

Information needs and information seeking behaviour of people living with HIV/AIDS in university of Nigeria teaching hospital Ituku/Ozalla, Enugu state

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the information needs and resource utilization by people living with HIV/AIDS in University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Ituku/Ozalla, Enugu state. Five research questions guided the study. Descriptive survey research design was adopted for the study. The population for the study comprised of 4000 people living with HIV/AIDS that are admitted or coming for regular checkup at the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital, Ozalla, Enugu state. The researcher used the purposive sampling technique to select 52 PLWH. The main instruments for data collection was questionnaire. Data collected was analyzed using descriptive statistics of mean scores. The study found that the information needs of PLWH were on latest treatment options, mental health resources, financial support, and navigating personal relationships, among others. The information seeking behavior of PLWH were predominantly on regularly seeking information about new treatments, understanding treatment plans from various sources such as healthcare provider, websites and forums, relying on peer networks and NGOs, and using social media, among others. The sources of information by PLWH were healthcare providers, support.

1. Introduction

Access to accurate and timely information is a critical determinant of health outcomes for people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA), influencing their ability to manage the disease and maintain quality of life. Understanding the specific information needs and seeking behaviors of PLWHA is essential for designing effective information services that empower these individuals in their healthcare journey. In the context of University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla, where HIV/AIDS remains a significant health challenge, exploring how patients seek, access, and utilize information can illuminate gaps and opportunities to enhance support systems tailored to their unique circumstances.

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the body's immune system, specifically the CD4 cells (T cells), which are crucial for immune defense. HIV is primarily transmitted through unprotected sexual contact which could be hetero, homo or bisexual, sharing of contaminated needles including sharp or blunt needles; and from mother to child during childbirth or breastfeeding (Tukur, 2015). It can also be transmitted through blood transfusion with infected blood. According to Agbaji et al (2015), if left untreated, HIV can lead to Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), a condition characterized by a severely weakened immune system, making individuals susceptible to opportunistic infections and certain cancers.

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) is the matured and extreme result from HIV. While there is currently no cure for AIDS, antiretroviral therapy (ART) has been effective in suppressing viral replication, thereby improving the quality of life and life expectancy of those infected (Adejumo & Adejumo, 2018). Most especially, AIDS as a deadly disease is very contagious doing sexual intercourse involving a man and woman who do not use protection. This disease (AIDS) is highly discriminating and is seen to be an infection that do not have a reliable cure at the moment.

Early diagnosis and consistent treatment of HIV are essential for managing the virus and preventing its progression to AIDS among the People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA)

People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) refers to individuals who are infected with the Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) and those diagnosed with Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). According to Ezeani and Igwesi (2016) People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) face numerous challenges, including health complications, social stigma, and psychological stress. In Nigeria, approximately 2 million individuals were living with HIV as of 2023, with a prevalence rate of 1.3% among adults aged 15-49 (Ajuwon, 2023). This deadly virus among the PLWHA destroys the body's immune system, thereby making it impossible for the body to fight certain infections. Therefore, People Living with HIV/AIDS are supposed to be provided with their information needs to help them keep abreast and stay healthy.

Information needs are referred to as the particular information required by a person to enable them to attain their academic, social, cultural, leisure and educational goals. According to Bharat and Kendra (2016) this information needs is highly sought for to solve people's needs and facilitates all round development of an individual. In relation to library parlance, information needs are information a library user requires to satisfy his or her information demands and curiosity. According to Huber and Cruz (2000) Information needs are also referred to as all the reference services, user education, internet access, website services provided, E-print services, consultation services etc rendered to users of the library in the process of pursuing their individual needs. Okon and Ugwanyi (2017) described information needs as a term comprising information demand and information desires.

Information need is generally understood as a critical requirement that an individual must possess to effectively perform tasks, and it significantly shapes information-seeking behavior. In related studies, Achebe and Onyemaechi (2023) emphasized how cognitive and behavioural factors influence decision-making processes among adolescents. Similarly, Onwuka et al (2022) highlighted how gender dimensions shape behavioural responses in institutional settings. Furthermore, Onyemaechi et al. (2025) demonstrated that social and psychological support systems play a key role in addressing individuals' needs and adaptive behaviours. Collectively, these studies reinforce the view that information needs are central to human behaviour and performance outcomes.

