

Pertinent Challenges Inherent in Support Structures for People Living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in Southern African Universities: The Case of University of Fort Hare

S. M Kang'ethe¹ and Martin Mutopa²

*Department of Social Work and Social Development, University of Fort Hare,
Private bag X1314, Alice, 5700 South Africa
E-mail: ¹<skangethe@ufh.ac.za>, ²<MMutopa@ufh.ac.za>*

KEYWORDS Counselling. Youth Friendly. Training Service Providers. Stigma. Discrimination Invisibility of Support Structures. Disclosure

ABSTRACT The aim of this paper is to explore the challenges confronting support structures for People Living With HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) in Southern African Universities. The paper has employed a qualitative research methodology and followed a case study design. An interview guide was used to facilitate the collection of data from the research participants. The following were the study's findings: support structures are invisible and insignificant; lack of knowledge about support structures; poor dissemination of information; apathy towards service delivery; undue attention attributed to the HIV/AIDS pandemic; inadequate service delivery; unethical practices taking place in the support structures; fear of the breach of confidentiality; the importance of support structures in addressing stigma and discrimination, and the need to adopt a comprehensive care package. The paper concludes that very little is being done policy wise to make the support structures responsive to People Living with HIV and AIDS at Universities. The paper recommends the following: HIV/AIDS structures to be made visible; an independent organization to manage support structures for PLWHA; mainstreaming HIV/AIDS in the institutions' curriculum; gender mainstreaming of HIV/AIDS services; making support structures youth friendly; and drawing up short and long term goals to aid fighting HIV/AIDS; and educating and training HIV/AIDS service providers.