

## **Socio-Cultural Factors Influencing Adherence to Anti-Retroviral Therapy among HIV Patients in a University Teaching Hospital in South-Western Nigeria**

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**Abstract :** The study investigated various socio-cultural factors influencing adherence to antiretroviral drugs among people living with HIV in a University Teaching Hospital in South-western Nigeria. The objectives are to examine the perception of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) of antiretroviral therapy (ART) in Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex, Ile-Ife, investigate the influence of socio-cultural factors on adherence of PLWHA to treatment regimen in the study area and assess the prevalence of adherence to ART among PLWHA in the study area. It was a cross-sectional where both qualitative and quantitative research methods were adopted. The participants were HIV diagnosed patients attending clinic at the Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospitals Complex in Ile-Ife between the ages of 18 and 60 years. Also three healthcare delivery personnel working in the clinic were interviewed. Out of the 3007 patients receiving treatment, using Fischer's formula of sampling technique, 336 patients living with HIV/AIDS were selected for the study. These participants had been on antiretroviral drugs for more than six months prior to the study and were selected using simple random sampling technique. Two focus group discussion sessions comprising of 10 male and 10 female living with HIV and currently on ART were conducted. These groups were purposively selected based on their being on ART for more than one year. Also in-depth interviews were conducted among three purposively selected healthcare givers (an experienced nurse, a doctor and a pharmacist) who are working in this clinic. All the participants were interviewed at the clinic on the various clinic days. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire, an interview guide and tape-recorder. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Content analysis was employed to analyse responses from IDI and FGD sessions. The findings from the study revealed a very positive perception to ART among PLWHA which was about 86.3% while the level of adherence to ART was 89.0% among the respondents. There was a very strong relationship between social and family supports and the degree of adherence to ART in the PLWHA. Nutrition, polygamy, difficulty in financing transportation fare to the clinic, unemployment, drug hawkers, religion, excuse duty from work and waking up very early were highlighted as socio-cultural barriers to adherence to ART. Fear of death, strong family support, religion belief, not seeking alternative treatment, absence of rituals and perceived improved health status were identified as very strong facilitators to adherence. The study concluded that to achieve a very optimal outcome in the management of HIV among PLWHA, various social and cultural contexts should be taken into consideration as this study was able to ascertain the influence of various socio-cultural factors militating and facilitating adherence to ART.

**Keywords :** ART, HIV, PLWHA, socio-cultural

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