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Fighting stigma, promoting care: a study on the use of occupationally-based HIV services in the Free State Province of South Africa

CITATION

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ABSTRACT

Fear of breaches in confidentiality and HIV-related stigma in the workplace have been shown to be primary concerns and potential barriers to uptake of HIV testing and treatment by health care workers (HCWs) at the Occupational Health Unit (OHU). In a context of human resource shortages, it is essential to investigate potential ways of reducing HIV-related stigma and promoting confidentiality in the workplace. Using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM), baseline data of the “HIV and TB Stigma among Health Care Workers Study” (HaTSaH Study) for 818 respondents has been analysed to investigate (1) whether bottom-up stigma-reduction activities already occur; and (2) whether such grassroots actions can reduce the fear of breaches in confidentiality and HIV-related stigma – and thus indirectly stimulate the uptake of HIV services at the OHU. Results (aim 1) illustrate the occurrence of existing activities aiming to reduce HIV-related stigma, such as HCWs giving extra support to HIV positive co-workers and educating coworkers who stigmatise HIV. Furthermore, results of the SEM analysis (aim 2) show that the Fighting-stigma factor has a significant negative effect on HIV-related stigma and a significant positive effect on Confidentiality. Results show that the latent Fighting-stigma factor has a significant positive total indirect effect on the use of HIV testing, CD4 cell count and HIV treatment at the OHU. The findings reveal that the fear of breaches in confidentiality and HIV-related stigma can be potential barriers to the uptake of occupationally-based HIV services. However, results also show that a bottom-up climate of fighting HIV-related stigma can stimulate confidentiality in the workplace and diminish the negative effect of HIV-related stigma – resulting in an overall positive effect on the reported willingness to access occupationally-based HIV services.