

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)

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An Undergraduate Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Department of Psychology,
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for the Degree of

BACHELOR OF ARTS IN PSYCHOLOGY

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ACCEPTANCE SHEET

This undergraduate thesis entitled “**LIVED EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)** prepared and submitted by **GANIELA KATHLEEN M. CATAPIA** and **MAELYN NICOLE A. PABLO**, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **BACHELOR OF ARTS IN PSYCHOLOGY**, is hereby accepted.


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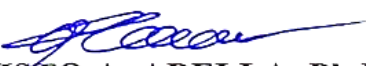
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She took her primary education in San Nicolas West Elementary School, where she was a consistent honor student and where she graduated as the class salutatorian. She attended her secondary education in Nueva Ecija University of Science and Technology. During her primary and secondary education, Ganiela is not only academically inclined but also active in participating in journalism competitions.

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ABSTRACT

CATAPIA, GANIELA KATHLEEN M. & PABLO, MAELYN NICOLE A.,
Department of Psychology, College of Arts and Sciences, Central Luzon State
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EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)**

Adviser: KAREN GRACE D.G. ALVAREZ

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) among three males and three females (> 18 years old) HIV positive (>1 year of diagnosis) following their HIV diagnosis and up to the present. The researchers used a narrative approach in interviewing the participants and analyzing the data gathered. Focal themes on the challenges experienced, effects of HIV on the lives of and coping strategies used by PLWHA were identified. The findings revealed that all participants suffered from a great amount of emotional disturbance that led to psychological problems such as depression and suicidal ideation following their HIV diagnosis. Notably, HIV stigma and discrimination predominantly arises within the family context but internalized stigma is prevalent among the participants. Furthermore, HIV support groups have significant roles on the development of positive perception and attitude towards HIV status among PLWHA. Interestingly, the belief that HIV is a death sentence is revealed in this study as a false notion, because due to ARV adherence, PLWHA are actually able to lead a longer, normal and healthy life. It is therefore recommended to HIV positive individuals to reach out to support groups and to government to provide additional funds for the conduct of seminars regarding HIV awareness.

Lived Experiences of People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study is to explore the lived experiences of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) among three males and three females (> 18 years old) HIV positive (>1 year of diagnosis) following their HIV diagnosis and up to the present. The researchers used a narrative approach in interviewing the participants and analyzing the data gathered. Focal themes on the challenges experienced, effects of HIV on the lives of and coping strategies used by PLWHA were identified. The findings revealed that all participants suffered from a great amount of emotional disturbance that led to psychological problems such as depression and suicidal ideation following their HIV diagnosis. Notably, HIV stigma and discrimination predominantly arises within the family context but internalized stigma is prevalent among the participants. Furthermore, HIV support groups have significant roles on the development of positive perception and attitude towards HIV status among PLWHA. Interestingly, the belief that HIV is a death sentence is revealed in this study as a false notion, because due to ARV adherence, PLWHA are actually able to lead a longer, normal and healthy life. It is therefore recommended to HIV positive individuals to reach out to support groups and to government to provide additional funds for the conduct of seminars regarding HIV awareness.

Keywords: HIV, Lived experiences, Stigma and discrimination, Coping strategies

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the CD4 cells (also known as T-helper cells) of the human body. These cells are responsible for the protection of the human immune system against other infections and diseases. As HIV causes to decrease the CD4 cell count of a person, it can lead to decline the immune system's ability to adequately protect the body (Kotze, 2011). Thus, HIV progresses to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) wherein the CD4 cells decline to 200 cells per cubic millimeter of blood (Calles, Evans, Terlonge, 2009). It is the most severe stage of HIV infection because the HIV has severely damaged the human immune system. In results, opportunistic infections will become increasingly more lethal as time progresses and will ultimately lead to death without treatment.

In Philippine setting, tuberculosis was the common HIV's opportunistic

infection followed by pneumonia while toxoplasmosis was the rarest (Salvana, Alejandria & Lim, 2012). But with the introduction of antiretroviral (ARV) medications, it provided a better treatment that helped many people with HIV/AIDS live longer. It may help weaken the spreading of the virus and prevent it from progressing to AIDS (Calles, Evans, Terlonge, 2009).

Since the discovery, HIV/AIDS has been one of the greatest health problems in the world and it places an increasing burden on the health of the population that causes further socioeconomic problems for individuals, families, communities, and governments in many countries (Walker et. al, 2004). A study by the World Health Organization on the global prevalence of HIV conducted in 2017 revealed that since the HIV discovery, 35 million people had already died because of HIV-related causes globally.

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