

Restoring women's dignity through fistula repairs Exploring the challenges and coping strategies of Zimbabwean women.

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE. This study identifies and analyses the impact of fistula repair towards the restoration of women's dignity and their coping strategies or methods of adjustment to society. The study is critical given the negative effects of fistula on the identities of women and their loved ones.

MATERIALS AND METHODS . The study employed a qualitative case study which used purposive sampling to select participants for in-depth interviews with seven women (age range 17 to 42). Data were grouped into themes and analysed. Thematic analysis identified the main themes as negative experience, stigma and positive coping strategies facilitating proper adjustment.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS . Social stigma continues even after surgery and is the major challenge that participants have to deal with daily affecting the level of integration into the community. It also threatened the extent to which fistula survivors can be perceived and perceive themselves as 'dignified'. Participants faced mental health challenges like anger, sadness, depression, anxiety, stress and shame. However, participants acknowledged that through family support, empowerment programmes and community support, they were slowly getting back to their normal lives.