

The Ripple Effect of Sickle Cell Anaemia: Examining the Social and Economic Impacts on the Individuals, their Families and Communities in Jos North LGA, Plateau State, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Sickle Cell Anaemia (SCA) is a hereditary blood disorder with significant social and economic consequences for affected individuals, their families, and communities. Understanding these ripple effects is critical for reducing stigma, improving care access, and guiding supportive policies.

Methods: A descriptive cross-sectional study was conducted among 285 individuals with SCA and their families, recruited from Bingham University Teaching Hospital, Jos University Teaching Hospital, and Plateau Specialist Hospital in Jos North, Plateau State, using a non-probability first-seen-first-recruited approach. Data were collected via interviewer-administered questionnaires and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics.

Results: Respondents were 78.2% female and 21.8% male; 70.2% were under 18 years, and 29.8% over 18. Most were Christians (70.2%), followed by Muslims (28.4%) and others (1.4%). Average monthly income was significantly associated with household economic burden and social stigma ($p < 0.05$). Over half (54.7%) reported difficulty meeting basic needs, 64.2% feared having more children, and 48.4% experienced substantial income loss from caregiving. Among respondents <18 years, 50.5% reported limitations in school activities and 17.4% reported bullying. For those >18 years, 52.3% experienced career limitations, 65.1% found it difficult to get a suitable romantic partner, and 36.0% said others perceived them as having spiritual problems.

Conclusion: SCA's impact extends far beyond clinical symptoms, significantly influencing household stability, economic security, and social integration. Effective interventions must combine medical management with community education, stigma reduction, caregiver support, and policies ensuring affordable healthcare access.

