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Abstract

Stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS: a study of the Iranian community in the Sydney metropolitan area

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At the threshold of a new millennium, the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS) epidemic is still one of the worlds biggest health and development challenges. According to several studies, there is a growing body of the evidence of HIV-related stigma and discrimination in the world, which is documented, for instance, in Australia, USA, China, Hug Kong, Iran, India, Thailand, Indonesia, Argentina, Brazil and Botswana. The estimated number of people living with HIV/AIDS grew considerably from 34 million in 2000 to 40 million in 2004. Stigma and discrimination have been increasingly identified as important barriers to effective HIV/AIDS prevention. The issues of stigma, discrimination and denial have been poorly understood and often marginalized within national and international responses as the world has struggled to respond to the HIV/AIDS epidemic after twenty years. Moreover, according to current literature, there is insufficient information available on stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS especially among ethnic groups. Stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS are complex issues and simply providing accurate information about HIV/AIDS cannot combat HIV epidemic sufficiently. Therefore the complexities of public reaction to HIV/AIDS should be understood appropriately. Accordingly, in this study, the functional approach to attitudes is used to determine whether attitudes toward stigmatised groups reflect personal self-interest, or they are symbolic expressions of deeply held values. To determine whether attitudes toward HIV/AIDS infected people are primarily instrumental or symbolic, multiple aspects of AIDS stigma are assessing in an Iranian Ethnic group with a sample of adults (N = 200). With regards to the Attitude Functions Inventory, participants will be categorized in evaluative or expressive groups with respect to the dominant psychological function served by their attitudes. It is supposed that negative affects toward HIV/AIDS infected people will be mainly shown by expressive attitudes whereas behavioral intentions to avoid persons with AIDS will be shown by instrumental attitudes.

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