

# **A Critical Assessment of Male HIV/AIDS Patients' Satisfaction with Antiretroviral Therapy and its Implications for Sustainable Development in Sub-Saharan Africa**

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## **Abstract**

### **Purpose**

The emergence of unique and destructive viruses, such as COVID-19, has claimed lives, disrupted health systems, and diverted resources from addressing the needs of male HIV/AIDS patients in the context of antiretroviral therapy and other HIV/AIDS-related issues. This study aims to assess male HIV/AIDS patients' satisfaction with antiretroviral therapy and its implications for sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Design/methodology/approach**

Satisfaction, word-of-mouth, trust, and revisit intention were the variables in the research model. A quantitative method was utilized. Data was collected from 400 male HIV/AIDS patients who received medical attention from hospitals in Gombe State, Nigeria, utilizing the convenience sampling method. SmartPLS was used for data analysis.

### **Findings**

The results show that satisfaction has a positive impact on trust, word-of-mouth, and revisit intention. Furthermore, trust and word-of-mouth had a significant impact on revisit intentions. Word-of-mouth played a significant mediating role in the relationship between satisfaction and revisit intention. Trust played an insignificant mediating role between satisfaction and revisit intention. Additionally, word-of-mouth had a significant mediating effect on the relationship between trust and revisit intention. Healthcare organisations should prioritise patient satisfaction because it influences their likelihood of returning. Addressing the needs of male HIV patients can significantly enhance their overall healthcare experience, which would lead them to spread positive word of mouth.

### **Originality/value**

The study investigates the effect of satisfaction on the revisit intention of male HIV/AIDS patients and also highlights how trust and WOM mediate this relationship.

**Keywords:** Patient-centred care, HIV, Healthcare quality, Revisit intention, Health policy

## **Introduction**

The human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) is one of the most destructive diseases, having a variety of negative impacts on the health and quality of life of persons living with HIV (PLWHV) (Ahmed *et al.*, 2021). The Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) agenda for 2030 was endorsed by the World Health Organization (WHO) to eradicate 90% of the AIDS epidemic and associated deaths by 2030 (Assefa and Gilks, 2020). The SDG-3 'Good Health and Well-Being' encompasses this objective (Assefa and Gilks, 2020). To achieve Project 2030, all populations—including individuals of all ages and genders—must reach the 95-95-95 objectives (Mitiku *et al.*, 2024). According to the 95-95-95 objectives, 95% of all HIV-positive individuals will be aware of their status, 95% of all newly diagnosed patients will access life-sustaining antiretroviral therapy, and 95% of all antiretroviral therapy (ART) users will have achieved viral suppression (Parker, 2023). By 2022, Mitiku discovered that 86% of individuals living with HIV were aware of their status, and 89% of those who received this information were receiving treatment. Furthermore, in 93% of patients on treatment, viral suppression was present (Mitiku *et al.*, 2024). Project 2030's success depends on sufficient and ongoing financing to support the growing number of patients in need of better lifelong ART prophylaxis (Ramatowski, 2020). Therefore, the primary focus of SDG 3 is the prevention and management of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), such as HIV/AIDS (Micah *et al.*, 2020). Significant effort has gone into determining the degree to which the SDG3 targets are being met (Ionescu *et al.*, 2020).

The emergence of unique and destructive viruses, such as COVID-19, has claimed lives, disrupted health systems, and diverted resources from addressing the needs of male HIV/AIDS patients in the context of ART and other HIV/AIDS-related issues (Chenneville *et al.*, 2020). This development has deteriorated the mental and physical health of male HIV/AIDS patients around the world (Hou *et al.*, 2023). Since the COVID-19 pandemic emerged, African nations have had to redirect resources from other competing priorities to address the current global public health

emergency, which the WHO has confirmed to be of international significance (Chanda-Kapata *et al.*, 2022). The severe impact on regular healthcare services in Africa, particularly those for other deadly infectious diseases like HIV/AIDS, hindered progress on HIV/AIDS control programs concerning the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (Chanda-Kapata *et al.*, 2022). It has brought to light the government's inadequacy in determining real-time responses (Hong *et al.*, 2023).

