Examining The Forms Of Social Support For People Living With Hiv And Aids In Nigeria: A Systematic Review

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Abstract: This paper aims to assess the forms of social support for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in Nigeria and its impact on their health conditions. Social support for PLWHA may come in various forms depending on the situations of the recipients and the support groups or individuals providing such assistance. Social support may be received from family members, religious leaders, community leaders, friends, co-workers, groups, organisations, and institutions. The support can come at the initial stage of the infection or later. When someone is diagnosed HIV positive, due to misconception of how the virus is spread from the victims to other people, the person may likely start to face some problems than could affect him socially, economically, educationally, and emotionally. If nothing is done to assist him, his disease condition may worsen and trigger people with HIV/AIDS to conceal their disease condition leading to the rapid dissemination of the virus. By and large, this will affect the community negatively in various ways. This paper intends to critically review related literature to determine the forms of social support for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in general and in Nigeria in particular. At the end of this paper, recommendations will be provided on how to increase the dimension and rate of social support to PLWHAs. This can be achieved through the public campaign and massive enlightenment to emphasize the significance of social support for PLWHA. The role of the stakeholders cannot be overstated in this respect. The federal, state, and local governments, health personnel, traditional leaders, religious leaders, local and international organisations, support groups, institutions, family members should play a very significant role in this aspect to remedy the daunting condition of the victims.

Key Words: Examining, Forms of social support, Nigeria, PLWHA,

1 INTRODUCTION

This paper aims to examine forms of social support for people living with HIV or human immunodeficiency virus that attacks cells which assist the body in fighting infection, exposing a person more susceptible to other infections and diseases. First recognized in 1981, HIV is the cause of one of humanity’s deadliest and most persistent epidemics. It is transmitted by contact with certain bodily fluids of a person with HIV, most usually for the period of unprotected sex (sex without a condom or HIV medicine to prevent or treat HIV), or by sharing injection and equipment. If not untreated, HIV could cause the disease AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome). The human body can’t get rid of the virus, and there is no treatment. So, the virus is lifelong with the infected person. Conversely, by taking HIV drugs (known as antiretroviral therapy or ART), people with HIV may live long and healthy lives and avoid transmitting HIV to sexual partners. Furthermore, there are effective techniques to prevent acquiring HIV via sex or drug use, including pre-exposure prophylaxis PrEP and post-exposure prophylaxis(PEP). The AIDS is the late stage of HIV infection that happens when the virus heavily injures the body’s immune system (T6). Social support denotes to any form of assistance accorded to someone in need which can be money, food, shelter, information, concern, sympathy etc.

2 FORMS OF SOCIA Support

Social support for people living with HIV/AIDS comes in various ways from family, government, non-governmental organisations at local, national and international levels, religious and traditional leaders and other support groups. The support comes in forms of drugs, health services, food, clothes, money, shelter, information, sympathy, acceptance, respect and so on. For example, the ART are sold at a very subsidised rate to all the registered HIV/AIDS patients in all the government hospitals that render HIV/AIDS services such as Aminu Kano Teaching Hospital. This support improves the health status of the patient and the quality of their life. According to [10], people use various methods to provide support to one another. The following are considered as forms of social support:

1. Emotional Support: This form of support commonly includes physical comfort such as hugging or patting on the back, and giving attention and sympathizing. With this form of support, friends and partners might give a suppressing hug and pay attention to someone’s problems, to show that they’ve felt the same way, too.
2. Esteem Support: This kind of social support is concerned with giving confidence or inspiration. Someone providing esteem support may remind one about his strengths he is forgetting have possessed, or letting him know they believe in him.
3. Informational Support: This is concerned with the type of support to offer informational support in terms of advice, or in disseminating information that may help others to know their potential that may work fine.
4. Tangible Support: Tangible support has to do with
Emotional support
This is what people usually think of when they are talking about social support. People are considered emotionally supportive when they care about others. For instance, if one detached from his partner or lost his job, a close friend might call daily for the first few weeks afterward to hear how he is coping and to allow him know that they care about him.

Practical help
People who care about others could give them practical aid such as gifts of money or food, assist with cooking or childcare, or help in other things. This form of support helps them accomplish their tasks in daily life.

Sharing points of view
Some people provide help by sharing their opinions on a particular issue or sharing how they might manage situations. When people exchange ideas, they could develop a better understanding of a situation and the easiest way to tackle it. For instance, if someone narrates to his friend about the problems he is facing with his teenage son, he may offer the right solution he hadn’t think before. This can help him to address the situation easily.

Sharing information
It may be advantageous when family and friends or even experts give realistic information about a particular situation. For example, a friend who newly married might provide information on the cost of their wedding, or an HIV/AIDS survivor might offer information on different types of management strategies. Information is one of the essential components of social support accorded to people living with HIV/AIDS. The strengths and credibility of religious leaders and their intimacy to the communities offer them the privilege to make an actual disparity in discontinuing the spread of HIV/AIDS. Hence, any information on HIV/AIDS communicated by religious leaders is significant in altering the attitudes and the behavioural patterns of their supporters about the epidemic.

