

Exploring leadership: the use of Mentimeter as a sociometric tool

Explorando el liderazgo: el uso de Mentimeter como herramienta sociométrica

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ABSTRACT

This case study explores the application of Mentimeter as a sociometric tool in the context of modern leadership and mental healthcare. During the 7th International Association for Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes African regional conference in Monastir, Tunisia, an interactive online app, Mentimeter, was utilized to engage participants in workshops and round-table discussions. The study highlights the effectiveness of Mentimeter in enhancing audience engagement, visualizing real-time data, and promoting inclusive participation. It demonstrates how this cloud-based tool can address cultural biases, foster dynamic interactions, and provide immediate feedback. The findings suggest that Mentimeter's capabilities are beneficial as a sociometric tool in different settings, making it versatile for understanding and improving group social dynamics.

Keywords: Sociometric tool; Modern leadership; Mental healthcare; Audience engagement; Real-time feedback.

RESUMEN

Este estudio de caso explora la aplicación de Mentimeter como herramienta sociométrica en el contexto del liderazgo moderno y la atención sanitaria mental. Durante la 7ª conferencia regional africana de la Asociación Internacional de Psicoterapia de Grupo y Procesos Grupales en Monastir, Túnez, se utilizó una aplicación interactiva en línea, Mentimeter, para involucrar a los participantes en talleres y mesas redondas. El estudio destaca la eficacia de Mentimeter para mejorar la participación del público, visualizar datos en tiempo real y promover la participación. Demuestra cómo esta herramienta basada en la nube puede hacer frente a los prejuicios culturales, fomentar interacciones dinámicas y proporcionar comentarios inmediatos. Interacciones dinámicas y proporcionar información inmediata. Los resultados sugieren que las capacidades de Mentimeter son beneficiosas como herramienta sociométrica en diferentes entornos, lo que la hace versátil para comprender y mejorar las dinámicas sociales de grupo.

Palabras clave: Herramienta sociométrica; Liderazgo moderno; Salud mental; Compromiso de la audiencia; Retroalimentación en tiempo real.

Introduction

During the 7th International Association for Group Psychotherapy and Group Processes (IAGP) African regional conference in Monastir, Tunisia, from May 9 until 11, 2014, I had the opportunity to lead a workshop and chair a round table on modern leadership and mental healthcare. I used an interactive online app, Mentimeter, for both presentations to engage my audience. This encapsulates modern leadership, engaging colleagues and empowering teams and shows how we can use Mentimeter as a cloud-based, interactive sociometric tool.

Modern leadership

What is modern leadership, and how does it relate to mental healthcare? The answer is both complex and straightforward. It is complex because modern leadership is a dynamic and complicated field that adapts to the changing landscapes of organizations and society (Kets de Vries, 2006; Vecchiotti, 2018). Contemporary leadership must deal with wicked

problems, and because of that, it transcends traditional, more hierarchical models and reflects the diversity of challenges and opportunities in nowadays' world (Kets de Vries & Florent-Treacy, 1999; Kezar, 2009).

Serious challenges

Mental healthcare and mental healthcare institutions face, just like any other service or organization nowadays, serious challenges. Mental healthcare managers, for instance, must deal with a lack of funding and growing political interference, cultural diversity and a shortage of skilled personnel, the effects of global migration, trauma and climate change, just to name a few. This is true for many countries across the globe (Bemme & Kirmayer, 2020). This calls for modern leadership that ensures agile management, the formation of solid teams, and the development of adaptive strategies to cope with the challenges that mental healthcare is facing (Kets de Vries, 2011).

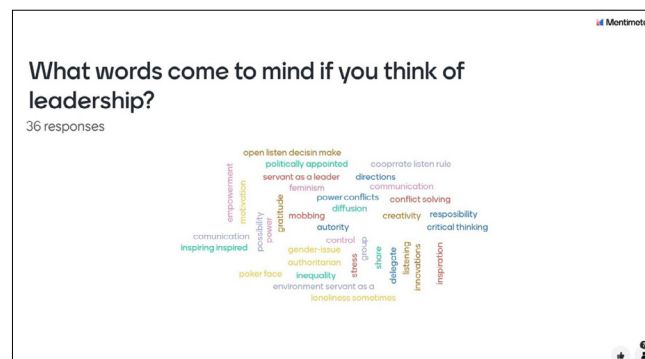
Dimension of modern leadership

What is modern or contemporary leadership? I believe six intertwining dimensions characterize contemporary leadership (Murari & Mukherjee, 2021):