This study primarily focuses on men due to their greater contribution to HIV/AIDS transmission compared to women (Monod *et al.*, 2024). In sub-Saharan Africa, more women than men use HIV testing and treatment, potentially achieving superior viral load suppression (Fernandez *et al.*, 2023), which could lead to higher transmission rates per sexual encounter from males compared to females (Monod *et al.*, 2024). According to UNAIDS (2022), men constituted over 70% of new HIV infections in all other regions. In Sub-Saharan Africa, this disparity is particularly prominent, with men constituting over 73% of new infections, as indicated in the UNAIDS 2023 report. This statistic is concerning as it hinders efforts to curtail the spread of the HIV epidemic. Men living with HIV not only face elevated rates of new infections but are also less inclined to seek HIV testing and antiretroviral medication (Joseph Davey *et al.*, 2022). Due to the societal norms and stigma associated with masculinity (Berner-Rodoreda *et al.*, 2021), fear of being perceived as weak or less masculine if they ask for support (Viisainen *et al.*, 2024), financial pressures, and the need to support their families can deter individuals from seeking necessary HIV-related services. Consequently, the reduced incidence of HIV testing among men in sub-Saharan Africa contributes to the increased AIDS-related mortality in this demographic (Adugna and Worku, 2022). Enhancing and concentrating on therapy for males is believed to reduce the overall infection rate (Mirkuzie *et al.*, 2021).

HIV continues to be a serious global public health concern, claiming approximately 40.4 million lives to date and continuing to spread throughout all nations (Kaur *et al.*, 2024; Asogun *et al.*, 2024; Pu and Wu, 2024). Some nations have reported rising trends in new infections after declining for some time (Cao *et al.*, 2024). By the end of 2022, the expected number of individuals living with HIV was approximately 39.0

million (Layessa *et al.*, 2024), with 25.6 million of those individuals living in the WHO African Region (Benti *et al.*, 2024). According to Basta *et al.* (2024) and Benti *et al.* (2024), approximately 1.3 million people contracted HIV in 2022, and 630,000 people lost their lives from HIV-related causes. Currently, HIV infection has no known cure (Kothawade *et al.*, 2024; Vansant *et al.*, 2020). In Nigeria, the national prevalence of HIV is around 1.4% among adults aged 15–49 (Wu *et al.*, 2016). According to a previous estimate, Nigeria's public HIV prevalence is 2.8%, and 1.9 million people live with the disease (Ayuk *et al.*, 2022).

The urgency of this research is due to the continued spread of HIV/AIDS transmission. In addition, the emergence of COVID-19 has disrupted health systems and diverted resources away from addressing the needs of male HIV/AIDS patients. Given that the SDG goal of eradicating the virus by the year 2030 is rapidly approaching, examining male HIV/AIDS patients' satisfaction with their revisit is critical. This study has the potential to benefit healthcare organisations and policymakers by providing insights into HIV/AIDS trends, death rates, and transmission. Furthermore, it might guide healthcare practitioners in developing focused preventive and treatment plans. The results of this study can raise awareness of the significance of early diagnosis and ART accessibility. Policymakers can use the findings from this study to make informed decisions on HIV treatment, prevention, and resource distribution. Fostering satisfaction is essential for male HIV/AIDS patients since stigma and discrimination may have an adverse effect on their psychological well-being (Kane *et al.*, 2023), self-esteem, and social interactions (de Wit *et al.*, 2020). There are only a few studies that explore male HIV/AIDS patient satisfaction and revisit intention. Therefore, this study will fill the existing gap and contribute to the literature by assessing the male HIV/AIDS patients' satisfaction with ART and its implications for sustainable development in Sub-Saharan Africa. The paper's structure is as follows: Section 2 explains the theoretical framework and the development of hypotheses. Section 3 lays out a comprehensive research methodology, incorporating a description of the participants and the measurements. Section 4 presents the main results of the research. Section 5 presents the discussion, conclusion, limitations, and implications.

## **Literature Review**

### ***Theoretical framework***

This study makes use of three theories: expectation disconfirmation theory (EDT), theory of planned behaviour (TPB), and social exchange theory (SET) because they extensively explain the connection between the variables under investigation: satisfaction, trust, word-of-mouth, and revisit intention, in relation to male HIV/AIDS patients.

Oliver (1980) developed the *Expectation Disconfirmation Theory (EDT)*, which examined customer repurchasing decisions in five stages: Consumers establish initial expectations before buying a particular good or service, followed by perceptions of its performance based on their use. Afterwards, the perceived performance is compared to the initial expectations to determine whether the expectation is met. Consequently, disconfirmation determines their level of satisfaction. In addition, satisfied consumers may choose to repurchase the good or service, while dissatisfied consumers may choose not to use it in the future. According to Carraher-Wolverton (2022), the EDT presents a process model of individual behaviour in which consumers develop pre-usage expectations, utilize a product over time, and then construct post-usage judgments. Focusing on components that male HIV/AIDS patients particularly value—like empathy, respect, and all-encompassing support—may increase their satisfaction and lead to a desire to return.

