

The Relationship Between Self-Acceptance and Adherence to Antiretroviral (ARV) Therapy Among Patients Living With HIV

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ABSTRACT

Self-acceptance plays an important role in enabling people living with HIV (PLWH) to adapt to their diagnosis and maintain adherence to lifelong antiretroviral therapy (ART). However, evidence regarding this relationship from the perspective of Orem's Self-Care Theory remains limited. This study aimed to examine the association between self-acceptance and adherence to ART among PLWH. A correlational study with a cross-sectional design was conducted among 31 PLWH receiving care at the HIV Care, Support, and Treatment Clinic of Gedongan Primary Healthcare Center, Mojokerto, Indonesia. Self-acceptance was assessed using the Berger Self-Acceptance Scale, while ART adherence was measured using the Probabilistic Medication Adherence Scale (ProMAS). Data were analyzed using Spearman's rank correlation. The findings showed that 54.8% of participants had low self-acceptance, whereas 61.3% demonstrated moderately high ART adherence. A significant positive correlation was identified between self-acceptance and ART adherence ($r=0.588$; $p=0.001$). These findings suggest that improving self-acceptance may enhance adherence to ART and should be considered an integral component of comprehensive HIV care.

Keywords: *HIV, treatment adherence, PLHIV, self-acceptance.*

INTRODUCTION

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) remains one of the major global public health challenges because it contributes to increased morbidity, mortality, and reduced quality of life (WHO, 2025). With the advancement of antiretroviral therapy (ART), HIV is no longer considered a disease that inevitably leads to death but has become a chronic condition that can be effectively managed when people living with HIV (PLWH) adhere consistently to lifelong treatment (Hayati et al., 2019). The success of ART largely depends on patients' adherence to medication. Poor adherence may result in increased viral load, decreased CD4 cell counts, the development of drug resistance, and a greater risk of HIV transmission (Kemenkes RI, 2025).

In Indonesia, HIV remains one of the priorities in communicable disease control programs. According to the 2024 Indonesia Health Profile, HIV cases continue to be reported across almost all provinces, with East Java being one of the provinces with the highest number of reported cases (Kemenkes RI, 2025). This situation indicates that HIV control efforts should not only focus on the provision of antiretroviral therapy but also on maintaining long-term treatment adherence among PLWH. Herawati et al (2023) reported that poor adherence to ART is associated with an increased risk of treatment failure, while Ibrahim et al (2023) identified low adherence as one of the major challenges in HIV care services in developing countries.

Adherence to ART is influenced by multiple factors, including individual characteristics, social support, access to healthcare services, and psychological conditions (Kristia et al., 2025). One of the most important psychological factors is **self-acceptance**,

which refers to an individual's ability to accept themselves and their circumstances without persistent self-blame (Ramli et al., 2025). Among PLWH, self-acceptance is an essential component of the adaptation process because it helps individuals cope with psychological distress, reduce self-stigma, and strengthen their motivation to maintain their health through adherence to treatment (Putri & Ambarini, 2021).

Previous studies have demonstrated that self-acceptance is associated with treatment adherence. eported that accepting one's HIV status is a crucial process that encourages PLWH to remain committed to ART. Similarly, (Tan et al., 2025) found that self-acceptance contributes to greater confidence in maintaining long-term treatment adherence. (Ramli et al., 2025) also demonstrated a positive relationship between self-acceptance and ART adherence, indicating that PLWH with better self-acceptance are more likely to adhere to treatment than those who continue to experience self-rejection.

These findings can be explained by Orem's Self-Care Theory, which proposes that every individual possesses self-care agency, or the ability to perform self-care activities necessary to maintain health (Muhlisin & Irdawati, 2025). dherence to ART represents a form of self-care behavior that requires awareness, responsibility, and the ability to make decisions that promote health. PLWH who have achieved self-acceptance are more likely to develop effective self-care behaviors because they are able to accept their health condition, adapt to the changes they experience, and remain motivated to sustain successful treatment (Nursalam, 2020).

Although numerous studies have investigated ART adherence and self-acceptance among PLWH, research examining the relationship between these variables from the perspective of Orem's Self-Care Theory, particularly in primary healthcare settings, remains limited. The HIV Care, Support, and Treatment Clinic at Gedongan Primary Healthcare Center, Mojokerto, provides continuous HIV services and therefore offers an appropriate setting to explore psychological factors associated with treatment adherence. Accordingly, this study aimed to examine the association between self-acceptance and adherence to antiretroviral therapy among people living with HIV from the perspective of Orem's Self-Care Theory.

