

Exploring Perceived Stress And Quality Of Life Among Women Living With Hiv/Aids: A Cross Sectional Pilot Study

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Abstract

Background and Purpose: HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, is one of the world's most serious public health challenges. At the end of 2022, there were an estimated 39 million people living with HIV out of which 53 % were women and girls worldwide.

In India, Annual New Infection are estimated at 62.97 thousand in 2021. As per the data provided by National Aids Control Organization, India (2021) 10.50 lakhs women were living with HIV. The present study aims to explore the perceived stress and quality of life of women living with HIV/AIDS.

Material and Methods: A pilot study was conducted using a cross sectional approach. 39 samples were selected using non probability convenience sampling technique. The study was conducted in a selected ART centre of Maharashtra, India. Data was collected using Perceived stress was assessed using WHOQoL HIV BREF Scale and modified perceived stress scale. Statistical Analysis were performed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results: Majority of the sample (71.79%) experienced moderate level of perceived stress and 5% of the samples experienced severe stress. In quality of life; the domains of social relationship (13.97+ 3.28) and spirituality (13.12+4.27) was found to be significantly low.

Conclusion: The study identified the areas of perceived stress in the participants. It also recognised the various domains of quality of life that is significantly low among women with HIV/AIDS.

Keywords: Health related quality of life, HIV, WHOQOL HIV BREF , Perceived Stress

Introduction

HIV/ AIDS have continued to put pressure on the Indian health sector of owing to its infectious nature. In India, adult HIV prevalence was estimated at 0.22 % in 2020 where as it was 0.20% among females. The heightened vulnerability of women for HIV/ AIDS in India is due to socio economic reasons such as early marriage, violence and sexual abuse against women and financial independence. Gender inequality adds to the disease burden. Women in rural poor areas in India have little control over important aspects of their life. They have little decision-making powers and they find themselves unable to negotiate to protect themselves from any harm or risk of infection. Besides, those who are infected with the disease are reluctant to access health care for fear of discrimination from their own families and society.

There are many empirical evidences that shows that psychosocial factors particularly stress and stressful events influences the disease progression in HIV infection by having an effect on the viral load and CD4 cell count. Many studies have shown that stress is related to higher viral load, lower CD4 cell counts, increased disease progression and poorer treatment adherence. There are so many factors that accounts for stress among women living with HIV/AIDS. Health related quality of life is one such factor. It can have an affect on the perceived stress of an individual and vice versa. Health related quality of life is an outcome that determines the health status of an individual with HIV/AIDS. It provides domain wise evaluation of the quality of life. Thus, the study aimed to explore the perceived stress and quality of life among women living with HIV/AIDS.

Material and Methods

A cross sectional approach was adopted. After approval from the Institutional Ethics Committee; permission was obtained from the concerned ART centre. 39 samples were selected using non probability convenience sampling. WHOQOL HIV BREF Scale and Modified Perceived Stress scale -HIV was used to get the responses from the samples. The data collection tool was validated by nursing experts and reliability (Perceived stress scale- HIV $r=0.90$) was established. Modified Perceived Stress scale-HIV was a five-point rating scale with a maximum score of 40 indicating high perceived stress. WHOQOL-HIV BREF SCALE is a multi-dimensional instrument comprising 31 items designed to assess the QOL of people living with HIV. It comprises of six domains of

physical health, level of independence, psychological health, spirituality, social relations, and environmental health.

Table 1: WHOQOL HIV BREF SCALE Domain Wise

Domains	N	Mean	St. dev
Physical	39	15.9487	2.5438
Psychological	39	15.1785	2.9221
Level of Independence	39	15.3333	3.1316
Social relationships	39	13.9744	3.2886
Environmental	39	14.2308	3.3655
Spirituality	39	13.1282	4.2746

Results

Majority of the samples (41%) were in the age group of 33-39 years. 39% of the samples had completed secondary level of education. Majority of the samples ie, 51.3% were married whereas 28.2% were widowed. 48.7% of samples were housewives. Almost half of the samples ie, 53.8% were having family income of less than Rs. 10000/ month. Maximum samples 53% were tested positive for HIV more than 7 years back and majority of them 36% were not aware about their source of infection. With reference to Quality of life; 48.2% samples rated their quality of life as Good and 23.1% rated as neither good nor poor. Domain wise quality of life assessment reveals that domain of social relationship and spirituality was comparatively low as compared to Physical, Psychological and level of independence.

With reference to perceived stress; Majority of the sample (71.79%) experienced moderate level of perceived stress and 5% of the samples experienced severe stress. Majority of the samples expressed stress related to coping with the challenges of the disease (38.5%) and dealing with the negative ideas of the society (41%). 38.5% experienced stress as they felt they lacked control of the events in their life.

Discussion

The study explores the areas of perceived stress and domains of quality of life that is affected in women living with HIV/AIDS. A larger study can be undertaken involving a larger number of samples from different geographical areas to have a better generalized finding. A number of studies have identified that individuals who are HIV positive have moderate to high levels to perceived stress. The finding is consistent with a study conducted in Nigeria by Adamu A (2019) which stated that women living with HIV had moderate perceived stress. Reis RK (2011) came across similar finding about quality of life among HIV positive women wherein it was suggested that policies could be made which improves social participation and acceptance of such women thereby improving their quality of life.

Conflict of Interest: None

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