*The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB)* put forward by Ajzen (1991) highlights that intentions, which are the result of certain factors interacting, are a very good predictor of different behaviours. Three components affect intentions: one's attitude toward a behaviour, subjective norms, and one's perception of behavioural control. According to Ajzen, intentions also encompass motivation, indicating the degree to which individuals are prepared to act in a particular manner and the amount of work they put into their actions. In the context of healthcare, TPB provides a comprehensive framework for examining the psychological factors that affect patients' motivation to return to a healthcare provider and their readiness to discuss

their encounters with others (Lee *et al.*, 2016). Male HIV/AIDS patients are more likely to acquire a favourable attitude toward the healthcare provider and consider returning to the provider as beneficial behaviour if they are satisfied with their healthcare experiences and hear positive feedback from peers.

*The Social Exchange Theory (SET)* is one of the most significant conceptual paradigms for comprehending behaviour. Its illustrious history dates at least to the 1920s (Kasper, 1884–1942). Social exchange involves a series of interactions that lead to responsibilities, often perceived as mutually dependent and reliant on each other's actions. The SET also highlights the possibility of creating excellent relationships as a result of these interdependent transactions. To build and preserve relationships, SET places a strong emphasis on the importance of reciprocity, trust, and the expectation of reciprocal benefits. According to SET, trust develops through consistent, pleasant interactions. As a result, male HIV/AIDS patients develop confidence in the provider and believe they will receive ethical and inclusive care.

### **Research Model and Hypotheses Development**

It is impossible to overstate the significance of patient satisfaction in healthcare because it plays a crucial role in determining the kind of care that healthcare professionals and organisations deliver (Nguyen *et al.*, 2021; Novitasari, 2022). Furthermore, it has a significant impact on patient revisit intention (Burgui *et al.*, 2023; Mursyid *et al.*, 2022; Gambarov *et al.*, 2017; Rahman *et al.*, 2023). The EDT is a well-known psychological theory used to explain consumer behaviour and service interactions in terms of customer satisfaction and revisit intention (Zhu *et al.*, 2016; Paulose and Shakeel, 2022). Kim *et al.* (2017) found that HIV/AIDS patients' treatment effectiveness and satisfaction positively influenced their intention to return to the hospital.

Patient satisfaction and trust are two essential factors that are crucial to patient-provider relationships (Batbaatar *et al.*, 2017; Harris *et al.*, 2020). According to the SET, a process of reciprocal exchange of tangible or intangible resources influences all human interactions, including those that take place in healthcare settings (Hsu *et*

*al.*, 2017). Some scholars found a positive link between patient satisfaction and trust, while others found a negative or no connection (Lee *et al.*, 2016; Hsieh *et al.*, 2018).

Word-of-mouth refers to the spread of information from one person to another about the quality of care received (Octivanny and Berlianto, 2022), which is a key factor that can influence the reputation of a healthcare provider in the community (Ovretveit and Ohrling, 2023). In healthcare, patients perceive positive experiences as outweighing costs, leading to positive word-of-mouth communication and gratitude from friends and family (Pan, 2017). There is a strong positive correlation between patient satisfaction and word-of-mouth recommendations (Kuppelwieser *et al.*, 2021). Providers who communicate effectively, create a clean and comfortable environment, and deliver care promptly are more likely to promote patient satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Hence, based on the above arguments, the following hypotheses are advanced:

**H1:** Satisfaction has a significant effect on revisit intention.

**H2:** Satisfaction has a significant influence on trust.

**H3:** Satisfaction has a significant influence on word-of-mouth.

Studies have shown that patients are more likely to use a physician again when successful outcomes confirm their trust (daCosta DiBonaventura *et al.*, 2014). Chanda-Kapata *et al.* (2022) found a positive association between trust and patient revisit intention. Contrarily, Wu *et al.* (2016) found a nonsignificant relationship between trust and revisit intention. Gharib *et al.* (2019) associate trust and word of mouth with the SET, which posits that individuals engage in social interactions based on reciprocity and the expectation of mutual benefit. Patients who trust their healthcare providers and have positive experiences are more likely to engage in positive word-of-mouth communication about their experiences with friends, family, and acquaintances (Balaji *et al.*, 2016). Previous studies (Miao *et al.*, 2020) have demonstrated a link between patient satisfaction and patient revisit intention through word-of-mouth. Nguyen *et al.* (2021) conducted a study that demonstrated a significant impact of positive WOM communication on patient revisit intentions. On the contrary, Hsu *et al.* (2017) found that WOM communication has no significant

