

## Psychosocial Adjustment: A Comparative Study of HIV-Positive and Normal Females

Dr. Sushma Sharma<sup>1</sup>, Ms. Ruchi Mishra<sup>2\*</sup>

### ABSTRACT

The present study aims to compare psychosocial adjustment among HIV-positive and normal females. Adjustment is a key indicator of psychological well-being. Comparative cross-sectional research was conducted on 70 females, 35 HIV-positive (recruited from an ART centre), and 35 normal females (from the community). They were assessed on Sinha & Singh's Adjustment Inventory (Adult Form) to measure emotional, social, and health adjustment. Independent samples t-tests revealed that HIV-positive females reported significantly lower adjustment across all three domains. The conclusions highlight the need for psychosocial interventions and stigma reduction programme to improve the quality of life among women living with HIV.

**Keywords:** *Adjustment, HIV, HIV-positive females, Psychosocial functioning*

**H**IV/AIDS continues to be a important public health challenge in India, excessively affecting women (NACO, 2023). Adjustment refers to an individual's ability to cope with internal needs and external demands while maintaining psychological well-being (Coleman, 1976). Psychosocial adjustment, which refers to an individual's ability to maintain emotional balance, healthy relationships, and social functioning despite life stressors, plays a crucial role in coping with chronic illnesses (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Research in India has shown that HIV-positive individuals face stigma, discrimination, and psychological distress, which negatively influence their emotional and social well-being (Gupta & Sharma, 2016; Yadav, 2019). Nyamathi et al. (2017) reported that women living with HIV experienced low quality of life and high internalized stigma. Thomas et al. (2009) found that perceived stigma predicted mental health distress among HIV-positive women in Southern India. Social support is a protective factor, as demonstrated by Logie, Gadalla, and Thara (2012), who showed that strong social networks improve coping and adjustment. In spite of this, few studies have quantitatively compared adjustment between HIV-positive and normal females in India. The present study addresses this gap, studying adjustment among HIV-positive women is vital for designing culturally sensitive interventions.

<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Dayanand Girls PG College, Kanpur.

<sup>2</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Dayanand Girls PG College, Kanpur.

\*Corresponding Author

Received: November 03, 2025; Revision Received: February 05, 2026; Accepted: February 09, 2026

## Psychosocial Adjustment: A Comparative Study of HIV-Positive and Normal Females

**Objectives:** The main objectives of the study are:

1. To measure emotional, social, and health adjustment among HIV-positive females and normal females.
2. To compare mean adjustment scores between HIV-positive and normal females.
3. To study whether HIV status significantly affects psychosocial adjustment.

### METHODOLOGY

A comparative cross-sectional research design was conducted on the sample consisted of 70 females; 35 HIV-positive participants enlisted from an ART Centre and 35 age-matched normal females from the community.

**Tool Used:** Sinha & Singh's Adjustment Inventory (Adult Form) (1993) was used to measure three dimensions: Emotional Adjustment, Social Adjustment, and Health Adjustment. The reliability (test-retest = 0.85) and validity indices (concurrent validity = 0.62) support its use in Indian settings.

**Statistical Analysis:** Descriptive statistics (mean, SD, min, max) were calculated. To analyze the difference between two groups on Adjustment domains independent t-tests was used. Significance was set at  $p < .05$ .

**Procedure:** Participants were individually administered the inventory after informed consent. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained. Scores were calculated for each domain, with higher scores indicating better adjustment.

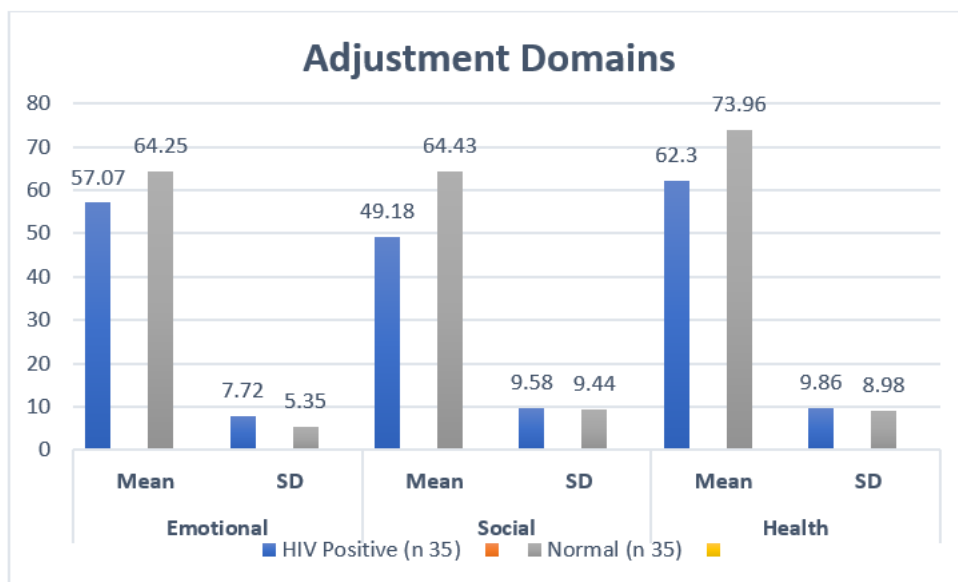
**Table 1** Descriptive Statistics for Adjustment Domains among HIV-Positive and Normal Females

Group	N	Emotional Mean (SD)	Min	Max	Social Mean (SD)	Min	Max	Health Mean (SD)	Min	Max
HIV-Positive	35	57.07 (7.72)	39.71	66.02	49.18 (9.58)	39.21	60.82	62.30 (9.86)	48.89	69.86
Normal	35	64.25 (5.35)	53.21	75.89	64.43 (9.44)	53.01	78.54	73.96 (8.98)	57.23	83.96

**Table 2** Independent Samples t-Test Results for Adjustment Areas among two Group:

Adjustment Area	t-value	p-value	Significance
Emotional	4.58	< .001	Significant
Social	6.71	< .001	Significant
Health	5.17	< .001	Significant

**Bar Diagram Showing the Adjustment Domains among HIV-Positive and Normal Females:**



**Interpretation:** HIV-positive females have significantly poorer adjustment compared to normal females in all the three areas of Adjustment.