- It is *transformational*: modern leadership is focused on building solid and motivated teams, stimulating innovation and collaboration, and encouraging the personal development of individual team members (Jiang & Chen, 2018);
- It is *service-orientated*: modern leaders support their colleagues by looking after them and actively investing in their personal growth and development, making them feel valued and important (Shek et al., 2015);
- It is *inclusive*: modern leadership stimulates team diversity not just for the sake of it, but to create an environment of respect and inclusion where everyone's voice is heard and valued (Leroy et al., 2022);
- It is *ethical*: modern leaders lead by example, are transparent about their intentions, take responsibility, set boundaries, and strive to sustainable organizations (Lawton & Páez, 2015);
- It is *adaptive*: modern leadership is dedicated to being agile and able to quickly and effectively adapt or react to systemic changes, opportunities or threats (Rzepka & Bojar, 2020);
- It is *authentic*: modern leaders are self-aware, consistent and transparent (know thy self) (Gardner et al., 2005).

What comes to mind?

One of the questions the participants had to answer at the beginning of the workshop was: what words come to mind when you think of leadership? The participants used Mentimeter to create a word cloud by submitting their associations via an app on their phones (Fig. 1).



Source: Elaborated by the author.

Figure 1. Example of composing a word-cloud with Mentimeter. This is what the participants wrote during the workshop on modern leadership.

Why Mentimeter?

Mentimeter (<https://www.mentimeter.com>) is a cloud-based interactive presentation tool that allows users to create engaging surveys, polls, quizzes, and Q&A sessions. Via a QR code, participants activate a website on their smartphones on which they can vote, write comments or give answers. The data is instantly and in real-time collected and provided as feedback in attractive visualizations on the screen. The free version has limited functionalities; several paid plans are available for more professional use. In this case, I used the educational plan, and I would like to stress that I have no commercial interest whatsoever in this software.

I have used Mentimeter for years as a tool in an educational setting, but I believe it is also valuable for other settings. The fact that people can see how the group reacts to or thinks of a specific topic engages and gives valuable feedback. For that reason, I decided to use Mentimeter during the Monastir presentation, and I did so because one of the objectives of the presentations was to clarify cultural biases in how people look at leadership (Meyer, 2014).

Mentimeter as a sociometric tool

The immediate visualization of responses ensures that data is gathered spontaneously and authentically, reducing the likelihood of response bias due to delayed contemplation. It also shows the social dynamic in the group, reveals hidden structures, and enhances cultural awareness, making Mentimeter a valuable sociometric tool (Mohin et al., 2022).

In that sense, Mentimeter offers clear advantages over traditional analogue or even digital methods. One of the core strengths of Mentimeter is its ability to facilitate real-time polling and give immediate feedback about the results. This feature is particularly beneficial in sociometric research, in which capturing immediate responses can provide critical insights into social dynamics and individual preferences. Researchers can design various questions, including multiple-choice, open-ended, and scaled questions, to gather comprehensive data on social interactions. The ability to collect responses instantly allows for a more dynamic and accurate representation of social structures.

Increased participants engagement

With the interactive word cloud feature mentioned above, as well as Q&A sessions and quizzes, Mentimeter addresses engaging participants. These tools make the data collection process more enjoyable for participants and increase their willingness to provide thoughtful and genuine responses. Higher engagement levels typically result in higher response rates and richer data, offering deeper insights into social networks.

Mentimeter also supports anonymous input, a crucial factor in obtaining honest and uninhibited participant feedback. In sociometric studies, in which individuals might feel pressured to conform to social norms or fear judgment, anonymity encourages more truthful responses. This leads to more reliable data, essential for understanding the true nature of social relationships and dynamics.

