Developing a mobile psychological health intervention app for health professionals in Nigeria: The process, challenges and lessons learnt

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Background: The aim of this project was to develop a mHealth based COVID-19 related psychological distress ameliorating intervention (mPsyl) and evaluate its feasibility, acceptability, and pilot-test among Nigerian healthcare workers.

The specific objectives were to

1) Assess the prevalence, pattern and determinants of psychological distress among a sample of health workers (doctors and nurses) in Nigeria

2) To evaluate the perception of health workers and relevant stakeholders to the use of mHealth for psychological intervention among health workers.

3) To develop a mHealth and determine the feasibility and acceptance of the mHealth intervention among the health workers.

Method

The process of developing the mHealth intervention is divided into four phases that will involve, (i) a quantitative HCWs survey to assess the type and levels of psychological distress; (ii) qualitative survey among the HCWs; (iii) expert qualitative interviews to develop the mHealth based guided intervention, and (iv) quantitative and qualitative surveys to assess the feasibility, acceptability, and pilot testing of the mHealth based guided psychological intervention.

Results

Higher odds of experiencing psychological distress were associated with being a nurse (AOR; 1.91, p=0.016), experiencing moderate to severe depression (AOR; 17.54, p=0.006), and having thoughts of resigning (AOR;2.81, p=0.021). Having a first degree (AOR; 0.038, p=0.014 or a postgraduate fellowship (AOR; 0.33, p=0.048) were associated with lower odds of experiencing psychological distress.

Conclusion

There is a high level of psychological distress experienced by the study participants. The population will benefit from strategies to improve their psychological wellbeing. This innovative study can potentially enhance establishing a culturally sensitive, cost-effective, and evidence-based treatment model for psychological distress experienced by Nigerian HCWs in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.