

HIV/AIDS stigma and its mechanisms among people living with HIV: The role of minority stress and social support in two temporal perspectives

In June 2019, thirty - eight years have passed since scientists firstly observed the cases of human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection, resulting in a previously unknown disease, the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Over all these years great progress in HIV treatment has changed the social outlook on HIV/AIDS from terminal to chronic and controllable medical problem. Moreover, nowadays an average life expectancy of people living with HIV (PLWH) does not significantly differ from life expectancy of the general population. Despite these positive factors PLWH still report lower well-being, not only in comparison to the general population, but also to patients suffering from other chronic diseases. Many studies proved that the reason for this paradoxical situation lies in still existing HIV/AIDS stigmatization, which *explicite* manifestations are changing, but its general level has remained relatively similar compared to the beginnings of HIV/AIDS epidemic.

Thus, in our project we want to examine psychological and social determinates of HIV/AIDS stigma among PLWH. Specifically, we want to investigate unique HIV/AIDS stigma mechanisms (i.e. internalised, anticipated and enacted stigma), which may be differently related to psychological, social and physical aspects of functioning among this patient group and what is the role of social support in this process. In addition, we want to check whether we could observe so called *stigma accumulation* among PLWH representing sexual minorities. To explore this phenomenon we will assess the minority stress level, which is the kind of stress experienced by minority stigmatized social groups (see, e.g. sexual minorities).

In our study we will combine two innovative modes of psychological assessment of the aforementioned study variables, i.e. classical longitudinal and intensive longitudinal design. With regard to this first mode of assessment we plan to conduct six assessments of the study variables with a 2-month time lag between measurements. Parallel, electronic daily diary studies will be performed for a subsample of the study participants from the classical longitudinal assessment. For two consecutive weeks, each evening the participants will fill online short versions of questionnaires send via hyperlink to their emails boxes. A single diary assessment will take about 5 minutes. Professional survey software dedicated to diary online measurements will be used to enable data collection.

To sum up, it is worth pointing to the potential benefits connected with this research project. Firstly, to our best knowledge the presented project describes the first research in HIV/AIDS literature, which combines such extensive theoretical model of HIV/AIDS stigma with such a novel methodological assessment. Secondly, better insight into mechanisms responsible for PLWH's stigmatization may help to create more effective ways of psychological help to reduce HIV/AIDS stigma and boost PLWH's well-being. Finally, we will realize this project in an agreement of cooperation between the Faculty of Psychology, University of Warsaw and the Institute of Psychology, SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw, which may foster the development of inter-university cooperation. Aforementioned factors are the sign of not only high scientific level but also social significance stemming from conducting the research, as presented in our project.