

DUALISM, PLURALISM OR SYNCRETISM(?): NAVIGATING BECOMING AND
BEING AN INDIGENOUS HEALER WITHIN CHRISTIAN FAMILIES IN RURAL
KWAZULU-NATAL

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirement for
Master's Thesis
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ABSTRACT

Before the colonial era, African Indigenous people lived in societies deeply rooted in African Spirituality, which functioned as both a belief system and a way of life. These communities believed in a Supreme God and venerated their ancestors. With the arrival of Europeans and missionaries, Christianity was introduced and evangelised across Africa, often condemning Indigenous practices, including traditional healing. Traditional healing came to be questioned and was labelled a demonic practice by missionaries. This study explored the lived experiences of individuals who grew up in Christian families and were called to become indigenous healers in rural KwaZulu-Natal. A phenomenological research design was employed to examine the lived experiences of indigenous healers. The research was guided by Critical Theory as a theoretical framework. The qualitative study used in-depth semi-structured interviews, both in-person and telephonic, to generate data. Both snowballing and heterogeneous sampling methods were used to recruit 11 participants. The data was analysed thematically. Several themes emerged, which include a) Familial Dynamics, b) Faith and Tradition Clash, c) Internal/identity conflict, d) Fear of Spiritual Contamination or Sin, e) Fear of family reputation, f) Spiritual Pluralism and Syncretism, g) Cultural Heritage and Pride. This study found that some indigenous healers experienced rejection upon disclosing their ancestral calling, while others were accepted and supported despite prevailing religious beliefs and societal stigmatisation. Families that rejected traditional healing did so out of fear of violating Christian commandments, as influenced by missionary teachings that associated traditional healing with sin and witchcraft. In contrast, families that embraced traditional healing viewed it as a reconnection with ancestral roots and cultural heritage. They saw the possibility of blending traditional healing with Christianity when love and support were present. The study encourages embracing religious pluralism, advocating for understanding diverse religious and cultural practices rather than viewing them in opposition.

Keywords: African Spirituality, Christianity, Colonial Era, Dualism, Pluralism, Traditional Healing, Missionaries

ABSTRACT IN ZULU

Ngaphambi kwenkathi yamakhloni noma ubandlululo, ama-Afrika ayehlala emiphakathini eyayigxile kakhulu ebumoyeni base-Afrika, okwakungeyona nje inkolo yenkolo kodwa indlela yokuphila. Abantu base-Afrika babehlala bekholelwa kuNkulunkulu oPhezukonke futhi behlonipha okhokho babo. AbaseYurophu kanye nezithunywa zevangeli bethula ubuKristu e-Afrika futhi babushumayela, kanye nemikhuba yabo yendabuko, kuhlanganise nokwelapha kwendabuko. Ukwelashwa kwendabuko kwangabazeka njengoba kwabizwa ngokuthi umkhuba wamademoni yizithunywa zevangeli. Umcwaningi ube esesebenzisana nabakhulele emindenini yamaKrestu ukuze abahlele ukuba umlaphi wendabuko ekubeni uzalwa emindenini yamaKrestu kuba kanjani, endaweni yasemaphandleni KwaZulu Natali, eNingizimu Afrika. Lolucwaningo lusebenzise phenomenological design yahlola impilo kwalabo ababizelwe ukuba yizinyanga zendabuko izimo ababhekana nazo usuku nosuku. Ithiyori ebucayi (Critical framework) isetshenziswe njengohlaka lwethiyori kulolu cwaningo. Ucwano lwekhwalithi lusebenzise inhlokhono ejulile enesakhiwo esincane, izingxoxo zocingo kanye ukuvakashela ezindaweni zabelaphi bendabuko, ukuze kukhiqizwe ulwazi olunzulu. Ucwano lusebenzise snowballing Kanye ne heterogenous okuyizinhlobo zamasampula ukuze kubuthwe ababambiqhaza abayishumi naye (11). Ulwazi luhlaziywe ngokwe Thematic. Kwavela izindikimba ezimbalwa, ezihlanganisa a) I-Family Dynamics, b) Ukungqubuzana Kokholo Nosiko, c) Ukungqubuzana kwangaphakathi/ komazisi, e) Ukwesaba Ukungcoliswa Ngokomoya Noma Isono, f) Ukwesaba isithunzi somndeni, g) I-Spiritual Pluralism and Syncretism, h) Ifa Lesiko Nokuziqhenya. Lolucwaningo luveza ukuthi abalaphi bendabuko abadalule ubizo lwabo emindenini yabo balahlwa, abanye bamukelwa futhi bathola uthando nokwesekwa naphezu kwezimiso zenkolo nokucwaswa emiphakathini. Imindenini eyala amalungu ayo ukuba abe abalaphi bendabuko iveze ukwesaba ukuphambana nemithetho kaNkulunkulu njengoba izithunywa zevangeli zazithi kuyisono nokuthakatha. Babebheka ukwelapha ngokwesintu njengokungavumelani nezinkolelo zabo zobuKristu. Ngaphezu kwalokho, imindenini eyamukela amalungu ayo ukuba abe abalaphi bendabuko yayikubheka njengokuhlangana namadlozi, okubuyela ezimpandeni ngokwamukela amasiko awo. Babebheka ukwelapha ngokwesintu njengento engahlangana nobuKristu inqobo nje uma kukhona ukusekelwa. Umcwaningi ugqugquzele ubuningi bezenkolo ukuthi bamukele ukwehlukahlukana kwezinkolo namasiko esikhundleni sobubili.

DEDICATION

Despite all the challenges they faced, I dedicate this work to all those who have embraced their ancestral calling to become healers. May your journey and calling be understood, accepted and recognised how you wish.

To all those working to bridge the gap between Christianity and traditional healing, may this thesis contribute to enlightenment, dialogue, understanding, and harmony.

To my beloved mother, Ntombikhona Hlombe, thank you, mother, for all the support and prayers that carried me throughout this course. Ngiyabonga Mama!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Firstly, I would love to thank God and my ancestors for the strength, wisdom, intelligence and support they gave me from the beginning of this course till the end, *ngithi nje izandla zidlula ikhanda, udumo malube kunina!!!*.

To my supervisor, Dr Gabriel Gyang Darong, thank you so much. Dr, you are the best supervisor, and I thank you for your exceptional guidance throughout this course. Thank you so much. Thank you for believing in me, for giving me the chance to showcase myself and for your warm feedback; thank you so much.

To my family, boNomndayi! Thank you for the support, prayers and privacy you gave me whilst attending Zoom classes, words of encouragement, Ngiyabonga boSingila abahle!

To my best friend, Nkosingqobile Kweyama, thank you for pushing me to pursue my master's degree; thank you for always being my cheerleader, for believing in me, for your prayers, and for helping me to find the participants; thank you so much, man, you are highly appreciated.

My humble gratitude goes to my participants and their families for taking the time to participate in my research. Thank you so much. I wouldn't be able to finish this thesis without your availability and support, *Makwande!*

Lastly, I am deeply grateful to the HWSETA for sponsoring me with a bursary; you made this degree smoother than I imagined and uplifted my financial burden; thank you so much for this opportunity.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

- ***Amathongo*** – it is a dead person whom we believe/is not dead but alive in the land of the ancestors (*kwelabaphansi*) (Mkhize, 2010).¹
- ***Isithunywa*** - ancestors that worked as faith healers (Kubeka, 2016).
- ***Impande*** – traditional herbs (Mkhize, 2011)

The definitions below are as stated by Dewcom (2023):

- ***Amadlozi*** - ancestors
- ***Isangoma*** - diviner/traditional healer; these can take various forms of specialisation depending on the gifts given by the ancestors. They are usually trained through dancing and music (*ingoma*). Their work encompasses the skills of the diviner, herbalist, psychotherapist, and community counsellor, as well as artists, detectives, mediators, and sensors.
- ***Isigodlo/ indumba*** - the spiritual house used for divination and healing, or where initiates reside throughout their training.
- ***Ithwasa*** - initiate who is undergoing ukuthwasa.
- inherit. It is mainly diagnosed through a prophecy or divination.
- ***Ubizo***- the general word referring to anyone with a vocational calling. In African traditional belief, this is a person who is showing signs of a call from ancestors
- ***Ugobela*** - teacher/ trainer/ senior traditional healers responsible for training initiation.
- ***Ukuthwasa*** - a training process undertaken by those with spiritual gifts from ancestors to emerge as healers.
- ***Umthandazi*** - this is an individual who heals through prayer and symbols such as water, candles and salt.

¹ In this study, the term is used interchangeably with *amadlozi*.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

Anthropology is known as the study of humankind. According to Makhathini's thesis (2021), studying humankind involves studying strategies that people, communities, cultures, societies, and families learn and share as members of their social groups. Anthropologists take an interest in the diverse ways that people in different environments take pride in their cultures. Hence, anthropological research usually focuses on social groups, material objects such as tools, clothes, and houses, and non-material creations such as beliefs, customs, rituals, practices, and other schemas. This chapter puts the research into context through an outline of the background of the study. The chapter outlines the research problem, objectives, questions, relevance in anthropology, literature review and conclusion.

1.2 Background

In the African belief system and worldview, the family comprises both the living members and deceased members of the family. The deceased members are commonly referred to as ancestors. They are the living dead who continue to communicate, offer support, and bestow spiritual gifts to the living (Dewcom, 2023). In the African worldview, there is a hierarchy of affiliations between God/Supreme Being creator, lesser deities, ancestors or the living-dead and living members of the family and community (Dewcom, 2023). Before the 15th century, most countries in Africa were still free. There were diverse forms of religious practices across different African communities, which were indigenous to those communities.

African societies lived in deeply spiritual communities where religion was integrated into all aspects of life. Religion was not seen as separate from daily existence; all life is religion (Farrington, 1998). Africans were a communal society emphasising interdependence and unity. Their worldview was holistic, linking spiritual, social and physical well-being. Individuals were defined by their relationship with their families, ancestors, nature, and the divine (Thorpe, 1994). Religious practices were conducted in homes, communities, or sacred spaces such as mountains, rivers, and groves rather than in separate religious buildings (Zahan,

2000). Some essential beliefs and practices shape people's spiritual lives. Those beliefs were grouped by one of the scholars, Idowu: belief in God, divinities, belief in spirits, belief in ancestors and the practice of magic and medicine (Ugwu and Ugweueye, 2004:32).

Mokgobi (2014) says that Africans had always believed in God and their ancestors and had been profoundly spiritual. "Africans believe that God is the Supreme Being, the Creator, above and beyond ancestors" (Mbiti, 1997:27 as cited by Mokgobi, 2014). He was seen as Creator, though he was considered a stent and was approached through intermediaries such as ancestors, nature spirits or lesser deities (Kasabele, 1995). Amanze (2000) articulated that God has a spirit world where the dead people go to live forever and can continue to interact actively with members of their families in this world. Common to many African people is the belief in ancestral spirits.

Ancestors provide communication channels between God and his people and between the living and the dead. They are also considered guardians of public morality. In African religions, their prayers and wishes are communicated to God through the medium of the ancestors (Mokgobi, 2014). While Christians communicate directly with God or through Jesus Christ, African religious believers communicate with God through the medium of the deceased. Mokgobi (2014) stated that, at times, communication between the living and the dead and God is done through the ritual slaughtering of animals. Also, in the events, Africans made offerings by honouring, pleasing, and praising their ancestors. Offerings are to receive and bless the ceremony (SAHO, 2011).

The intermediaries, diviners, traditional healers² and rainmakers, whose priestly duties and responsibilities consist of mediating between the people and the supernatural being, are characteristic features of many African religions (Amanze, 2000). They are essential to the spiritual and religious survival of the community. The indigenous healers are responsible for healing, divining, fortune-telling, and counselling. These traditional healers are being called by their ancestors. They undergo strict training and learn many skills, including how to use herbs for healing (SAHO, 2011). Dreams, especially their interpretation, have great religious significance in African Spirituality. Sisiani, Komu, Muhamba, Kisandu and Keneema (2023) define African spirituality as a diverse set of beliefs and practices passed down through

² In this thesis, the terms African Traditional Healers (ATH) and African Indigenous Healers (AIH) will be used interchangeably. This choice is in recognition of the longstanding use of the term Traditional Healers in literature, but also by the healers in different contexts, while at the same time acknowledging the changing use of terminologies due to their implications, as discussed by Ntombana, Mndende & Mkuzo (2018).

generations. They note that it is not limited to any religion and exists in various forms across the continent. Deeply rooted in the connection between the spiritual and physical worlds, African spirituality conveys that everything is interconnected. The beliefs and practices articulated by Sisiani et al. (2023) include ancestor veneration, divination, healing practices, music and dance, and community building. However, with the advent of Colonialism and Christianity, such practices were criticised, and Africans were forced to leave behind their beliefs. This led to conflicts between African spiritual beliefs and Christian teachings, which continue to be a cause of tension in many families today.

1.3 Area of The Study

The initial intention was to conduct the study at Inchanga, a rural village in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, close to Hammarsdale. Inchanga was chosen because of its unique socio-religious environment, where African Spirituality and Christianity coexist, often in conflict. In addition to the community's long history of customs that still greatly influence people's identities, many homes also have a strong Christian faith. It was appropriate to examine how Christian families react when their members are called to become indigenous healers in the context of this dual religious environment. However, as fieldwork went on, it became clear that finding appropriate participants inside Inchanga was difficult. The research site had to be expanded due to the limited number of individuals willing to engage in the study, who were indigenous healers. As a result, additional places within KZN province, such as Ntuzuma, Eskhawini (Richards Bay), and Emnambithi, were included in the study. This change made it possible for the study to continue collecting data.

1.4 Relevance of the study in anthropology

Cultural anthropology studies human cultures, their beliefs, practices, values, ideas, technologies, economics and other domains of social and cognitive organisation. (CollegeSidekick, no date) This field is based primarily on cultural understanding gained through first-hand experience or participant observation within human populations. This study aligned with cultural anthropology, which examines the interplay between culture, religion, identity and social practices. This study looks at cultural change and the adaptation of traditional healers and Christians. The study examines the cultural change for traditional healers within Christian families, how they adapted to another culture or religion within the

influence of Christianity, and the tension that arises between their families, as traditional healing and Christianity are two different religions.

