A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF POST TRAUMATIC SYMPTOMS IN MEN AND WOMEN NEWLY DIAGNOSED WITH HIV-INFECTION

by

THAPELO SHADRACK LAKAJE

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SUPERVISOR: Dr. L. CLOETE

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HOLD HANDS
HIS HANDS HER HANDS

HONEST HANDS
HOLY HANDS

HELPING HANDS
HAPPY HANDS

HOPEFUL HANDS
HUMBLE HANDS

HEARTY HANDS
HOLDING HANDS

OUR HANDS, THE HEARTBEAT
OF LOVE CARE AND SUPPORT

These hands, all our hands joined together light a candle of hope.

For all of us touched by HIV/AIDS, our family and the community at large.

May this flame burn in remembrance of all people
who died of AIDS related conditions

May our hands be caring hands, loving hands
And supportive hands

WHAT ARE YOU DOING WITH YOUR HANDS?
WHAT DO YOU HOLD IN YOUR HANDS?

C ZANELE MASHININI 2001.GAUTENG PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
SUMMARY

It is now well known that HIV/AIDS-sufferers face profound psychological, psychiatric and neurological sequelae as the disease progresses. However, studies indicate that women diagnosed with HIV-infection are twice more likely to be depressed, to suffer from PTSD and other psychiatric morbidity than men. Yet very few studies have attempted to investigate the role that gender plays in reacting to the illness. Finding out that one is HIV-infected is one of the most significant discoveries. This is due to the fact that in receiving an HIV-positive diagnosis individuals are exposed to news of prodigious personal consequence. And yet very few studies have focused on how the impact of finding out that one is HIV-positive may affect their adjustment to the illness. Moreover, how men and women are likely to react to such news.

It is against this background that the current study was conducted. The aim of the current study was to compare post traumatic symptoms in men and women upon hearing news of their HIV-positive status and to investigate to what extent such reactions may be similar or different and to further assess how their reactions are likely to affect disease progression and adjustment.

A total of one hundred participants (38 Male, 63 female) diagnosed with HIV/AIDS participated in the study. These men and women were obtained from support groups
in the Gauteng region. The Impact of Event Scale-Revised and Mental Adjustment to HIV-Scale questionnaires were used to collect data over a period of a month.

A large majority of 60.2% of the total sample ($n = 87$) reported experiencing feelings of shock upon hearing about their HIV-positive status, 66.0% of the total sample ($n = 94$) of those who responded to this item reported trying to remove the issue from their mind. A further 59.6% of the total sample of ($n = 94$) indicated feeling as though news about their HIV-positive status were not real suggesting that the incident was traumatic. There were no significant gender differences in how both men and women reacted to news of their HIV-positive diagnosis. However, significant differences were found in relation to adjustment. Men were found to be more likely to have more Fighting Spirit which is indicative of adaptive adjustment as compared to women. Women on the other hand were found to be more likely to be Hopeless which is indicative of maladaptive coping.

The current study findings support the importance of tailoring treatment and prevention messages to incorporate gender issues.
OPSOMMING

Dit is welbekend dat MIV/VIGS-lyers beduidende sielkundige, psigiatriese en neurologiese gevolge in die gesig staar soos die siekte ontwikkel. Studies toon egter dat vrouens wat gediagnoseer is met die MI-virus twee maal meer geneig is as mans tot depressie, PTSV en ander psigiatriese toestande. Min studies skenk egter aandag aan die rol wat geslag speel in ‘n persoon se reaksie tot die siekte. Om met MIV gediagnoseer te word is ‘n baie beduidende gebeurtenis. Dit is as gevolg van die skrikwekkende persoonlike gevolge van die persoon in die gesig staar. Tog het baie min studies al gefokus op die impak om uit te vind dat ‘n mens MIV-positief is. Meer nog, hoe mans en vrouens geneig sal wees om op die nuus te reageer.

Dit is teen hierdie agtergrond dat die huidige studie geloods is. Die doel van die huidige studie was om die reaksies van mans en vrouens nadat hulle ingelig is van hulle MIV-positiewe status te vergelyk en te bepaal tot watter mate die reaksies mag verskil of ooreenstem. Verder nog is daar ten doel gestel om vas te stel hoe hulle reaksies die siekte se verloop en hul aanpassing mag beïnvloed.

‘n Totaal was eenhonderd deelnemers (38 mans, 63 vrouens) wat gediagnoseer is met MIV/VIGS minder as ‘n jaar gelede, ouer as 11 jaar het deelgeneem in die studie. Hierdie mans en vrouens is verkry deur ondersteuningsgroepe in die Gauteng-area. Die “Impact of Event Scale-Revised” en die “Mental Adjustment to HIV-Scale” is gebruik om die data oor ‘n maandlange periode in te samel.
‘n Groot hoeveelheid (60.2%) van die totale steekproef (n = 87) het gevoelens van skok gerapporteer nadat hulle ingelig is oor hulle MIV-positiewe status terwyl 66% van die totale steekproef (n = 94) probeer het om die saak uit hulle gedagtes te verwyder. ‘n Verdere 59.6% van die totale steekproef (N = 94) het aangedui dat die nuus nie werklik was vir hulle nie wat aanduidend is van ‘n traumatiseringed incident. Daar was geen beduidende geslagsverskille in hoe mans en vrouens tot die nuus van hulle MIV-status gereageer het nie. Beduidende verskille is egter gevind met betrekking tot hulle aanpassing. Mans was meer geneig om ‘n “Fighting Spirit” te toon wat aanduidend is van gesonde aanpassing. Vrouens was meer geneig om gevoelens van hopeloosheid te rapporteer wat aanduidend is van wanaanpassing.

Die huidige studie se bevindinge is in kontras met die van Olley et al (2003) waar hulle psigiatriese ko-morbiditeit, coping response en ongeskiktheid vergelyk het in mans- en vroue-buite-pasiënte wat onlangs met MIV/VIGS gediagnoseer is. Olley et al (2003) het gevind dat terwyl vrouens geneig was om die diagnostiese kriteria van PTSD te ontmoet, ook geneig was om coping strategieë te gebruik wat beskou word as aanpassende strategieë (bv. beplanning en godsdiens). Daarenteen was mans meer geneig om aan die kriteria vir alkoholgebruik of –afhanklikheid te voldoen asook om risikogedrag te toon wat gewoonlik met wanaanpassing geassosieer word. Ander studies toon gemengde resultate.
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