

Abstract

Previous research has shown that public stigma associated with HIV/AIDS is prevalent and is affected by various psychological factors. However, it was not clear how public stigma associated with HIV/AIDS compares across cultures. This study examined public stigma and its associated psychological factors in university students in Hong Kong (China) and California, the United States. One hundred participants from Hong Kong and 100 participants from California completed a survey measuring (i) level of stigma towards people with HIV/AIDS, (ii) cognitive flexibility, (iii) responsibility attributions, (iv) acceptability of risk behaviours, (v) knowledge about HIV/AIDS, and (vi) prior contact with people with HIV/AIDS. Results showed that, when compared with participants in the U.S., participants in Hong Kong had a higher level of public stigma associated with HIV/AIDS, lower cognitive flexibility, less prior contact with people with HIV/AIDS, and less knowledge about HIV/AIDS. Hong Kong Chinese participants also attributed more responsibility to people with HIV/AIDS, and had lower acceptability of homosexual intercourse and sex transaction on the whole. Four out of five factors (except cognitive flexibility) were found to be significant contributing factors to level of stigma, and the contributions of different factors to public stigma of HIV/AIDS were found to be different across groups. This implied that stigma could be targeted differently in different societies.

Keywords: public stigma, cultural difference, HIV/AIDS