Information seeking behavior can be defined as the patterns of behavior that people display when they experience information needs, make choices about where and how to look for information, and reflect or act on the information they see. Information seeking behavior refers to the ways in which individuals search for, access, and use information to meet their needs (Hjørland, 2015). It involves various activities, including searching, browsing, and evaluating information. Information seeking behavior is shaped by various factors, including the individual's information needs, knowledge, and context (Wilson, T.D, (2016). The information seeking behavior entails the various ways People Living with HIV/AIDS can recognize, access, and make the most of information to meet their shared and individual needs. Therefore, stakeholders has a role to play in supporting the information needs of People Living with HIV/AIDS

Currently in Nigeria, most University Teaching Hospital and General hospitals are mandated to cater for these people living with HIV/AIDS and they are supported with information that are utilized for their use on how to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS (Nwagwu, 2016). These Teaching Hospitals have libraries in them that acquire and disseminate information to their patients and users. University of Nigeria teaching hospital Ituku/Ozalla is a state-owned Teaching Hospital domiciled and controlled by the Enugu state government. It is also a learning institution for medical students, nursing and other medicals undergraduates. The facilities they provide are life saving machines, diagnosis and emergency facilities for PLWHA. But presently, it is unclear if the information needs of these people living with HIV/AIDS are met and there is also uncertainty if their information seeking behavior has been improved towards effective and accessible information needs. Therefore,

this study critically examined the information needs and information seeking behavior of people living with HIV/AIDS in University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla.

Statement of Problem

In an ideal scenario, individuals living with HIV/AIDS are supposed to have comprehensive access to accurate, timely, and relevant information tailored to their specific health needs. This would empower them to make informed decisions regarding their treatment options, preventive measures, and overall well-being. Library staffs in these University Teaching Hospitals are also expected to actively facilitate this information exchange, ensuring that patients are well-informed and supported throughout their care journey.

At present, there is a notable lack of adequate information available to these patients. Many individuals with HIV/AIDS encounter challenges in accessing pertinent information, which can impede their ability to manage their health effectively. Most existing studies on HIV and AIDS have focused largely on clinical and treatment-related issues, while giving limited attention to the information needs and information-seeking behavior of patients. Existing studies appear to have given limited attention to how individuals living with HIV and AIDS access, interpret, and utilize health information, particularly within Nigerian healthcare settings, NGOs, and social media platforms among others. patient education. Therefore, this study was motivated by the need to address these deficiencies. This has however, provided a gap in the study. This gap in the literature hinder development of targeted interventions aimed at improving information dissemination and s by investigating the specific information needs and seeking behaviors of people living with HIV/AIDS at University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla.

Research questions

1. What are the information needs of people living with HIV/AIDS in University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla?
2. What is the information seeking behavior of people living with HIV/AIDS in University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla?

Methods

A descriptive survey research design was used for the study. Nwogu (2015) defined descriptive survey as the collection of data aimed at describing a particular events or population with the same characteristics and making generalization. It is deemed suitable for this work since it will describe and find out the information needs and information seeking behavior of people living with HIV/AIDS in University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla. The reason for choosing University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla as the area of study is because it is a health institute that registers people living with HIV/AIDS as well as proved drugs and other health and social aids to them. The area of the study is University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla. It is a state-owned teaching hospital that is domiciled by management structure of University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla. The University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla is located in Enugu state which is a highly populous state located in the South East of Nigeria. Statistics have shown that Enugu state had 0.2% prevalence of People Living with HIV/AIDS in 1991, but within six years, the prevalence rose to 4.3 % and then 5.8% in 2014, and 8.1% in 2017, and 11.4% in 2021. Being a large cosmopolitan state, certain factors have been identified that increase the HIV epidemic in the state to include poverty, illiteracy, unprotected sex and stigmatization which play a role in making the PLWHA hide their identity and infect other people in the process (Nwokedi, 2018).

