

COVID-19 Personal and Perceived Stigma as Predictors of Autonomy and Relatedness Need Satisfaction in Hong Kong's University Students.

Introduction Under self-determination theory, need satisfaction leads to psychological well-being, whereas their frustration leads to ill-being. This research explores COVID-19 personal and perceived stigma as predictors of autonomy and relatedness need satisfaction in Hong Kong university students. Personal stigma refers to one's attitudes and treatment of a stigmatized group. Perceived stigma refers to what one believes are their community's attitudes and treatment of the same.

Significance The unprecedented nature of COVID-19 makes it unclear how existing theory translates to COVID-19 stigma. Our research addresses this by showing COVID-19 perceived stigma predicts worsened relatedness satisfaction, which opens implications of its effects on psychological well-being.

Methods 102 university students in Hong Kong recruited in November to answer an online questionnaire. Inclusion criteria include being students in a higher education institution in Hong Kong, at least 18 years of age, residency in Hong Kong, and no prior history of mental illness.

Results High COVID-19 perceived stigma is associated with worse sense of relatedness adjusted for after adjusting for confounders ($\beta=-1.17$, $p=0.017$). COVID-19 fear is associated with both increased COVID-19 personal stigma ($\beta=1.26$, $p<0.001$) and perceived stigma ($\beta=0.70$, $p\text{-value}=0.009$). Personally, knowing someone who was diagnosed with COVID-19 has no association with either decreased COVID-19 personal stigma ($\beta=0.99$, $p\text{-value}=0.355$) or perceived stigma ($\beta=0.65$, $p=0.387$).

Conclusion COVID-19 perceived stigma warrants attention as a predictor of decreased relatedness need satisfaction. Consistent with existing theory on health-related stigma, fear is a factor associated with increased COVID-19 stigma, and should be considered as a target for stigma-reduction interventions.

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