Advanced data analysis

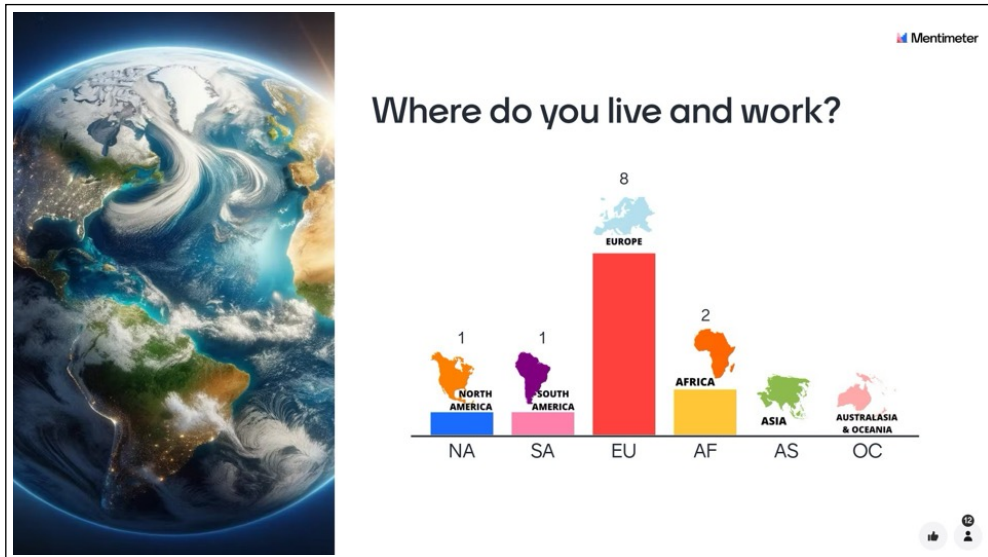
The live results display feature of Mentimeter further enhances engagement by fostering interactive discussions among participants. Seeing results in real-time can prompt spontaneous discussions and reflections, providing qualitative data on group dynamics and peer influences that might not emerge through traditional survey methods.

Also, Mentimeter's ability to present data visually in real-time is a significant data analysis tool. One can quickly identify patterns and trends in the data, facilitating a more nuanced understanding of social relationships. The platform's export options allow one to quickly transfer data to statistical software for more sophisticated analyses, such as social network analysis, which can uncover hidden structures and influences in a group.

Results of the round table discussion as an example

The round table discussion was an excellent example of using Mentimeter as a sociometric tool since we wanted to include cultural differences in how people view leadership and evoke a discussion about it in the group. The attendance was both physical in Monastir and online via Zoom.

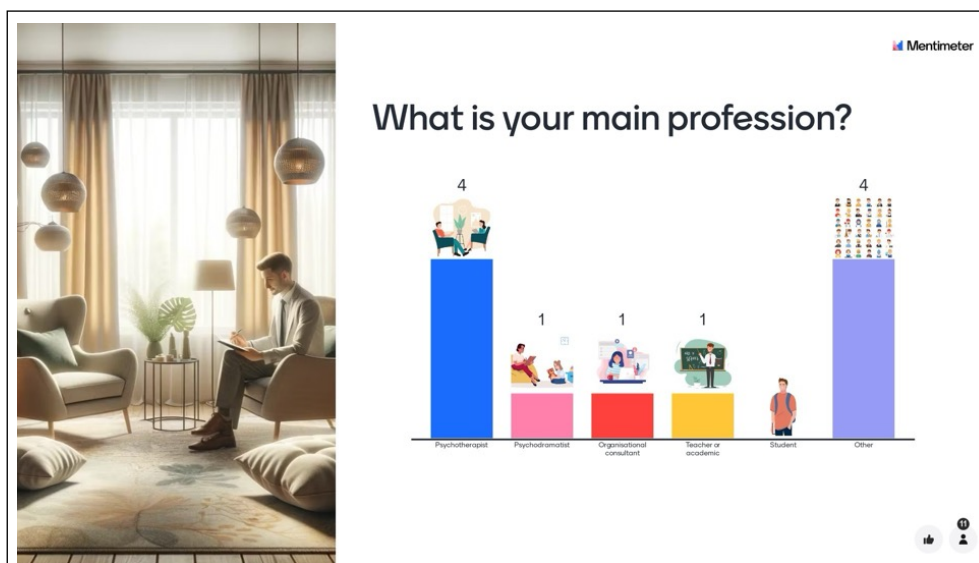
The first few questions were basic: where do people come from, and what is their profession? Most attendees were from Europe, eight, as you can see in Fig. 2, two from Africa, one from North America, and one from South America. It must be said that some couldn't log into the Mentimeter website (you can try it yourself at www.menti.com, use code 84431442). It must be noted that this is one of the critical points of using Mentimeter: you need to be handy with a smartphone. In that sense, it has a bias in favor of younger users.



Source: Elaborated by the author.

Figure 2. Question 1 round-table: where do you live and work?

