

LIVED EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE LIVING WITH  
HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY  
VIRUS IN DAVAO CITY



A Thesis

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## ABSTRACT

This research study used a qualitative phenomenological design about the lived experiences of People Living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (PLHIV) in Davao City. There were eleven respondents consisting of seven males, three females and one transgender all coming from the "Clinic" under the Davao City Health Office selected through snow ball sampling. FGD were conducted among the respondents and data were analyzed through thematic analysis. Findings describing the lived experiences of PLHIV revealed five emergent themes for intent number 1: physical changes, behavioral changes, emotional changes, lifestyle changes, and spiritual changes, five emergent themes for intent number 2: fear, discrimination, renewal of faith, pity, and acceptance, and five emergent themes for intent number 3: fear, self-blame, sadness and anger, regrets, and sacrifice. Interestingly, the results showed that lifestyle changes are warranted to prolong their lives. Discrimination and disclosure have huge impacts on their lives. The researchers recommend that misconceptions about the infection should be corrected and rightful disclosure of PLHIVs to the trusted select be promoted if they have not disclosed to anyone. Medical professionals should also be reminded on confidentiality, privacy and empathy.

*Keywords: lived experiences, people living with human immunodeficiency*

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background of the Study

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a retrovirus that infects the cells in the human body, especially those playing major roles in the immune system which is the body's protection against foreign agents that causes infections. As it goes on, the immune system grows weaker, making the individual infected more susceptible to other diseases. If left untreated, this will lead to Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). (Pantaleo, G. 2012)

According to World Health Organization (WHO), a rough estimate of 78 million people is infected by HIV globally. In 2013, there were 35 million people living with HIV and 1.5 million have died of AIDS. The Asia-Pacific region also has presented striking numbers of HIV-AIDS-related cases in the past years. Although the numbers have fallen; 250,000 individuals have died of AIDS-related causes in 2013.

In the Philippines, more Filipinos with HIV are dying (DOH, 2013). In 2014, HIV cases increased from 339 to 486 as per record in 2013. Most of them are males with a total of 15, 851. From the records of the City Health Office of Davao, in 2014, only 7% of the total population inflicted of HIV was reported coming from Region XI. In Davao City, there were 69 new cases of HIV and 20 cases of AIDS, listed in the first quarter of 2014. It summed up to 713 cases last September. Most of them were 25 to 34 followed by ages ranging from 15 to 24 with cases mostly found in the urban areas (Ramittere, J., 2015).

The possibility of the development of AIDS is due to late diagnosis of HIV and the failure to undergo Antiretroviral (ARV) Therapy or (ART). The treatment regimen entails having to take a combination of certain medicines that does not necessarily cure, but would prolong one's life by controlling the spread of infection. Although the said therapy is free, some individuals would not submit themselves to treatment because of certain personally perceived deterrence (Salvaña, E., 2013).

Experiences of people living with HIV varies. Stories on how they acquired the disease, how they dealt with initial result of being positive, and how they are living with HIV differ. Some went through hopelessness and despair before even accepting the fact, while others, stuck with whatever was spiritual for them to move on. The perception of the society makes things worse for them and that even nonverbal messages of people around them matter. (Nelson et al 2015)

This research aims to explore the lived experiences of people living with HIV in Davao City. The result of the study would help the medical field as well as the society to be informed about the needs and views of people living positive with HIV. This would also help in improving the programs of the Department of Health (DOH) currently running in terms of sensitivity towards PLHIV.

