

**REGISTERED NURSES' EXPERIENCES OF WORKING IN A HIGH-RISK
ENVIRONMENT FOR CONTRACTING HIV/AIDS**

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that REGISTERED NURSES' EXPERIENCES OF WORKING IN A HIGH-RISK ENVIRONMENT FOR CONTRACTING HIV/AIDS is my own work and that all the sources that I have used have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references and that this work has not been submitted for any other degree at any other institution.

NDOU, ND

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ABSTRACT**REGISTERED NURSES EXPERIENCES OF WORKING IN A HIGH RISK ENVIRONMENT FOR CONTRACTING HIV/AIDS**

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Registered nurses are exposed to the risk of Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) infection and contracting the Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS). Qualitative phenomenological research was conducted to explore registered nurses' experiences of working in such a high-risk environment and how their experiences influence the therapeutic relationship. A sample of registered nurses who care for HIV-infected persons or persons who suffer from AIDS was purposefully selected. Focus group interviews were conducted. Qualitative data analysis was performed. Frankl's theory of *meaning of life* served as a theoretical foundation for interpreting the research findings. The research results revealed that registered nurses experience existential frustration due to the intentional and unintentional risks that they are exposed to. This negatively impacts upon their ability to maintain a healthy therapeutic relationship with patients. However, evidence was obtained indicating that some factors support their quest for finding meaning in life in the workplace.

KEY TERMS

Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS); Ethics; Existential frustration; Existential vacuum; Experiences; Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV); Meaning of life; Risk; Therapeutic relationship; Victor Frankl.

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