

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COPING WITH
HIV&AIDS AND THE ASSET-BASED APPROACH**

by

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ABSTRACT

The *descriptive purpose* of this study was to explore and describe the manner in which a South African informal settlement community is coping with HIV&AIDS, by relying on existing assets and local resources. The *intervention-related purpose* was to explore how an activist intervention research approach might facilitate change and empower an informal settlement community in relation to community members' ways of coping with HIV&AIDS. Theoretically the study conceptualised asset-based coping, thus adding to available literature on the asset-based approach and coping. The practical value lies in documenting an example of one community's coping with HIV&AIDS, which may inform other communities during future capacity building initiatives. Furthermore, the study provides methodological knowledge concerning the potential value of employing activist intervention research within the context of coping with HIV&AIDS.

The conceptual framework of the study constituted the HIV&AIDS pandemic, coping theory and the asset-based approach. I followed a qualitative research approach guided by an interpretivist epistemology. I employed an instrumental *case study design, applying PRA (Participatory Reflection and Action) principles*. I purposefully selected the case (a South African informal settlement community and primary school through which I entered the community), as well as the participants (educators, community members and other stakeholders of the community). Data collection consisted of an *intervention (focus groups combined with workshops that relied on PRA informed techniques), interviews, observation, a field journal and visual data collection techniques*.

Four prominent themes emerged subsequent to inductive data analysis. ***The community experienced certain challenges and stressors within the context of HIV&AIDS.*** Besides general challenges like poverty,

unemployment and at-risk sexual behaviour, community members displayed vulnerability with regard to HIV&AIDS and identified challenges when supporting other people living with HIV&AIDS. ***Various assets and potential assets were identified in and around the community***, upon which the community might rely in coping with the challenges associated with HIV&AIDS. Thirdly, ***the community displayed certain trends in coping with HIV&AIDS***, relying on community-based coping to deal with being infected with HIV or living with AIDS, coping with other community members living with HIV&AIDS, or caring for children orphaned due to HIV&AIDS. Finally, ***participants' active involvement in the intervention research resulted in unchanged-, as well as changed coping strategies.***

Based on the findings, I conceptualised the construct ***asset-based coping***, defining it as the ability to deal with challenges, by identifying and mobilising existing assets, as well as external resources available. I proposed ***asset-based coping*** as one possibility of coping with HIV&AIDS.

In terms of research methodology, I combined research and intervention in an innovative manner, by developing and employing an activist intervention research approach. Active participation and their role as research partners enabled educators to experience increased levels of self-worth, take agency and be empowered in the context of community-based coping with HIV&AIDS.

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LIST OF KEY WORDS

- ⌘ Asset-based approach
- ⌘ Asset-based coping
- ⌘ Community-based coping
- ⌘ Community development
- ⌘ Coping with HIV&AIDS
- ⌘ Empowerment
- ⌘ Informal settlement community
- ⌘ Interpretivism
- ⌘ Interventionist research approach
- ⌘ Participatory Reflection and Action / Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)

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* *Included as hard copy*

* *Included as hard copy (selected items) and on compact disc*