

Problems That Traditional Health Practitioners And Western Health Practitioners Encounter In Interfacing

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Abstract

The study focused on the Problems that traditional health practitioners and western health practitioners encounter in interfacing .The interfacing of traditional health and western health care system has become increasingly important in recent years, particularly in Africa and other developing region however, the interfacing of traditional health practitioners and western health practitioners is often hindered by various challenges. Thus, the traditional health care system of South Africa, which was the primary health care for the indigenous people is mostly undermined by various religious groups. The youth and the scientific institution demonize the indigenous health care system and its practice as they associate it with witchcraft and other evil practices. Traditional health practitioners and western health practitioners have distinct diagnostic methods, philosophical approaches to health and illness. Western health practitioners focus on biomedical and scientific explanation while traditional health practitioners focus on spiritual and holistical aspects. The researcher observed a growing trend in the twenty-first century towards interfacing Traditional Health Practices (THPs) with Western doctors. It appears that basic health care systems were provided by traditional medical professionals in civilizations prior to the arrival of colonialism. The objective of the study was as follows, to examine problems that traditional health practitioners and western health practitioners encounter in interfacing. The study adopted an employ sociocultural theory. The study used a qualitative research design and was exploratory in nature. Data was generated using semi-structured interviews as data collection instruments. The finding of the shows that western practitioners do not believe that the ancestors do exist, and they undermine the diagnosing methods of traditional practitioner, as they say it is based on speculations due to lack of scientific results. The study recommend that education could make our community conscious of the conventional health care system and work to make youth and scientific groups be able to know and understand the importance of traditional health care system, integration of traditional health and western healthcare system and Funding traditional health care system.

Keywords: *Traditional Health Care, Western Health Care, Conventional Medicine, and Indigenous Knowledge*

Introduction

Traditional health practitioners and Western health practitioners are two distinct groups of healthcare providers that play important roles in the healthcare system. Traditional health practitioners, also known as traditional healers, are individuals who use traditional methods and practices to diagnose and treat illnesses, often based on cultural and spiritual beliefs (Thipanyane et al., 2022). They have been an integral part of African societies for centuries, providing primary healthcare services to communities. Western health practitioners, also known as conventional or allopathic healthcare providers, are trained in Western medicine and use evidence-based practices to diagnose and treat illnesses (Eigel & Kuhn, 2022). They are typically trained in medical schools and hospitals, and their practices are guided by scientific research and clinical trials.

The integration of Western health practitioners is a complex issue, with both groups having different approaches to healthcare. While Traditional health practitioners focus on holistic treatment, incorporating social, environmental, and spiritual well-being, Western health practitioners focus on scientific testing and evidence-based medicine. This difference in approach creates tension and mistrust between the two groups. Despite these differences, there is a growing recognition of the importance of integrating Traditional health practitioners into the healthcare system. Traditional health practitioners have been shown to play a crucial role in maternal health services in rural communities, and their practices have been found to be effective in treating certain illnesses (Thipanyane et al., 2022).

Literature Review

This section presents the literature review of the study.

According to Polit & Beck (2020) The literature review informs researchers about other studies that are similar and relevant to their study. After the research outcomes have been studied and understood, they can be linked to the current knowledge in the literature about the phenomenon under study.

Theoretical Framework

This section discusses the theoretical framework and its application to this study.

Theories are developed to explain, forecast, and comprehend phenomena as well as, frequently, to question and broaden existing knowledge within the parameters of critical boundary claims.

The afrocentric theory

The Afrocentric theory emerged in the 1960s, led by African American academics in the department of black studies, who sought to analyze information from an African perspective (Asante, 2020). Molefi Kete Asante emphasized the importance of Afrocentricity in the late 1970s, aiming to liberate Africans from the constraints of non-African perspectives (Asante, 2020). The Afrocentric theory is a radical movement that seeks to restore African agency and promote social change driven by cultural, economic, religious, and political aspects of society (Ani, 2020). The theory emphasizes the need for Africans to reclaim their knowledge and express it from an African viewpoint (Obenga, 2020). It argues that Africa has been misunderstood due to non-African perceptions and terminology. The Afrocentric theory encourages questioning the impact of colonialism on African societies and exploring alternative responses to environmental, social, and economic challenges. Afrocentric theory highlights the importance of centering African perspectives, experiences, and knowledge systems (Asante, 2020). Afrocentric theory can offer a relevant framework for addressing these issues. By centering African perspectives and experiences, Afrocentric theory can inform a more holistic approach to health, incorporating physical, spiritual, and cultural aspects. It can also help decolonize healthcare by challenging dominant Western narratives and promoting indigenous knowledge. Additionally, Afrocentric theory emphasizes community engagement and participation in healthcare decision-making, empowering local communities to take control of their healthcare needs. This can lead to more inclusive and culturally sensitive healthcare policies and practices.

