

# Influence of Religion and Spirituality on HIV Positive People

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## Influence of Religion and Spirituality on HIV Positive People

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### ABSTRACT

Religion and spiritual beliefs have been frequently associated with greater psychological well-being among illness populations, little is known about the specific benefits individuals' receive from pooja and meditations. Our culture says it is necessary to remember God Constantly while doing our daily duties and tasks. We can make God as our companion; we can talk to Him, Consult Him, demand His help and guidance. People even force and blame Him for the difficulties they face in their day-to-day life. Along with this sometimes general notion of the human being is that, when difficulties come, it is the God who is not pleased with their act and even think that a curse from him, especially when the person is suffering from chronic illnesses. Religion can also be a product of coping when a person is in stress and can increase their religious faith. As part of an individual's general orienting system, religion influences how individuals appraise situations, participate in activities, and develop goals for themselves in particular when faced with difficult situations. The main aim of this paper is to know the influence of religion and spirituality on HIV positive people and the objectives are to understand the religious patterns and practices they follow especially at the time of crisis Secondly to identify the use of religion and spirituality as a coping mechanism during a chronic incurable illness like HIV/AIDS. The Research Design will be Exploratory in nature.

**Keywords:** HIV/AIDS, Religion, Spirituality, Well-being, Chronic illnesses, Coping Mechanism.

### 1. Introduction :

The study on Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is done by the people related to causes, symptoms, and effects, Health issues and the family with Psychological perspective, treatment etc have done by many researchers and one of the important component is the religion and the disease is studied in this paper. A small but growing number of studies conducted mostly within the past few years have recognized the importance of religion in the lives of individuals with HIV. Whenever the family is facing any crisis, like diseases, losses, financial crises, sudden death in the family etc is faced by the family, the first exclamation is "Oh my God", Help me, save me etc. A human being will try their level best

to treat the person or their family members or relatives are sick, all family members will be coming together join hands and help the family members who are sick and support them financially, socially, morally and physically. And try their level best to save the sick members especially in the case of heart attack, accidents, cancer and any other calamities in the family [1].

But in the case of HIV, this is opposite. In normal cases which are highlighted earlier, the members want to share the disease and the situation with close family members for their support, but in the case of HIV? They like to hide it with close relatives including their spouse and children [2]. When the person is sick especially their life partner they like to

help them, but in case of HIV, they like to blame each other than supporting an helping, When any death news comes from relatives, they will not see the situation and cancel all appointments, prior planned work and come for the crimination, but in case of HIV they are even denying their last rights. In fact, they differentiate them and do not want to relate with them. They curse them and blame the positive person for his disease [2].

## **2. HIV and Spirituality :**

HIV disease is most of the time is related to sexual behaviour and other related issue and nobody wants to talk openly, and it is considered that the victim has bad behaviour and he got the disease because of his risk behaviour. To overcome their sense of guilt and shame in engaging in risky behaviours, and to find a renewed sense of purpose in life, nobody wants to get this disease for themselves and any of their family relatives near or far. Research studies have shown, spirituality has a positive effect on mental and physical health, especially in chronic and incurable diseases. The studies have explored the influence of spirituality on purpose in life and well-being in persons living with HIV [3,4]. The religion and spirituality and its effect in coping up with the diseases and the day to day challenges there is a direct connection. And the effect will vary from male and female. The spirituality will be assessed how one is involved with his way of prayer and meditation and the way of life by accepting the limitations. No doubt people will trust God at their palliative stage when there are no hopes of living and people themselves surrender themselves to die peacefully.

## **3. Spirituality and coping mechanism :**

Coping means to the capacity of the individual to overcome the challenges in life. People generally use various coping mechanisms to overcome the disease and one among this is the spirituality. Religious coping among individuals with HIV have proved positive attitude in people as studied by the various researchers. Religion can also be a product of coping such that people can increase their religious faith as a result of life events. When any difficulties occur in life like ill health disasters, difficulties, loss including chronic illness like cancer, AIDS or any kind of

difficult situations, individuals have reported using a wide variety of religious coping methods, such as benevolent religious appraisals, seeking support from clergy or church members, seeking spiritual support, discontent with congregation and God, negative religious reframing, and expressing interpersonal religious discontent [7].

## **4. Positive and Negative coping strategies :**

The positive religious coping strategies may be seeking God's love and care, asking for forgiveness and strength to face the situation, the strength to breach the confidentiality and negative religious coping strategies are expressing anger at God, feeling punished by God, not going to Mosque, Church or temple, not performing poojas and daily prayer and ultimately becoming "Nasthik" (believing there is no God) [8]. Positive religious coping methods rest on a secure relationship with God, a belief in a larger, benevolent purpose to life, and a sense of connectedness with a religious community. Negative religious coping methods reflect a religious struggle that grows out of a more tenuous relationship with God, a more ominous view of life, and a sense of disconnectedness with a religious community. In some sense, negative religious coping occurs when major life stressors pose a threat or challenge not only to physical and psychological health and well-being but also to the individual's religious and spiritual world view [9].

