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EXPERIENCES OF PREGNANT WOMEN LIVING
WITH HIV/AIDS AT VHEMBE DISTRICT IN THE
LIMPOPO PROVINCE

By

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ABSTRACT

One of the greatest health challenges that threaten the human race in our time is the Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS). About 5.3 million South Africans are infected with the virus, of which 3 million are women above 15 years of age and 220 000 are children. The impact of death due to AIDS related illness is a tragic reality experienced by families, communities and the nation at large (National Department of Health Report, 2009:2). Amongst the women who were HIV-positive, about one in four pregnant women attending antenatal clinic were HIV-positive (Van Der Spuy, 2009:1). The purpose of this study was to explore and describe experiences of pregnant women who are living with HIV/AIDS at the Vhembe District of Limpopo Province. The objectives of this study were to explore and describe the experiences of pregnant women who are living with HIV/AIDS, to identify the challenges they faced and to determine the level of support they needed. The study was qualitative, explorative, descriptive, phenomenological, and contextual in nature. A purposive sampling method was used. Data were collected through in-depth individual interviews, guided by unstructured questions. Tesch's eight steps of qualitative data analysis were used. Measures to ensure trustworthiness and ethical issues were observed. The results of the study revealed that pregnant women who are living with HIV/AIDS were experiencing fear to disclose their status to their spouse/boyfriend, their in-law, their parents and siblings. They also experienced difficulties and challenges related to the support they received, fear related to being pregnant and living with HIV/AIDS. Recommendations in relation to the experiences of pregnant women living with HIV/AIDS, nursing practice, society, policymakers and research were thus made.

Key words: Experiences, HIV, Pregnancy, Living with HIV/AIDS.