



Adapting VR Training for Mental Health First Aid in Rural Uganda

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Abstract

Virtual reality (VR) training is increasingly being used to enhance learning experiences in various fields, including mental health first aid (MHFA). However, its application in rural settings remains underexplored. A mixed-methods approach was employed, involving pre- and post-training assessments using questionnaires and focus group discussions (FGDs). A convenience sampling method was used to select participants from rural communities. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis of FGD transcripts. Participants demonstrated significant improvement in knowledge scores on MHFA topics after VR training, with a mean increase of 25% compared to baseline scores (95% CI: [10%, 40%]). Themes from FGDs indicated high engagement and perceived usefulness of the VR environment. Adapting VR for MHFA in rural Uganda showed promising results in enhancing knowledge, with participants showing a notable improvement. Further research is needed to explore long-term effects and scalability. Future studies should consider expanding the sample size and conducting longitudinal analyses to validate initial findings. Virtual Reality, Mental Health First Aid, Rural Communities, Uganda Model estimation used $\hat{\theta} = \text{argmin}\{\theta\} \text{sumiell}(y_i, f\theta(\xi)) + \lambda l \text{Vert}\theta r \text{Vert} 2^2$, with performance evaluated using out-of-sample error.

Keywords: *Virtual Reality, Mental Health First Aid, Rural Development, Community Engagement, Ethnography, Simulation Technology, Participatory Design*

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