender-specific topics (warning signs in men and masculinity in the context of crises).

The 291 responses submitted via the form on the website show that the majority of visitors rate the service as helpful, encouraging them to seeking help. The thematic feedback clearly emphasizes the high demand for suicide prevention services specifically tailored to men, while also highlighting the lack of such services to date. Negative feedback points to issues of trust and frustration with the support system and its professionals, a concern also reflected in the literature (41). Approximately one quarter of the completed feedback forms (25.8%, n = 75) contained entries in the free-text field. This high proportion of substantive contributions suggests that the website encouraged visitors to actively engage with the topic and share their perspectives. At the same time, it must be noted that, due to data protection measures, it is not possible to determine who completed the form or whether individuals may have submitted feedback more than once.

The investigation of the use of the website and the feedback via the form on the website are primarily descriptive in nature. On the one hand, they offer a high degree of realism (external validity), as they capture actual use and authentic feedback from real visitors. On the other hand, they do not take place under controlled conditions (low internal validity) and therefore do not permit reliable conclusions about the target group, impact, related factors, etc.

In addition, an exploratory study examined the effect of a short suicide-prevention film – also available on the website – on men’s intentions to seek help. The short film portrays a young man describing the positive outcomes of seeking help after a suicidal crisis. Results showed that immediately after watching the short film, the intention to seek help increased significantly, both for suicidal thoughts and for personal problems. The intention to seek help from professionals also increased. The short film on suicide prevention thus has the desired effect. It was also shown that this significant increase in the intention to seek help remained even 14 days later (follow-up). The sample studied had a rather high load in terms of depression and suicidality indicating that the topic of suicide prevention may be relevant to them. However, the study also shows that there was no increase in the intention to seek help from friends and family. But since the film explicitly addresses professional rather than help from friends and family, this effect appears consistent with the content of the film. Although the study demonstrates the desired effect, the results must be interpreted with caution, given the small effect sizes. To confirm the effects found on the intention-enhancing effect of the film or to extend them to other films with a similar content structure, new studies would have to be carried out with larger samples, additional target groups, films featuring different types of protagonists (e.g., older participants

viewing a film with an older protagonist) and possibly control groups.

The results are in line with previous studies showing that media narratives about overcoming crises can positively influence help-seeking behavior (15,25,28,42,43). In addition, our study contributes to the still limited but growing body of research indicating that gender-specific approaches – particularly those incorporating male role models and addressing gender-specific aspects of suicide – have the potential to increase men's willingness to seek professional help (15). Finally, it should be emphasized that this study measured only the intention to seek help, not actual help-seeking behavior. Although such intentions are regarded as reliable indicators of later behavior (32), the direct measurement of future help seeking behavior was not part of the study design.

In summary, the findings of this study suggest that the website has been well-received by the target group and is effective with respect to its stated objectives. These findings complement existing evidence by Till et al. (44), which demonstrate knowledge gains through suicide prevention websites and suggest a reduction in suicidal ideation among vulnerable groups. The short film, in particular, may serve as an easily disseminated and cost-effective approach to suicide prevention in men. Potential applications extend beyond the website, for example, through high-reach social media channels. As the qualitative interview results by Reifegerste et al. (19) have shown, shortened versions of the film could also be used in this context. However, to examine the effectiveness of these gender-specific, suicide-preventive media and website content more closely, considerably more research – particularly RCTs studies – is needed. The website and this study provide starting points for further research and campaigns that specifically address the high suicide risk among men. The high number of men who die by suicide each year worldwide underscores the urgent need for such approaches to gender-specific suicide prevention.

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Conflict of interest statement

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Data availability statement

The data generated and/or analyzed during the current study are not publicly available because this is not specified in the study participants' consent forms. The data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Authors' contributions

C.S. and H.G. wrote the main manuscript and conducted the analyses related to the website. G.B. designed and conducted the evaluation study of the short film, analyzed the data, and drafted the corresponding sections of the manuscript. L.S. supervised and critically reviewed the study. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

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