METHOD

This study employed a correlational analytic design with a cross-sectional approach to examine the association between self-acceptance and adherence to antiretroviral therapy (ART) among people living with HIV (PLWH). The study was conducted in 2025 at the HIV Care, Support, and Treatment (CST) Clinic of Gedongan Primary Healthcare Center, Mojokerto, East Java, Indonesia. The study population consisted of 31 PLWH receiving ART. A consecutive sampling technique was applied, in which all participants who met the inclusion and exclusion criteria were recruited into the study.

Data were collected using two validated instruments. Self-acceptance was measured using the Berger's Self-Acceptance Scale (BSAS), whereas adherence to ART was assessed using the Probabilistic Medication Adherence Scale (ProMAS). Participants completed both questionnaires after receiving an explanation of the study objectives and providing written informed consent.

Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics. Descriptive statistics were used to summarize participants' characteristics and the distribution of the study variables. The

association between self-acceptance and adherence to ART was analyzed using Spearman's rank correlation test, as both variables were measured on an ordinal scale. Statistical significance was set at $p < 0.05$.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

RESEARCH RESULT

Table 1 Characteristics of the Participants

Karakteristik	Kategori	Frekuensi	Persentase (%)
Usia	18–25 tahun (Remaja akhir)	3	9,7
	26–35 tahun (Dewasa awal)	8	25,8
	36–45 tahun (Dewasa akhir)	14	45,1
	46–55 tahun (Lansia awal)	3	9,7
	>55 tahun (Lansia)	3	9,7
	Jumlah	31	100,0
Jenis Kelamin	Laki-laki	25	80,6
	Perempuan	6	19,4
	Jumlah	31	100,0
Pendidikan	Dasar (SD, SMP/ sederajat)	9	29,0
	Menengah (SMA/ sederajat)	18	58,1
	Tinggi (Perguruan Tinggi)	4	12,9
	Jumlah	31	100,0
Pekerjaan	Tidak bekerja	1	3,2
	Swasta	24	77,4
	Wiraswasta	2	6,5
	ASN/TNI/Polri	1	3,2
	Petani	1	3,2
	Lain-lain	2	6,5
	Jumlah	31	100,0
Lama Menderita HIV	<1 tahun	1	3,2
	1–5 tahun	24	77,4
	>5–10 tahun	5	16,1
	>10 tahun	1	3,2
	Jumlah	31	100,0
Keluarga HIV	Ada	2	6,5
	Tidak ada	29	93,5
	Jumlah	31	100,0

Table 1 shows that most participants were aged 36–45 years (45.1%), male (80.6%), had completed secondary education (58.1%), worked in the private sector (77.4%), had been living with HIV for 1–5 years (77.4%), and reported no family history of HIV (93.5%).

Table 2 Distribution of Self-Acceptance and Adherence to Antiretroviral Therapy

<i>Self Acceptance</i>	Frekuensi	Persentase (%)
Tinggi	14	45,2
Rendah	17	54,8
Jumlah	31	100,0
Kepatuhan Pengobatan ARV	Frekuensi	Persentase (%)
Tinggi	9	29,0
Sedang Tinggi	19	61,3
Sedang	3	9,7
Rendah	0	0
Jumlah	31	100,0

Table 2 indicates that 54.8% of the participants had low self-acceptance. Regarding adherence to antiretroviral therapy, the majority (61.3%) demonstrated moderately high adherence, followed by high adherence (29.0%) and moderate adherence (9.7%). No participant was classified as having low adherence.

Table 3 Association Between Self-Acceptance and Adherence to Antiretroviral Therapy Among People Living with HIV

Self Acceptance	Kepatuhan Pengobatan ARV								Total	
	Tinggi		Sedang Tinggi		Sedang		Rendah			
	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Tinggi	8	57,1	6	42,9	0	0	0	0	14	100
Rendah	1	5,9	14	76,5	3	17,6	0	0	17	100
Total	9	29,0	19	61,3	3	9,7	0	0	31	100
Hasil Uji Spearman Rho <i>pvalue</i> = 0.001, koefisien korelasi = 0.588										

Hasil Uji Spearman Rho $pvalue = 0,001$, koefisien korelasi = 0,588

As presented in Table 3, participants with high self-acceptance were predominantly classified as having high ART adherence (57.1%), whereas those with low self-acceptance were mostly categorized as having moderately high adherence (76.5%). Spearman's rank correlation analysis revealed a significant positive association between self-acceptance and adherence to antiretroviral therapy ($r = 0.588$; $p = 0.001$).

