



Forgiveness and Loneliness in HIV+ African-American Women: Anxiety's Correlates

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Introduction

Anxiety is associated with progression to AIDS (Hand, Phillips, & Dudgeon, 2006). Additionally, anxiety in general may cause individuals to isolate themselves, leading to an exposure to feelings of loneliness. Loneliness is associated with drug use and unsafe sexual practices, both which increase the risk of HIV transmission (Ware, Wyatt, & Tugenberg, 2006). People living with HIV are often stigmatized, to which forgiveness may mitigate the relationship between forgiveness and loneliness. Forgiveness, a positive cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses to interpersonal conflict, has been associated with less anxiety (Lin, Mack, Enright, Krahn, & Baskin, 2004).

Model



Hypotheses

- Forgiveness is negatively associated with state and trait anxiety.
- Loneliness is positively associated with state and trait anxiety.
- An increase in forgiveness and a decrease in loneliness will predict less state and trait anxiety.

Sample Demographics (n = 31)

	Mean	SD	Range
Age	47.52	9.03	24 – 66
Annual Income		Frequency (%)	
<\$10,000		17 (56.7)	
>\$10,000		13 (43.3)	

Sample Demographics Ctd.

Living Arrangement	Frequency (%)
Live Alone	11 (35.5)
Live with spouse/partner	7 (22.6)
Live with your children	6 (19.4)
Live with other family members	4 (12.9)
Live with parents/friends/in shelter	3 (9.6)

Measures

Heartland Forgiveness Scale (Yamhure, Snyder, Hoffman, & Rasmussen, 2002)

- 18 likert-type items
- Reliability: Published $\alpha = .83$
- Responses: (1 – 7)
1 = Almost Always False of Me
7 = Almost Always True of Me
- "I continue to punish a person who has done something that I think is wrong."

UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, 1996)

- 10 likert-type items
- Reliability: Published $\alpha = .89 - .94$
- Responses: (1 – 4)
1 = Often 2 = Sometimes
3 = Rarely 4 = Never
- "How often do you feel that you have nobody to talk to?"

State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (Spielberger, 1969)

- 20-item scales
- Responses (1 – 4)
1 = Not at All 4 = Very Much So
- State Anxiety Scale $\alpha = .89 - .94$
"I feel at ease"
"I feel upset"
- Trait Anxiety Scale $\alpha = .89 - .94$
"I am a steady person"
"I lack self-confidence"

Results

Univariate Statistics

Variable	Mean (SD)	Range	Possible Range	Calc. α
Forgiveness	110.61 (16.93)	95 – 132	87 – 149	.75
Loneliness	22.42 (8.57)	10 – 40	10 – 40	.95
S-Anxiety	44.84 (5.69)	33 – 55	20 – 80	.89
T-Anxiety	38.65 (9.40)	20 – 54	20 – 80	.87

Bivariate Statistics

Independent Variables:

	1	2	3	4
1. Forgiveness	----			
2. Loneliness	-.04	----		
3. State Anxiety	.53*	-.30	----	
4. Trait Anxiety	-.46*	.52*	-.77**	----

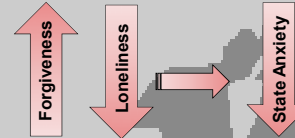
** p<.001 *p<.01

Regression Analyses

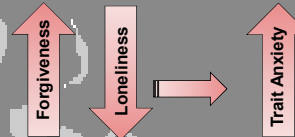
Predictors	State Anxiety	Tolerance	VIF
Forgiveness (p<.01)	.55 3.69	.999	1.001
Loneliness (p<.05)	-.33 -2.20	.999	1.001
	Adj. R ² = .35		
Predictors	Trait Anxiety	Tolerance	VIF
Forgiveness (p<.01)	-.48 -3.61	.999	1.001
Loneliness (p<.01)	.54 4.04	.999	1.001
	Adj. R ² = .47		

Discussion

Our first model showed that forgiveness is associated with decreased state anxiety.



Surprisingly, in our second model, more forgiveness and less loneliness contributed to more trait anxiety. One explanation for this relationship may be that more introverted people prefer to be alone. Thus, when placed in social contexts that require interaction with others which may call for forgiveness, they become more anxious. Additionally, loneliness may result from an avoidance coping behavior associated with disclosure and stigma issues for HIV+ African-American women. While forgiveness may reduce short-term anxiety, increased loneliness may only reduce trait anxiety due to the use of isolation as a coping mechanism for stigma.



Clinical implications may include treatment interventions that teach forgiveness and provide more adaptive coping strategies to combat anxiety.

Limitations

This study used a cross-sectional correlational design, so causality cannot be inferred.

The study's sample size is small and predominantly African American women; therefore, the generalizability is limited.

Data was obtained through self-report techniques.

References

See handout for references.