



Exploring the Association between Water Salinity and Hypertension Prevalence: A Qualitative Study in the Sine-Saloum Delta, Senegal

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Abstract

Coastal communities in the Sine-Saloum delta, Senegal, are exposed to elevated water salinity. Hypertension is a major public health issue in the region, and a connection with saline water consumption has been suggested, but qualitative evidence is scarce. This study aimed to explore community perceptions and lived experiences concerning water salinity and hypertension, to understand the perceived association and its influence on daily life and health-seeking behaviours. A qualitative study was conducted using semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with community members and local health workers. Participants were recruited from multiple villages via purposive sampling. Data were analysed using thematic analysis. Participants consistently perceived a direct causal link between consuming salty water and developing high blood pressure. A prominent theme was the adaptation strategy of seeking alternative, less saline water sources, which was frequently described as burdensome and economically costly. Many reported a perceived reduction in hypertension symptoms when using rainwater or purchased bottled water. Community perceptions strongly associate water salinity with hypertension prevalence. This perceived link significantly shapes water-seeking behaviours and imposes a socio-economic burden on households. Public health strategies should integrate these community perceptions into hypertension prevention programmes. Interventions to improve reliable freshwater access are needed. Further research is required to quantify the physiological association. hypertension, water salinity, qualitative research, Senegal, community perceptions, public health This study provides qualitative evidence on the perceived link between water salinity and hypertension in a Senegalese coastal community, offering context for public health planning and future epidemiological research.

Keywords: *Water salinity, Hypertension, Qualitative study, Sub-Saharan Africa, Groundwater consumption, Public health, Environmental health*

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