The population of the People Living with HIV/AIDS from the records of the teaching hospital is 4000 (University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla, PLWHA records, 2025). The population of the study was the People Living with HIV/AIDS that are admitted or coming for regular

checkup at the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla. Due to the fact that most of these respondents are not free to give out their information for research for fear of confidentiality and also they don't usually attend regularly on their visiting days, the researcher decided to use the purposive sampling technique to select only those seen and available at the point of the research for them to give out information to the researcher. On this premise only 52 respondents were accessible and 52 of them were used as the sample of the study. The main instrument used for collecting data for this study is questionnaire. The instrument is titled "Information Needs and Information Seeking Behavior of People Living with HIV/AIDS (INISB-PLWHA)". Research question one sought data on information needs of people living with HIV/AIDS with 10 items. Research question two sought data on information seeking behavior of people living with HIV/AIDS and has 10 items. There are a total of 20 items and they all used the four-point rating scale of SA- Strongly Agree, A- Agree, D- Disagree, SD- Strongly Disagree. The researcher, with the help of a research assistant who was a staff of the library at the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla, distributed the questionnaires. Data was collated and analyzed using descriptive statistics, particularly the mean scores, tables, and percentages. However, a criterion mean (a mid-point mean score) of 2.50. The average of the individual score for response on a 4-point Likert-type scale (SA=4, A=3, D=2, and SD=1

$$\frac{4 + 3 + 2 + 1}{4} = 2.50$$

Thus any mean score range from 2.5 and above was regarded as positive and accepted, while any score from 0 - 2.4 will be regarded as negative and rejected.

Results and Discussion

Research Question 1: What are the information needs of people living with HIV/AIDS in University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla?

Table 1: Mean responses on information needs of people living with HIV/AIDS

Item	Mean	Decision
I need information on the latest HIV/AIDS treatment options.	3.10	Strongly Agree
I need information on how to manage the side effects of my HIV/AIDS medications.	2.85	Agree
I need information on how to improve my overall health and well-being while living with HIV/AIDS.	2.77	Agree
I need information on support services available at the University Teaching Hospital for PLWH.	3.01	Strongly Agree
I need information on how to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS to others.	2.89	Agree
I need information on mental health resources and counseling services.	3.03	Strongly Agree
I need information on financial assistance programs for HIV/AIDS treatment and care.	3.12	Strongly Agree
I need information on how to navigate social and personal relationships while living with HIV/AIDS.	3.00	Strongly Agree
I need information on how to access culturally sensitive HIV/AIDS information and care.	2.75	Agree
I need information on how to understand and interpret my lab results related to HIV/AIDS.	2.79	Agree
Grand Mean	2.95	Agree

Table 1 shows that the respondents agreed on Information needs of people living with HIV/AIDS in University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ozalla were information on the latest HIV/AIDS treatment options (3.10), information on how to manage the side effects of my HIV/AIDS medications (2.85), information on how to improve my overall health and well-being while living with HIV/AIDS (2.77), information on support services available at the University Teaching Hospital for people living with HIV/AIDS (3.01), information on how to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS to others (2.89), information on mental health resources and counseling services (3.03), information on financial assistance programs for HIV/AIDS treatment and care (3.12), information on how to navigate social and personal relationships while living with HIV/AIDS (3.00), information on how to access culturally sensitive HIV/AIDS information and care (2.75), and information on how to understand and interpret my lab results related to HIV/AIDS (2.79). Therefore, the cluster mean of 2.75 shows that people living with HIV/AIDS agreed that information needs were on information on how to navigate social and personal relationships while living with HIV/AIDS, information on how to access culturally sensitive HIV/AIDS information and care, and information on how to understand and interpret my lab results related to HIV/AIDS, among others.

Research Question 2: What is the information seeking behavior of people living with HIV/AIDS in University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla?

Table 2: Mean responses on information seeking behavior of people living with HIV/AIDS

S/NO	Item	Mean	Decision
1	I regularly seek information about new HIV/AIDS treatments and research.	3.10	Strongly Agree
2	I prefer to get information about HIV/AIDS from my healthcare provider.	2.85	Agree
3	I use online resources, such as websites and forums, to find HIV/AIDS information.	2.79	Agree
4	I rely on support groups or peer networks for information about living with HIV/AIDS.	3.05	Strongly Agree
5	I seek information about HIV/AIDS to better understand my treatment plan.	2.89	Agree
6	I find information about HIV/AIDS from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or community-based organizations.	3.08	Strongly Agree
7	I use social media platforms to find information about HIV/AIDS.	3.00	Strongly Agree
8	I seek information about HIV/AIDS to manage my symptoms and improve my quality of life.	3.03	Strongly Agree
9	I prefer to get information about HIV/AIDS in my local language.	2.79	Agree
10	I seek information about HIV/AIDS to address stigma and discrimination.	2.73	Agree
	Grand mean	2.95	Agree

