

Psychosocial Aspects of Noma (Cancrum Oris) in Sub-Saharan Africa: A scoping Review

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INTRODUCTION

Diverse psychosocial problems have been reported across the continuum of illness in persons with Noma (Yunusa & Obembe, 2012; Farley et al., 2020). These psychosocial issues in the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) have been described in silos of research articles. Attempt at integrative analysis of available evidence in the region is generally lacking.

The objective of this review was to describe the volume and scope of existing research evidence on psychosocial aspects of Noma in the region.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Literature search was done for all original peer-reviewed research articles on the psychosocial aspects of Noma in each of the SSA Countries using PubMed, Google Scholar, African Index Medicus and a direct search of reference list of pertinent journal articles. Publications included were peer-reviewed original articles, irrespective of their quality, carried out within the SSA countries and which were available in English or translated to English. Case reports, dissertations, and abstracts, were excluded. The Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) guidelines was used to describe the review.

RESULTS

A total of five studies that met the inclusion criteria across four countries in the region were identified (Yunusa & Obembe, 2012; Farley et al., 2020; Mpinga et al., 2022; Kagone et al., 2022). The summary of their findings are as follows: One in three persons with Noma has a mental health condition (Yunusa & Obembe, 2012), indices of social disadvantage such as being divorced, remaining unmarried, public stigma, social isolation and lack of opportunities for employment are very common in this population (Yunusa & Obembe, 2012; Farley et al., 2020), indirect cost due to lost productivity ranges from 13.4 –15 million United States Dollars (Mpinga et al., 2022), and belief in the supernatural causation of the disease hold sway with its implications for the pathway to care (Kagone et al., 2022). However, despite evidence of enormous psychosocial needs, a huge gap still exists in the area of psychosocial interventions to alleviate them.

CONCLUSION

This review shows the paucity of data on the psychosocial problems of persons with noma. It further buttresses the usefulness of biopsychosocial model for the treatment of the condition.

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