Healing perspectives of traditional health care system

The Yoruba community's approach to healing involves the body, mind, and spiritual world (Olupona 2020). This holistic method is eventually the difference among indigenous healing and modern modes of treatment. Traditional healing of Africa involves herbal medicine by way of incarnation and invocation of spirits for the whole-body healing indigenous medicine. Orthodox is allopathic; however, African traditional medicine is homeopathic naturally (Mbiti 2022).

The Yoruba community's approach to healing is different from Western medical professionals, who think that certain illnesses, like malaria, have environmental causes or may have originated from something the patient may have eaten. Traditional healers had different views on illness than do contemporary healers. According to traditional healers, certain illnesses are said to have human causes (Hakim & Chishti 2020). Traditional healers use divinity to first confer with their ancestors before diagnosing their patients (Campbell 2022). While Western doctors rely on machines to diagnose their patients, healers are guided by their ancestors in making diagnoses. Conventional medicine considers not just the cure of illnesses but also other facets of life that may affect the patient (Hakim & Chishti 2020). African traditional healers are well-versed in all elements because social unrest frequently stems from an unbalanced relationship between the environment and the community. Certain illnesses that are incurable with Western medical care can be treated with traditional medicine (Floyed et al. 2023).

Impact of colonisation in african traditional health care system

Helwig (2020) asserts that there was a significant disparity between traditional and western medical practices during the colonial era. "Western health care was successful while indigenous health care system was considered as primitive, outdated, and witchcraft," as Ulin and Segall (2022) demonstrate. The parallel systems of traditional and western health care were created by the differences in health practices. Regardless of its importance in providing primary healthcare in rural areas, Western medicine has frequently disregarded indigenous health (Ulin & Segall 2020).

Africans, however, continued to use traditional medicine because it is accessible and affordable by rural communities. The support of the World Health Organization (2020) of the integration of indigenous healing in modern science led to a rise in active indigenous healers in South Africa of approximately 200,000 and an estimated 80% of Africans who consult traditional healers daily (WHO 2020). According to Bourdillon (2020), "the same has occurred with the spread of the so-called colonisation in our country." Most unfortunate in this process is that most black or African people were made to conceive a very wrong notion that everything about them was either wrong or evil.

The formalising of traditional healing profession

The fact is that 80% of South Africans still see traditional healers for their primary healthcare needs, despite the present medical establishment's negative views on indigenous medicine and the negative media coverage this profession has gotten (World Health Organization 2020). Due to a lack of medical facilities, most individuals in rural areas only have access to traditional healthcare services for their medical needs (Stassen 2022). The is 80% of the population who seek medical advice from the traditional health care system stands to gain from its formalization. People continue to practice indigenous medicine despite the medical establishment's negative portrayal of traditional healthcare (Ulin & Segall 2022). The government benefited from the formalization of the traditional health system, since it may aid in the nation's economic development in addition to traditional healers and those who depend on indigenous medicine (Bourdillon 2020).

Research methodology

This study employed a qualitative and explorative research approach, utilizing semi-structured interviews to collect data (Bryman & Bell 2020). The choice of semi-structured interviews allowed for an in-depth exploration of the research questions, without adhering to a rigid set of questions (Cresswell & Plano Clark 2022). The qualitative research design aimed to focus on problems that traditional health practitioners and western health practitioners encounter in interfacing. This approach was suitable for the study, as it enabled the researcher to gain a deeper understanding of the social world and how it is perceived, experienced, and constructed by the participants (Polit & Beck 2022). By using semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to capture the emotions and attitudes of the participants regarding the challenges encountered by traditional health practitioners and western health practitioners. The study involved a research team comprising 5 registered traditional practitioners, 5 western practitioners, and 5 community members from Sendedza, who collaborated to establish new data on the selected topic (Stanley & Anderson 2020).

