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MA Research Report in Social and Psychological Research

The Insights and Roles of Traditional Healers Regarding People's Wellbeing in South Africa during the time of COVID-19 Pandemic.

by

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ABSTRACT

South Africa has been affected greatly by COVID-19. Many South Africans consult with traditional healers, more often when experiencing problems. This study highlights the insights and roles of traditional healers in our context, exploring questions of people's wellbeing and COVID-19 regulations. This research study was aimed to investigate the insights and roles of traditional healers regarding people's physical, mental, and social wellbeing during the time of COVID-19 pandemic in South Africa. This study was informed by the biopsychosocial-spiritual model which recognises the interface between social, spiritual, psychological, and physical aspects to patient's well-being and patient care. This research study was conducted using a qualitative approach to explore the insights of traditional healers in detail. Participants were recruited telephonically due to lockdown restrictions. The study was conducted through a telephonic in-depth semi structured interview shortly after receiving an ethical clearance. Sepedi language was used during the interview because people could provide more information when speaking their home language. The sample size consisted of seven traditional healers from Limpopo province. The interview results were analysed within a qualitative approach. The thematic analysis highlights the predominant themes across the views

of traditional healers. An effort was made to review and put together the research results into which the strengths and limitations of the study as well as the recommendation for future research were made. Traditional healers highlighted that most people lost their lives during the lockdown because traditional healers were unable to offer them traditional care. Despite the emphasis on traditional healers being oppressed, the results also highlight participants' recognition of the role they play in peoples' lives such as providing advice through media for illnesses awareness. The nature of the government not recognising the value on traditional healing, not allowing traditional healers to treat people, the halting of tobacco sales, prohibition of gatherings as well as the killings of cows has affected the society and traditional healers as they were not able to communicate with their ancestors as well as performing vital rituals for the dead. Traditional healers pointed that they might try to heal COVID-19 if the government could hear them out or give them a chance because traditional healers are able to successfully heal many illnesses such as cough, flu, cancer, and mental related illnesses. It is worth noting that the lack of government not giving traditional healers a chance to fight COVID-19, the participants felt that without their services the virus might keep on affecting people. Participants revealed that abomination took place, a reptile was killed, for the virus to end people should go to the mountain to ask for forgiveness. Participants felt that if they and the government could work together to fight COVID-19, then this virus could be defeated, and people's wellbeing may get back to normal.

Keywords: Insights and Roles of Traditional healers, People's Wellbeing, COVID-19 Pandemic in South Africa.