Serematiks (2017) stated that the father of anthropology, Franz Boas, developed the term cultural relativism, emphasising understanding a culture on its terms without imposing external judgements or ethnocentrism. It recognises that culture has values, norms, and practices that should be respected and understood within their context. Boas argued that culture is plural. It refers to the cultures of individual human groups. He emphasised that there are many cultural realities and experiences, and none has a moral superiority over the others. Hence, this thesis seeks to understand how traditional healers within Christian families navigate their roles and beliefs without passing values or judgments on these practices. It aims to offer an unbiased investigation of the essential cultural and religious factors.

1.5 Why African Spirituality and not African Traditional Religion?

Before the arrival of settlers, African people were spiritually anchored. Their spirituality was deeply rooted in their way of life and guided by a belief in Umvel'kuqala, also known as Umvelinqangi, Lowo owavela kuqala oMkhulukakhulu. However, settlers struggled to pronounce these spiritual praises and instead referred to the divine as uNkulunkulu rather than mastering oMkhulukakhulu. Africans did not initially use African Traditional Religion (ATR) to describe their beliefs. According to Mndende (1994), the people of Africa did not have a specific name for their religion before colonisation. The name attached to it was given to them later by those who studied it. The outsider, the observer, the investigator, the curious, the detractor, or the busybody first supplied labels, to which Mndende (1994:9) said, "All down the ages, people have worshipped without being preoccupied with finding names for their religions". He argues their work was too subjective and unreliable, based on racial and religious prejudices, because they wrote to capture readers' interest in Europe. The religion on the paper is not the religion practised by its believers. Even the indigenous African scholar John Mbiti, the first African scholar and Christian convert to write about African Traditional Religion, did not fully capture African people's lived experiences and philosophies. Instead, it was said to impress their audiences by shaping presentations of African beliefs and practices towards a Western theological pattern. African Traditional Religion was more structured, with defined rituals and religious roles, whereas "African Spirituality is a holistic way of life and embodies the notion of living in harmony with nature and the world around you" (Brogan, 2023).

It allows them to coexist with dominant world religions such as Christianity and Islam, often leading to religious syncretism (UnisaIR, no date). This study opted for African spirituality because it provides insight into how Africans lived before the arrival of Christianity. It helps explain the significance of traditional healing, particularly the ancestral calling, as an integral part of African spirituality. By focusing on African spirituality, the study explores how missionaries suppressed these beliefs, leading to tensions between Christianity and traditional healing. This perspective allows for a critical discussion on how some Christian families reject traditional healing while others embrace it, reflecting religious pluralism.

1.6 Problem Statement

Colonial settlers not only imposed foreign political and economic systems on African societies, but also sought to replace indigenous religious beliefs with Christianity. The African people, who had long held deep spiritual connections to their traditional beliefs, such as those surrounding Umvelinqangi, the supreme deity in many African cosmologies, were coerced into adopting a foreign religion that often disregarded and undermined their cultural and spiritual heritage. The coexistence of traditional healing practices and Christian beliefs in many societies presents complications and conflicts in culture and religion. As Mndende (1994) stated, the introduction of Christianity to Africans has resulted in ethnocentrism, where the traditional religion is judged according to Christian standards. Outside Christianity, there is no salvation and no knowledge of God, and there is no civilisation. African Religion was not regarded as a valid religion by missionaries; hence, it was called heathenism, a religion of the uncivilised. Asamoah-Gyadu (2014) also showed that Christian missionaries viewed herbal medicines as negative attributes and evil because they believed in God. The use of herbs and the traditional practices which Western African people used were linked to witchcraft. Therefore, this approach has produced dualism in Africans as indigenous religion is labelled as an evil thing, but Christianity is the best and superior religion in the world.

Robinson (2003) stated that “dualism denotes having two systems that may be together but pulling each other in different directions, and more importantly, one is seen as more important than the other”. This is linked to the Cartesian, the French philosopher who said that the mind and body are separate and that the mind is superior to the body. This speaks to whether we see Christianity and traditional African healing as dual systems, which go in different directions, and one is more important than the other. Historically, missionaries came with teachings of Christianity, claiming that their religion was superior to the African religion. They portrayed

the African religion as primitive, based on superstitions, and not grounded in the truth, while presenting Christianity as the only genuine and legitimate faith. The introduction of Christianity to Africans has resulted in ethnocentrism, where the traditional religion is judged according to Christian standards. As a result, religious bigotry, "a holier than thou" attitude (Mndende, 1994:4), has been experienced.

This view thus causes conflict between an individual's desire to become a traditional healer and the family's opposition based on their Christian beliefs. For example, Van der Watt et al.'s (2020) research explored experiences of becoming healers and found many conflicts their participants experienced. It was familial conflicts, church, self-conflicts and experience of belonging. Their participants revealed that their families never wanted anything to do with this ancestral calling, and their families did not understand it. However, with the advent of Christianity and, subsequently, apartheid in the country, *becoming* and *being* a traditional healer became a challenging experience for some healers. Hence, the study seeks to explore navigating becoming and being a traditional healer within Christian families in South Africa.

This study explores the challenges, dilemmas and strategies employed by individuals who aspire to become or are already traditional healers within Christian families. It seeks to investigate how these individuals coexist or maintain their culture and religious identities as a form of syncretism. Van Rheenen (1997) defined religious syncretism as blending Christian beliefs and practices with other dominant cultures or religions. Thus, understanding the experiences of traditional healers and their families' tensions or conflicts and harmonies that arise when traditional healing and Christianity intersect will shed light on the broader issues of identity, faith and cultural continuity in a world of evolving beliefs and practices.

1.7 Research Objectives

1. To understand how Christian family members in a rural KwaZulu-Natal community react to the calling of their family members to become traditional healers.
2. To understand how traditional healers in a rural KwaZulu-Natal community are affected by the reaction of their Christian family members towards them becoming and being traditional healers.
3. To explore how traditional healers in a rural KwaZulu-Natal community navigate how their Christian family members react to them becoming and being healers.

1.8 Key Questions

1. How do Christian family members react to the calling of their family members to become traditional healers?
2. How were traditional healers affected by the reaction of their Christian families towards their becoming traditional healers?
3. How do traditional healers navigate after the reaction of their Christian families?

1.9 Structure of the dissertation

Chapter 1 - This chapter introduces the research study and presents a brief background, relevance, research questions, and objectives. This chapter will discuss what other scholars wrote about African Spirituality and Christianity, the History of African Spirituality and its beliefs and practices before the arrival of Christianity. This will also introduce Christianity in Africa and outline the impact of Christianity in some African countries and the impact of missionaries on traditional healing, as it is the main reason for this study, as well as the approach of dualism, pluralism, and syncretism and the gap between studies.

Chapter 2 – The chapter explains the literature review, which covers African spirituality, beliefs, practices, and the arrival of Christianity in Africa. It will discuss the impact of Christianity on traditional healing in Africa, the banishment of traditional healing and the Traditional Health Practitioners Act. This chapter will further discuss the ancestral calling theme to provide cultural and spiritual context.

Chapter 3- This chapter will discuss the theoretical framework, which is Critical Theory. It develops the theoretical framework by explaining the origin of Critical theory, tracing its foundation to Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse and Habermas and showing its application in African epistemologies, spirituality and decoloniality. It further discusses pluralism, aligning with critical theory and initiatives.

Chapter 4 - This chapter will discuss the methodology of the study. It will highlight the qualitative approach used, sampling techniques and size, location of the study, where the data was collected, data tools used to collect data and ethical considerations. This chapter will also reflect on how ethnographic principles such as trustworthiness and reflexivity informed the study. Ethical considerations and limitations to ensure credibility are also presented.

Chapter 5- This chapter discusses findings, focusing on the experiences of traditional healers, the initial phase of calling as experienced by the traditional healers and the spiritual grounding of the healers and their families. Themes such as internal conflicts and seeking validation will be discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 6- explains and analyses themes from Christian families rejecting their members from becoming traditional healers. These themes include the fear of spiritual contamination from members called to be healers, the need to protect the family's reputation, the fear of isolation from community and church members, and the perceived fear of consequences linked to having a traditional healer in a family.

Chapter 7- This chapter discusses themes that emerged from Christian families that accepted their members to become traditional healers. These themes include their view of traditional healing as a form of cultural pride, their ability to practice spiritual pluralism and syncretism, their view of healing as a service to the community, the support they receive from their communities, and the need to celebrate cultural diversity and richness.

Chapter 8 discusses the study's conclusion, recommendations and limitations.

1.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the foundation of the study by placing it within the wider anthropological purpose of understanding human cultures, traditions and worldview. This chapter shows that African societies lived in deeply spiritual communities where religion was integrated into all aspects of life. African Spirituality was a holistic life deeply rooted between

the living, ancestors and divine. Christianity and the arrival of missionaries destroyed the lives of Africans and their practices, causing conflicts that still influence African families to this day. African spirituality and traditional healing were regarded as evil, superstitions, while Christianity was portrayed as superior, as the literature has shown. This has led to conflicts within families, especially when a family member has a calling to become an indigenous healer.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Religion is the most substantial element in traditional African culture and exerts significant influence on the conduct of the African people. Religion is closely bound up with the traditional way of African life; therefore, religion has shaped the lives of Africans, and at the same time, life has also shaped religion. Whenever two or three cultures meet, there is a potential for conflict. Spiritual conflicts exist between the African religion and Christianity. Christianity was introduced in Africa; many Africans became Christians not by choice but via intimidation, and others became Christians by choice. Missionaries viewed Africans as pagans and objects of missions, and missionaries were good Samaritans, bringing the civilising influence of Christianity to Africa (Ntombana, 2015).

According to Ntombana (2015), who quoted Jafta's work (2011:61), articulated that "the teaching of missionaries played a role in detribalisation and undermining African society because each of the customs they condemned played a significant role in the maintenance of the tribal culture". Traditional healing and traditional African practices were oppressed by Congregational, Methodist, Anglican, Lutheran or Catholic because they considered them barbaric and based on superstition (Adamo, 2011). Offerings and sacrifices to the ancestors were forbidden as evil. Information on African Spirituality and Christianity will be obtained from different scholars.

2.2 African Spirituality

African spirituality refers to African people's religious and philosophical worldview, which is deeply rooted in their daily lives, customs, and beliefs (UnisaIR, no date). According to Brogan (2023), it is a holistic way of life that embodies living in harmony with nature and the world around you. Furthermore, it is not a static system but a dynamic, evolving practice influenced by social and cultural changes. African spirituality is characterised by adaptability, flexibility, and openness, allowing it to coexist with dominant world religions such as Christianity and Islam, often leading to religious syncretism. The historical roots of African spirituality can be

traced back to ancient indigenous belief systems and practices deeply ingrained in the diverse cultures across the continent. Spiritual File (2024) emphasises that these belief systems are not monolithic; they vary widely from region to region, encompassing a rich tapestry of traditions, rituals, and cosmologies (Spiritual File, 2023). What unites them, however, is a deep reverence for the natural world, ancestors, and spirits, as well as a profound interconnectedness between the physical and spiritual realms. Moreover, African spirituality often emphasises communal harmony, balance, and the interdependence of all living things. Ntombana & Meveni (2015) stated that Africans do not separate religion from culture; religion is not a state of being where one can be today and decide otherwise tomorrow; it is a part of one's identity. African religion is who they were, who they are and who they aspire to be and accompanies the individual from long before his birth to long after his physical death. That explains why spirituality is so significant to African people, and as a result, it is strongly embraced as part of their identity.

According to Chiorazzi (2015), Professor John Olupona, a scholar of Indigenous African religion, defines African spirituality as a belief system acknowledging how beliefs and practices touch on and inform every facet of human life. He argues that African religion cannot be separated from the everyday or mundane (Chiorazzi, 2015). Olupona views African spirituality as truly holistic; for example, sickness in the indigenous African worldview is not only seen as an imbalance of the body but also as an imbalance in one's social life, which can be linked to a breakdown in one's kinship and family relationships with one's ancestors. Consequently, having an ancestral calling can be perceived as a form of sickness. Olupona further argues that African spirituality has always blended or coexisted with other religions, such as Christianity and Islam. He asserts that African spirituality has consistently demonstrated an ability to adapt to change and absorb the wisdom and views of other religions, often more so than Christianity and Islam (Chiorazzi, 2015).

An example of this adaptability is in African amulets inscribed with Quran or Christian Bible verses. This illustrates the efficacy of other faiths and religions; there is no inherent conflict between traditional African spirituality and other faiths. Olupona sees other faiths as complementing African spirituality. He shares a personal account of his father, a faithful Anglican priest in Nigeria, who embraces African culture and never spoke out against initiation rites, festivals, or traditional Yoruba dress, as long as they did not directly conflict with Christianity. This perspective supports the argument that Christian families do not necessarily need to reject traditional healing but can integrate it into their faith. Moreover, Olupona

employs an African proverb, 'The sky is large enough for birds to fly around without one having to bump into another.' This encourages a plurality of religious viewpoints, promoting the coexistence of various faiths without one religion excluding or compromising the other. This aligns with my study, as it advocates for religious pluralism.

The African perspective emphasises community and interconnectedness. Brogan (2023) states that "humans are not independent beings," and Sisiani et al. (2023:4211) echo this sentiment by asserting that "community building is an integral part of African spirituality because it reflects the African belief in the interconnectedness of all things." Both authors argue that humans are part of a broader community that includes the spirit world and nature. This holistic approach fosters a sense of kinship that extends beyond human relationships to include all living beings. Gumo et al. (2012) explain the importance of communication and nature in African spirituality. The African spiritual worldviews create respect for nature and reverence for hills, forests, animals, and rivers. This practice is still upheld by some African communities, especially among the Luhya of Kenya, who utilise their African spirituality to conserve the Kakamega Forest. Communication can be used as a conceptual tool to understand how African spirituality is exercised among traditionalists. Communication involves transmitting information from one person to another. It is so deeply rooted in the behaviours and structures of African society that it is difficult to think of social or religious events that lack communication. The ritual communication process cannot be artificially abstracted from its historical and social context.