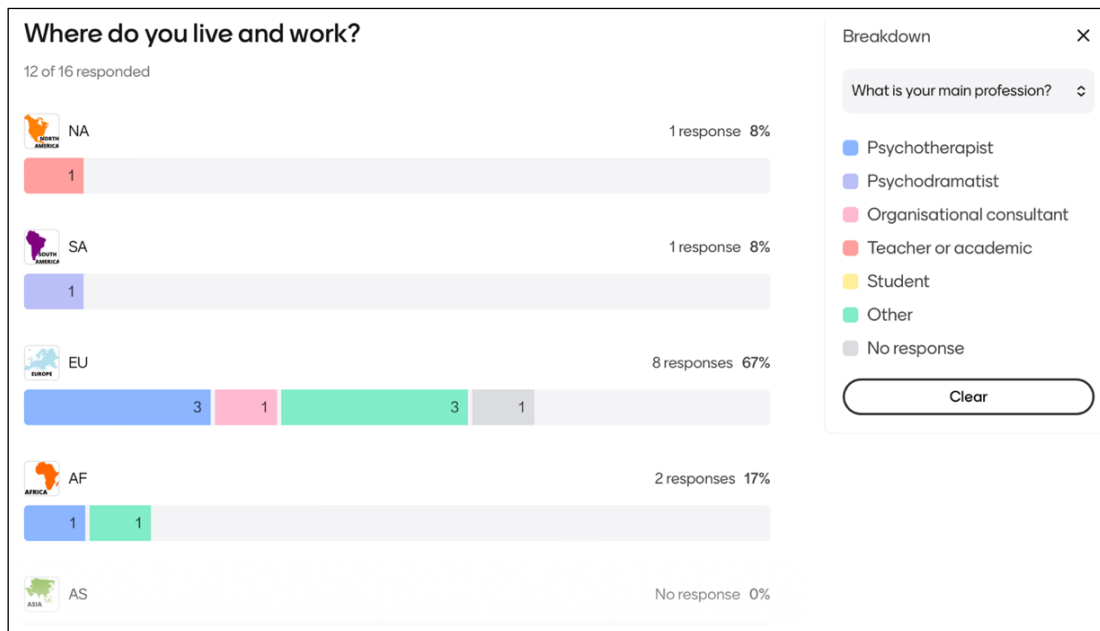
As for occupation, most attendees worked as psychotherapists (four) or had another profession (four, of which two at least were psychiatrists); one was a psychodramatist, one was an organizational consultant, and one was a teacher or academic (Fig. 3).



Source: Elaborated by the author.

Figure 3. Question 2 round-table: what is your main profession?

We can also combine these two questions, and then you see that the teacher/academic is from North America, one psychodramatist is from South America, and from Europe, there are three psychotherapists, one organizational consultant, three with other professions, and one with no response. From Africa, there is one psychotherapist and one other profession, and nobody from Australia and Oceania (Fig. 4).

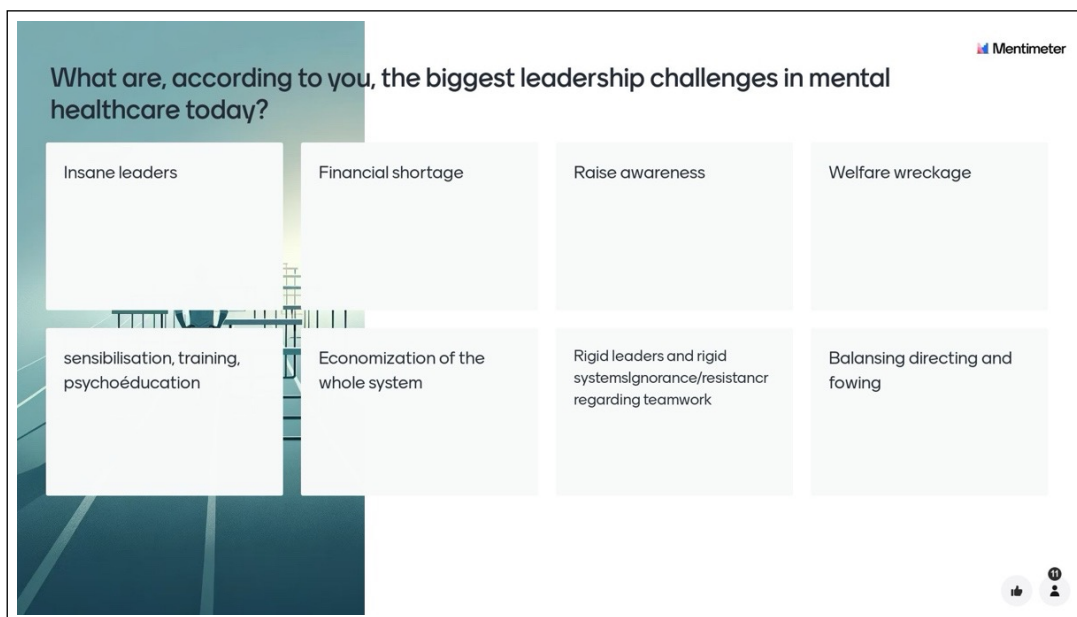


Source: Elaborated by the author.