## Framework of Analysis

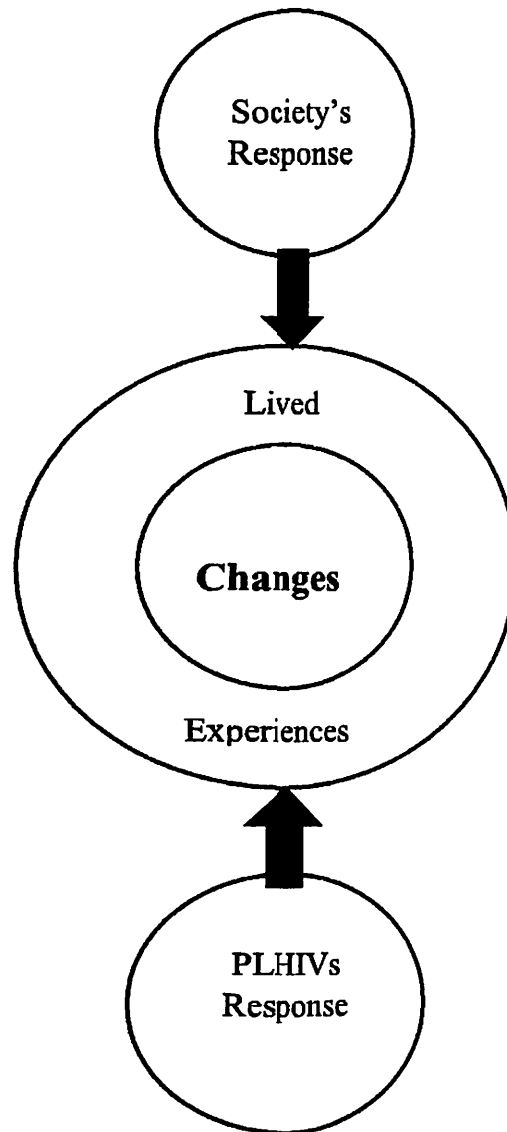


Figure 1: Framework of Analysis of the Study

The society's respond to the PLHIV and the respond of the PLHIV towards the diagnosis and the society are considered the driven factors that entail changes to the life of a PLHIV. The results of these changes are now the lived experiences of the PLHIV.

## Research Questions

This study aims to explore and describe the experiences of the people living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus here in Davao City specifically on:

1. What are the changes experienced by the respondents after being diagnosed with HIV?
2. How did the society respond to the respondents after the diagnosis?
3. How did the respondents respond to society's reaction?

## Scope and Delimitations of the Study

The study primarily explores the experiences of people who are inflicted with HIV regardless of their age, gender, marital status, and educational attainment and under antiretroviral (ARV) treatment. Also, it is limited to PLHIV diagnosed with HIV for 1 year and above, registered at the Clinic.

## Significance of the Study

Ateneo Community and Association International of Students in Economic and Commercial Sciences (AISEC). The information provided by this study gives emphasis on the social stigma faced by the HIV or AIDS victims in Davao City, this would be beneficial to the Ateneo community and AISEC following the Ignatian spirituality "Cura Personalis" for it will increase not just their awareness of the disease but will also deepen their understanding towards the needs of the victims as a holistic human being. This

study would strengthen their passion and knowledge in transforming society for common good.

Commission on Higher Education (CHED). This study would serve as a guideline that will support the integration of HIV/AIDS education in all of the health sciences subjects in tertiary level as pursuance to R.A.8504. This would also serve as a module of approach and instruction towards PLHIV.

Davao Community. This study aims to address the lived experiences of PLHIV and to further elaborate the fact that HIV is not an individual problem, rather social that affects everyone regardless of the age, race, status, color, religion, and educational attainment. This study would serve as an eye opener for Dabawenyos whether positive or negative to be empowered and united to move forward in fighting HIV.

Department of Education (DepEd). The information provided by this research may offer a great help for educational institutions in incorporating HIV information with health related subjects as pursuance of Republic Act 8504 that promotes HIV awareness, prevention, along with the corresponding rules and regulation that protects PLHIV.

Department of Health (DOH). The result of this study would enrich and expound the HIV programs of the DOH in promoting awareness, prevention, and counseling; also in implementing the rules and regulation of R.A. 8504 here in Davao City. By understanding the lived experiences of PLHIV, further formulation of programs that are accessible, directed toward PLHIV in holistic aspect would be made possible.

**Future Researchers.** This study is beneficial to the future researchers since it can be one of their literature and guide in conducting new research about HIV/AIDS with further improvements and inputs.

**HIV counselor.** This study would serve as an additional guideline for HIV counselors in enriching their knowledge and skills in dealing with PLHIV, this would help them to strengthen and thoroughly address the needs of the PLHIV and their families, to live a productive life, to be mentally, physically, emotionally stable despite of the infection.