The conceptualisation of communication is shared among all or most people belonging to a particular community, making it a vital element in understanding the dynamics of a people's culture and religiosity. As a communication mode, language is crucial in transmitting African spirituality embedded in belief systems. Through the diversity of African languages, African spirituality has been passed down from generation to generation, promoting the transmission and context in which the message of African spirituality is interpreted. Furthermore, Gumo et al. (2023) emphasise that humanity is integral to African spirituality. According to various African spiritualities, humanity exists in a religious universe where natural phenomena and objects are intimately associated with God. Therefore, humanity, animals, and other natural phenomena originate from God and bear witness to Him. The understanding of God is profoundly shaped by the universe of which humanity is a part.

In traditional African societies, humankind visualises God as a father, both the universal creator and provider and as a personal presence in times of need. This notion of God as the father of creation is shared among various African people, although only some hold specific personal names for God as simply father (Gumo et al., 2023). According to African thought and belief, humankind is not an isolated creature. Instead, humanity is part of a universe filled with animals, plants, and inanimate objects, all related in various ways and dependent on the Supreme God for their existence. Both Brogan and Sisiani et al. (2023) wrote about the components and beliefs of African spirituality. Brogan (2023) mentioned belief in the Supreme Being and lesser spirits, ancestral veneration and community, whereas Sisiani et al. (2023) articulated ancestor veneration, divination, healing practices, music and dance, and community building.

2.2.1. Belief in Supreme and Lesser Spirits

Brogan and Sisiani, Komu, Muhamba, Kisandu and Keneema (2023) explain that traditional African ideas about truth and fate are profoundly entrenched in the spirit realm. Brogan (2023) states, "The Creator (God) is first in the order of existence, followed by the deities, object-embodied spirits, ancestors' spirits, and other non-human spirits that include benevolent, innocuous, and malevolent spirits." Sisiani et al. (2023: 4211) note that "the Supreme God is believed to be the Creator of all – spirits, humans, plants, animals, and other life forces." They both highlight that the existence of other impersonal and personal spirit beings, forces, powers, divinities, and gods permeates the entire universe. Brogan (2023) asserts, "this universe is fundamentally spiritual rather than physical," and life has divine potential, reinforcing the need for offerings and sacrifices to effect positive change in both the earthly and heavenly realms.

2.2.2. Ancestral Veneration

Ancestral veneration is a central component of traditional African spirituality, as both Brogan and Sisiani et al (2023) highlight. Brogan (2023) explains that "African spiritual beliefs hold that our ancestors are very much alive and among us," emphasising their ongoing presence in our lives. Sisiani et al. (2023:4211) state, "In Africa, ancestors are believed to be able to influence the lives of their living descendants, and they are often invoked for guidance and protection." Both authors emphasise honouring ancestors, noting that this practice ensures prosperity, long life, and happiness for future generations. Brogan mentions that "every African culture has one thing in common – they believe in nurturing ancestral bonds through prayers,

rituals, and ceremonies," aligning with Sisiani et al.'s (2023) assertion that ancestor veneration is integral to African spirituality because it reflects the belief in the continuity of life beyond death. Most Africans still believe that their ancestors introduced them to uMvelinqangi (the Creator), which is why they believe that even in death, they remain connected to Him.

2.2.3. Divination and Healing Practices

Divination is another significant aspect of African spirituality, as highlighted by both Brogan and Sisiani et al. (2023). Brogan (2023) notes that "divination serves as a vital method for communicating with the spiritual world and seeking guidance," while Sisiani et al. (2023:4211) add that "there are many forms of divination in African spirituality, including the use of bones, shells, and other objects." Both authors agree that divination reflects the African belief in the interconnectedness of all things. Healing practices, which incorporate herbal remedies, prayer, and other forms of spiritual healing, are also integral to African spirituality. Brogan (2023) points out, "Healing is an integral part of African spirituality because it reflects the African belief in the interconnectedness of the physical and spiritual worlds."

2.2.4. Music, Dance, and Community Building

Music and dance are essential expressions of joy, gratitude, and faith in African spirituality. Brogan (2023) states, "Music and dance are an integral part of African spirituality because they reflect the African belief in the interconnectedness of all things." Sisiani et al. (2023:4211) reinforce this by emphasising that "African spirituality continues to have a significant influence on the spiritual beliefs and practices of African people today." Together, these elements illustrate how African spirituality shapes the beliefs and practices of African people today.

2.2.5. Traditional healing

Traditional healing was and still is the most practised in Africa, and many Africans embraced it. Traditional healing encompasses treating illness with herbs and spiritual treatment (Mokgobi, 2014). Melato (2000) explains that various names are known to traditional healers; their names differ according to ethnic groups. They are highly respected and concerned with the well-being of society as a whole. They determine illness and provide counselling and treatment (Melato, 2000). Morekwa (2004) defines traditional healing as a method of healing and curing illness, sickness, and diseases found in African Spirituality. It involves using natural remedies such as herbs, roots, bark, leaves, and animal materials to cure or solve people's problems.

A traditional healer is a conduit, transmitting information between the living and the living dead family members. Mokgobi (2014:30) defined a traditional healer as “an umbrella concept encompassing different training expertise”. There are different types of traditional healers in South Africa, called by various names in other provinces. In KwaZulu-Natal, Zuma et al. (2016: 6) stated that the “types of traditional healers are *Isangoma* (diviner), *Umthandazi* (faith healer), and *Inyanga* (herbalist)”. The authors assert that while a person can become an *Inyanga* through intensive training about traditional medicines and practices, they can only become *Isangoma* or *Umthandazi* if they have been called by their *Amadlozi* and thereafter be trained. Zuma et al. (2016) stated that although the *Inyanga*’s skills are primarily through their training rather than calling, they still need to be able to connect with their ancestors. This connection allows them to “activate” their healing ability.

This view is aligned with that held by Truter (2007: 57), who asserted that “in South Africa, people do not choose to become traditional healers. Instead, they are said to be 'called' by their ancestors to be trained and thereafter take up the practice of healing”. An *isangoma* becomes a healer after experiencing illness, which is interpreted as the calling of the ancestors. One does not chase to become an *isangoma*; supernatural powers are bestowed upon them for spiritual healing (Crawford & Lipsedge, 2004). *Izangoma* can communicate directly with the ancestors or indirectly by throwing bones (Ndlovu, 2016). Ngoma, Prince & Mann (2003) assert that their supernatural powers enable them to differentiate between ancestral and non-ancestral illnesses and their relative treatments.

Inyanga has extensive knowledge of curative herbs, natural treatments and medicinal mixtures of animal origin (Truter, 2007). They often accept referrals from *izangoma* and complete the healing process using their medicinal expertise (Ngoma, Prince & Mann, 2003). Sthabile Ndlovu’s thesis (2016) stated that *Inyanga* specialises in certain illnesses, for example, snake poison or mental illness. Still, they are generally competent to offer healing for any illness. Faith healers (*abathandazi*) undergo training before practising. They communicate with and consult God and ancestors for their patrons’ requests and problems (Ndlovu, 2016). Their healing is believed to come from God through trance contact with a spirit, a combination of the Holy Spirit and ancestral spirits (Truter, 2007). *Umthandazi* may use herbs, remedies, and holy water to heal, but usually uses religious symbols and quotes from Bible scriptures to offer encouragement and spiritual exhortation, providing hope to the diseased or troubled (Ngoma et al., 2003).

2.3 Ancestral Calling

According to Kubeka (2016), in Zulu culture, certain people may be identified by their ancestors to become traditional healers. The person has to accept the calling (*ubizo*) and undergo rigorous training, known as *ukuthwasa*. Any person with the calling can undergo *ukuthwasa* irrespective of education, gender or age (Kubeka, 2016). *Ukuthwasa* is defined as coming out and rebirth (Kubeka, 2016). The first signs of *ubizo* often take the form of dreams or visions in which the individual encounters natural elements, such as rivers, ancestors, or animals. These experiences are understood as communication from the ancestors, indicating that the individual is chosen to serve as a healer. Mkhize (2011) explains that *ukuthwasa* is not something new but has always existed as a process of accepting an *idlozi* (ancestral spirit) that once lived and now seeks to continue its duties through a living person.

He further stresses that the spirit (*idlozi*) governs the process, often revealing itself through dreams (*amaphupho*), water, or herbs (*impande*). According to him, refusing the calling can result in abnormal illnesses, misfortunes, and even collective suffering within the family until the calling is acknowledged. However, in Christian families, participants explained that when they spoke about their dreams and visions, their families dismissed them, sometimes calling those dreams forms of devil possession, insisting they pray them away. This denial delayed recognition of the ancestral calling. When *ubizo* is not recognised or accepted, it frequently manifests as *ingulo*, which is an illness that cannot be cured through medical treatment. This corresponds with Mlisa's (2009) stage of confusion, resistance and acceptance, where initiates struggle with personal conflict and misdiagnosis by doctors or priests. *Ingulo* was described by Mlisa (2009) as a sickness which affects those whose ancestors are targeted in their family lineages to be diviner healers.

Similarly, Mkhize (2011) highlights that this is not an ordinary illness but a spiritual affliction, and only the acceptance of the calling (*ukuvuma idlozi*) and subsequent initiation can restore balance. The person has to accept the calling to be a diviner and go through a series of steps through rigorous training. The person has to be treated by a fully fledged diviner who has been identified and presented to the person through dreams (*amathongo*). The ancestral spirits may cause obstacles in the individual's life. Suppose the individual does not accept the calling. In that case, it can affect the whole family, resulting in the family having a dark cloud over it, and various family members may also undergo various problems despite all efforts to overcome them (Kubeka, 2016). The individuals may experience misfortune in all levels of living, such

as marital disharmony, car accidents, loss of employment, addictions, miscarriages and financial problems (Kubeka, 2016).

Some families would start the process at this stage by seeking counsel from an igqirha (healer) to verify or confirm what is happening. It is a well-known tradition to resemble ukuthwasa with sickness, as it is often revealed through a series of syndrome signs and symptoms called ingulo or ingulo emhlophe in Xhosa (Mlisa, 2019). The stage of intense afflictions by Mlisa (2019) explains that at this stage, the sickness intensifies, and the family is forced to do something. Verification and confirmation of a need to start the journey of ukuthwasa becomes more apparent, and in most cases becomes a last straw. After confirmation, the training starts immediately or later, depending on the family's socio-economic status, as the process is expensive (Mlisa, 2019). No church prayers or doctors' treatment, except cultural training, bring a cure. It is the sickness of the ancestors, a prerequisite to be trained as a healer.

The first stage of ukuthwasa starts with accepting idlozi (ukuvuma idlozi), which implies the death of an old life and being reborn into a new person (Dewcom, 2023). Accepting the ancestral call often involves forms of abstinence and a change of diet to achieve the unpolluted sacred status of a traditional healer. Throughout the initiation process, ithwasa develops a habit of listening to and communicating with ancestors through the guidance of ugobela, who interpret and guide the messages one receives and the required rituals (Dewcom, 2023). The trainer (ugobela) becomes the guide and mentor in each step. They help the initiates learn how to listen and connect with ancestors on behalf of people who need healing. There is no timeframe for the process of ukuthwasa. It largely depends on ancestors and when ugobela feels they have completed the journey (Dewcom, 2023). On completing the ukuthwasa process, the trainee has access to the world of ancestors. They possess the skills for divination and healing, and they can receive direct communication from them. Traditional healers can specialise in several ways that align with their ancestors' spiritual gifts bestowed upon them. These streams include izangoma, ababhuli, abalozi, izanusu, liNgaka, amaGqira and aBathandazi, among others.

2.4 Introduction of Christianity in Africa

The Oxford University Press Dictionaries (2012, as cited by Manala, 2013) define Christianity as the religion based on the person and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth or its beliefs and practices. Most Christians believe in one God in the three Persons (the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit) and that Jesus is the Son of God who rose from the dead after being crucified. A Christian hopes to attain eternal life after death through faith in Jesus Christ. Christianity was an agent of change in Africa. Bringing new opportunities to some and undermining the power of others. With the Christian missions came education, literacy, and hope for the disadvantaged (Manala, 2013). During colonisation, Christianity was used to convert people to a Westernised religion and offer charity to low-income people. To complete their mission, the missionaries also denied people pride in their culture and practices so Africans could cultivate the Western culture.

According to the BBC, *The Story of Africa*, Monala (2013) quoted that Christianity has spread slowly in Africa for centuries. It first arrived in North Africa in the 1st century. It slowly spread from west to east. In the 4th century, Christianity decreased as Islam became prevalent and more acceptable to Africans. In the 15th century, Christianity went to sub-Saharan Africa. Until the 19th century, all other African religions were practised and respected; however, missions to Africa started increasing and thus were driven by Europeans who wanted to colonise many different African countries. Christianity reached those regions throughout Europe during the great Age of Exploration. As Europeans established outposts on the coast of Africa in the 1400s and 1500s, they brought along missionaries who settled among indigenous populations (Geography 2023). At first, the introduction of Christianity was limited to Africans in coastal areas but expanded into the continent's interior around the 1800s. Europeans considered converting Africans to Christianity to be part of the process of colonisation. Their exploitation of Africa's wealth was accompanied by missionary activity. The primary interest of most conquerors and traders who journeyed to Africa was to enrich themselves. This goal often involved enslaving and killing local populations.

West Africa was only introduced to Christianity in the 15th century when Portuguese seafarers travelled around the African continent (Baur, 1994:42). "Portuguese commercial voyages played an important role in the spreading of Christianity to West Africa, Roman Catholic priests accompanied the Portuguese expeditions and spread of Christianity among the Africans they encountered during their voyages" (Onyinah, 2007:306). The spread of the Christian

missionary movement in West Africa started around the 19th century to convert Africans to the Western religion (Christianity). Christian missionaries were sent out to West Africa by various missionary societies of protestant churches.