Figure 4. The answer to the question “Where do you live and work?” is broken down by the respondent’s main occupation.

The challenges we face

After this, people were asked: what are, according to you, the biggest leadership challenges in mental healthcare nowadays? The answers people give are shown in Fig. 5, in a continuous cascade that scrolls down.



Source: Elaborated by the author.

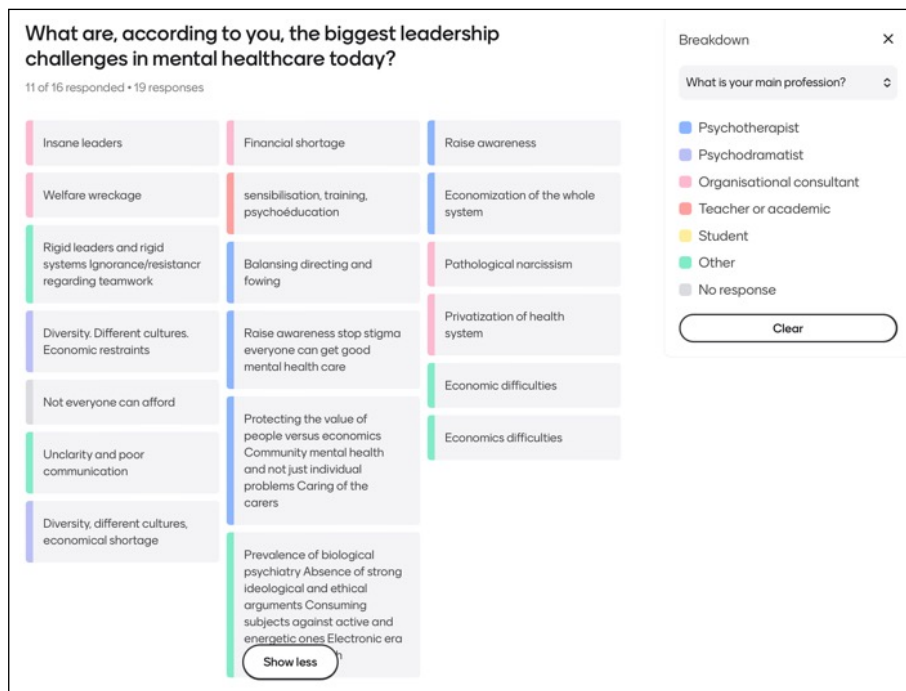
Figure 5. The screen with the answers to the question “what are, according to you, the biggest leadership challenges in mental healthcare nowadays?”. It shows only the first eight comments.

These are all the answers now put in Table 1.

When we break down this question into where attendees come from and their profession, we see the following sociometric results in Figs. 6 and 7.

Table 1. All the answers to the question “what are, according to you, the biggest leadership challenges in mental healthcare nowadays?”.

