

A study on HIV related stigma experienced by people living with HIV and AIDS in Saudi Arabia

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Background and objectives: HIV risk and HIV-related stigma and discrimination are still experienced in most parts of the globe with adverse effects on individuals and their societies, especially where the culture is conservative, like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Althobaiti, 2019; Alomair et al., 2023). The proposed research is going to be qualitative, and the main goals of the study are as follows: To investigate the daily life of the people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA) in Saudi Arabia, specifically about how depression and stigma work and the way they influence the psychological health of the people. Some of the objectives include exploring the antecedents of stigma and its socio-psychological effects on the infected persons, as well as the coping strategies used by the PLWHA.

Methods: This research uses descriptive phenomenological research design to access knowledge on the experiences of PLWHA. Fourteen participants were interviewed, males and females of Saudi nationality and over 20 years old. Data were analyzed using NVivo 11 qualitative analysis software from which codes were developed and collapsed into recurring themes such as community attitude towards HIV, availability and access to psychological support, internalized stigma, and mental health status.

Main Results: The analysis revealed five key themes. Some of the findings include: (1) The respondents insisted that they hid their HIV-positive status from their families, friends and society due to stigmatization; (2) Participants lacked adequate information on HIV transmission hence continued to be isolated from society (Abolfotouh et al., 2019); (3) self-stigma was observed to be high in the study experience with some participants expressing feelings of pity on themselves.

Conclusion and Recommendations: The results show that HIV-related stigma is still prevalent in the Saudi context and poses a significant impact on the psychological well-being as well as the social participation of PLWHA (Qashqari et al., 2022). This prejudice remains worryingly high because people with HIV are shunned and kept out of the various mental, physical, and social help that they need. To reduce stigma, the study suggests future awareness initiatives about HIV transmission, which should be culturally appropriate for the given community to facilitate desistance of stigma (Malli et al., 2023). The study also advocates for the improvement of mental health services for all persons living with HIV and AIDS.

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Biography

Saliha Fallatah is a distinguished public health professional with an MA in Public Health and a certification as a Certified Professional in Healthcare Quality (CPHQ). Currently a PhD student in Health Management Planning and Policy, committed to advancing public health through education, training, and strategic initiatives.

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