Different Protestants in Europe and America formed societies in the 19th and 28th centuries. Some societies, such as the C.M.S. Mission, the Baptist Mission, and the Catholic Mission, came to Africa at different times to spread the gospel to Africans. The coming of European missions to West Africa was based on many reasons, which were more beneficial to the Europeans and which Africa also enjoyed little benefit. One of the reasons why missionaries came to spread Christianity was that the European explorations carried out by different European explorers revealed that West Africa's interior communities engaged themselves in the traditional worship of gods, animals, spirits, ancestors and a lot more. Some early missionaries focused on ministering to formerly enslaved people sent to Liberia and Sierra Leone, while others evangelised indigenous populations. They did not know anything about Christianity, and the European Christians felt that they had an obligation to spread Christianity among Africans, which brought them to Africa to convert Africans from traditional religion to Christianity. The eradication of inhuman practices in Africa was one of the essential motives for spreading Christianity to West Africa. The European explorations revealed that Africans were involved in so many evil practices, such as human sacrifices, the slave trade, slavery and the killing of twins, which made the Europeans send missions to preach to the people the Christian principles of love for one another; anyone who accepted would stop the inhuman practices considered evil by the Europeans.

To achieve their aim of eradicating enslaved people and introducing legitimate commerce, the European Christian mission was to spread Christianity in Africa by introducing the system of the Bible and the Plough, which were the tactics the missionaries used in substituting the slave trade with legitimate commerce. The Christian missionaries were also sent to establish Western education, civilisation, and culture among Africans; with the spread of Christianity, any converts who accepted Christianity would be required to read the Bible. Since Africans were non-literate, schools had to be established by the missionaries and the Africans were taught how to read and write. The main aim of the missionaries was to evangelise the natives (Satyo 1992:199; Turner 1968:41; Haingura 1992:134). Education was also helpful in the thriving trade transactions between the Europeans.

The ideas embedded in Africans about their culture made Africans less inferior and barbarous because Africans did not operate in the European way of life. Missionaries regarded the black way of life as uncivilised because it was not European and had to be changed before spiritual salvation could be achieved (Ashley 1978:2). The Europeans made Africans realise that they had no religions, no cultures and that the European culture and civilisation was superior. Africans' names were described as meaningless and unstable for baptism; therefore, the Europeans encouraged the adoption of foreign names for African converts, but the meanings of the names they could not explain. African arts, music and polygamous marriage systems were rejected and preached against, which destroyed the African culture. Africans were taught that everything from the Western world was good, while everything in Africa was primitive and evil; to become reasonable and civilised Africans, they had to copy Western ways of life. With the spread of Christianity in Africa, some traditional African views and practices, such as healing, were questioned. Africans were discouraged from traditional religious beliefs because the missionaries considered them inferior and demonic (Mokgobi 2014).

Christianity continued spreading in Africa, and David Livingstone introduced it to Southern Africa, Botswana, in 1812. Christianity was widely adopted during the colonial period of the Bechuanaland Protectorate. Nkomazana & Setume (2016:30) stated that “the London Missionary Society made the mistake of believing that to become a Christian, Batswana/ Africans had to abandon their indigenous cultures completely. They treated African religions as evil and did everything possible to ensure that it was ousted. Ingo (2005:14) said that “some African Christian scholars deliberately classify ancestors with evil spirits of unknown origin. The Western people colonised the African religion by trying to detach Africans from their traditional religions and cultures and embrace Western cultures only. The Western missionaries believed that traditional religious beliefs and practices were inferior, and together with the traditional customs had to be done away with before the acceptance of Christianity”. Nkomazana & Setume (2016) said, “Missionaries usually equated non-Western cultures with degradation, barbarism, ignorance and darkness. They wanted Africans to denounce their culture and adopt Western ways. The missionaries also aimed for Africans to abandon their religion and cultures. Children grow up being ignorant of their African identity and then becoming Europeanized in their ways and thinking, thus softening their hearts to embrace the European colonial takeover from a tender age”. Nkomazana & Setume (2016) stated that “missionaries destroyed powers of the Batswana chiefs who resisted Christianity, were

removed with the assistance of the colonial government. They were removed from their thrones because of refusing to embrace missionary teachings”.

Meanwhile, Tlou and Campbell (1984:133 as cited by Nkomazana & Setume, 2016) said that the “Botswana chiefs saw Christianity as a foreign religion that was against traditional values, beliefs and practices”. Similarly, Dube in Nkomazana & Setume’s reading (2016) articulated that “missionaries worked towards weakening the traditional authority, its values, being and potential. The missionaries used the Bible as a tool to colonise the minds of the Africans”. The Bible was presented in such a way that it painted everything associated with African practices as pagan to promote Western ideologies, values and practices. The missionaries particularly disliked such practices as initiation ceremonies, bridewealth, polygamy, and traditional healing because they viewed them as contrary to the teachings of the Bible and also a hindrance to the spread of missionary teachings, as is still happening today, where you will not find a Christian who has two wives since the Bible does not allow that.

Nkomazana & Setume (2016) mention that “these missionaries aimed to Christianize Africans and change their way of life, which was regarded as primitive by settler Europeans”. Musa W. Dube relates a popular story about the Bible and the white man as follows: “When the white man came to our country, he had the Bible and we had the land. The white man said to us, ' let us pray', after the prayer, the white man had the land and we had the Bible”. Dube (2003:3, cited by Nkomazana & Setume, 2016) explains how Africans connect colonialism to the Bible. The missionaries also used the Bible to seriously weaken the traditional culture by describing it as evil”. For example, having an ancestral calling is seen as something evil, demonic and superstitious because of the teachings of the missionary.

Nkomazana & Lanner (2001) mentioned that missionary education was used as a great weapon to confuse the people’s minds, and it undermined African culture and the general way of life of the Africans. Their education was presented as a tool to weaken the influence of the indigenous religion and replace it with Christian values. It was against traditional medicine and its related practices. It favoured Western values and ultimately rejected the African cultural environment and cultural values. It failed to appreciate any culture other than its own Western culture, which was considered superior and of a higher level of civilisation. Missionary education, therefore, not only reinforced colonialism but also became an instrument that Europeans used to destroy people’s cultural values (Nkomaza & Setume, 2016).

Beyond Southern Africa, from 1870 to 1962, European Christian Missionaries introduced Christianity in the Baganda Kingdom in East Africa. Resources indicate that “missionaries argued that Africans had no religion or belief” (Hassan, 2015:194). Missionaries thus often preached that Africans' beliefs were devilish, satanic, and demonic, to mention but a few (Hassan, 2015). Kyewalyanga Walligo (Hassan, 2015) noted that “the Baganda’s commitment to traditional values serves as the foundation for their choice of Buganda”. The Baganda believed in one God, whom they called Katonda; the missionaries dismissed this God as a pagan deity. Baganda addressed Katonda through intermediaries, further confusing the missionaries. They took this to mean that the Baganda had no clear concept of God and were steeped in ancestor worship. However, they tend to criticise religion as a poor shadow of the Christian concept; God invariably resulted in the reductionist fallacy that the religion of the Baganda was superstition. In the missionary’s mind, demons and the devil possessed the Baganda. The missionaries’ interpretations undermine African belief and the strength of African religion. According to Hassan (2015), African people, their cultures and religions were considered by early missionaries and anthropologists as primitive, heathen and pagan. Additionally, missionaries viewed diviner-healers as liars and con artists (Hassan, 2015). The anger with Christian missionaries sought to exterminate the indigenous healers who were well known. The missionaries vehemently condemned the diviners and sincerely believed they worshipped the devil (Hassan, 2015).

Tlou & Campbell (1984:187) stated that “Africans were taught to believe that almost everything about Western cultures was superior and good, while African culture was barbaric”. That resulted in the conflict of religions between Africans and Christianity. Some Africans with an ancestral calling found it hard to tell their families that they have a calling because of Christian and missionary teachings planted in African families. Some people born in a family that follows the teachings of Western Christian missionaries may discover that they have a calling from their ancestors to become healers. Still, their families will force them to reject or ignore the calling since they do not believe in their ancestors.

Due to their lack of knowledge about their African roots and missionary teachings, to satisfy their church masters, they viciously attack their ancestors to the extent that they even give false testimony. Meanwhile, the Christians condemn ancestors to satisfy their superiors or pretend to be Christians during the day and secretly practice African Religion at night. Having been raised by a traditional healer and interacted closely with other traditional healers from the community and my previous research, I have encountered similar concerns from healers raised

in born-again Christian homes: rejection of their calling. Such concerns relate to cases of abuse by their families even before they begin their training. Anderson and Pillay (1997:76, cited by Ntombana, 2015) articulated that “missionaries perceived most African rituals and practices as evil and referred to as people who worship demons”. It did not end there. Even an African theologian, Tyler, in his missionary work titled ‘Polygamy and Other Evil Practices’, from his Western worldview and Christian experience, polygamy was the worst sin imaginable (Kealotswe, 2005). Traditional healing was discouraged by the foreign settlers. They compelled people who accepted their religion, mainly Christianity, to distance themselves from traditional healing because they condemned it as evil or satanic. African religion believes that ancestral spirits continue to be members of the earthly community but have the new task of going to God for us. But the Bible teaches that only Jesus Christ is the Mediator, and the dead family members have no power over the living. Christians believe that Jesus is the Messiah and that no other spirit can dwell in a person besides the spirit of God.

2.5 Impact of Christianity on indigenous healing practices and beliefs in South Africa

When two different religious systems exist in one community, the tendencies of conflicts of socio-religious, ideological, physical, and even political characters will arise between them (Okeke et al., 2017). The introduction of Christianity to Africans resulted in ethnocentrism, where the traditional religion was judged according to Christian standards (Mndende, 1994). Christian missionaries failed to appreciate any culture other than their own Western culture, which was considered superior and of a higher level of civilisation. They favoured Western values and ultimately rejected the African cultural environment and cultural values (Nkomazana & Setume, 2016). Taylor indicated that resources show that missionaries argued that African people neither had any religion nor any form of belief. Missionaries thus often preached that African beliefs were devilish, satanic and demonic. Hassan (2015:195) said that “missionaries considered themselves as bearers of a superior religion and culture, the two being inseparably intertwined”.

This ethnocentric approach not only led to the marginalisation of African spiritual practices but also imposed a worldview that prioritised foreign religious norms over indigenous ones, creating deep divisions within communities. While such religious encounters have undeniably shaped the religious landscape of many African societies, they also raise important questions about the ongoing tensions between cultural preservation and religious transformation. In some

instances, these conflicts have fostered a hybridisation of beliefs, leading to syncretism, while in others, they have resulted in lasting resentment and disintegration of traditional structures. The challenge lies in navigating these complexities while acknowledging the historical forces that continue to shape contemporary religious and cultural identities.

Several pieces of literature have researched the impact of Christianity on Traditional healing and African Religion and Spirituality, such as Mndende, Mokgobi, and Morekwa. Still, there is a lack of detailed studies focusing specifically on the practices and experiences of traditional healers within Christian families. Hence, the study aims to fill this gap by exploring how traditional healers simultaneously navigate and maintain their spiritual calling and being a Christian. With the arrival of Christianity, Christian missionaries conflated Christian beliefs with Western culture and the political tenets of colonialism. This meant that African Indigenous Religion was unjustly suppressed and denigrated by the colonial, later apartheid era (Mndende, 2019). Africans were regarded as barbarians, uncivilised and believing in demons, hence the introduction of Christianity is framed as a means of salvation (Mndende, 1994). Africans were always referred to as people who worshipped ancestors (their gods) but not God Almighty. Ntombana (2015) articulated that Africans argued that they never worshipped ancestors as missionaries have suggested. African people have venerated their ancestors and have always been monotheists by worshipping uThixo (God or uNkulunkulu. They explained that uMdali (the creator) is the highest and is in the spiritual realm, and the living cannot fully communicate with him because they are not in the spirit but in the flesh.

Ntombana (2015) asserts that “scholars agree that Christianity supported by European colonial powers and European culture changed the face of religion, politics and cultures in the African continent”. Another author stated, "Early in the 19th century, various missionary societies embarked on a campaign to convert African people to Christianity by sending their missionaries to various African countries" (Nmah, 2010:484). Similarly, according to Nmah (2010:490), “Missionaries were part of a larger programme of European colonisation of Africa. Their beliefs and actions must be seen in the light of their connection with the European trader, diplomat and settler”. As a result, missionaries viewed African people as Pagans and objects of missions, and missionaries were good Samaritans bringing the civilising influence of Christianity to Africa (Ntombana, 2015). There was a common misconception among missionaries that African people had no religion before their arrival; thus, Africa was called a dark continent.

Ntombana (2015) articulated that Africans defined faith to them by saying they never worshipped ancestors as missionaries suggested. African people have venerated their ancestors and have always been monotheists by worshipping God. God is the highest and is in the spiritual realm, and the living cannot fully communicate with him because they are not in the spirit but in the flesh. They then relied on those who had gone (the dead) or ancestors on their behalf, so various ceremonies were a way to appease ancestors and talk to *umdali* (God) on their behalf. However, because Europeans were not interested in studying African history, they associated it with evil and heathens.

Traditional healing has been around for centuries on the African continent. People consulted with traditional healers and used traditional medicines long before the arrival of Europeans, but this continued during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Mokgethi (2018) asserted that “the Apartheid Era in South Africa was not only a period of oppression of the indigenous people of South Africa, it was also a system that prohibited the people from practising indigenous customs and rituals that were in existence before the colonisation of the country. One practice that was prohibited and even deemed as witchcraft is that of training to become a traditional healer, otherwise known as *ukuthwasa*. Ntshangase et al. (2001) showed that “today *ukuthwasa* and being a traditional healer is still clouded by mystery, superstition and the stigmatic notions of witchcraft”. Hence, in most cases, those whose ancestors call will deny the call and identify the influence of Christianity as one of the reasons behind their denying the call. This is because they are devoted Christians and view the calling as evil and pagan (Lesolang-Pitje, 2009).

