Associations between HIV-related stigma, self-esteem, social support, and depressive symptoms in Namibia

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Abstract

Statement of the Problem: People living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) face enormous challenges including HIV-related stigma and mental health issues. Studies have documented that people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) are at greater risk for experiencing, judgmental attitudes from health care providers, stigma and discrimination, and often, refusal of services. Researchers have reported that HIV-related stigma has been linked with many mental health conditions including depression, poor self-esteem, anxiety, generalized stress and poor social supports. Given the far-reaching social and mental health impacts of HIV-related stigma on PLWHA, unfortunately, however, little is known about this phenomenon among people living in Namibia. This study is one of the first studies conducted in Namibia, one of the top five countries in the world with the highest AIDS prevalence rates. The purpose of this study was to examine the association between HIV-related stigma and its association with depression, self-esteem, and social support as it is perceived and experienced by PLWHA in rural northern Namibia.

Methodology: A purposive sampling was used to recruit a total of 124 men and women living with HIV/AIDS in the Katima Mulilo. Participants were recruited as they came for their routine follow-up for HIV care. A cross-sectional survey was used to collect information on demographics, self-esteem, social support, HIV-related stigma, and depression.

Findings: Correlation analysis revealed that HIV-related stigma, self-esteem, and social support were all significantly correlated with depression. Further, Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression analysis indicated that HIV-related stigma was the largest risk factor and self-esteem was the largest protective factor with respect to depressive symptoms.

Conclusions & Recommendations: There is a need for appropriate assessment and interventions for psychosocial distress among PLWHA. Helping professionals should design evidence-based interventions that address individual and societal challenges that impact PLWHA.

Biography

Eveline Ndii Kalomo is an Assistant Professor at Wichita State, School of Social Work. She teaches various courses in social work for students both in the undergraduate and graduate programs. Her research interests are intersections of HIV/AIDS and, kinship caregiving, population aging, gerontology, mental health, intimate partner violence, substance abuse, children's mental health and educational outcomes. She has expertise and passion in improving the health and well-being of individuals and families affected by HIV and AIDS in Africa. Her research area stemmed from her extensive experience working with families and children affected by AIDS in Namibia.

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