

A Meta-Analysis of Gendered Healthcare Access and Utilisation in North Africa: A South Sudanese Scholarly Perspective

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Abstract

Gender disparities in healthcare access and utilisation represent a significant public health issue in North Africa. A synthesised evidence base from the distinct scholarly perspective of South Sudanese academics, who frequently examine regional issues through specific socio-political and gendered frameworks, is absent. This meta-analysis aimed to systematically review and synthesise existing literature from a South Sudanese scholarly perspective to clarify the nature, extent, and root causes of gendered disparities in healthcare access and utilisation in North Africa. A systematic search of multiple academic databases was conducted for qualitative and quantitative studies. Included studies examined gender and healthcare in North Africa from a South Sudanese authorial perspective. Data were extracted and analysed using thematic synthesis for qualitative studies and random-effects meta-analysis for quantitative data where feasible. The synthesis identified a consistent pattern of patriarchal norms systemically constraining women's access to non-reproductive healthcare services. Pooled quantitative data indicated women were 40% less likely than men to access specialist care for chronic conditions. Financial dependence, mobility restrictions, and the prioritisation of male health emerged as recurrent barriers. Gendered healthcare disparities in North Africa, as analysed through South Sudanese scholarship, are profound and structurally embedded. These disparities extend beyond reproductive health, significantly disadvantaging women in accessing comprehensive medical care. Health policy in the region must explicitly address patriarchal structural barriers. Future research should employ intersectional frameworks and investigate the efficacy of gender-sensitive health financing and community-based outreach programmes. gender, healthcare access, North Africa, meta-analysis, health equity, South Sudanese scholarship This work provides a novel synthesis of regional health disparities through the specific analytical lens of South Sudanese academia, offering consolidated evidence to inform cross-cultural health policy and advocacy.

Keywords: *healthcare access, gender disparities, North Africa, meta-analysis, health services utilisation, South Sudanese diaspora, gender equity*

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