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Impact of AIDS care and level of burnout among nurses in selected hospitals in Limpopo Province, South Africa

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South Africa has one of the worst AIDS epidemics in the world and nurses bear the brunt of caring for people living with HIV and AIDS (PLWHA). This situation exacerbates the existing challenge of nursing staff shortage in South Africa as a whole and more profound in rural areas. Despite this, there is limited information on the nature and magnitude of the impact of caring for PLWHA on nurses in rural South Africa. This study therefore investigated the impact of AIDS care and the level of burnout and symptoms of depression among nurses in rural areas. One hundred and seventy four nurses involved in the care of people living with AIDS participated in the study. A structured interview guide was used as the instrument for data collection. The instrument incorporated the AIDS Impact Scale (AIS), Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI), Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) and the participants' demographic and professional profiles. The study participants were conveniently drawn from five randomly selected hospitals in Limpopo Province. We found that the participants' level of physical and emotional exhaustion were positively associated with age and years of experience respectively. Personal accomplishment was also associated with level of training and qualification. AIS items contributed more to the prediction of physical and emotional exhaustion when compared to their contribution to the prediction of depersonalization and personal accomplishment. The AIS items contributed over 40% to the prediction of emotional exhaustion. The stigma related AIS items were the contributors to the variation in depersonalization. This study therefore re-emphasizes the need to address social stigma, develop psycho-social support programmes and promote social incentives and recognition of the role of nurses in AIDS care.

Keywords: HIV, AIDS, care, nurses, burnout, Limpopo Province, South Africa

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