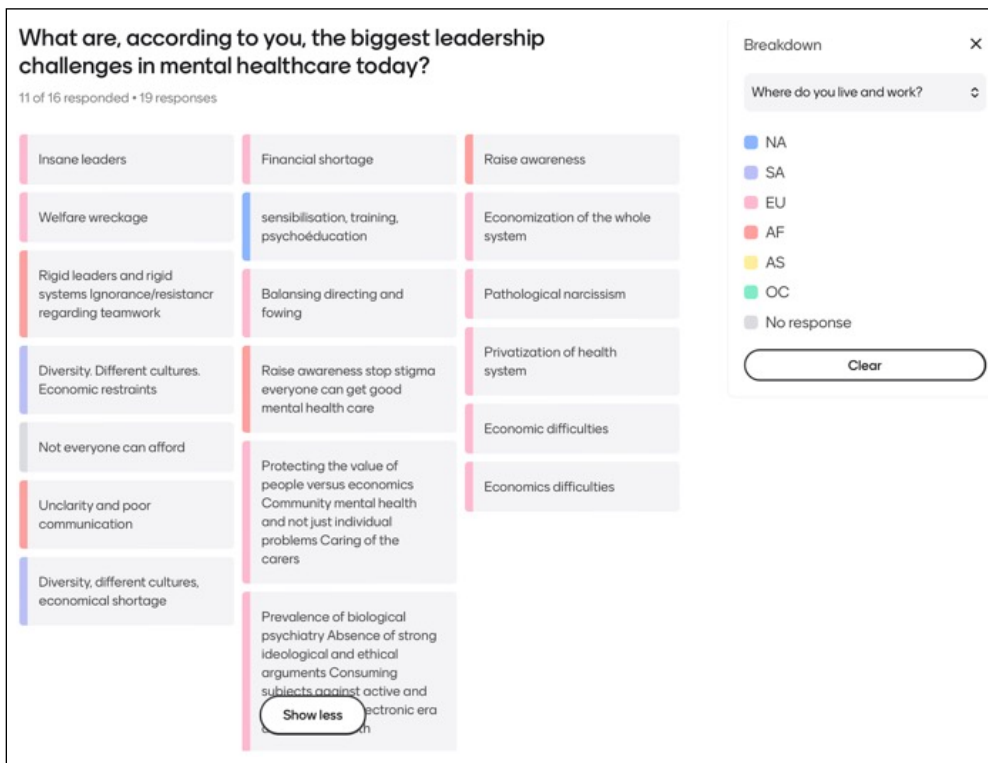
What are the biggest leadership challenges in mental healthcare nowadays?		
Insane leaders	Diversity, different cultures, economic shortage	Community mental health and not just individual problems
Welfare wreckage	Financial shortage	Caring for the carers
Rigid leaders and rigid systems	Resistance regarding teamwork	Prevalence of biological psychiatry
Diversity	Ignorance	Absence of strong ideological and ethical arguments
Different cultures	Sensibilization, training, psycho-education	Consuming subjects against active and energetic ones
Economic restraints	Balancing directing and flowing	Electronic era and mental health
Not everyone can afford	Raise awareness and stop stigma so everyone can get good mental health care	Raise awareness
Unclarity and poor communication	Protecting the value of people versus economics	Economization of the whole system
Pathological narcissism	Privatization of the health system	Economic difficulties



Source: Elaborated by the author.

Figure 6. The relationship between perceived challenges and occupation.

In Fig. 6, you see the answers broken down by profession; in Fig. 7, according to where people come from. For clarity, I have put the breakdown according to the profession in Table 2.



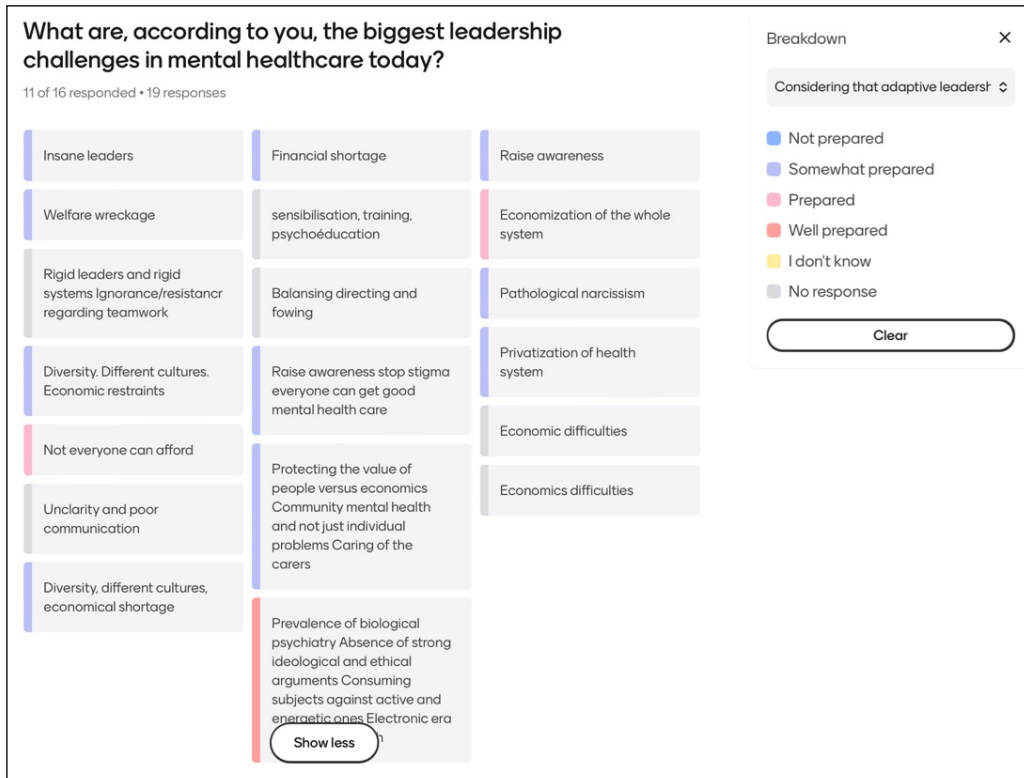
Source: Elaborated by the author.

