

ARTICLE REVIEWED

Evaluation of a Behavioral Self-Care Intervention Administered Through a Massive Open Online Course

White, M.A., Venkataraman, A., Roehrig, A., & Whelen, H.S. (2021). Evaluation of a behavioral self-care intervention administered through a massive open online course. *American Journal of Health Education*, 52(4), 233-240.

THE PROBLEM:

Over the last few years, it has come to light that numerous university and professional school students are suffering from mental health issues. Research has found that several behavioral and lifestyle risk factors, such as lack of sleep, poor nutrition, financial burdens, etc., could be cause for the increase in mental health issues in these populations. This rise is also reflected in the general American population with one in five adults living with a mental illness (Merikangas et al., 2010) and approximately 50% of children ages 13-18 suffering from mental illnesses (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2020). As the COVID-19 pandemic began and orders were issued for people to stay at home and social distance, these numbers increased as more adults reported having symptoms of anxiety and depression.



Research Summary:

The authors previously did a study with a curriculum-based health improvement intervention and improved the mental health of health science graduate students. Due to this success, they decided to attempt to reach a larger population through the use of a massive open online course (MOOC) during the COVID-19 pandemic. This course ran from March 2020 to January 2021 with 216 participants. The participants completed behavior change assignments which were intended to improve their health-promoting behaviors in nutrition, physical activity, and mental health.

Conclusion:

In this paper, the authors found that they were able to increase participants' mental and physical health outcomes using behavioral goals. The reported mean adherence to the behavioral goals by participants was 76.3% for nutrition, 74.6% for mental wellness, and 79.7% for physical activity.

Key Takeaway:

In this paper, the authors challenge health educators and Certified Health Education Specialists to use the premise of their research to develop curriculums and online programs to help students and communities combat mental illnesses.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Merikangas, K. R., He, J. P., Burstein, M., Swanson, S. A., Avenevoli, S., Cui, L., Benjet, C., Georgjades, K., & Swendsen, J. (2010). Lifetime prevalence of mental disorders in US adolescents: results from the National Comorbidity Survey Replication-Adolescent Supplement (NCS-A). *Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry*, 49(10), 980-989. doi:10.1016/j.jaac.2010.05.017.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. *Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health*. (HHS Publication No. PEP20-07-01-001). Rockville, MD: Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; 2020.