Problems that traditional health practitioners and western health practitioners encounter in interfacing

The participants were interviewed to give the problems that traditional health and western health encounter in interfacing. This question is important to provide the problems that both health care systems encounter which makes it hard to interface. The following are some of the views:

“Western medicines are not that powerfully because it has been processed and added some things while traditional medicine is used as raw, and another difference is that medical doctors go to school to become doctors whereas traditional healer it's a calling from the ancestors.”

“The challenge is that traditional health or traditional healers are despised and not fully recognized by the department of health. Traditional healing can be accepted as primary health care service only if it can be document on books, computes, and internet and kept at the different libraries so that people would not fear to consult traditional healing when they are making consultation of corona virus”.

“The difference of treating corona virus between traditional health and western health is that when they are treating corona virus in traditional health a patient must have faith in the process of healing. When it comes to western health or treatment it is based on the scientific experiment”

Some of the raised points which will be provided in the themes that were raised above by the participants include the use of natural medicinal plants in traditional health and the use of scientifically tested medicines in western health.

Traditional health uses natural plants while western health uses scientifically tested medicines.

This part provides the uses of natural plants by traditional health and the use of scientifically tested medicines in western health. This was important for the researcher to gain deeper and better understanding on the methods used by both health carer. The participant s views are as follows.

“The difference is that traditional health does not typically have a dosage, their medicine is not tested, and another variety is that traditional health care do not provide oxygen to a patient.”

“In traditional health care they use raw medicine which is very strong they do not dilute them while in western health the use purified medicine or pills that were tested, I know the clinic medicines are checked as to whether they could increase the sickness or not. I doubt if the Traditional health practitioners test their herbs before giving them to their patients.”

The fact that traditional health care uses traditional natural medicinal plants which are not scientifically tested makes it hard to be interfaced because western medicines are scientifically tested before they are administered to patients.

Traditional health care is not fully recognized and documented.

Despite the fact that traditional health practitioners restore the most imperative part in societies, the attributes of traditional healing have not been taken serious in the national health system (Kassaye, 2006). The participant said the following on how the challenges in could be interfacing these two-health care.

“The challenges that us as traditional practitioner are facing is that our traditional health is not recognized by our south African government because is not gazette, which makes it to be less valued and despised. It becomes difficult for other people to accept traditional health and it is the health care which existed a long time ago before the arrival of western health care. we were healing this kind of diseases using indigenous plants. The challenges are that the government is not recognizing traditional health which makes people to rely on western health than traditional health and the problem is that we as African people we do not value our traditional ways of healing where is more effective because we were using this health care for millions of years ago”.

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“The first challenge which I can name is lack of recognition if African way is given enough opportunity to perform their way of healing or if the get enough recognition in government i think they can be able to interface with the western health care system because in my understanding interfacing is not about joining this health care system

together into one thing is about arranging them so that they can help each other if African way is given recognition and they can also work with western health care system to treat this virus I think it can be a best way. Another challenge is the lack of facilities traditional health they do not have buildings and offices to operate they depend on their home stand to perform health action they also have shortages of space. Discrimination is another challenge and this huge challenge which traditional are facing and African indigenous health care is associated with evil things which make African traditional health to be limited to do their rituals or perform health care action."

"the challenges is very much clear I will talk from the black man point of view the challenge which exist is prejudice only if would stop entitling them self as people who got all the knowledge on how things should be done even concerning applying health or treating sickness, or virus sickness only when western people will stop prejudicing black people they can stop undermining indigenous people knowledge as far as am concern every knowledge useful is knowledge and every knowledge that can be productive is scientific as long as it helps let it be tried let it be tested they should not feel that their entitled and sets standards that is the only challenge that is preventing this interfacing black people doesn't have a problems black people accept and welcome the coming of new knowledge only when the western people can also welcome and embrace the indigenous knowledge that they found indigenous communities using it"

Majority of the participants said, Traditional health care is not registered which makes it to be less valued and despised. It becomes difficult for other people to accept traditional health even though it is the health care which existed a long time ago before the arrival of western health care. This made traditional seems to be inaccurate.