The table 2 shows that the respondents agreed that information seeking behavior of people living with HIV/AIDS seek information about HIV/AIDS to better understand of treatment plan (3.10), information about HIV/AIDS from my healthcare (2.85), used online resources, such as website and forums, to find HIV/AIDS information (2.79), rely on support groups or peer networks for information about living with HIV/AIDS (3.05), information about HIV/AIDS to better understand the treatment plan (2.89), information about HIV/AIDS from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) or community-based organizations (CBOs) (3.08), use of social media

platforms to find information about HIV/AIDS (3.00), seek information about HIV/AIDS to manage symptoms and improve quality of life (3.03), prefer to get information about HIV/AIDS in local language (2.79) and seek information about HIV/AIDS to address stigma and discrimination (2.73). Therefore, the cluster mean of 2.61 shows that people living with HIV/AIDS agreed that information seeking behavior were use of online resources, such as websites and forums to find HIV/AIDS information, rely on support groups or peer networks for information about living with HIV/AIDS, and seek information about HIV/AIDS to better understand of treatment plan, among others.

Summary of major Findings

The information needs of people living with HIV/AIDS in University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla were on latest treatment options, mental health resources, financial support, and navigating personal relationships, among others. The information seeking behavior of people living with HIV/AIDS in University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla were predominantly on regularly seeking information about new treatments, understanding treatment plans from various sources such as healthcare provider, websites and forums, relying on peer networks and NGOs, and using social media, among others

Discussion of Results

Information needs of people living with HIV/AIDS

The information needs of people living with HIV/AIDS in University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla were on latest treatment options, mental health resources, financial support, and navigating personal relationships, among others. The study indicates that PLWH require access to comprehensive, reliable, and sensitive information covering clinical treatments, mental health, social support, prevention, and financial assistance. Supporting these findings, Okoroiwu et al, (2021) documented the critical importance of accessible treatment and side effect information for PLWH adherence to antiretroviral therapy in Nigeria. Bezabhe et al, (2016). emphasized that integrated mental health and financial aid information is vital to addressing the psychosocial burden of HIV/AIDS patients in Nigerian teaching hospitals. Furthermore, UNAIDS(2019) highlighted the role of culturally sensitive and relationship-focused information services as key components for effective HIV/AIDS care within African hospital settings. Also, Giuse et al, (2014) found that the information needs of people living with HIV/AIDS are mainly issues and topics that are related to health information on how to stay safe, educational information to improve their learning, policies and government to know new guideline put up by the government for them, employment matters to know what kind of job is available for them, and recreation matters on how to relate and live peaceful and fun free life.

Information seeking behavior of people living with HIV/AIDS

The information seeking behavior of people living with HIV/AIDS in University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla were predominantly on regularly seeking information about new treatments, understanding treatment plans from various sources such as healthcare provider, websites and forums, relying on peer networks and NGOs, and using social media, among others. PLWH actively engage in a broad spectrum of information seeking behaviors that integrate formal healthcare channels, community resources, and digital platforms. Supporting these findings, Afolabi et al, (2014) highlighted the importance of multi-channel information seeking among HIV patients in Nigerian healthcare settings. Ezeani and Onyanacha (2021) noted that support groups and NGOs are indispensable in providing health information critical for symptom management and mental health support. Furthermore, Kamau and Ndungu (2020) identified social media as a growing platform for health information dissemination among PLWH in African contexts, emphasizing its potential for stigma reduction and peer support.

Conclusion

The study reveals that people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWH) at the University of Nigeria Teaching Hospital Ituku/Ozalla have urgent information needs encompassing the latest treatment options, mental health resources, financial support, and guidance on social relationships. Their information-seeking behaviors predominantly involve actively searching for new treatments and understanding treatment plans through divted by social media engagement. For the diverse and critical information needs on latest treatments, Teaching Hospitals should develop and regularly update a comprehensive, user-friendly information hub or resource center that provides holistic information addressing medical aspects relevant to PLWH. For the varied information seeking behaviors utilizing healthcare providers and social media, Teaching Hospital should implement multi-channel communication strategies that integrate healthcare personnel training, and social media campaigns to ensure trustworthy and accessible information reaches PLWH widely and effectively.

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