

Abstract of Master's Dissertation

No.1

Course	Master of Science in Global Health and Medicine	Name	Aliyu Aliyu Bello
Thesis Title	Assessment of the opportunities and barriers to the use of telemedicine for follow-up consultations for people living with HIV in Nigeria.		

Background: Over the past decade, Nigeria has made significant progress in increasing access to care for people living with HIV. However, several challenges continue to affect the quality of care available to patients. These challenges include stigma, poverty, overcrowded healthcare facilities, and a chronic shortage of healthcare manpower. Mitigating these challenges requires more funding, manpower, technology, and alternative interventions. Telemedicine is one such intervention, having shown promise in some countries; hence the need to evaluate it as a potential tool to both improve the quality and increase access to care for people living with HIV in Nigeria.

Objectives: To assess the opportunities and barriers to using telemedicine for follow-up consultations for people living with HIV in Nigeria, by evaluating key factors such as acceptance and necessary facilitating conditions among patients and healthcare workers.

Methods: A mixed method concurrent embedded design was chosen for this study. This involves the concurrent collection of qualitative data, embedded within a quantitative questionnaire, followed by independent analysis of the two data strands and integration of the resultant findings. Across two facilities (rural versus urban) in Abuja, Nigeria, 389 patients and 138 healthcare workers were surveyed. Data were collected using two separate interviewer-administered questionnaires. Quantitative and qualitative data analysis was performed using STATA version 16 and MAXQDA version 2022.2, respectively, followed by integration of the results from both strands.

Results: Patients and healthcare workers held generally positive opinions about telemedicine. Both groups recognized the potential of telemedicine to reduce costs and cut down waiting times, hence increasing access. Health workers identified the potential to decongest healthcare facilities and help streamline workflows as key expectations of telemedicine. Regarding privacy, however, reactions were mixed across both groups; while some thought that telemedicine would increase privacy and promote access for patients, others pointed out that receiving care at home could undermine patient privacy. Telemedicine acceptance was 61% and 81% among patients and healthcare workers, respectively. Among patients, telemedicine acceptance was associated with gender (AOR; 1.9, CI; 1.1-3.1) and the cost of transport to the healthcare facility; as demonstrated by men being more likely to accept telemedicine than women and a 40% increase in the likelihood of accepting telemedicine for every \$1 increase in the cost of transport to the healthcare facility. Mobile phone access among patients was generally high with 95% of patients interviewed reporting that they had access to a mobile phone, internet access, however; was low, at 33%. The level of technology awareness was also low among patients, with a mean technology awareness score of 1.18 (out of a maximum of 10).

* The abstract, containing background, objectives, methods, results and conclusion should not exceed 300-500 words and printed double sided on A4 paper)

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<p>Conclusion: Opportunities exist for the use of telemedicine for the follow-up of patients with HIV in Nigeria, these include relatively high mobile phone access rates among HIV patients, a relatively technology-aware health workforce, and overall positive opinions regarding telemedicine among both patients and healthcare workers. However, barriers might also exist, factors such as low internet access among patients, privacy concerns, and resource inequalities could also serve as barriers.</p>			