The arrival of Europeans with Mission churches (Christianity), “missionaries perceived most African rituals and practices as evil and referred to African people as 'worshippers of demons' or worshippers of ancestors (Nkomazana, 2015). Missionaries viewed diviner-healers as purveyors of lies and fraudsters. Morekwa (2004) also articulated that foreign settlers discouraged traditional healing. They compelled people who accepted their religion (Christianity) to distance themselves from traditional healing, as it was condemned as evil or satanic. Ntombana and Meveni (2015) illustrated in their study on amakhosi spirit possession in schools of the Eastern Cape in South Africa, where church leaders viewed it as demonic behaviour. Instead of recognising these spiritual experiences as part of African spirituality, individuals were excluded from the schools, churches and within the communities, and the parents moved their children from that school. Europeans had to create a Bible that had rules and scriptures that would prohibit African religions, especially ancestral veneration/ healing,

because they were not interested in learning Africans' history but in creating confusion for African future generations to praise Western cultures and religion, but not their identity. The book of Deuteronomy (18 10-13) says,

“Let no one be found among you who sacrifices his son or daughter in the fire, who practices divination or sorcery, interprets omens, engages in witchcraft, or casts spells, or who is a medium or spirits or who consults the dead. Anyone who does these things is detestable to the LORD; because of these detestable practices, the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you”.

Missionaries have brainwashed modern Africans into disowning their own cultures and embracing alien cultures and values, some of which they do not claim to understand (Onuzulike, 2008). This succeeded in many African Christians abandoning their ancestral worship practice. They have committed their lives to Christ and him alone. Anything that demands devotion to Christ is rejected. When a person has an ancestral calling, that person has evil spirits that have to be cast out or is possessed by evil spirits. These spirits are the ones that use that person this way, so they need to come to Christ only and be prayed for.

2.6 Banishment of traditional healing by the state

Traditional healing was one of the practices deemed illegal, with consequences for those recognised as practitioners. According to the Union Gazette Extraordinary on Maluleka's literature (2020), during apartheid in South Africa, “any form of traditional healing was labelled as Witchcraft and categorised under the Witchcraft Suppression Act (3 of 1957)” A piece of colonial legislation which declared divination, including traditional healing, to be illegal, thereby theoretically making the work of traditional healers impossible. Maluleka (2020) articulated that traditional healing was associated with witchcraft and that stigma continues to shadow traditional healing even today. When missionaries and colonial powers failed to understand African spiritual practices, they tried to abolish them. A case in point is when the apartheid government in South Africa legally banned *ukuthwasa* in Natal because it associated it with sorcery, *ukuthwala* (gaining powers for wealth), *ubugqwirha* (witchcraft) and other superstitions.

Mokgobi (2014:25) stated that “churches openly discouraged their members from consulting traditional healers because it was indicated that traditional healers worshipped the ancestors and not God, which was seen as a sin in the Christian orthodoxy”. Denis (2006:312) said that “despite all the challenges, African traditional beliefs stood the test of the time and were widely practised in secret, mainly because of apartheid laws and the missionaries from the congregational, Methodist and Catholic churches”. Moreover, Mbatha (2012) articulated that the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) also did not consider sick notes issued by traditional healers valid. Traditional healers were not registered with a professional council, meaning employers did not have to accept certificates from traditional healers unless they were bound by a collective agreement to receive such certificates.

The banning of traditional healing did not occur in South Africa but in the Buganda Kingdom (Uganda). In Buganda, missionaries said that traditional healers were the church’s worst enemies. The Christians have ruthlessly burnt down traditional houses of worship, sacred places and many others. However, because the traditional healers command confidence among their people, they still stand firm (Hassan, 2015). Onuzulike (2008) mentioned that the clash between African Religion and Christianity is the use of other Gods. Meanwhile, Christians know one God. The Christians encouraged and abolished the ideas of gods in many Africans' minds. The negative stories about traditional healing published by the media have also impacted how the current generation views this practice. Unproven stories about suspected killings are linked to traditional healing and traditional healers, where it is believed that people are killed for their body parts to be used for the healing process, which resulted in the banning of traditional healing.

2.7 Traditional Health Practitioners Act – Reinstating Traditional Healing

After apartheid, “the South African government passed the law, the Traditional Health Practitioners (THP) Act, 22 of 2007, which regulates the activities of indigenous healers. The Act states that traditional healing means the performance of a function, activity, process or service based on a traditional philosophy that includes using traditional medicine” (Sodi et al., 2011:101). This meant that traditional healers were free to practice and were protected by the law. According to the THP Act, any person who wishes to register as a traditional health practitioner or a student must apply to the registrar of the Interim Traditional Health Practitioners Council of South Africa (Government Gazette 2008). Denis (2000:313) raised a

point that “indicates that Christianity and traditional African religion have been transformed into polarity with an infinite variety of intermediary positions and multiple interactions between the two poles.

Currently, living with the democratic dispensation in the country, the government permits traditional healers to practice freely. Some churches also allow people who have or believe in ancestors and Christianity (combined) to be part of the congregation, such as African Independent Churches and Mainline Churches (Ntombana, 2015). Mainline churches were more Europeanized in the issue of healing (Morekwa, 2004). Along the way, mainline churches started to tolerate African practices, as Ntombana (2015:114) says that “members of mainline churches who are called to become traditional healers, are also accepted in the Church as long as they only consult at their private spaces and keep it to themselves”. Mainline churches do not preach against ritual practices and ancestors; as a result, when one attempts to criticise the African rituals, others will whisper ‘*yeka into zabantu*’ (leave people’s things alone).

However, some families still struggle to accept members who are called to become traditional healers. It can be cultural differences where ancestral callings are often deeply rooted in specific cultural traditions and practices. When a family member embraces an ancestral calling, it may clash with their Christian family's cultural norms and values. The conflict between cultural expectations and religious beliefs can create challenges in accepting and understanding the ancestral calling. Pentecostal churches clearly describe themselves as churches with nothing to do with ancestors. They share the same opinion with missionaries regarding any consultation of ancestors as worshipping them and regarding it as evil and sinful (Ntombana, 2015). This belief further reinforces individuals' challenges with an ancestral calling within Christian families as they navigate the complexities of faith, tradition and identity. Many communities subscribe to different religious beliefs because of what they were exposed to in the past. Many South Africans are still divided between Western and traditional African philosophers.

Dr Vusamazulu Credo Mutwa, a renowned traditional healer, author, and philosopher, was one of the traditional healers whom his father rejected during colonial times. His father was a Christian, and his mother practised the ancient religion of the Zulu people. Mutwa’s father was forbidden by the missionaries to marry Mutwa’s mother unless she converted to Christianity. Missionaries had to find another wife for Credo’s father, who is a Christian. Mutwa had an illness, and his maternal uncle helped him to find out what it was since the medical doctors

were unable to help him. His illness was ancestral, calling him a *sangoma*. Because his father did not want anything to do with traditional healing or African traditions, he and his stepmother told him never to set foot in their house again (Chidester,2000).

Van der Watt et al.'s (2021) research, entitled *Becoming a Xhosa traditional healer: The Calling, illness, conflict and Belonging*, also discovered that their participants experienced rejection and conflict with their families for various reasons linked to being or becoming a traditional healer. Their participants revealed the familial conflict, conflict with the church and self and confusion conflict. Their families were not supportive financially, rejecting them as healers because they were Christians and lacked understanding from their families. Some participants were rejected from their churches because they were worshipping God and ancestors, which is against the Christian church rules. Participants described receiving the calling to become a traditional healer; it causes conflict with who they are, who they want to be, and where they belong, which results in conflict with a sense of belonging because being a healer and a Christian clash, according to Christian families.

European missionaries with little understanding of African cosmology dismissed the spiritual and cultural practices they encountered, particularly ancestor veneration. It was simplified and misrepresented as devil worship (Obuseh, 2024); this led to fear in some Christian families that ancestral practices associated with witchcraft were incompatible with their faith. This way of thinking can lead to concerns about spiritual dangers, and family members may resist accepting an ancestral calling or someone's desire to protect their loved one from what they see as spiritual harm. The lack of understanding can be why many Christian families may not have an ancestral calling or cultural significance behind them. Lack of knowledge can result in fear, judgment, and reluctance to accept something that appears unfamiliar or conflicts with your beliefs.

The other reason would be social stigma or how the media portrays African culture and being a traditional healer. Traditional and faith healers have been dehumanised in newspapers and viewed as threats to humanity (Gijima, 2016). In some Christian communities, social stigma may be associated with ancestral practices or beliefs, leading to concerns about how their family's reputation or standing within the community might be affected. This fear of judgment and societal pressure can make it challenging for families to openly accept and support a family member's ancestral calling. These reasons brought arguments about three approaches: dualism, pluralism and syncretism in these religions.

2.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has given the background of the study, the importance of ancestors within African families and how a person sees if they have an ancestral calling. It has touched on why becoming a traditional healer is difficult within Christian families and the rules of Christianity. It has a problem statement and relevance to the study of anthropology. The chapter also presented a review of relevant pieces of literature on traditional healing within Christian families. The phenomenon of Christianity and African Spirituality was defined. Relevant literature has explained the history of African Spirituality, the reasons for traditional healing associated with evil spirits and worshipping gods, and how Christianity was seen as a religion that was superior to other religions. This study explained how the arrival of Christianity with missionaries impacted other African continents, such as Botswana and the Baganda. The impact of Christianity on traditional healing was explained, leading to traditional healing being labelled as witchcraft by the Witchcraft Suppression Act. This chapter has further presented the approaches of dualism, pluralism, and syncretism relevant to this study. This table represents the time before the arrival of Christianity with missionaries and after the introduction of Christianity in Africa, as reviewed in this chapter.

Table 1: Before and After the arrival of missionaries in Africa

Before the arrival of missionaries with Christianity in Africa	After the arrival of missionaries with Christianity in Africa
Africans had always, in indigenous spirits, believed in God.	The introduction of Christianity led to indigenous spirits being suppressed and colonised.
The religion of Africans was more based on oral history, customs, and practices.	Religion was shaped by written guidelines from a book and provided rules from the scriptures (the Holy Bible).
There was an African Religion, the San and Khoisan religion, before Christianity.	Brought Pentecostal churches with nothing to do with ancestors (Faith Mission and Full Gospel) and Mission churches such as Methodists and Presbyterians.
In African culture, the mediator between Africans and God is their ancestors.	There is only one mediator, Jesus Christ, not ancestors.
Africans had cultures connected to spiritual beliefs and included diverse rituals and ceremonies (ukubuyisa, imbeleko, ukwalukwa, traditional healing).	Missionaries perceived most African rituals and practices as evil and referred to African people as worshipers of demons or worshipers of ancestors, leading to a loss of indigenous knowledge.
Traditional healers were very resourceful and played vital roles as doctors of African communities. They were known as medical knowledge storehouses (Yeboah, 2000). Uses herbs for sicknesses, both spiritual and physical.	With the arrival of missionaries and Europeans, traditional healing was seen as superstitious, evil and something against Christian beliefs. They did not understand traditional healing and were not interested.
Traditional healing was practised freely and peacefully in Africa. People were consulting traditional healers.	An apartheid government banned traditional healing with the act of Witchcraft Suppression, as Europeans associated it with witchcraft and evil.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews a presentation of a theory that was found to be relevant to this study. The theoretical framework is the ‘blueprint’ for the entire dissertation inquiry. It serves as the guide on which to build and support the study. Also, it provides the structure to define how you will philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically approach the dissertation as a whole. Eisenhart defined a theoretical framework as a “structure that guides research by relying on a formal theory, constructed using an established, coherent explanation of certain phenomena and relationships” (Grant & Sanlo,1991:205). This chapter provides a theoretical framework for understanding the complex dynamics of becoming and being a traditional healer within Christian families. The research explores the historical and contemporary intersections of traditional African healing practices and Christianity, particularly within the context of Christian missionaries' historical labelling of traditional healers and practices associated with evil and witchcraft.

3.2 Discussing theories

Theories give researchers different ‘lenses’ to look at complicated problems and social issues, focusing their attention on various aspects of the data and providing a framework to conduct their analysis (BMJ, 2008). Kawulich (2009) states, "A theory may be viewed as a system which orders concepts in a way that produces understanding or insight". The theoretical framework is one of the most critical aspects of the research process and serves as the structure and support for the rationale for the study. Without a theoretical framework, the structure and vision for a study are unclear.

This study will use one theoretical framework, which is critical theory. The critical theory concerns issues related to social justice, power imbalances, and how dominant ideologies maintain control and marginalise certain groups. It has been applied to various fields, including politics, economics, culture, and religion, to uncover hidden power structures and question the status quo. Critical theory historically relates to three leading critical theorists of the original

Frankfurt School. Horkheimer (1982: 244), one of the founders of critical theory, defined it as “seeking human emancipation to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them”. Ashgar (2013: 3123) further defines critical theory as “in contrast to traditional theory that explores and conforms to the status quo and strives for a balanced and democratic society. Critical theory does not intend only to highlight and explain these social factors that cause oppressive and powerful groups to dominate the suppressed and repressed section of society, but also strives for a social set-up based on equality for all the members”.

3.3 Introducing Critical Theory

According to Celikates, Robin and Flynn (2023), Critical theory is a family of theories aiming to critique and transform society by integrating normative perspectives with empirically informed analysis of society’s conflicts, contradictions, and tendencies. Critical theory refers to the work of several generations of philosophers and social theorists in the Western European Marxist tradition known as the Frankfurt School. (Celikates et al., 2023). The roots of Critical theory can be traced back to the early 20th century, with the formation of the Frankfurt School in Germany. The Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt began in the 1930s and is best known for interdisciplinary research that combines philosophy and social sciences with the practical aim of furthering emancipation (Celikates et al., 2023). There are separate entries on influential figures of the Frankfurt School, Max Horkheimer (1895-1973), Theodor W. Adorno (1903-1969), Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979) and the leading figure of the second generation, Jurgen Habermas (b.1929).

Critical Theory has undergone significant transformations since its inception, evolving from a primarily Marxist critique of capitalism to a diverse and multifaceted framework for analysing power dynamics and social injustice. Over time, Critical Theory evolved beyond its Marxist foundations, expanding to include perspectives on culture, education, media, postcolonialism and contemporary social justice issues.

In his 1937 essay *Traditional and Critical Theory*, Max Horkheimer defines Critical theory by contrasting it with traditional theories, which take the existing social order as given and focus on describing facts, often modelled after the natural sciences (Calakates et al., 2023). While traditional social research is not invalid, it fails to analyse the broader social context and can reinforce dominant ideologies and power structures. Critical theory, in contrast, examines the context of its origins and seeks to be transformative. It uses an interdisciplinary approach,

meaning it uses different fields such as philosophy, psychology and social sciences to understand how power and unfairness work. Its goal is to unite theory and practice to help people take action to fight unfairness and establish reasonable conditions of life. Horkheimer emphasised that critical theory is about increasing knowledge and achieving emancipation from all domination.