## **5. Spirituality and Health :**

It is also important to note that religiousness and spirituality may have direct effects on health; that is, these phenomena may make distinctive, even unique, contributions to health and well-being [11]. In some of the empiric studies suggest that religious and spiritual resources hold particular value for people with HIV. It is also important to note that religion and spirituality may represent a source of pain and struggle for at least some people with HIV [12].

## **6. Spirituality and intervention in HIV treatment :**

Empirical studies suggest that religion and spirituality can be both resources for people with HIV and sources of pain and struggle. The counselor and social Practitioners have

begun to develop spiritually integrated interventions for this HIV positive population. Religion has been associated with a variety of indicators of mental health (ie, depression, positive effect, life satisfaction), after controlling for the effects of socio-demographic variables, global religious measures. Religious coping methods have also been associated with physical health. People will live for a longer period and found strong improvements in the self-rated health of elderly residents in deteriorating neighbourhoods who reported more positive religious coping.

Global measures of spirituality have also been significantly associated with positive psychological outcomes. Specifically, among women with HIV, greater engagement in spiritual activities is tied to decreased emotional distress, lower depression, greater optimism and overall better psychological adaptation. Spirituality and beliefs seemed to resolve their grief faster than those with no spiritual beliefs. Both men and women with HIV suggest that spirituality occupies a significant role, often providing them with a context in which they can find meaning in their lives, and stimulating psychological and spiritual growth.

Various issues common to people dealing with HIV/AIDS and addressed in Spirituality and one among is; will ***Light their way***'- This is the fundamental concern of the positive people to light their way by positive thoughts, communicate with everyone, peace of mind and body. This is possible through meditation, prayer, ritual, spiritual support etc. They may belong to any religion, any institution or affiliation to any caste spirituality will help them to overcome the difficulties and challenges and show light to their way; ***Healing***'- HIV affects people spiritually as well as psychologically, socially, and physically. Healing is a process, one that involves struggles and barriers along the way. Particular attention is paid to the key role spiritual resources may play in this journey to healing, including spiritual supplies like prayer, religious support, finding hope, gratitude. It is helpful in emotional, social, and physical support at the time of difficulty. Participants are also introduced to the critical existential and spiritual challenges like

healing, control, and surrender, letting go of anger, shame, and guilt, intimacy, and isolation, hopes, and dreams that must be faced and addressed if the participants are to succeed in their journey [13]. These existential and spiritual themes are the organizing foci for subsequent group sessions; ***Body and spirit***'- Individuals diagnosed with HIV often report feeling physically violated; every part of their lives seems to be in unhealthy forms of coping that may make them feel good initially but ultimately leaving those feeling empty. The HIV positive people find effective ways to ***"feed their spirit."*** People should be encouraged to identify healthy forms of coping like reading religious scriptures; ***Control and surrender***' - a sense of control and psychological health and well-being among individuals with a chronic illness have been consistently reported that they like to control their emotions anger and surrender completely to the God. HIV positive people can let go or surrender the uncontrollable aspects of their lives to a benevolent external force, such as a higher power or God. After identifying potential barriers to the process of surrendering their fear of loss of control, sadness, and anger. Positive people use relaxation exercise in which they are encouraged to surrender those things beyond their control to God; ***Shame and guilt***'- Individuals living with HIV often experience shame and guilt. These feelings are all the more prominent among women who anticipate leaving their children behind when the illness claims them. Shame and guilt have been associated directly and indirectly with higher levels of depression, avoidance coping, hopelessness, alienation, and loneliness among people with HIV normalize feelings of shame and guilt, explore their impact on healing, and encourage emotional disclosure and self-acceptance; ***Hopes and dreams***'- it is important for people to sustain a sense of meaning and hope during this traumatic time. One woman we interviewed illustrated how spiritual resources can play an important role in the movement toward hope [14].

## 7. Conclusion :

The challenge for people grappling with HIV is to acknowledge their limitations while simultaneously realizing that hope and

meaning remain a part of their lives. Their dreams and hopes will shatter after knowing the status. Spirituality will definitely help the positive people to overcome from their hopes and dreams partly. It will definitely not cure them rather get the courage to overcome from stigma and other effects of HIV. Their dreams will not be fulfilled like watching their children grow up; their future and settling them. Spirituality plays an important role in the health and well-being of people living with HIV. Further studies are needed that examine the longer-term impact of religiousness and spirituality, the specific coping resources and burdens that contribute to the positive or negative effects. Researchers have begun to design, implement, and evaluate spiritually integrated forms of intervention for people dealing with a variety of physical and emotional problems.

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