

Stigma reduction through forum engagement in a digital health intervention for young Black and Latinx men and trans women who have sex with men



Seul Ki Choi, Marta Mulawa, Aimee Rochelle, Chunyan Li, Dovie L. Watson, Sabina Hirshfield, Lisa Hightow-Weidman, Kathryn Muessig, & Jose Bauermeister

skchoi@nursing.upenn.edu

Introduction

Young Black and Latinx men and transgender women who have sex with men (YBLMT) are disproportionately impacted by HIV compared to their non-Hispanic White counterparts.

Promoting online forum engagement in digital health interventions (DHI) has demonstrated preliminary efficacy in reducing HIV and sexuality stigma among YBLMT.

We explored forum engagement and whether forum engagement was associated with stigma reduction from baseline to 3-month follow-up in an mHealth intervention.

Methods

HealthMpowerment (HMP) 2.0 was designed to reduce stigma and promote social support through user-generated content among YBLMT (ages 15-29).

Intervention arm participants had full-access to the app while control arm participants had access to information-only contents.

In this study, we only included participants in the intervention arm who had access to the Forum where participants can share their ideas by initiating posts or leaving comments.

We summarized participants' weekly real-time forum interactions and time spent on HMP 2.0 over 12 weeks.

Linear regression tested the effect of forum engagements on stigma and social support levels at 3-month follow-up.

Results

Mean age was 24.90 (SD 3.42) and the majority identified as gay (75.3%) and single (60.9%).

Average duration of forum engagement was 11.50 (range 0.00-214.97) minutes over 12 weeks.

Among 348 intervention participants, 147 participants engaged with the Forum, either by generating posts or by commenting on others' posts.

Over 12 weeks, 147 participants who engaged with the Forum posted 1.61 times (SD=1.57) and commented 3.83 (SD=4.88) times, on average.

Participants engaged with the Forum most during their first few weeks of the study (see Figure 1).

There were no differences in demographic characteristics between contributors (N=119; 34.2%; who spent ≥5 minutes engaging with the Forum and posted ≥1 post or comments) and observers (N=229; 65.8%; who spent < 5 minutes or did not post).

Compared to observers (passive readers and non-users), contributors in the forum had marginally significant reduction in everyday discrimination ($\beta = -0.14$; $p=0.07$) (Table 1).

Figure 1. The average number of activities in the forum in 12 weeks

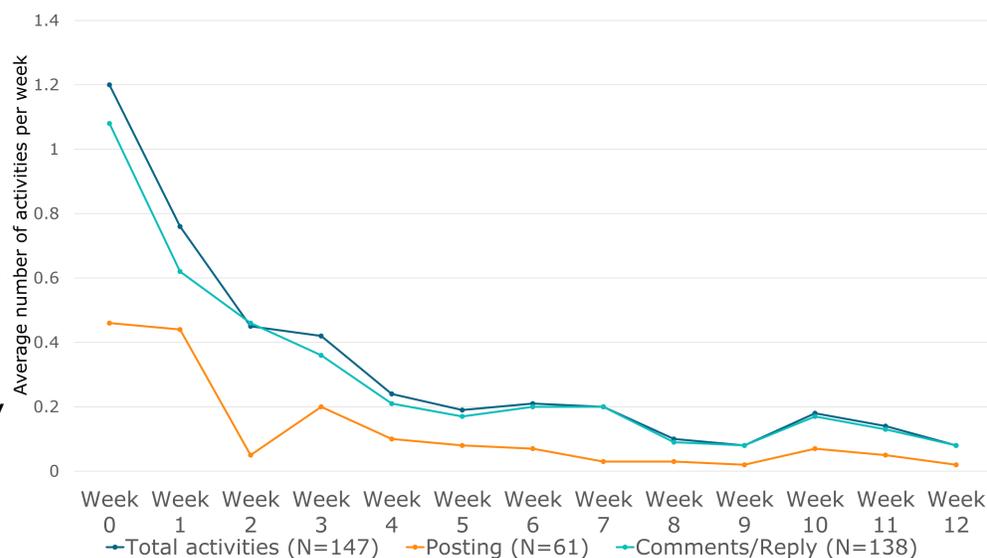


Table 1. Forum engagement effects on stigma and social support

	Changes from baseline to 3-month		Linear regression ⁶	
	Observers	Contributors	Beta coefficient	P-value
Gender prejudice ¹	-0.01 (0.69)	-0.08 (0.75)	-0.07	0.351
Everyday discrimination ²	-0.41 (0.67)	-0.54 (0.64)	-0.14	0.071
Enacted Stigma ³	-0.36 (0.46)	-0.40 (0.46)	-0.05	0.271
Challenge Stigma ⁴	0.02 (0.51)	-0.07 (0.45)	-0.06	0.334
Emotional support ⁵	0.25 (0.86)	0.13 (0.84)	-0.10	0.289
Tangible support ⁵	0.18 (1.08)	0.19 (1.07)	-0.07	0.550
Isolation ⁵	-0.10 (0.97)	-0.08 (0.81)	0.008	0.942

¹ Gender Minority Stress and Resilience Measure for Adolescents

² Everyday Discrimination Scale

³ Adapted from Hate crimes: Confronting violence against lesbians and gay men. Sage Publications. Newbury Park.

⁴ Self-Other Differentiation Subscale and Personal Cognitions Scale

⁵ ATN harmonized PROMIS Measure

⁶ The effect of engagement (contributors vs observers) on the outcome at follow up controlling for outcome at baseline.

Discussion

Contributors and observers may have different gains from engaging in forums as part of a stigma reduction intervention. Given the key role of forum engagement in stigma reduction, analyzing active versus passive forum participation is warranted.

Finally, strategies to sustain participants' forum engagement throughout the intervention are needed.

Dissemination

We are still **recruiting study participants!**



Take a picture to **participate** or **share**