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health education about the significance of couples have HIV tests and counselling. According to [8], success could not, according to the Ugandan government, be possible without the support of the religious organisations in the country. Generally, traditional method of healing in Africa complements the modern technique of management of HIV/AIDS victims to a very large extent. Most patient prefer treatment from traditional healers because it more accessible, affordable easier and cheaper. Some traditional healers also claim that they can cure the disease completely as opposed to modern medicine which vividly asserts that there is no treatment for HIV/AIDS. Traditional healers play a very crucial role in supporting people living with HIV/AIDS in African countries. They are regarded as herbalists, spiritualists, diviners, priests, and faith healers. They are highly respected, and great importance is attached and adhered to whatever they say. UNAIDS (as cited in [5]), asserts that, in countries that have implemented quick, well-planned efforts with people from political and religious leaders, including sex education in schools, treatment of STDs (sexually transmitted diseases), and widely promoted condom use, HIV prevalence has been kept consistently low and has even decreased in some countries in the last five years. [5] Opines that yet, cases of diminished of HIV prevalence are still the exception, and several developing nations are striving to discover innovative, cost-effective strategies that are pertinent in their AIDS condition. In resource-constrained setting, one way that has been seldom traveled in cooperation with the native health system.

He further adds that:

1. Traditional healers often outdo doctors by 100 to 1 or more in most African countries. They afford a large accessible, available, affordable trained human resource pool.
2. They usually see their patients in the presence of other family members, which emphasizes the traditional healers role in promoting social stability and family counselling.
3. They are commonly respected healthcare providers and opinion leaders in their respective communities and, therefore, are treating high numbers of people living with HIV/AIDS. Healers have superior credibility than village health workers (who are often their counterparts in village setting), particularly within terms of social and spiritual matters.
4. They offer client-centred, personalized healthcare that is appropriate culturally, all-inclusive, and intended to meet the needs and expectations of the patients. Traditional healers are traditionally close to clients, which cases communication about illnesses and related social issues. This is especially significant case of STDs.

In a research conducted in Tanzania titled: Health and social support services to HIV/AIDS infected individuals in Tanzania: employees and employers perceptions, the findings reveal that: HIV/AIDS infected employees vividly stated treatment and nutritional support, and soft loans as well as reduced workload correspondingly, as the most vital health and social supports they required from their establishments. This study makes available baseline information for additional studies in providing health and social support services by employers to their HIV/AIDS infected staff within the context of developing countries like Tanzania [4]. Nigeria is highly dedicated to supporting people living with HIV/AIDS in the country. It works in collaboration with so many and different partners both at international and local levels to limit the dissemination of HIV and improve the quality of life of the victims. According to [12], Nigeria has a compelling political commitment to address HIV/AIDS. The National Action Committee on AIDS is in charge of the global multisectoral coordination of the response to the HIV/AIDS prevalent in Nigeria. The Federal Ministry of Health affords leadership to the health sector response. The following are the Partners offering support for developing the National Health Sector Plan for HIV/AIDS: WHO, UNAIDS, UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, the United States Agency for International Development, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the United States President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, the Society for Family Health, Pathfinder International, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, the Network of People with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, the World Bank, the Civil Society Consultative Group on AIDS in Nigeria and Médecins Sans Frontières. In a research conducted by [1] on the impact of care and social support on wellbeing among people living with HIV/AIDS in Nigeria, they stated that the study observed the impact of care and social support on health outcomes amongst people living with HIV/AIDS in southwest Nigeria. It evaluated the effect of social, economic, psychological, and environmental factors on health status and well-being among them. Based on the hypothesis that individuals who have access to care, social support, and ARV therapy will experience great health outcomes than those who do not have such opportunity, it records how these aspects impact on the livelihood, coping mechanisms, and health outcomes among this population of the study.

3. CONCLUSION
Social support for people living with HIV/AIDS refers to any help or assistance rendered to any person living with HIV/AIDS to relieve him/her from stigma, discrimination, psychological stress, social and economic deprivation aimed to minimize the spread of HIV infection and enhance their health status and quality life. Social support comes in various forms as highlighted in the paper. It can be in terms of health education, advice, reassurance, drugs, health-related services, educational support, employment, clothes, shelter, etc. friends, social support can be provided by spouse, family, employer, workmate, government, religious leaders, traditional leaders, traditional healers, organisations, philanthropists, associations, non-governmental organisations and so. The significance of this support cannot be overemphasized in improving the quality of life of people living with HIV/AIDS in particular and the society in general. Hence, there is every need to mobilize the community on the significance of social support.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS
1. The government should rededicate its effort in the provision of social support in various forms to people living with HIV/AIDS not only in health-related materials.
2. The government should reinforce the laws that protect the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS in the state.
3. Policies should be provided to ensure PLWHA have equal opportunity in terms of employment in both the
4. People living with HIV/AIDS should have equal opportunity as other people to acquire education.
5. Families and friends need to provide more social support to people diagnosed with HIV positive or AIDS victims.
6. Philanthropists and wealthy individuals should pay more attention to HIV/AIDS concerning social support.
7. International and local non-governmental organisations should intensify their effort in supporting people living with HIV/AIDS financially, economically, socially, and health-wise.
8. People living with HIV/AIDS should form viable support groups to steer their activities and serve as a pressure group in protecting their interests and sourcing more social support local, state, national and international levels.
9. Kano is a Muslim state, and therefore, the religious leaders should play a stronger role by the position in giving spiritual and moral support to people living with HIV/AIDS.
10. Traditional healers should work in collaboration with biomedical healthcare providers and need to be more available, accessible, and affordable.
11. Traditional leaders are very close to people, and their voice has more weight. Given this, they should sensitize the community members on the importance of helping sick persons, especially those with a lifelong disease like HIV/AIDS patients in the state.

REFERENCES