Moving further, Theodor Adorno studied authoritarianism and mass culture with Horkheimer, where they wanted to better understand how individuals tolerate unfair authority and dominance in society. In the 1930s, they began with the studies of German society. They continued with studies of the U.S. in the 1940s (Calakates et al., 2023)¹ They integrated philosophy, social theory and psychoanalytic theory with empirical research. Studies in Authority and the Family was one significant study. According to Erich Fromm, the drives underlying the authoritarian character are the pleasure of obedience, submission, surrender of one's personality, aggression against the defenceless, and sympathy with the powerful. In simple terms, those with an authoritarian personality like to be obeyed and submit. They also favour those in positions of authority and act aggressively towards the weak. According to Adorno and his team, people with specific personality qualities are likelier to obey strict authority. Those traits include rigid conformity to conventional norms, a tendency toward stereotypical thinking, a preference for substantial authority figures, prejudice and dislike of weakness. The Frankfurt School also studied film, music and other popular culture. They demonstrated how it influences people's perspectives, leading to obedience and reduced ability for positive vision. Kraenur and Benjamin were more hopeful, thinking that mass culture could democratize culture and open up new political opportunities. In contrast, Horkheimer, Adorno, and Marcuse thought it was a weapon for control.

In their *Dialect of Enlightenment* (1944-1947), Horkheimer and Adorno presented the concept of the culture industry, demonstrating that mass culture is manufactured like a factory for financial gain rather than produced by the general public. They argued that commercialising culture dulls people's critical thinking skills while entertaining them.

3.3.1 Herbert Marcuse- One-Dimensional Man

Herbert Marcuse's 'One-Dimensional Man' was first published in 1964 and is a pivotal critique of advanced industrial societies. Marcuse, a member of the Frankfurt School, presents a sharp analysis of capitalism and communism (Marcuse, 1964,2010). Marcuse explores how both systems create social repression and cultivate a passive populace. At the heart of Marcuse's

thesis lies the idea that advanced industrial society produces false needs (Marcuse, 1964) 2010. These needs integrate individuals into a system that emphasises consumption over authentic existence, which means these are not real needs for survival like food and shelter; instead, they advertise things that are not necessary. According to Marcuse (1964,2010), he spoke about how mass media and advertising manipulate desires, creating a homogenised consumer culture, for example, advertising wants like always needing the newest phone, clothes and car. People stop questioning whether the system is fair or free; they become trapped in consuming. Marcuse (1964,2010) argues that this manufactured consensus undermines absolute freedom and individuality, pushing society into a state of complacency. Marcuse emphasises the role of technology in shaping consciousness and society. He asserts that technological advancement is often wielded as a tool of oppression rather than liberation.

3.3.2 The Communicative Turn (Jurgen Habermas)

Jürgen Habermas was a second-generation Frankfurt School thinker built on Horkheimer and Adorno, who prioritised communication. Habermas provides a historical and conceptual reconstruction of the idea of the public sphere in which subjects recognise each other as equals, submit to the force of the better argument, and subject legislation to the public debate. Initially, democracy was promoted but later declined under the influence of mass media and consumer culture, as shown in his 1962 book ‘The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere’. In *Knowledge and Human Interests* (1968), he claimed that human knowledge is tied to three fundamental needs: freedom, understanding and survival. He later developed the concepts of the world (daily social life) and the system (state and market) in the *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981). He warned that power and wealth often colonise the lifeworld, preventing true freedom and communication. His solution is to make communicative reason stronger so that nations can fight off oppression and improve their democracy.

3.4 Linking Critical Theory (Frankfurt School) to the study

Critical theory can help analyse how colonial and missionary influences dominate African religious conceptions. African spirituality and traditional healing were often seen as inferior or even demonic by these philosophies. This study highlights these power and knowledge inequalities using Critical Theory, showing how families blend Christian teachings with ancestral calling. Decolonial studies that support acknowledging African spirituality and epistemologies as significant knowledge systems are also related to this.

According to Horkheimer, Critical theory should not only describe society but also confront and change dominating systems. In Christian families in my research, Christianity serves as a dominant belief system that defines ancestral calling as unacceptable. Horkheimer believed that institutions, such as religion, can be used to oppress or control people. My study demonstrated how Christian families under the influence of belief oppress or mistreat those who choose to follow their ancestral calling to become indigenous healers. Horkheimer said the goal of Critical theory is always liberation, allowing people to live freer and respectable lives. By supporting diversity and promoting pluralism between Christianity and African Spirituality, this study helps to ensure that indigenous healers can practice their work without facing discrimination.

Adorno's contributions claimed that contemporary culture, including music, television, education, and religion, is an industry that forces people to conform without questioning. Christianity was included in this culture industry in Africa, where sermons, schools, music and teaching led Africans to believe that their own spirituality was outdated. In education, Mndende (1994) spoke about how missionaries helped Africans educate them to read and write. Still, the missionaries tried to break down African culture and imposed Western culture and work patterns. They tried to do that by rejecting all the beliefs and practices of the indigenous people as they believed them to be contrary to Christianity and regarded them as heathenism or paganism. Adorno warned against the use of education as an ideological tool to force Africans to abandon their spirituality, and missionary school influenced their attitudes, and this rejection is still evident today when they reject their members becoming indigenous healers because of the teachings of missionaries.

Adorno and Horkheimer spoke about the culture industry and how mass media (newspapers, radio, television) create and spread dominant ideologies. According to Adorno and Horkheimer, Zimbabwe's negative media portrayal of traditional and faith healers is an indication of the culture. Gijima (2016) explains that despite the hard work, popularity, success and significance of traditional and faith healers among Zimbabweans, they have been facing so much negative publicity. They have been dehumanised in the newspapers and viewed as a threat to humanity. African healing methods are delegitimised by the media's one-dimensional portrayal of healers as threats to humanity while neglecting the results they have achieved. Since healers are shut out of meaningful dialogue, Habermas would see this as a communication distortion, similar to Marcuse's idea of 'one-dimensional thought,' in which only the pessimistic view is spread out.

By portraying European rationality as the norm, Horkheimer and Adorno argue in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1994) that Enlightenment reason usually functioned as a tool of dominance rather than a means of emancipating humanity. Hegel claimed that Africans were mindless people who did not have a history outside the confines of Europe (Gijima, 2016). To him, Africa did not deserve any serious attention because historically it did not exist. He considers Africans as people who saw the light when they came into contact with the Europeans. This serves as an example of this cultural oppression since it legitimised colonial power and dismissed African knowledge. The authoritarianism by Adorno and Horkheimer also explains how missionaries with the apartheid government force Botswana chiefs (amakhosi) to abandon their indigenous religion and practices for Christianity; if not, they will be removed from their chieftaincy with the help of the colonial government (Nkomazana & Setume, 2016). This shows how missionaries used their authority to oppress Africans by forcing them to live under Christian teachings.

African spirituality and healing have been portrayed as superstitious by the media and education, which are influenced by Western and Christian norms. Families then adopted this viewpoint, rejecting their member's calling without considering if it is acceptable or truthful. Misuses and how missionaries viewed herbal medicines as a negative attribute because they believed God, not nature, heals (Albin, 2015). Even though traditional healing has supported communities for years, this can lead to a false need, leading people to believe they cannot exist without Western medicine, just as Marcuse explained that people accept false needs.

Jürgen spoke about the communicative turn to strengthen communicative reason so that nations can fight oppression and improve their democracy. Long ago, when missionaries brought Christianity to Africa, they did not allow Africans to communicate or debate publicly, just like Jürgen said. Instead, they assumed everything wrong about African spirituality. An example from YouTube by Mr Joshua Maponga, who said Africans long ago did not have houses to praise or worship the Lord; instead, they used sacred places close to nature, such as rivers, mountains, or under a tree. Missionaries saw an African praying under the tree, and they assumed that the person was worshipping the tree, not God, which is not allowed. If Africans were allowed to communicate, they could have understood why they used sacred places to pray. Aligning with the study, Christian families would have given indigenous healers the chance to explain why they are becoming healers and what it means, in a respectful way.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2015) discussion of decoloniality has been applied and debated in contemporary scholarship in multiple ways, particularly within African epistemologies, spirituality, and decolonial studies. Scholars such as Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Achille Mbembe, and Ramon Grosfoguel have drawn on his framework to interrogate how knowledge, power, and being continue to be shaped by coloniality in African contexts. In African epistemologies, decoloniality has been used to critique the persistence of Eurocentric curricula in African universities, the marginalisation of Indigenous knowledge systems, and the epistemic violence of research methodologies that fail to recognise African realities. Decoloniality has influenced the study of how colonial Christianity affected African spiritual practices, offering a framework for investigating African religious diversity and the reclaiming of traditional knowledge (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). Using an analysis of coloniality, the lasting impact left by colonial systems, Ndlovu-Gatsheni applies Critical Theory to the African context, examining how power, knowledge, and social structures are centric control of science, culture, spirituality, which marginalises African epistemologies and ways of being, based on Critical Theory's focus on domination and emancipation. He examines historical events like slavery, colonialism, and imperialism to show how systematic hierarchies still impact African societies. He also shows how colonial power is reinforced by what is often presented as a universal truth, challenging dominant Western epistemologies. In this sense, Ndlovu-Gatsheni uses Critical Theory to support decoloniality, a practical approach that seeks to eliminate institutional oppression and restore African freedom and identity.

3.5 Alignment of Critical theory with study objectives and key questions

Objective 1. To achieve this goal, critical theory challenges the accepted authority of Christian beliefs in deciding what constitutes a proper spiritual practice. Examining how religious domination can portray ancestral calling as unnatural and influence the character of familial responses is caused by this.

Objective 2: Critical theory focuses on the real-life experiences of people who have to respond to judgments that carry power. Investigation of the emotional, social and identity-related problems that arise when dominant religious norms reject cultural and spiritual legitimacy is made possible by this.

Objective 3: This objective aligns with critical theory as it uncovers and examines oppressive structures, inequality of power, and the ways that dominant views oppress viewpoints. Bringing voice to marginalised people, including traditional healers, whose cultural practices and belief systems have often been rejected by dominant forms of Christianity, is an integral part of Critical theory.

Key Q1: This question examines the relationship of power in both religion and family. It examines how Christian teachings and standards are hegemonic forces that marginalise African Spirituality. Critical theory allows me as a researcher to question why some spiritual practices are considered inappropriate and how these dominant beliefs influence family power and control.

Key Q2: The social and emotional consequences of marginalisation are highlighted by this question. This question examines marginalisation's social and emotional consequences on traditional healers. It examines how dominant ideologies shape their lived experiences and affect their sense of belonging, identity and well-being.

3.6 Contextualising the rise of Christianity in Africa through the Critical Theory

Since the rise of colonialism and the introduction of Christianity to Africa worked together to transform African communities, it is impossible to separate these two. According to scholars, Christian evangelisation had a lasting impact on African cultural and spiritual life because it was closely associated with political dominance. Okon (2014:192) stated that “colonialism has become a stigma for Christians in contemporary Africa. It is a historical fact that Africa was evangelised through colonial machinery”. The introduction of Christianity by Europeans and Christian missionaries in Africa resulted in cultural imperialism and domination. Europeans and missionaries used their power and Christianity to colonise and exploit Africa. Christian Missionaries, aligned with European powers, not only introduced Christianity but also actively worked to suppress African cultures and religion. This suppression often involved labelling indigenous practices as evil while positioning Christianity as a powerful and civilised religion. Europeans and missionaries came from First World countries. The term First World Countries is essentially interchangeable with developed countries and typically describes countries considered to have reached the upper echelon of advancement in several categories. They are highly developed industrialised nations with high-income economies.

When the Europeans and protestant missionaries arrived in Africa in the 19th century and early 20th century, they found Africans having their religion and culture, African Spirituality intertwined with African culture. Africans had always believed in God and their ancestors and were profoundly spiritual (Mokgobi, 2014). Missionaries eliminated many other cultural forms which did not contradict biblical principles without even attempting to understand them. Those practices were polygamy, initiation rites, ancestor worship and other indigenous practices (Adamo, 2011). The missionaries used their powers to diagnose the worship of ancestors as unacceptable by biblical standards. According to Mndende (1994), missionaries and Europeans also claimed that outside Christianity, there is no salvation and no knowledge of God, and there is no civilisation. Moreover, missionaries did not regard the African religion as a religion. Hence, it was called heathenism, a religion of the uncivilised.

The missionaries continued to control Africans by telling them that if they wanted to become Christians, they needed to abandon their religion and their African culture. Ricker (2017) said that Belgian and British missionaries taught Africans that they could only reach salvation through conversion and obedience; they also taught them that this was also the only way to gain full humanity, and that it was through European Christianity. In this study, the Europeans and missionaries used power/ hegemony, defined by Kincheloe & McLaren (2000), “as an oppressive role, that is, its productive ability to bring about inequalities and human suffering” to oppress Africans. They used coercive power, described as a person with less power obeying the superior to avoid some punishment or penalty” (Wayner, 2003). Since Europeans and missionaries belonged to First World Countries, had the power to control and marginalise underdeveloped countries and also worked with an apartheid government during the colonial time, they were able to destroy the powers of the Batswana chiefs who resisted Christianity and removed them with the assistance of the colonial government.

3.7 Linking Critical Theory with Religious Pluralism

The critical theory encourages cultural pluralism. Patton (2002) stated that critical educational research aims to explain or understand society and change it. Instead of generating knowledge of the social world as it exists and perpetuating the knowledge status quo (Kincheloe, 2008), critical researchers endeavour to bring to light the beliefs and actions that limit human freedom with the ultimate aim of transforming the situation. The researcher of this study uses a pluralist approach to bring emancipation and liberation to both religions and cultures. Wollenberg et al. (2005) define pluralism as the coexistence of many values or other human traits in a society to

enable individuals to pursue happiness. Moreover, Global Pluralism (no date) states that pluralism is an ethic of respect for diversity and sees diversity in society as a source of strength, which means recognising, valuing and respecting diversity.

