

**D3**

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**Religiosity, Spirituality, Loneliness, and Social Isolation Among People Living with HIV**

**Background:** Healthy relationships, or social connections, are fundamental to well-being. Research on social connections typically incorporates two constructs: loneliness, which is the perception of inadequate social connection, and social isolation, which is a lack of, or infrequent social ties. Both have been associated with higher rates of psychiatric and substance use disorders and reduced well-being. Additionally, people living with HIV/AIDS may be at particular risk for loneliness and social isolation, which in turn may increase risk for depression and substance use. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the need to address these topics given regulations on social restrictions, reduced interactions, and personal loss.

**Methods:** Data was collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with study participants (n=33) enrolled in a longitudinal cohort study (MACS/WIHS Combined Cohort Study). Interview questions asked about study participants' social network and activities with and feelings about those social networks and experiences of loneliness. Interview data were transcribed, deductive and inductive codes were developed through an iterative process, and a final codebook was created. Data was coded and a thematic analysis conducted.

**Results:** Preliminary findings from thematic analysis include themes that center around the role of religiosity, defined as the commitment to religious beliefs, principles, or activities, in attenuating social isolation and loneliness. Religious service attendance may facilitate social networks, while spirituality, defined broadly as the belief in a greater entity or higher power, may shape participants' experiences of loneliness and recovery from substance abuse.

**Conclusion:** Findings will contribute to our understanding of religiosity, spirituality, loneliness, and social isolation in the lives of people living with HIV and can inform strategies to reduce loneliness and social isolation within medicine and public health.