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Socio-cultural construction of HIV/AIDS stigma among African migrant women in Lower Saxony, Germany

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About 80,000 people are living with HIV in Germany with migrants from Sub-Saharan Africa having a high prevalence of all migrant groups. In 2010, a quarter of the women from SSA origin were newly diagnosed. Yet, many sexually active people do not know their HIV status. In so doing, HIV-related stigma stands as a major barrier in seeking VCT, especially within African communities. Gender and culture play a significant part in the aftermath of the infection. Women are more likely to be blamed for the transmission of HIV compared to men. All these complicate the disclosure of infection and prevention of HIV transmission. HIV prevention efforts are slowed down by societal and cultural factors that largely lead to the stigmatization

of infected individuals. The current research, therefore, examines the socio-cultural construction of HIV stigma, processes and women's shared experiences. The social context of HIV-related stigma is reflected in negative behaviors including discrimination, denial, secrecy, and self-blame. Most HIV infections are through heterosexual transmission, a mode of transmission closely linked to promiscuity and the resultant HIV-related stigma. The complexity surrounding HIV-related stigma cannot be ignored considering, it is layered amongst other stigmas such as gender. Therefore, intersectionality, a critical feminist race-gender concept was used in the theorizing process. Multiple factors often precipitate stigmatization experiences and their social identities at the individual level such as being female, ethnic minority, a low economic status which interlocks with oppressive forces at the macro level e.g classism or sexism, creating social injustice. It is vital to examine the underlying aspects

that create and re-enforces HIV-related stigma in order to design culturally sensitive intervention. The qualitative study was analyzed using interpretative phenomenological analysis approach, to gain a better understanding of their perspectives in its own term, than simply focusing on theoretical underpinnings. The study shows how the psychological impact of HIV continues to affect these women negatively in living fulfilled lives, impacting on their overall wellbeing. Thus, redefining HIV/AIDS from a social standpoint is imperative, considering its impact as a social disease. .

Biography

Joyceline Ntohyuh is a Feminist and is rounding up her Doctorate at the University of Oldenburg, Germany. She holds an MA in Women & Gender Studies from the ISS Erasmus University Netherlands. Her research interest includes HIV/AIDS-related stigma, gender issues, Sexual and Reproductive health. Since 2006 she took keen interest in the field of HIV/AIDS were she researched on

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the impact of HIV on Agriculture affecting mostly women with the UN FAO Gender unit(Italy), mainstreaming HIV policies in UNFFE(Uganda), HIV stigma &

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