Figure 7. The relationship between perceived challenges and people’s origins.

Table 2. The answers to the question “what are, according to you, the biggest leadership challenges in mental healthcare nowadays?” are sorted by profession.

Profession	Answers
Psychotherapist	Balancing directing and flowing
	Raise awareness stop stigma everyone can get good mental health care
	Protecting the value of people versus economics Community mental health and not just individual problems Caring of the carers
	Raise awareness
	Economization of the whole system
Psychodramatist	Diversity. Different cultures. Economic restraints
	Diversity, different cultures, economical shortage
Organizational consultant	Insane leaders
	Welfare wreckage
	Financial shortage
	Pathological narcissism
Teacher/Academic	Privatization of health system
	Sensibilization, training, psycho-education
Student	No response
Other	Rigid leaders and rigid systems Ignorance/resistance regarding teamwork
	Unclearity and poor communication
	Prevalence of biological psychiatry Absence of strong ideological and ethical arguments Consuming subjects against active and energetic ones Electronic era and mental health
	Economic difficulties
	Economics difficulties
No response	Not everyone can afford

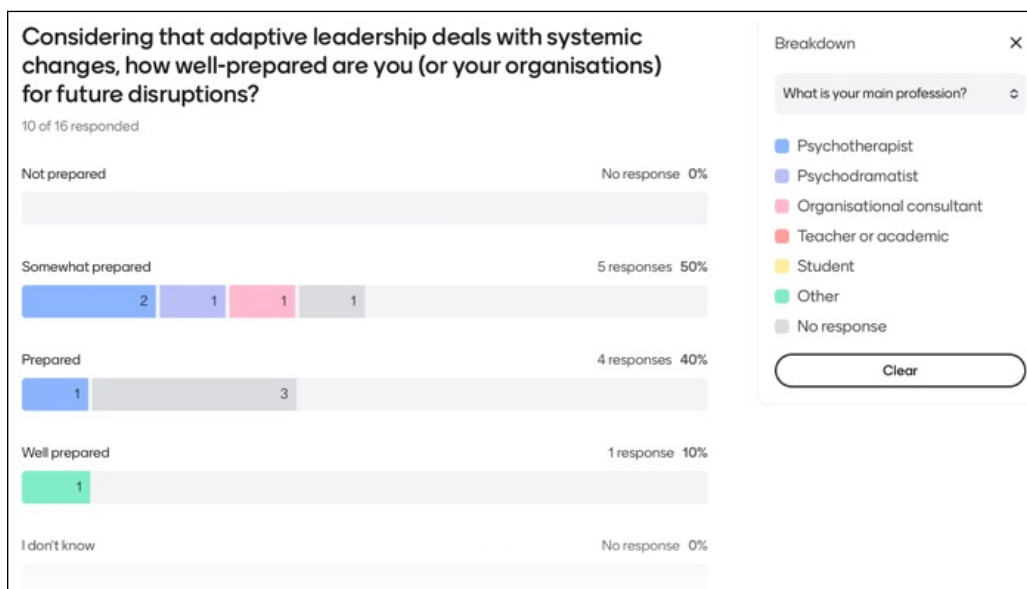
You can also relate the biggest challenges in nowadays' mental healthcare to one of the following questions in the presentation: "considering that adaptive leadership deals with systemic changes, how well are you (or your organization) prepared for future disruptions?". In Fig. 8 is how the answers to this question (not prepared; somewhat prepared; prepared; I don't know) related to the initial question of challenges in mental healthcare.



Source: Elaborated by the author.

Figure 8. The answers to the challenges to mental health care concerning what people answered: "considering that adaptive leadership deals with systemic changes, how well-prepared are you (or your organizations) for future disruptions?".