The idea that one religion or culture is better than another is challenged by critical theory, which also opens the door to a more accepting society that respects and values diversity of opinion. It should be borne in mind that South Africa is a pluralistic country. It should also be acknowledged, in fact, and admitted that there was and there is still the religion of indigenous people. Therefore, religious ethnocentrism should be wiped out, especially with Christianity, which claims to be the only truth (Mndende, 1994). Amanze (2000:337) articulated that “one of the missionaries, John William Colenso, in his book 'Christian Mission in South Africa, stated that African Religion should not be coarsely and violently rooted out since it contained many seeds of true religion. He insisted the South African Church should be African, not partly Westernised”.

An African theologian, Augustine Musopole, also stated that Western Christianity should appreciate African spirituality as usable by God” (Amanze, 2000:339). Therefore, it is essential that no one religion, church, or country should have a monopoly on the Christian faith and that Christ would like to be the Christ of each nation, communicating with them in their mother tongue. “Andie Kamanga, a well-known African theologian, pointed out that there is no justification for African Christians to remain and maintain a colonial Christianity which is extremely divided” (Amanze, 2000:340). Appian (1994), the novelist and cultural theorist, suggested that subcultural identity should be a matter of state maintenance, problematising specific contemporary methods of teaching multiculturalism, suggesting instead a more inclusive cultural education for a pluralistic society than is usually achieved by teaching culture only to those who belong to a particular community.

This means that instead of teaching culture only to people who belong to a specific community, there should be a more inclusive approach to cultural education. In other words, Kwame suggests that everyone in a diverse society should be educated about various cultures, not just those of a particular cultural group. This would be better for a society with a mix of different cultures. The problematic goal toward which we must strive is the possibility of having a standard set of institutions and a common culture, in addition to the pluralistic identities of an open society. As critical theory seeks to emancipate and bring equality to the marginalised

group, critical theory advocates educational initiatives and awareness that present an unbiased view of history, acknowledging the contribution of diverse cultures and religions.

3.7.1 Interfaith Dialogue

Adamo (2011), in his paper *Christianity and the African Traditional Religion(s): The postcolonial round of engagement*, emphasises awareness programmes that promote diversity between Christianity and African Traditional Religion. He outlines types of religious dialogue as “means sharing of religious conviction for mutual understanding that will bring eventually result in a peaceful co-existence amongst world community of various religious faith” (Adamo, 1989:82). Historical efforts, such as the African society of culture formed in 1934, created platforms where people of diverse faiths gathered as equals and were trained to engage respectfully with different beliefs, giving African Religion due recognition. In alignment with these principles, this initiative proposes forming an interfaith organisation in collaboration with ward counsellors, izinduna, chiefs, pastors, traditional healers’ associations, and relevant departments. This organisation would host regular dialogue sessions where Christians and African Spirituality practitioners share communal values, highlight the importance of religious and cultural diversity, and promote understanding. Through these dialogues, Christian families would be encouraged to understand ancestral callings, recognise ancestors' roles, and support members called to traditional healing.

3.7.2 Comparative Religious Education

Roux (2005), in his study *Religion in Education: Perceptions and Practices*, highlights the National Policy on Religion and Education as an essential step towards recognising the diversity of belief systems in South Africa. He argues that all in-service and pre-service teachers in public schools should be knowledgeable about different cultures, religions, beliefs, and value systems. Such education will ensure that children become aware of Africa’s diverse cultural, religious, and historical heritage. This initiative proposes collaboration with the Department of Education and Arts and Culture to deliver comparative religious education programmes in schools and public spaces, such as clinics, where information can be displayed for wide access. Workshops would also target leaders of different churches and traditional trainers (*ogobela*), empowering them to pass on accurate, respectful knowledge to congregants and initiates. These community workshops, held twice yearly in halls and churches with permission from ward counsellors and chiefs, would actively promote pluralism between Christians and traditional healers.

3.7.3 Media Literacy Programs

This initiative proposes leveraging the media to reshape public perceptions of African Spirituality and its relationship with Christianity. Television programmes, films, and newspaper articles should promote unity, challenge the stigma that labels traditional healers as witches, and counter associations with ukuthwala. These media projects can portray traditional healers as skilled practitioners who heal using natural resources such as water, salt, candles, and plants. This initiative proposes that there should be cartoons teaching children about cultural and religious pluralism and the shared history of Africans and Christianity. Reality shows featuring families practising Christianity and traditional healing, such as the Bala Family on *Mzansi Magic*—inclusive programming representing diverse racial groups, fostering respect across cultures. Examples from international media, such as *Long Island Medium* (IMDb, 2010), show spiritual practices outside African contexts, reinforcing that spirituality and ancestral connections are not exclusive to one race or culture. By normalising traditional healing in the media, this initiative seeks to reduce fear and hesitancy in Christian families towards accepting members with ancestral callings.

3.7.4 Community Engagement

Uri (2023, February 23) reports on the African Union Interfaith Dialogue Forum, which brought together diverse religious, spiritual, and indigenous groups to foster understanding, respect, and a culture of peace. Drawing inspiration from such models, this initiative proposes establishing a local community engagement structure in partnership with ward counsellors, izinduna, Christian organisations, traditional healers' organisations, and theology schools. The organisation would host annual cultural and religious festivals showcasing diverse traditions. Create spaces for conversations that highlight the positive aspects of both Christianity and African Spirituality. Address historical tensions by acknowledging Christianity's value while critically engaging with the colonial misuse of religion in Africa. Such initiatives would promote understanding, appreciation of different customs, and community unity.

3.7.5 Promotion of Indigenous Knowledge

The indigenous knowledge of Africans remains a gold mine. However, it has been suppressed since the advent of cultural imperialism, exemplified by narrowing scenes of devastation in the contexts of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism (Dube & Dipane, 2017). Traditional institutions and some cultural industries such as museums, mass media and cinema have preserved African indigenous knowledge. The Nigerian Association of Theatre Art

Practitioners (NANTAP) theatre has contributed immensely to developing indigenous African knowledge. To promote the preservation of cultural knowledge, a Bible has to be created that can once again embrace the rich history of Africans, similar to the existing Bible that elaborates on the history of Jesus Christ. This Bible also aims to teach what spirituality is, what happens to people when they pass away from the world, and what happens to them, emphasising the connection between culture and God.

A traditional healer and philosopher, Dr Credo Vusamazulu Mutwa, built a living museum in Soweto, KwaKhaya Lendaba (The home of the story). The aim was to unite the world's people with a greater understanding of one another, thus nurturing respect for different tribes, aspirations and origins (SAHO, 2013). Another aim was to preserve African Indigenous knowledge systems for future generations to restore and maintain pride in African cultural roots. There were sculptures and buildings for visitors who wanted to learn about deep African cultures and beliefs combined with modern ideas (SAHO, 2013). This will enable people to have deep knowledge and be further educated. It should continue even in Sunday schools where children will be taught the importance of their heritage and what spirituality entails, and that God loves everyone, as the Bible says: *For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son* John 5:22. This verse emphasises that only God has the authority to judge. This will aid future generations in preserving cultural knowledge, embracing individuals who believe in traditional spirituality, and ensuring a continuous understanding, especially for those who may not possess extensive knowledge.

3.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented a theoretical framework, which is critical theory. Critical theory in this study was found to be relevant as it promotes emancipation and liberation for those who are oppressed and enslaved. Origin of Critical theory, evolution and the contribution of the pioneers such as Max Horkheimer, Theodor Adorno, Marcuse and Jurgen was explained. Critical theory advocated educational awareness that will teach Christians and Africans about the pluralism of religions and traditions. The educational initiatives included preserving indigenous knowledge as it was seen as denigrating by Christian missionaries, according to Dr Credo Vusamazulu Mutwa. This chapter also promoted interfaith dialogue, as Christianity and Africa prefer dualism over pluralism. This chapter presented study objectives and key questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

This chapter focuses on the research methodology. This will outline the research design, approach, and methods used. This will be followed by the sampling technique used, and the location of the study will be discussed. This is then followed by the instruments used in data collection and analysis. This chapter concludes by focusing on the ethical considerations of this study.

4.2 Research Approach

Research is a scientific and systematic search for pertinent information on a specific topic (Kothari, 2004). However, in his thesis, Darong (2014) shared that accessing the needed data to help conclude the study cannot be reached without a methodological approach to the venture. Islam & Samsudin (2020:321) assert that “research is the primary enterprise of knowledge construction”. Mokgethi (2018) courted Creswell's (2014) work, defining a research approach as a strategy that will be used to conduct research and determine the specific methods that will be used to gather the most data from the research. Three existing approaches are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. For this research, a qualitative approach is used to attain descriptions and narratives of the experiences of traditional healers and those who will become healers in Christian families. Adopting a qualitative approach allows the researcher to meet with the subjects, collect narratives concerning the desired data, and employ the narrative method (Peersan, 2014). Kothari (2004) explains qualitative research as it aims to discover the underlying motives and desires using in-depth interviews.

4.3 Research design

According to Thakur (2021), a research design refers to the overall strategy that a researcher chooses to integrate the different components of the study coherently and logically, thereby ensuring that it effectively addresses the research problem; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection and analysis of data. Seltiz (1962) discussed that research design not only anticipates

and specifies the seemingly countless decisions connected with data collection, processing and analysis but also presents a logical basis for these decisions. Research design is also a conceptual framework/ structure within which the research shall be conducted. It is a kind of blueprint to proceed smoothly in a clear direction (Thakur, 2021).

Mokgethi (2018) explains that a research design is an elaborate guideline detailing how a study will be conducted. It describes how a research idea is turned into a research project and which measures were selected to answer the research question as best as possible. Furthermore, a research design considers the best way of gathering data to ensure meaningful and valuable insights, which will assist in procuring substantially objective knowledge about the social world (Xaso, 2015). This is a phenomenological study. According to Donalek (2004), phenomenological design examines human experiences through the descriptions provided by the people involved. Phenomenology is an inductive qualitative research methodology typical of the philosophical approach that allows researchers to obtain crucial insights into how people construct their understanding of their lived realities (Vundla, 2023). The phenomenological approach emerged from Edmond Husserl's philosophical view that one's personal experience of phenomena, such as conscious perceptions and feelings derived from lived experience, is the foundation for knowing (Vundla, 2023).

4.4 Study setting

The study was initially intended to be conducted solely in Inchanga, KwaZulu-Natal, where one family known to the researcher, who was rejecting traditional healing due to Christian beliefs, was selected through purposive sampling. This participant played a crucial role in the study by referring a researcher to another suitable participant (snowballing sampling) based in Eskhawini (Richard Bay), expanding the study beyond the original location. Due to the scarcity of participants who fit the study criteria, the research was extended to other towns across KwaZulu-Natal, including Ntuzuma, Emnambithi, Ulundi and Eskhawini. These areas were chosen due to their similar presentation of the conflict between Christian beliefs and traditional African healing. Because of its long history and social background, where many residents continue to blend traditional African rituals with Christianity and some are Christians only who have not experienced having a person with an ancestral calling, Inchanga remained a significant site of reference. Purposive and snowballing sampling methods and the digital ethnographic method were used to recruit participants. The researcher used Facebook to find additional participants. In particular, one participant was recruited after sharing on social media how his

4.5 Sampling and sample selection techniques

According to Bhardwaj (2019), sampling is a procedure to select a sample from an individual or a large population for a particular research purpose. Sampling is essential for research studies because the population of interest usually consists of too many individuals for any research project to include as participants (Browner, 1988). Eleven participants were recruited for this study. The researcher uses sampling to select suitable populations (elements) so that the focus of the study can be appropriately researched. The researcher would not use everyone for the study, as it is impossible to sample appropriate participants because the selection process is critical. Inappropriate procedures may seriously affect the findings and outcome of the study (Lopez and Whitehead, 2013).

The researcher recruited nine (9) participants using heterogeneous sampling, which falls under purposive sampling, since I have already worked with traditional healers during my honours degree. I later used snowballing sampling, whereby the initially identified participants helped me link to other potential participants who had similar experiences and were willing to participate. One participant was recruited with her mother, making them two (2). Religious background was considered in this study, as it looked at religion's impact on becoming a traditional healer.

Table Two: The demographics of participants.

Peusodymn Names	Age	Gender	Residential	Type of traditional healer & kinship	Accepted or Rejected
Nomkhuleko Shangase	44	F	Richard Bay (Eskhawini)	Traditional healer (Faith healer)	Rejected
Miss Shangase	65	F		Christian/mother	
Zandile Msomi	35	F	Ntuzuma	Traditional healer	Accepted not fully
Mrs Msomi-Ceza	52	F		Christian/mother	
Sandile Khuzwayo	33	M	Inchanga	Traditional healer	Accepted
Mrs Khuzwayo	62	F		Christian/mother	
Nombulelo Zulu-Cele	43	F	Emnambithi	Traditional healer	Accept & Rejected
Miss Zulu	51	F		Christian/aunt	
Mr Zulu	70	M		Christ+Afr/uncle	
Pretty Zuma-Ndlovu	43	F	Olundi	Traditional healer	Accept & Rejected
Miss Zuma	70	* F		Chris+Afr/mom	

The table above shows the participants' demographics, including their age, gender, residential areas, occupation, and status of being accepted or rejected. Most participants went through the initiation process and graduated (*ukuphothula*); some did not, as they were rejected. The researcher used heterogeneous and snowballing sampling in this study (non-probability). With non-probability sampling in qualitative research, the researcher recruits only a specific population to investigate a specific topic or when the total population is known. According to Alchemer (2021), heterogeneous sampling is a purposive sampling technique that captures a wide range of perspectives in a study. This allows the researcher to gain insight from as many angles as possible during interviews, as this study recruited different categories of participants, traditional healers and Christian participants, whether opposing or supporting pluralism and syncretism in Christianity and traditional healing. The snowballing sampling was used in this study, as suitable participants were rare, as the Inchanga community consists of people combining their religion and traditional healing. As the researcher, I aimed to recruit 24 participants for more information. Still, due to the sensitivity of this study, the shortage of suitable participants and criticism between Christians and traditional healers, I got 11 participants in total, as some were not found.

