

# HIV transmission risks: narratives of rural women in eastern Kenya living with HIV

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## **Abstract:**

As people live longer and more productively with HIV infection, issues of agency in reducing HIV risk are particularly important for HIV-infected women living in high prevalence, underresourced countries such as Kenya. Because of their gendered lives, in that being masculine is associated with dominance and being feminine is associated with passiveness, women in rural Kenya must cope with continued HIV transmission risk even after knowing they are infected with HIV. In this narrative interview study, informed by theories of gender and postcolonial feminism, we examined personal accounts of HIV risk and risk reduction of 20 rural women in eastern Kenya who were living with HIV. From our analysis of the women's narratives, two major themes emerged: gender-based obstacles even in the context of a known HIV diagnosis, and struggles with economic pressures amid HIV risks. Implications for policy, programs, and research are discussed.