impact on patient revisit intentions. Punpairaj *et al.* (2023) found that WOM has a significant direct effect on revisit intention. Thus, it is logical to assume that satisfied customers are inclined to use the service provider again and will spread information about their excellent experiences (Akram *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, the authors proposed the following hypotheses:

**H4:** Trust has a significant impact on revisit intention.

**H5:** Trust has a significant impact on word-of-mouth.

**H6:** Word-of-mouth has a significant influence on patient revisit intention.

**H7:** Trust significantly mediates the relationship between satisfaction and the revisit intention.

Loyal patients are valuable to the healthcare industry since they are often less price-sensitive about the services they get (Olesen and Bathula, 2022). The direct determinant of human activity, according to the concept of TPB, is behavioural intention (Ajzen, 2011). According to Martin (2017), patients who have trust in healthcare providers tend to have more favourable views and are more likely to spread information about their experiences. This boosts patients' intentions to return to the provider by strengthening subjective norms, fostering a supportive environment, and improving perceived behavioural control (Kumar, 2024). Trust has a significant impact on patients' perceptions of positive WOM, both directly and indirectly (Jalilvand *et al.*, 2017). Additionally, patients' trust in the healthcare provider mediates the relationship between patient satisfaction and willingness to return to the provider (Liu *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, based on the above arguments, the following hypotheses are postulated:

**H8:** Word-of-mouth significantly mediates the relationship between satisfaction and revisit intention.

**H9:** Word-of-mouth significantly mediates the relationship between trust and revisit intention.

**H10:** Trust significantly mediates the influence of satisfaction on word-of-mouth.

## **Research Model**

Following the explanation above and the developed hypotheses, Figure 1 presents the conceptual model.

**Insert Figure 1 about here**

## **Methodology**

This study used the quantitative approach because it most accurately captured its overarching aim. A questionnaire survey was used to gather the necessary data for analysis. The study employed convenience sampling. The selection criteria included male HIV/AIDS patients aged 18 years or older who received treatment at the selected hospitals in Gombe and gave their consent to participate. Ethical clearance from the ethical committee was obtained.

### ***Measures of the constructs***

To ensure content validity in this study, the measurement items were adapted from prior investigations and operationalised using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (5). The authors adapted four-item trust scale from Gambarov *et al.* (2017) and one from Mohd Isa *et al.* (2019). The study adapted two measurement items of patient satisfaction from AlOmari (2021) and three from Nguyen *et al.* (2021). The authors also adapted two measurement items of patient revisit intention from Mohd Isa *et al.* (2019) and two from Nguyen *et al.* (2021). The current research adopted two general word-of-mouth measurement items from Siripipatthanakul (2021) and three specific to ART from Mohd Isa *et al.* (2019). The measurement items were modified to align with the aim of the research (see Appendix). Using Smart PLS, a structural equation modelling (SEM) analysis was conducted. The validity and reliability of the instruments were evaluated. The research hypotheses were then tested using SEM. PLS-SEM can effectively handle complex models, including small sample sizes, without making assumptions about the data distributions (Hamid *et al.*, 2017). PLS-SEM recommends a sample size equal to 10 times the number of directed arrows to a construct. Therefore, the current

study, with 400 participants and a 19-arrow distribution towards the constructs, is suitable for PLS-SEM.

### ***Structural model assessment***

Establishing the validity and reliability of the variables is a prerequisite to evaluating the structural model. Afterwards, path coefficients can be used to evaluate the significance of the model's relationships. The SEM is frequently used for instrument validation and construct-correlation tests. Figure II displays the bootstrapped connections between the four variables: satisfaction, trust, word-of-mouth, and revisit intention. Bootstrapping is used to assess the statistical significance of coefficients by estimating their standard error.

### **Insert Figure II about here**

## **Data analysis and results**

### ***Measurement model assessment***

#### ***Convergent Validity***

Convergent validity is determined by the degree to which one measure correlates favourably with other measures of the same variable. Values of the AVE greater than 0.50 have convergent validity (refer to Table I).

