

Development and Preliminary Evaluation of a Digital Self-care Intervention for Health-related stigma: Lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic

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ABSTRACT

Background: The COVID-19 outbreak was associated with considerable stigma and discrimination, possibly due to a lack of knowledge about the novel coronavirus and its highly transmissible nature. Addressing these concerns on a large scale requires novel strategies such as digital self-care interventions.

Aim: The study aimed to explore the experiences of stigma, perceived discrimination, and quality of life of patients and frontline healthcare providers and develop a digital self-care intervention to cope with stigma and discrimination.

Design: A cross-sectional research design was employed. **Methods and material:** In the formative phase, participants were administered an adapted version of the Stigma Questionnaire, WHO Quality of Life- Brief questionnaire, along with a 10-item questionnaire developed to assess perceived discrimination in various aspects of their lives. The intervention phase involved the development of the self-care video intervention using Leventhal's self-regulatory model, piloting the intervention, and obtaining feedback on its utility.

Results: The study revealed that stigma positively correlated with perceived discrimination and that stigma and perceived discrimination negatively correlated with quality of life in patients and frontline healthcare providers during a pandemic. The feedback obtained from the participants revealed that the intervention helped deal with stigma and prejudice and acted as a self-care guide.

Keywords: frontline healthcare providers, Self-care guide, Self-regulation, stigma, discrimination, quality of life.