Traditional healthcare is based on beliefs and western healthcare based on scientific experiments.

One of another problem is that traditional health is also based in belief where the ancestors are also part of the treatment and one must believe that they will be cured and on the other hand western health is based on working experiments, some of the views from the participants are as follows:

"I think the challenges of interfacing traditional health and western health care is this one the western health care system is based on the scientific proven and traditional health care rely on the experience with the nature."

"In traditional health care the treatment is based on beliefs they first through bone in order for them to request on the ancestors for the medicine to heal a patient while in the western health their treatment is based on the scientific check-ups."

"Traditional health practitioners they view their medicinal practice as genuine and they prejudice because they believe that they're the chosen ones by their ancestors, and they regard western health care system as health care that is not complete, and at the western health care they regard their practice as best because they have studied the medication and their called professionals".

Traditional health care is very different from western health medicine, which is technically and analytically based, in that it holds that illness results from social or spiritual imbalances rather than random events. It is without doubt visible that respond know and understand what makes traditional health care and western health care different in treating corona. According to what the majority of participants said Traditional health, a patient must have faith in the process of healing. Traditional health practitioners said that they do not use only medicine, but beliefs also heal. When it comes to western health or treatment it is based on scientific experiment and they do check-ups until the person is completely healed.

Religion.

Raab (2008) states that the main challenge is the belief or religion because we have many different religions and many people who are coming from different religion who will not understand to be treated by traditional health care, for example there are some Christian who still believes that they cannot enter into the traditional healer premises because they believes that everything traditional healers are doing is committing sins. It would be a challenge to interface the two-health care system.

“Challenges between traditional healers and medical doctors is that traditional healers work by observing to see how we can help a patient, so doctors have the knowledge of how to help a person then it makes it hard to work together.”

“Main challenge is the belief or religion because we have many different religions and many people who are coming from different religion who will not understand to be treated by traditional health care system.”

“The challenge is that if traditional health care practitioner and western health care doctors works together, they cannot understand each other because one of them is a doctor by profession and the other one is called by his/her ancestors, and they believe that are from the ancestors, so the person has to undergo rituals for them to be cure.”

Environment they worked in.

Traditional health care and western health care operate on different environments. Participant said the following regarding the environment that two health care works in.

“The challenges we as traditional healers is that our ancestors do not want us to work in the buildings where there are tiles, ceiling and we practice inside a rondavel mud house where the ground is plasted by dung cow”.

“Challenges between traditional healers and medical doctors is that traditional healers work by observing to see how we can help a patient, so doctors have the knowledge of how to help a person then it makes it hard to work together.”

“The challenge is that if traditional health care practitioner and western health care doctors works together, they cannot understand each other because one of them is a doctor by profession and the other one is called by his/her ancestors, and they believe that are from the ancestors, so the person has to undergo rituals for them to be cure.”

“Traditional healers work in the hats, and I don’t think they will agree to go and work at the hospitals using their ancestral sprits and in the western health professional doctors won’t allow to work with people that didn’t go to school and study medicine.”

“In traditional health care mostly, they treat their patient in bad environment and their medicines smells bad and on the western health care they have rooms for different.”

“People who are going to be helped and the other difference is the language barrier because doctors went to school for their profession, they can help people easily even when they are from different cultures and most traditional healers are not educated, they might have problem helping a person of a different culture .and traditional health does not have a dosage they don’t measure medicines when they prescribe”.

The participants were showing that the environment they both work in can be the problem because traditional health practice does not tidy their places. These were some of the challenges in interfacing traditional health care and western health care.