## DISCUSSION

The present study found significantly lower adjustment scores which reflect increased anxiety, mood disturbance and emotional instability among HIV-positive females, supportive earlier findings by Nyamathi et al. (2017). Similarly, Kumar et al. (2017), highlighted that stigma and reduced self-esteem are associated with poor adjustment and coping abilities. HIV-positive women face challenges in social interactions, likely due to stigma and fear of disclosure.

Thomas et al. (2009), reported that perceived stigma significantly predicted mental health distress in HIV-positive Indian women, which aligns with our findings suggesting that stigma may be a key contributor to poor adjustment. Logie et al. (2012) further emphasized that social support acts as a protective factor; women with stronger support networks demonstrated better coping and adjustment. The present results thus underscore the need for psychosocial interventions focusing on stigma reduction, family counselling, and peer support groups to enhance adjustment levels in HIV-positive women.

These findings emphasize the importance of psychosocial interventions, including counselling, peer support, and community stigma reduction programs to enhance adjustment among HIV-positive women.

## CONCLUSION

HIV-positive females demonstrated significantly lower psychosocial adjustment compared to normal females. Interventions targeting emotional well-being, social support, and health coping are crucial. This highlights the psychological burden associated with living with HIV and suggests that comprehensive psychosocial care should be an integral part of HIV management.

**Significance of the Study:**

Understanding the psychosocial adjustment patterns among HIV-positive females is essential because women living with HIV often face multi-layered challenges — including stigma, discrimination, social isolation, and emotional distress, which can adversely affect their mental health and overall quality of life. This study highlights the psychosocial inequalities that exist between these two groups. The findings can help psychologists, counsellors, and healthcare providers to design targeted intervention programs aimed at improving emotional resilience, social support systems, and coping mechanisms among HIV-positive women.

In the Indian context, where cultural taboos and gender inequalities often exacerbate the emotional burden of HIV, such a study provides empirical evidence that can influence policy formulation, awareness campaigns, and community-based mental health services.

**REFERENCES**

- Chandra, P. S., Desai, G., & Ranjan, S. (2005). HIV & mental health: An overview of research from India. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 47(1), 27–33. <https://doi.org/10.4103/0019-5545.46067>
- Coleman, J. C. (1976). *Abnormal psychology and modern life* (5th ed.). Scott, Foresman and Company.
- Kumar, S., Mohanraj, R., & Manhart, L. E. (2017). Stigma and psychosocial well-being among women living with HIV/AIDS in Southern India. *Journal of the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care*, 16(3), 252–258. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2325957416686195>
- Logie, C. H., Gadalla, T. M., & Thara, R. (2012). HIV-related stigma and social support among women living with HIV in Southern India. *Women & Health*, 52(4), 366–382. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03630242.2012.681467>
- Mahajan, A. P., Sayles, J. N., Patel, V. A., Remien, R. H., Ortiz, D., Szekeres, G., & Coates, T. J. (2008). Stigma in the HIV/AIDS epidemic: A review of the literature and recommendations for the way forward. *AIDS*, 22(Suppl 2), S67–S79. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.aids.0000327438.13291.62>
- Nyamathi, A. M., Ekstrand, M., Yadav, K., Ramakrishna, P., Heylen, E., Carpenter, C. L., Wall, S., Oleskowicz, N., Arab, L., & Sinha, S. (2017). Quality of life among women living with HIV in rural India. *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care*, 28(4), 575–586. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jana.2017.02.004>
- Nyamathi, A. M., Heravian, A., Zolt-Gilburne, J., Sinha, S., Ganguly, K., Ramakrishnan, P., Marfisee, M., & Leake, B. (2011). Correlates of depression among rural women living with AIDS in Southern India. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, 32(6), 385–391. <https://doi.org/10.3109/01612840.2011.558762>
- Patel, V., Kirkwood, B. R., Pednekar, S., Weiss, H., & Mabey, D. (2006). Risk factors for common mental disorders in women: Population-based longitudinal study. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 189(6), 547–555. <https://doi.org/10.1192/bjp.bp.106.022558>
- Satyanarayana, V. A., Burroughs, T., Heylen, E., Yadav, K., Sinha, S., & Ekstrand, M. L. (2021). The effect of maternal depression on child social competence: Evidence from mothers living with HIV in rural India. *AIDS Care*, 33(3), 350–356. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540121.2020.1792861>
- Sinha, A. K. P., & Singh, R. P. (1993). *Manual for Adjustment Inventory for Adults*. National Psychological Corporation, Agra, India.
- Thomas, B., Nyamathi, A. M., Swaminathan, S., Venkatesan, P., Fahey, J. L., & Kumar, S. (2009). Correlates of perceived stigma among women with HIV in Southern India. *AIDS and Behavior*, 13(6), 1302–1308. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10461-009-9588-0>

***Acknowledgment***

The author(s) appreciates all those who participated in the study and helped to facilitate the research process.

***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

***How to cite this article:*** Sharma, S. & Mishra, R. (2026). Psychosocial Adjustment: A Comparative Study of HIV-Positive and Normal Females. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 14(1), 407-411. DIP:18.01.037.20261401, DOI:10.25215/1401.037