Many criteria are used to assess the measurement model's (the outer model's) convergent validity. This comprises the average variance extracted (AVE), the reliability of individual indicators, and the composite reliability (CR) that assesses the model's internal consistency (Hamid *et al.*, 2017). High values (items with a loading of .70) on a variable suggest significant levels of commonality between the measures they are linked to (Lowry and Gaskin, 2014). Also, to assess the model fit, the value of SRMR should be less than 0.08 (Feng and Chen, 2020). The value for SRMR in this study is 0.057, which is less than the threshold value. Hence, the model is fit.

### **Insert Table I about here**

### *Discriminant Validity*

The ability of a variable to reliably differentiate itself from other variables is crucial for achieving discriminant validity. Tables II and III show that the AVE exceeds the inter-construct correlations, establishing discriminant validity.

**Insert Table II about here**

**Insert Table III about here**

### *Structural Model Assessment*

#### *Hypotheses test*

The proposed relationship between the constructs as conceptualized in this study is shown in the structural model. H1 states that SAT significantly affects RI. The finding shows that SAT significantly affects RI (total effect) ( $\beta = 0.508$ ,  $t = 9.585$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). As a result, H1 is supported. H2 states that SAT has a significant effect on TR. The finding demonstrates that SAT significantly affects TR ( $\beta = 0.203$ ,  $t = 3.693$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). Therefore, H2 is supported. H3 states that SAT has a favourable relationship with WOM. According to the finding, SAT significantly affects WOM ( $\beta = 0.374$ ,  $t = 7.026$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Therefore, H3 is supported. H4 states that TR and RI have a positive relationship. According to the findings, TR significantly affects RI ( $\beta = 0.100$ ,  $t = 1.980$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); hence, H4 is supported. H5 states that TR has a positive relationship with WOM. TR significantly affects WOM, according to the findings ( $\beta = 0.199$ ,  $t = 3.631$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); therefore, H5 is supported. H6 asserts a significant relationship between WOM and RI. According to the findings, WOM significantly affects RI ( $\beta = 0.358$ ,  $t = 6.286$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); therefore, H6 is supported. Table IV presents the results.

**Insert Table IV about here**

#### *Mediation analysis*

Table IV displays the results of the mediation and control analyses. The direct relationship was significant ( $\beta = 0.337$ ,  $t = 6.149$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). To determine if TR mediates the connection between SAT and RI, H7 was tested. The data demonstrate that SAT has an insignificant indirect effect on RI via TR ( $\beta = 0.021$ ,  $t = 1.693$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). Therefore, H7 is not supported. H8 investigates whether SAT has a significant effect on RI via WOM. The result indicates that SAT influences RI indirectly through WOM ( $\beta = 0.134$ ,  $t = 4.415$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Thus, H8 is supported. H9: Ascertain whether WOM mediates the relationship between TR and RI. The outcome demonstrates that TR has an influence on RI through WOM ( $\beta = 0.071$ ,  $t = 3.093$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). As a result, we conclude that H9 is supported. H10 was tested to find out if TR acts as a mediator between SAT and WOM. The finding suggests that SAT has a significant indirect effect on WOM ( $\beta = 0.040$ ,  $t = 2.343$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The findings indicate a moderate degree of mediation. As a result, H10 is supported.

The researchers also controlled the effect of demographic characteristics such as age and education on male HIV/AIDS revisit intention. The results show that age and education have no effect ( $\beta = -0.002$ ,  $t = 0.103$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ;  $\beta = -0.023$ ,  $t = 0.834$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) on male HIV/AIDS revisit intention, respectively. Figure III presents the structural model with control variables and path coefficients.

**Insert Figure III about here**

## **Discussion**

The study set out to establish the relationship between SAT and RI, mediated by TR and WOM. The findings of the study have significant implications for researchers, legislators, and healthcare professionals seeking to improve the support and care provided to male HIV/AIDS patients in sub-Saharan Africa. The study seeks to advance patient-centred care paradigms that improve treatment outcomes and general well-being by addressing the understudied topic of patient satisfaction and revisiting intention. The study's findings can help guide changes in the healthcare system,

policy decisions, and the development of interventions aimed at improving the care that male HIV/AIDS patients receive.

According to Henseler (2017) the threshold value for the HTMT ratio is below or comparable to 0.90. The results of this study's HTMT meet the requirements. As a result, Table III presents the discriminant validity result.

