

IMPACT OF HIV STATUS DISCLOSURE ON THE
PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING OF HIV POSITIVE
ADOLESCENTS

by

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the degree of Master of Arts in child and adolescent psychology.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the work submitted in this dissertation is the result of my own independent investigations except where reference is made to published literature and where assistance is acknowledged. This work has not been presented before, either wholly or in part for any other academic research work and has been submitted as part of the requirements for the award of my Masters Degree certificate in psychology (Child and adolescents).

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Abstract

Background: Globally the HIV infection status amongst adolescents aged 13 – 24 years estimates high prevalence of infection among adolescents, most without knowing that they are infected; making it difficult for them to access necessary care and support UNICEF (2011). Zambia has recorded equally high prevalence rate though there have been increased numbers of children surviving into adolescents in the era of improved treatment and care (WHO, 2004). Studies suggest that children who knew their HIV status had higher self esteem than children who did not know their status. The study was thus aimed at investigating the impact of disclosure of HIV positive status to HIV positive adolescents and social support on their psychological well-being.

Methodology: This was a cross-sectional study. A sample of 80, participants was recruited randomly using the Kth method of randomization from centre of excellence, UTH. Forty with disclosed and 40 undisclosed infection status within the age group 11 to 15 years. The measures used for data collection were; the Strength and Difficulty Questionnaire- Youth version (SDQ-Y) Goodman (1997) to determine the Psychological well-being of HIV positive adolescents with regard to disclosure. Social Support from Friends (PSS - Fr) Weinert et al (1987) was used to measure perceived social support from friends and family with regard to psychological well-being. Both measures have demonstrated both good reliability and validity for use in this study because they have been used before in similar situations with HIV populations. Socio- demographic questionnaire designed for this study was also used for demographic data.

Data Analysis: The researcher used the Software Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for data analysis. Descriptive statistics included mean and chi square. Comparison between the two status groups was done using the Mann Whitney U – test and the correlation analysis to explore the relationship of status disclosure and social support on the psychological well-being.

Results: Eighty questionnaires were distributed; 70 were completed and returned, giving a response rate of 87.5%. Forty two (60.0%) of the 70 participants were female and 28 (40.0%) male. Average age was 13.5, the minimum 11 and the maximum 15 years. Psychological well-being was calculated by combining the four sub scale scores (except pro-social) and a Mann Whitney U test revealed a very strong significant relationship between status disclosure and psychological well-being; indicating that participants who had their status disclosed to them had a better psychological well-being than the undisclosed groups. A correlations

coefficient analysis was conducted to determine the significant relationship between status disclosure and social support on the psychological well-being showed that though there was a weak negative correlation between psychological well-being and social support, the relationship was not significant.

Conclusion: This study revealed that there was a strong significant relationship between HIV status disclosure and psychological well being. But there was no significant relationship between social support and status disclosure on the psychological well being. This statement addresses the current knowledge and recommendations that adolescents should know their HIV status and should be fully informed and counseled about all aspects of their health, including their sexual behavior.

I wish to dedicate this piece of work to my wonderful spouse and children for their understanding and encouragement during my research and report writing process, for besides every successful writer, is an advisor who fosters freedom to be creative and dedicated to their work.

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List of abbreviations

HIV- Human Immunodeficiency Virus

AIDS- Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

WHO- World Health Organization

PLH- People Living with HIV

NCI- National Cancer Institute

US- United states

UNAIDS- United Nations AIDS

SDQ-Y- Strength and Difficult Questionnaire - Youth version

PSS- fr- Perceived Social Support from friends and family