



Global Parenting Initiative



Integrating Intimate Partner Violence Prevention into a Digital Parenting Chatbot Intervention during COVID-19



<https://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12889-023-16649-w>

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Background

Intimate partner violence (IPV) and violence against children (VAC) are critical public health concerns that surged during the COVID-19 pandemic. There is growing global interest in finding integrated forms of violence prevention to address both forms of family violence concurrently.

Parenting interventions have been identified as an effective strategy to address and prevent IPV and VAC. However, structural barriers in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), such as high costs, limited infrastructure, and human resources, often create challenges in programme delivery and implementation. As such, digital modalities, such as apps and chatbots, provide promising possibilities in overcoming these challenges.

This study created and developed IPV prevention content that was embedded in a digital parenting intervention rolled out in Jamaica. It is the first documented effort to integrate IPV prevention content into a digital parenting intervention, contributing significantly to the violence prevention and digital intervention fields.

ParentText

ParentText is a chatbot intervention for parents and caregivers of children aged 0 to 17 years, which was developed as a digital adaptation of the in-person Parenting for Lifelong Health (PLH) programmes in response to COVID-19. ParentText delivers automated messages to users via social messaging platforms such as WhatsApp and Telegram, and is also available via SMS for individuals without smartphone access. ParentText content has been adapted with implementing partners in various LMICs to make sure the content is culturally relevant.

Research Aim

To develop, create, and evaluate IPV prevention content embedded in the digital intervention, ParentText, using the Six Steps in Quality Intervention Development (6SQuID) framework.



Research Question

What is the retention rate and level of user engagement with IPV prevention content developed and integrated into the digital intervention ParentText for parents and caregivers above 16 years of age?

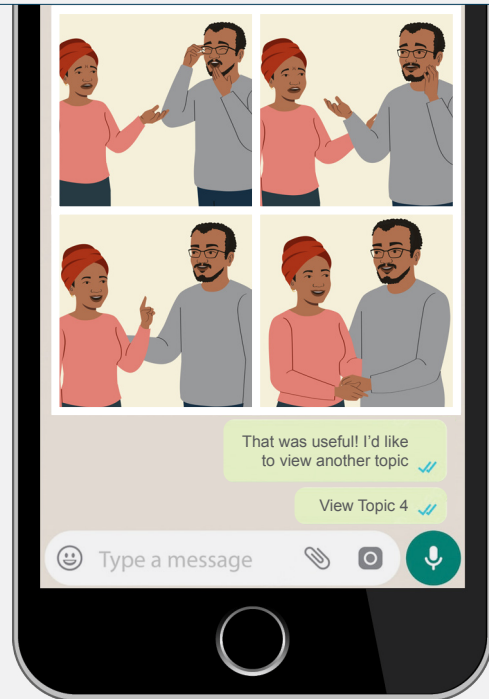


Study Design

The study systematically developed the IPV prevention content following the Six Steps in Quality Intervention Development (6SQuID) model, using evidence-based approaches, expert consultations with academic researchers (n=5), practitioners (n=5), and local community organisations (n=7). A formative evaluation was conducted with parents in relationships (n=96). It employed a transparent and theory-informed approach, allowing for intervention content assessment, replication, and improvement.



IPV Prevention Content Topic 3:
Share family responsibilities.



IPV Prevention Content Topic 5:
Listen and talk to each other.

Research Findings

- Digital interventions can effectively deliver IPV prevention content, but user engagement remains a challenge.
- The retention rate of participants throughout the study was similar to other digital interventions. The study highlighted common barriers of digital interventions such as participants exiting the intervention before engaging with all the materials.

Lessons Learned

- There is need for enhancing user engagement and retention rates in digital interventions, with recommendations including incentives, reminders, shorter programme lengths, and further qualitative research with participants to receive feedback to improve the design and content of the intervention.
- Personalization and evidence-based development processes enhance intervention relevance and effectiveness.
- Representation of underrepresented groups, such as male caregivers, is essential in intervention design and recruitment strategies.
- Future research should employ rigorous methods to evaluate intervention effectiveness and understand the active ingredients of change.



Recommendations

- Scaling Up ParentText:** Governments and organizations should consider expanding the ParentText model, adapting it to diverse cultural contexts and languages to reach a broader audience.
- Research and Evaluation:** Further research and evaluation should assess the long-term impact of ParentText on reducing IPV and VAC, with a focus on low-resource settings.
- Investment in Digital Interventions:** Policymakers should invest in the development and dissemination of digital parenting interventions that integrate IPV prevention measures, recognizing their potential to address family violence during crises and the promising approach of comprehensive violence prevention efforts.
- Continued Community Engagement:** Collaboration with local community organizations and practitioners should be further developed and continued to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of digital interventions like ParentText.
- Awareness and Education:** Governments and NGOs should prioritize public awareness campaigns, funding, and educational initiatives to promote the use of digital interventions in order to address the high rates of IPV and family violence worldwide.

In conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated IPV and VAC, emphasizing the need for evidence-based, scalable interventions. ParentText’s integration of IPV prevention content serves as an important example of how digital parenting programmes can address both forms of family violence. While further research is needed, this work offers valuable insights into user engagement and intervention refinement, advancing the field of integrated digital violence prevention interventions.

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