The study found a significant impact of SAT on RI ( $\beta = 0.337$ ,  $t = 6.149$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The coefficient  $\beta = 0.337$  shows that increased satisfaction levels are linked with a higher likelihood of returning to the healthcare provider. The outcome is consistent with Khoo (2020) and Nguyen *et al.* (2021) findings that patients' likelihood of returning for future care is significantly influenced by their level of satisfaction with their most recent visit. As stated by EDT, satisfied consumers have a higher likelihood of returning, while dissatisfied consumers have fewer chances of returning in the future. Hence, it is essential for healthcare providers to provide high-quality care and pleasant experiences to improve patient satisfaction and increase the likelihood of patient retention.

Our study found a positive connection between SAT and TR ( $\beta = 0.203$ ,  $t = 3.693$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The positive  $\beta$  value (0.203) indicates that for every one-unit increase in satisfaction, there will be a 0.203-unit increase in trust, assuming all other factors remain constant. Our finding is consistent with Orrange *et al.* (2021) and Rahman *et al.* (2023); they stated that when patients are satisfied with their care, they are more likely to have trust in their care providers. Therefore, healthcare providers need to put their patients' needs first to earn their trust and create lasting bonds.

A positive link between SAT and WOM was found ( $\beta = 0.374$ ,  $t = 7.026$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). This result suggests that a one-unit increase in satisfaction will lead to a 0.374-unit increase in WOM communication, provided all other factors stay constant. The finding is similar to Ahmadinejad (2019) and Siripipatthanakul (2021), who also found a direct and significant relationship between satisfaction and word-of-mouth. The EDT posits that patients are more likely to spread their positive experiences with a provider to others if they are satisfied with the care they receive. Dandis *et al.* (2021) support our findings by emphasising that meeting or exceeding patients'

service expectations leads to positive word-of-mouth. Hence, by soliciting feedback and reviews from patients and making use of social media to spread the word about positive patient experiences, healthcare providers can actively encourage positive word-of-mouth recommendations.

A positive connection between TR and RI was found ( $\beta = 0.100$ ,  $t = 1.980$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The result implies that a unit increase in trust will subsequently result in a 0.100 unit increase in patients' intention to revisit. The finding is consistent with Ibrahim *et al.* (2021), Akthar *et al.* (2024), and Kurnianingrum and Hidayat (2020), who found a significant relationship between trust and revisit intention. Meeting patients' expectations increases their trust and belief in the healthcare provider's ability to provide quality care (Natafqi *et al.*, 2022). According to SET, trust develops through consistent, pleasant interactions, which in turn improve the long-term patient-provider relationship, resulting in patients' intent to return. Therefore, healthcare providers can improve patient outcomes and foster long-term healthcare relationships by focusing on building trust with their patient population.

TR and WOM were positively related ( $\beta = 0.199$ ,  $t = 3.631$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Our finding is similar to Guerreiro and Pacheco (2021) and Wibowo and Junaedi (2019), who found that TR has a significant direct effect on WOM. When patients have complete trust in their specialist, they are more likely to tell others about their positive experiences. However, the converse is also true; negative word-of-mouth can damage a healthcare provider's reputation and lead to lower patient retention rates.

There was a positive connection between WOM and RI ( $\beta = 0.358$ ,  $t = 6.286$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Our findings align with the findings of Liu *et al.* (2021) and Rosid *et al.* (2020), who suggest that there is a significant link between a customer's initial exposure to a provider, whether through personal connections, social media, or online reviews, and their likelihood of returning to that provider in the future. The recommendations of others, whether positive or negative, can have a significant impact on a patient's decision to seek medical attention. Therefore, healthcare providers should be aware of the power of word-of-mouth and work to foster constructive relationships with their patients.

The study hypothesised that TR in a healthcare provider mediates the relationship between SAT and RI ( $\beta = 0.021$ ,  $t = 1.693$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). The result demonstrates that TR does not mediate the relationship between SAT and RI, thereby invalidating the hypothesis. This outcome contradicts the findings of Liu *et al.* (2021) and Mohd Isa *et al.* (2019), who found that trust mediates the link between satisfaction and revisit intention. Patients who have faith in their doctor are more loyal in terms of subsequent visits and referrals. Also, the study by Khasanah *et al.* (2020) found that a customer's perception of their provider's trustworthiness increases if they are satisfied with the services they have received. If healthcare providers want to boost patient loyalty and retention, it is essential to understand how trust plays a mediating role between patient satisfaction and return intention.