**Nursing Academe in Davao City.** The information provided by this study would be beneficial to the nursing academe, since it will help them to produce future nurses with deeper knowledge and understanding towards PLHIV, such that their communication skills is therapeutic, accepting, and with regards to the views and opinions of the victim. It will also help them to be precise in planning their care plans that are client centered and with high regards to confidentiality.

**People Living with Human Immunodeficiency Virus (PLHIV).** This study aims to gain respect and empower HIV or AIDS victims by reaching out the gaps between them and the community. This study is significant to the PLHIV for it will voice out their daily struggles facing the complication of the disease and the existence of stigma in the community.

**Student Nurses.** This study would be beneficial for student nurses to be knowledgeable in all aspects of HIV/AIDS including the rights, management, approach,

attitude, and social factors which affects the inner and outer self of the person. It would lead them to practice valuing confidentiality and respect.

Southern Philippines Medical Center HIV and AIDS Core Team (SPMC-HACT). This study would serve as a guideline for the SPMC-HACT in evaluating their performances in rendering care, support, prevention, counseling, etc. On the other hand, this would give an additional input that will further improve their services for people living with HIV along with its families.

World Health Organization (WHO) Philippines. This study would strengthen the advocacy of the World Health Organization in empowering people living with HIV and their families to live a normal, happy, and blissful life despite of the infection. This study would allow them to reach the subunit of PLHIV in Davao City by giving them an overview of their lived experiences and incorporate it with the implementation of R.A. 8504 and the antiretroviral therapy.

## Definition of Terms

To comprehend this study better, the researchers have conceptually and operationally defined the following terms:

**Anti-Retroviral Therapy (ART or ARV).** According to Web MD (2015), it is a combination of several antiretroviral medicines used to slow the rate at which HIV makes copies of itself in the body.

**Gatekeeper.** In this study, it refers to the person responsible to contact the respondents based on the criteria given by the researchers.

**Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV).** According to Centers for Control and Disease Prevention, it a virus spread through body fluids that affects specific cells of the immune system, called CD4 cells, or T cells. Over time, HIV can destroy so many of these cells that the body can't fight off infections and disease. When this happens, HIV infection leads to AIDS. **Lived experience.** In this study, it refers to the event or personal experience of the people who had acquired HIV.

**People living positive with HIV.** According to World Health Organization, it refers to the individuals with confirmed positive results of HIV test.

**Clinic.** In this study, it refers to the substation that caters preliminary HIV testing.

**Acceptance.** In this study, it refers to the acceptance and support of the society towards the diagnosis of a PLHIV and the acceptance of a PLHIV about his/her condition.

**Anger.** In this study, it refers to the burst of intense emotional response of a PLHIV towards the society and vice versa.

**Behavioral Changes.** In this study, it refers to the transformation or modification of human behaviors of a PLHIV brought by the diagnosis and treatment.

**Emotional Changes.** In this study, it refers to initial reaction experienced by a PLHIV after being diagnosed as positive with HIV that changed their feelings and the way they affect their life.

**Discrimination.** In this study, it refers to an unfair treatment or distinction of the society against the PLHIV.

**Fear.** In this study, it refers to the unpleasant emotion or disturbed feelings experienced by the society against PLHIV and PLHIV to the society.

**Lifestyle Changes.** In this study, it refers to the lifestyle modifications of a PLHIV after the diagnosis and in adherence to the ARV treatment that would affect their overall health and well-being.

**Pity.** In this study, it refers of sorrow and sympathy experienced by the society towards the experiences suffered by the PLHIV.

**Physical Changes.** In this study, it refers to the changes in the shape and physical characteristics of the body that the PLHIV experiences with or without ARV.

**Regrets.** In this study, it refers to a PLHIV's disappointment about the major life changes brought by the disease.

**Renewal of Faith.** In this study, it refers a PLHIV's restoration of faith to God for divine intervention.

**Sacrifice.** In this study, it refers to a loss, or something that a PLHIV has given up for the sake of a better cause.

**Sadness.** In this study, it refers to the emotional pain felt by a PLHIV after being diagnosed and living with HIV.

**Self-blame.** In this study, it refers to a feeling of guilt and failure to do one's responsibility that lead a PHIV to blame his/herself.

**Spiritual Changes.** In this study, it refers to the alteration of spirituality and faith to God evenafter being diagnosed with HIV.