DISCUSSION

The present study Self-Acceptance Among People Living with HIV found that most participants had low self-acceptance (54.8%). This finding indicates that accepting an HIV diagnosis remains a major psychological challenge, even though most participants had been receiving antiretroviral therapy (ART) for 1–5 years. Self-acceptance is influenced not only by the duration of treatment but also by an individual's ability to adapt to the diagnosis, regulate emotions, and cope with HIV-related stigma (Setyaningrum et al., 2023). These findings suggest that successful treatment does not necessarily reflect successful psychological adjustment to living with HIV.

According to Orem's Self-Care Theory, self-care agency refers to an individual's ability to recognize, accept, and fulfill health-related needs (Nursalam, 2020). Individuals who accept themselves are generally better able to adapt to their condition, remain motivated

to maintain their health, and engage in self-care behaviors. Conversely, poor self-acceptance may hinder the adaptation process and increase psychological distress. This finding is consistent with previous studies reporting that better self-acceptance is associated with improved psychological adjustment and greater engagement in self-care among people living with HIV (Li et al., 2025; Ramli et al., 2025).

Most participants demonstrated moderately high adherence to ART (61.3%), while no participant was categorized as having low adherence. These findings indicate that the majority of participants were able to maintain long-term treatment despite living with a chronic condition. Adherence to ART is influenced by several factors, including treatment experience, access to healthcare services, support from healthcare professionals, and individual motivation to maintain health (Herawati et al., 2023). Continuous HIV care through education, counseling, and regular follow-up may also contribute to improving treatment adherence (Yona et al., 2023).

From the perspective of Orem's Self-Care Theory, adherence to ART represents an essential self-care behavior that reflects an individual's ability to meet therapeutic needs (Muhlisin & Irdawati, 2025). Although most participants in this study had low self-acceptance, they still demonstrated relatively good adherence to treatment. This finding suggests that external factors, such as family support, healthcare providers' assistance, and accessible HIV services, may help individuals maintain adherence despite ongoing psychological challenges. Similar findings have been reported by Nugroho et al (2023) and (Kristia et al., 2025), who emphasized that ART adherence is shaped by the interaction of psychological, social, and healthcare-related factors.

This study Association Between Self-Acceptance and Adherence to Antiretroviral Therapy demonstrated a significant positive association between self-acceptance and adherence to antiretroviral therapy ($r = 0.588$; $p = 0.001$). The moderate correlation indicates that individuals with higher self-acceptance tend to show better adherence to ART. Accepting an HIV diagnosis enables individuals to adapt to their health condition, maintain future goals, and remain committed to lifelong treatment (Tan et al., 2025).

These findings are consistent with Orem's Self-Care Theory, which proposes that self-care behaviors are determined by an individual's self-care agency, including the ability to recognize health needs, make appropriate decisions, and sustain health-promoting behaviors (Nursalam, 2020). Self-acceptance facilitates this process by enabling people living with HIV to adapt to their diagnosis and focus on maintaining their health rather than experiencing persistent denial or fear of stigma. Consequently, individuals with better self-acceptance are more likely to engage in consistent self-care behaviors, including adherence to ART (Kirana et al., 2023).

The present findings are supported by previous studies showing that acceptance of HIV status contributes to sustained adherence to ART (Yona et al., 2023). Likewise, (Ramli et al., 2025) and (Kristia et al., 2025) reported that individuals with higher self-acceptance demonstrate greater motivation to continue treatment. Nevertheless, the moderate correlation observed in this study suggests that adherence is influenced not only by self-acceptance but also by other factors, including family support, healthcare provider support, accessibility of HIV services, and individual motivation Ibrahim et al (2023).

CONCLUSION

This study found that most people living with HIV (PLWH) receiving care at the HIV Care, Support, and Treatment (CST) Clinic of Gedongan Primary Healthcare Center had low self-acceptance, while the majority demonstrated moderately high adherence to antiretroviral therapy (ART). A significant positive association was identified between self-acceptance and ART adherence, indicating that individuals with better self-acceptance were more likely to adhere to lifelong treatment. These findings highlight the importance of integrating interventions that strengthen self-acceptance, including psychosocial counseling and family support, into comprehensive HIV care to promote sustained adherence to ART and improve long-term treatment outcomes.

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