The authors hypothesised that WOM mediates the relationship between SAT and RI ( $\beta = 0.134$ ,  $t = 4.415$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The WOM mediation (0.134) increased the total effect (0.506) of SAT on RI. Therefore, by emphasising excellent care and service and actively seeking and responding to patient feedback, hospitals can encourage positive word-of-mouth recommendations. Our finding is consistent with Siripipatthanakul (2021) and Phillips *et al.* (2013), who found that word-of-mouth recommendations and feedback from previous customers can have a significant effect on a customer's level of satisfaction and subsequent likelihood of returning to the service provider.

The Authors proposed that WOM mediates the relationship between TR and RI ( $\beta = 0.071$ ,  $t = 3.093$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). The present study's findings are consistent with those of Martin (2017), who found that word-of-mouth recommendations and feedback from previous patients have a significant influence on patients' level of trust in their healthcare provider and the patient's likelihood of returning to the same provider. As postulated by the TPB, providers can increase positive word-of-mouth recommendations and patients' likelihood of returning for future visits by focusing on building trust through effective communication, personalised care, and a patient-centred approach. Providers can also actively seek and respond to patient feedback to reduce the impact of unfavourable word-of-mouth. Consequently, to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS, it is imperative to establish a robust commitment from the

government and other stakeholders to public awareness initiatives (Kartono *et al.*, 2024).

The study proposed that TR mediates the relationship between SAT and WOM ( $\beta = 0.040$ ,  $t = 2.343$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). The study's findings align with the findings of Gambarov *et al.* (2017), who found that patients' satisfaction and word-of-mouth are all impacted by the level of trust in the healthcare provider. Providers who want to increase patient loyalty and retention should understand the role trust plays as a mediator between patient satisfaction and positive word-of-mouth. Providers can boost positive feedback and referrals from patients if they prioritise building trust.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the thorough examination of the connections among satisfaction, revisit intention, trust, and word of mouth among male HIV/AIDS patients has produced insightful findings that advance our knowledge of patient behaviour in the healthcare setting. Empirical research indisputably proves the relevance of satisfaction as a critical determinant of both revisit intention and the important components of word-of-mouth and trust. The EDT highlights that the performance of a product or service, when combined with expectations, determines satisfaction. According to TPB, satisfied patients are more likely to express an interest in returning to a hospital for future medical treatments. Quality provider-patient interaction that builds trust is an important component of SET. In the context of male HIV/AIDS care, this crucial connection highlights the essential role that satisfaction and positive experiences play in encouraging long-term relationships and patient involvement in male HIV/AIDS care, which in turn leads to revisiting the provider. The study has also revealed a fascinating interaction between satisfaction and word-of-mouth, which suggests that the mediating role of word-of-mouth further amplifies the effect of satisfaction on revisit intention. This highlights the influence of patient experiences and peer communication as means by which positive disconfirmation might spread, ultimately inspiring others to consider similar choices regarding their health.

Contrary to original predictions, the study found that trust has no impact on the relationship between patient satisfaction and their intention to use the same healthcare providers repeatedly. While this finding goes against conventional opinion, it also provides a starting point for additional investigation into the complex processes underlying patient trust development and how they affect the intention to revisit treatment in the particular setting of HIV/AIDS care for males. The recognition that word-of-mouth plays a key role in boosting the impact of satisfaction on revisit intention highlights the need for establishing excellent patient experiences that organically promote positive word-of-mouth. This study significantly enhanced our knowledge of the variables influencing male HIV/AIDS patients' intention to return.

### **Limitation and future research**

The findings of this study have brought to light several contributions; however, the study is not without limitations. To begin, the study used quantitative data and focused on the male gender. The present research was conducted in public hospitals, noting prominent variations in the factors influencing the return of male HIV/AIDS patients. In future research, researchers may try to replicate this study in other settings within the healthcare industry, such as private or community hospitals, to broaden the applicability of their findings. Second, we employed a cross-sectional study. As a result, we recommend expanding it into a longitudinal study, as it allows the researcher to validate the causal mechanism and obtain more generalisable results. Thirdly, this study focused on Nigeria. Future research should broaden its scope to include other countries or continents. In conclusion, the factors considered antecedents of male HIV/AIDS revisit intentions in this study were patient satisfaction, trust, and word-of-mouth. Therefore, future research should incorporate variables that moderate the relationship between customer satisfaction and revisit intention.