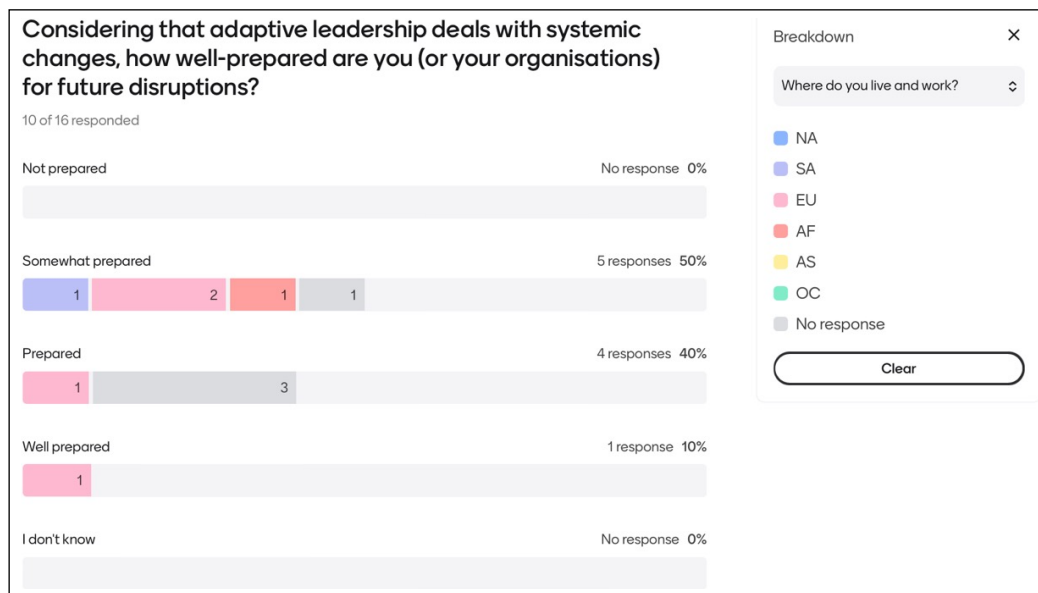
The reverse is also possible. The answers to the question "considering adaptive leadership deals with systemic changes, how well-prepared are you (or your organizations) for future disruptions?" are broken down by profession in Fig. 9.



Source: Elaborated by the author.

Figure 9. The responses to the readiness question according to profession.

Again, you can break down the same question according to where people come from, in Fig. 10.



Source: Elaborated by the author.

Figure 10. The responses to the readiness question according to the region of origin.

Critique

Despite the advantages of using Mentimeter as a sociometric tool, some critical notes on using it are also needed. The experience in Monastir showed that digitally less experienced people have problems using the tool. This limits the application of a digital sociometric tool; it has a clear digital literacy requirement. For instance, older people may have difficulty answering questions via the app.

Other difficulties relate to internet dependence: reliable internet access is necessary for real-time interaction. And while it is suitable for quick surveys, it may not capture the depth of qualitative sociometric data. There is also potential response bias: anonymity might lead to less accountable responses (Doyle, 2004). Finally, there are accessibility issues: not all users may have access to devices compatible with Mentimeter, like smartphones or computers.

Conclusion

It is beyond the scope of this case study to show the complete analysis of all the questions that have been put forward during the round-table session. I aimed to show the practical applications of Mentimeter in sociometric research beyond the classroom. In educational settings, teachers and researchers can use Mentimeter to map out social connections among students, identifying leaders, followers, and isolated individuals. For instance, a researcher could ask students to rate their peers on trustworthiness and friendliness. The immediate aggregation of this data into visual formats like heatmaps or social network graphs can reveal the social structure of the classroom, informing interventions to improve social cohesion and address issues like bullying.

In workplace sociometry, Mentimeter can help map informal networks in organizations, providing insights into information flows and identifying key influencers. This information is invaluable for enhancing teamwork, communication, and organizational efficiency.

The Mentimeter's versatility, ease of use, and ability to facilitate real-time interaction could make it a valuable tool for sociometric research. It offers innovative ways to collect, visualize, and analyze social data, significantly enhancing our ability to understand and interpret social relationships and structures. Integrating Mentimeter into sociometric methodologies can gain deeper insights, foster greater participant engagement, and achieve more accurate and dynamic representations of social dynamics.

Conflicts of interest

The author certifies that he has no affiliation nor any financial interest with the company Mentimeter.

Availability of data and material

The data that support the findings of this study are saved in the author's personal repository and can be shared with anyone who will contact the author.

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