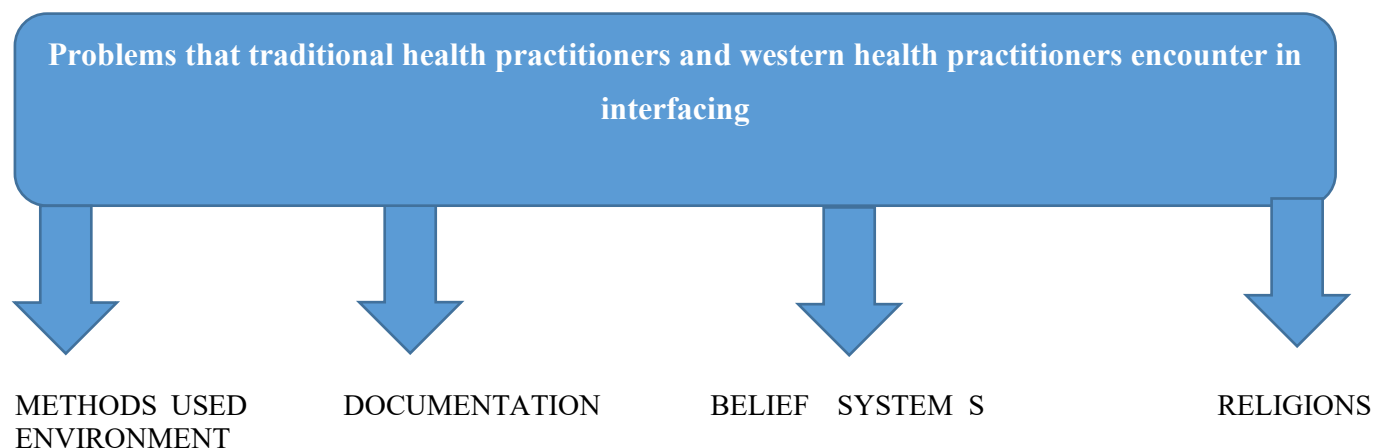


Figure 1. Summary of the Problems that traditional health practitioners and western health practitioners encounter in interfacing

The response given by participants indicated that African traditional medicine is not scientifically proven because it did not undergo lab testing and the knowledge of traditional medicine is largely undocumented hence passed down orally from one generation to generation. Western doctors do not believe that the ancestors do exist, and they undermine the diagnosing methods of traditional healers, as they say it is based on speculations due to lack of scientific results. The study findings also indicated that another challenge is religion and environment they work in because we have many different religions and many people who are coming from different religions who will not understand to be treated by traditional health care, for example there are some Christians who still believe that they cannot enter into the traditional healer premises because they believe that everything traditional healers are doing is committing sins and environment they both work on can be the problem because traditional health practitioners do not tidy their places.

Conclusion

The interface between traditional practitioners and western practitioners is complex and multifaceted. Differences in worldview, methodology and cultural context can lead to challenges in collaboration and understanding. However, by acknowledging and respecting these differences, we can work towards more effective partnerships. Mutual respect and trust are essential in building successful partnerships between traditional and western practitioners. The interfacing of traditional and western practitioners has potential to enrich our understanding and approach to various fields, including health care and spirituality.

Recommendations

Awareness campaigns and education programs on the interfacing of traditional health and western health care systems

During the study little exists about interfacing traditional health care and western health care systems. There is a need for the department of health and relevant agencies or organizations to have awareness campaigns and educational programs about the interfacing of traditional health care and western health care systems. This will influence youth and scientific institutions to consider the significance of using traditional health in their health care needs.

Integration of traditional health and western healthcare system in the fight against coronavirus

The study noted a need for traditional and western health care systems to work together in the fight against Coronavirus. Therefore, the Department of Health, with its relevant stakeholders and private health companies should work together to find ways they can interface traditional and western health care in the fight against coronavirus. The study noted that the traditional health care system was sidelined in various activities, including in the department of health. This study also recommends that a presentation of traditional health should be prioritized during the integration. Part of this analysis to bring about the integration of traditional and western health care system in the fight against coronavirus is to ensure that all relevant stakeholders are all part of the process. The study also proposes that there should be a committee or structure to facilitate the integration process, committee should include traditional practitioners, western practitioners, community liaison officer, (from indigenous community or rural area) local higher education institution and department of health.

Funding traditional health care system

The study found that traditional health does not have funding and they are being oppressed whereas the western health care systems are able to receive funds from the government. The study recommends that government and other companies need to assist the traditional health care system by providing sponsors and funds. Also, the government has to be fully responsible in funding all activities of traditional health care systems that can assist in the promotion and development of traditional health care systems.

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