### **Theoretical Implications**

This study provides numerous theoretical contributions. Firstly, this study focuses on the healthcare sector in Nigeria, incorporating factors like satisfaction, revisit

intention, trust, and word of mouth. The current research expands our understanding of the role that trust and word of mouth play in the interaction between satisfaction and revisit intentions. The study demonstrated how word-of-mouth and trust influence the beneficial impact of satisfaction on revisit intention. In terms of theoretical contributions, our findings support the hypothesis that satisfaction influences revisit intention. The authors suggest a novel way to increase revisit intention using satisfaction, while word-of-mouth and trust serve as mediators. We also controlled the effect of demographic variables (age and education) on revisit intentions.

### **Practical Implications**

Healthcare administrators should make it a top priority to provide superior services that match or exceed patient expectations. The goal should be to create a friendly and supportive environment that caters to the needs of male HIV/AIDS patients. Continuous evaluation of patient satisfaction through surveys and feedback channels can identify areas for improvement. Healthcare managers should actively encourage positive patient reviews and recommendations. Setting up systems to record and distribute patient success stories can improve the hospital's reputation and attract new patients. Increased word-of-mouth advertising can naturally result from encouraging positive encounters and outcomes. Healthcare administrators should establish channels for sharing information regarding therapies, procedures, and support services that are transparent and easy to obtain. Patients' intentions to return for follow-up appointments can be favourably influenced by education on the value of ongoing care. Healthcare management should provide specialised services such as mental health support, counselling, and nutritional guidance that cover the physical, emotional, and psychological components of male HIV/AIDS patients' care. Policies that restrict discrimination against HIV/AIDS status, deprivation of services, and inequitable treatment should be established. Hence, this will create an environment that fosters support and encouragement for patients with male HIV/AIDS.

## **Social Implications**

Male HIV/AIDS patients who are satisfied with their care have a tendency to trust medical professionals more, which promotes enhanced therapeutic outcomes and greater compliance with treatment regimens. Positive comments from those with the condition can also reduce stigma and motivate community members to seek treatment, fostering a supportive environment for those living with HIV/AIDS. The study emphasises how important it is for patients and healthcare providers to have stronger and greater empathy connections, which could contribute to decreasing health disparities.

## **Research Implications**

The study revealed that word-of-mouth significantly mediates the relationship between satisfaction and revisit intention; further research is required to comprehend other prospective mediators such as treatment adherence. To more extensively generalise the results, future studies could conduct longitudinal research to examine if changes in satisfaction, trust, and word-of-mouth over a prolonged period could influence patient revisit intention.

## **Educational Implications**

Medical and nursing institutions should include a curriculum that emphasises the value of patient satisfaction and trust-building to prepare future healthcare providers for patient-centred care. Healthcare practitioners might benefit from educational programs that highlight the development of excellent communication skills to improve patient satisfaction and promote positive word-of-mouth; hence, there is a need to organise training and seminars. Communities should receive education about the benefits of patient satisfaction and trust in healthcare institutions to encourage proactive health-seeking habits and reduce the stigma associated with HIV/AIDS.

**Conflict of Interest**

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author state that there is no conflict of interest.

## **Insert Appendix about here**

### **Reference**

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## Appendix

Variable	Measurement Items	Source
Patient Satisfaction	I am satisfied with the ART services provided. The overall feelings about the ART service in this hospital is better than what I expected Compared with other hospitals, the level of satisfaction with ART services was high. Choosing this hospital has proven a wise decision. Overall, I am satisfied with the ART services in this hospital.	Alomari (2021) Nguyen et al. (2021)
Patient Trust (TR)	I have confidence that the ART medical professionals and employees at this hospital are very competent. I can trust the ART staff of this hospital. The ART medical and service staff of this hospital have high integrity. I have confidence that this hospital provides the best ART services. I have great trust to the ART services of this hospital.	Gambarov et al. (2017)
Revisit Intension	I will consider this hospital as my first choice in future when I need ART services. I will visit this hospital in the future if I need ART services. I will continue to go to this hospital for ART services. I will keep in touch with ART staff of this hospital for future treatment.	Mohd Isa et al. (2019) Nguyen et al. (2021)
Word-of-Mouth (WM)	I will say positive word-of-mouth about the ART services of this hospital. I will recommend the ART services of this hospital to my family members, relatives and close friends. If my family members, relatives and close friends were looking for ART services, I would tell them to try at this hospital. I will say positive things about this hospital. I will encourage friends and relatives to visit the ART unit of this hospital.	Siripipatthanakul (2021) Mohd Isa et al. (2019)