

To What Extent Do Nurses in Sub-Saharan Africa Experience Moral Distress? A Systematic Review and Meta-regression Analysis

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REVIEW TITLE AND BASIC DETAILS

Review title

To What Extent Do Nurses in Sub-Saharan Africa Experience Moral Distress? A Systematic Review and Meta-regression Analysis

Condition or domain being studied

This review focuses on the prevalence and extent of moral distress among licensed/registered nurses and nurse-midwives working in healthcare settings across Sub-Saharan Africa. Moral distress is a psychological response that arises when nurses are constrained from acting according to their ethical beliefs, often due to systemic, organizational, or resource limitations. It is associated with negative professional outcomes such as burnout, reduced job satisfaction, and high turnover, making it a critical workforce and healthcare systems issue.

Rationale for the review

Moral distress among nurses has been widely studied in Western contexts, but little is known about its prevalence and impact in Sub-Saharan Africa. The absence of region-specific evidence limits understanding of how systemic and resource-related constraints shape nurses' experiences. This review will synthesize available data to provide reliable prevalence estimates and contextual insights, supporting targeted strategies to mitigate moral distress and improve workforce retention in the region.

Review objectives

Primary objective: To estimate the prevalence and mean scores of moral distress among nurses in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Secondary objectives:

To assess heterogeneity across studies by country, practice area, and methodological quality.

To explore potential sources of variation in reported moral distress levels using subgroup and meta-regression analyses.

Keywords

Nurses; Moral distress; Prevalence; Sub-Saharan Africa; Systematic review