

## Socio-economic status and HIV-related discrimination in Lagos, Nigeria

Chinwe Nwanna

The book explored the correlation between socio-economic status and discrimination among people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) and non-infected people in two local government areas (LGAs) of Lagos state: Lagos Mainland, an urban setting, and Epe, a rural one. Interviews were conducted with a random sample of 1,611 non-infected people and a purposive sample of 80 PLWHA from September 2005 to April 2006 within the family/community, workplace, health and educational sectors. Focus group discussions were also conducted among purposively selected respondents. Data were analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and hypotheses were tested by Chi-square statistic and multiple logistic regression analyses. The results indicated a high level of awareness of HIV/AIDS. However, cultural perceptions of it depicted gross misrepresentations of HIV/AIDS and its aetiology which were conducive to social discrimination. Many non-infected respondents exhibited discriminatory attitudes in different situations involving potential contacts with the PLWHA. They would not marry PLWHA, share toilets or rooms with PLWHA or vote for them. They would alienate perceived infected colleagues; withdraw their children from schools known to have students with HIV/AIDS and forbid their children's association with such PLWHA. Similarly, PLWHA were avoided by their friends, rejected and abandoned by their family members. Many of them could not buy or sell to non-infected people in their communities. In the health sector and workplace, PLWHA experienced mandatory HIV testing, alienation, withheld treatment, seclusion, ridicule, denial of promotion and exclusion from insurance scheme. The study also demonstrated that education, place of residence, gender, marital status, knowledge of sexual mode of HIV transmission and income were significant predictors of discrimination. Contrary to our argument that women were more vulnerable to discrimination than men, the reverse was the case in the family/community. However, women suffered greater discrimination than men in the health sector. Widowed/separated/divorced PLWHA suffered more discrimination than those in other categories of marital status. The book recommended compulsory and free education, intensive poverty alleviation programmes, intensive mass HIV education and enforcement of national and international legal instruments.