4.6 Data collection and Instruments used

This study is qualitative ethnographic research. The three most common qualitative methods are participant observation, in-depth interviews and focus groups. This study used an in-depth (semi-structured) interview. In this study, data were collected through a combination of one face-to-face interview and several telephonic interviews. I visited one participant in their home, which provided an opportunity to build rapport and gain insight into their context. However, due to geographical distance and logistical constraints, most participants were interviewed telephonically. While this method allowed me to include participants who were not easily accessible, it also presented challenges such as occasional network disruptions and the absence of non-verbal cues.

Another way I used to gather data was through an in-depth semi-structured interview, which was recorded with an audio recorder with the consent of the participants. The semi-structured interview is designed using several interview questions prepared in advance (Polkinghorne, 2005:5). These questions, however, are open-ended and flexible, differentiating this approach from a structured interview. This approach enabled me to be flexible in how the questions and topics were discussed and, more importantly, to allow the interviewee to build up ideas to be

discussed on a broader scope. Thus, the answers were also open-ended. Mark et al. (2011:27) articulated that “in-depth is a technique designed to elicit a vivid picture of the participant’s perspective on the research. The aim is to gain in-depth insights into the participant’s thoughts, experiences and perspectives on a particular topic. Therefore, in-depth interviews allow the researcher to dig for more information from participants and find meaning in some of the information they give (Makhathini, 2021). As a researcher, I built relationships/ rapport with my participants through interviews, giving them more information and finding it easier to communicate their experiences with a smile. However, the challenges they faced were so painful and sensitive. They even got so comfortable asking why I was interested in this topic because they were being judged for having an ancestral calling.

Farooq and DeVillers (2017) stated that rapport is key to creating a comfortable environment that encourages interviewees to speak openly and freely. Most of my participants used telephone interviews as a researcher since they lived in different towns around KwaZulu-Natal. Even though Farooq and deVillers (2017) said qualitative interviews are traditionally conducted face-to-face, due to the scarcity of individuals who met the criteria for participation around my area and distance, it was difficult for me to get to where they were. Nene (2013) stated that the tape recorder has become one of the most essential apparatuses for research purposes. Previously, the recorder's use was confined primarily to psychologists, but only lately has it been witnessed being used by field researchers (Bucher, Fritz and Quarantelli, 1956:359). Usually, researchers were limited to different forms of note-taking and memory reconstruction to record interview data. With the help of tape recording, it becomes easy to have rich data in a few minutes (Nene, 2013). The advantage of using a tape recorder/audio recorder is that it allows the researcher to record everything simultaneously. No words are lost during the interviews (Nene, 2013). Permission was obtained from the participants to use media devices such as audio recorders or tape recorders.

Interviews were scheduled at a time and day suitable for my participants, as some were working and had other commitments. Participants were requested to avail themselves for 30-45 minutes. Some of the participants invited me to their homes for interviews. It was helpful as it allowed the participants to feel more comfortable in their natural space. Participants gave me their permission to be recorded. All interviews were conducted in the participants’ preferred language.

Before data collection began, I got permission from potential participants to be interviewed. The research aims and objectives were explained verbally to each participant, and informed consent was obtained before conducting the interview. Due to the geographical spread of participants across KZN, interviews were conducted using both telephonic and in-person interview methods. Most participants were interviewed telephonically, while one participant who lived nearby invited me to his home to be interviewed in person. For this participant, who invited me for an in-person interview, cultural protocols were observed as part of his practice as an indigenous healer. These rituals were *ukukhunga*, where I was required to bring silver coin(s) (*imali emhlophe*) such as R1, R2 or R5 as a symbolic gesture of respect. I was asked to wear appropriate clothing, such as a long skirt or dress covering my shoulders and a doek on my head, to respect the spiritual space. These spiritual practices were respected and observed as part of the ethnographic nature of the research.

4.7 Data Analysis

Taherdoost (2020) stated that data analysis converts the gathered data into meaningful information. Bogdan and Biklen (2003) define qualitative data analysis as working with the data, organising it, breaking it into manageable units, coding it, synthesising it, and searching for patterns. Qualitative data analysis aims to discover patterns, concepts, themes and meanings. This study will use thematic analysis. Thematic analysis has five steps: familiarisation, coding, reviewing themes, re-reading field notes and finalising reports.

4.7.1 Familiarization

After collecting data, I began to familiarise myself with the data by listening and re-reading the entire data to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences. Then, I transcribed all electronic recordings into notes and translated field notes from the participants' language since all my participants responded in Zulu into English. This process took longer than expected as I tried to correspond with everything the participants said during the interviews.

4.7.2 Generation of initial codes

Secondly, it generates codes. After re-reading and making notes during interviews, the aim was to become intimately familiar with the data and notice things relevant to the research question; moreover, to help the researcher process coding and analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2012). After translating data and reading field notes, I began to generate codes from field notes and audio recordings/transcripts. The researcher identified initial codes from participants' journeys to

becoming traditional healers within Christian families. The codes were identity conflict as most participants had conflict with their identity on whether to accept calling, family acceptance and rejection, spiritual calling, religious tensions, family conflict and social criticism.

4.7.3 Searching for Themes

Thirdly, I searched for themes. After coding, I searched for themes by examining and grouping all related codes to generate themes within the data. Themes were generated through analysis, combining, comparing, and visually mapping how codes connect (Vundla, 2023). The theme was identity negotiation, where all my participants talked about how difficult it was to balance their families' expectations, Christian beliefs and their calling as there are traditional healers. In family dynamics, participants talked about their different experiences with acceptance, rejection or hesitation from their families regarding the use of traditional treatment methods and *ukuphahla*. Spiritual calling, where all participants expressed a strong spiritual connection or were called to traditional healing, caused conflict with their Christian beliefs.

a. Reviewing themes

As a researcher, I had to review and check to see how well the themes supported or accurately reflected the coded data. The themes were to ensure that they captured what participants experienced accurately.

b. Defining and naming themes

After reviewing the themes more, I began defining them and giving them names based on analysing participants' narratives. Themes differed from codes because they capture patterns in the data rather than just the topic and relate directly to the research questions (Qualtrics, 2024).

4.8 Ethical consideration

Bhandari (2021) stated that ethical considerations in research guide research design and practices. Ethical consideration is essential in research because it ensures that the quality of research is maintained and prevents people from being harmed and their lawful rights from being taken away during and after research. This study observed the following ethical considerations.

The proposal was submitted to the Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee for ethical inspection, and the study was granted full approval on the 5th of September, 2023. The approval number was 2023-7421-8016. Participants also conducted rituals to get permission from their ancestors to continue with the interview.

Before the interviews were conducted, participants were informed about the aim of the study, that their participation was voluntary and that if they wished to withdraw, they should do so with no penalisation. Participants were then given consent forms to sign before interviewing the researcher. The informed consent was in English and isiZulu; since most of the participants were Zulu and some were elderly and might not understand English, the researcher had to accommodate everyone in terms of language.

According to Wiles et al. (2008), privacy and confidentiality are significant aspects of ethical research. Ethical guidelines and research protocols all emphasise the importance of using pseudonyms during the research process to safeguard the identities of research participants (Smyth and Williamson, 2004). The researcher maintained confidentiality by ensuring that the personal information of participants was not exposed by using pseudonyms. These were assigned to protect the identity of participants and confidentiality.

The researcher respected the participants and avoided bias towards the research topic and what the participants said during the interview. The researcher ensured the interview schedule was according to the participants' availability. In this research, the researcher guaranteed that no participants were put in a situation where they might be harmed due to their participation, either physically or psychologically. The researcher clarified to the participants that the research was only for academic purposes and that their participation was voluntary. No one was forced to participate.

4.9 Data collection experience

The process of data collection had several challenges. The first difficulty was identifying or finding participants for this study. It took approximately five to six months to find participants and to build trust by convincing them to be part of the study, as the topic was spiritually sensitive. Scheduling interviews was also challenging. Some participants selected interview dates but would cancel or become unavailable without notice. Sometimes, I had to do a follow-up for up to two weeks before a participant was ready to engage. These delays impacted the time I intended to submit my thesis. Another experience I encountered was participants being

uncomfortable discussing their experiences and challenges of becoming indigenous healers. I also informed them that I was here as an academic researcher, since some hesitated to share their personal and sensitive experience. I built trust for them and told them that I am not here to judge but to note and try to understand this experience.

Another challenge was gaining access to participants' family members. While my research aimed to explore both the perspectives of indigenous healers and their Christian family members, all participants indicated that their families would not be willing to participate due to their religious or cultural objections to the topic. All participants offered to speak on behalf of their families. Another significant experience occurred with a participant whom I interviewed telephonically. Before agreeing to participate in the study, she asked me to give her 2 to 3 days to consult with her ancestors for permission (ukuphahla) to burn incense. After 3 days, she contacted me again and confirmed that her ancestors approved that she can participate, and we proceeded with the interview. This moment showed me the importance of respecting ancestors and indigenous protocols, regardless of the format or location of the interview. In addition, financial limitations were a barrier. Since the majority of participants were interviewed telephonically due to the distance of my participants, I frequently experienced challenges with insufficient airtime. This delayed communication and interview scheduling did not prevent the completion of the required interview. Despite all the challenges, the data collected was rich and meaningful.

4.10 Limitations in fieldwork

A limitation of this study was the challenge of identifying and recruiting participants who met the inclusion criteria, given the sensitive nature of the topic and the geographic dispersion of participants. This study is too sensitive as it explores the emic experiences of people who were facing psychological distress because of rejection from their Christian families to become a traditional healer; people did not want to share those deeply personal experiences. The process of collecting data was prolonged because participants were hard to find. The study had to be submitted late as the data collection period was almost 7 months. Most people were found combining Christianity and African religion, and some were Christians only and did not have someone within the family with an ancestral calling, since the study precisely needed those who grew up in Christian families but had an ancestral calling to become traditional healers. The researcher added study locations, as Inchanga was found to be an area where people combined Christianity and traditional healing.

4.11 Ensuring trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the corresponding term used in qualitative research to measure the quality of research. It is the extent to which the data and data analysis are believable and trustworthy. Guba & Lincoln (1981), Krefting (1991) and Creswell (1998) suggest that the trustworthiness of qualitative research can be established by using four strategies: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. This study will use credibility, conformability, transferability and dependability.

4.11.1 Credibility

Sigida's thesis (2022) articulated that credibility is a substitute for internal validity (in qualitative studies). This demonstrates that a study has been conducted to ensure that subjects were accurately identified and described. Credibility refers to the degree to which the research represents the phenomenon of interest based on the experiences and perspectives of the participants (Cresswell & David, 2017; Trochim, 2006). For this study, the researcher used telephonic interviews primarily because of distance. To ensure trustworthiness and credibility, the researcher engaged with participants in casual conversations before the beginning of telephonic interviews, showing interest in building rapport and a comfortable space or environment for participants to speak freely. To understand their cultural and religious background, this meant that a relationship of trust between the researcher and the participants was established.

Peer debriefing enables external researchers (whether a team member is directly involved in the research or a colleague is not involved in the project) to examine the research process and findings (Jarrahi & Newland, no date). My assigned supervisor reviewed my work, from the introduction to the data analysis, to ensure credibility. This also helps me to overcome personal biases or personal catharsis in this study.

4.11.2 Confirmability

Confirmability is the degree to which others can confirm or corroborate the research findings. It is analogous to objectivity, the extent to which a researcher is aware of or accounts for individual subjectivity or bias. Seal (1999) argues that auditing could be used to establish confirmability, in which the researcher provides a methodological self-critical account of how the research was done. My assigned supervisor reviewed my work in this study to identify any biases or oversights. The researcher maintained detailed records by writing a comprehensive description of the data collection process, why the researcher used specific data collection tools

and how the data was transcribed for thematic analysis. All the collected data was stored in an organised storage, which the researcher and supervisor could access. The findings have not yet been shared with the participants, as this study is being conducted for a Master's degree and must first be submitted. However, after the research was marked, the researcher promised to share a copy with the participants. The researcher also detailed the challenges she faced during interviews and how she addressed them.

4.11.3 Transferability

Transferability refers to the generalizability of the inquiry. Qualitative research concerns only case-to-case transfer (Tobin & Begley, 2004, as cited in Nowell et al., 2017). The researcher cannot know the site that may wish to transfer the findings; however, the researcher is responsible for providing thick descriptions so that those who seek to transfer the findings to their site can judge transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, as cited in Nowell et al., 2017).

Thick description: In this study, the researcher provided the details of the participants, their background (religion and culture) and their experiences of becoming traditional healers while born in Christian families. The study provided the narratives of those who become traditional healers, facing rejection and acceptance, and how their families reacted.

Purpose sampling: The researcher selected participants with an ancestral calling who were born and raised in Christian families. This allowed other researchers who wish to study a similar topic to mine to relate findings to their own.

4.11.4 Dependability

Dependability pertains to the enduring and unwavering nature of the research findings across time. Researchers rigorously document their approaches, data-gathering techniques, and analysis procedures to ensure reliability. Creating and preserving an audit trail consisting of a comprehensive log documenting the decisions made throughout the research process allows other researchers to produce the study, guaranteeing the dependability of the results (Ahmed, 2024).

Audit trail: Field notes were recorded during interviews, and data were transcribed word for word to ensure accuracy. Thematic analysis was also applied to maintain consistency in data interpretation.

Peer debriefing: The Academic supervisor gave me feedback to give different perspectives for consistency and minimise bias in my research. This study used semi-structured interviews with all the participants. This ensured that if another researcher followed the same approach, similar themes and conclusions could be reached to ensure trustworthiness and consistency.

4.12 Chapter Summary

This chapter highlighted the qualitative methodology that was used in this study. The ethical considerations were presented as they guided the researcher of this study. In-depth semi-structured and telephonic interviews were used in this study, as they were conducted to elicit emic participant perspectives. This study used heterogeneous and snowball sampling, using traditional healers from Christian families. The study was analysed thematically, and these themes were generated. To ensure the trustworthiness was explained by using credibility, transferability and dependability.

CHAPTER FIVE

EXPERIENCES OF CALLING, DISCOVERY, AND ACCEPTANCE

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents all the data collected from members with an ancestral calling to become traditional healers within their Christian families. This study explores the experiences of individuals who receive an ancestral calling to become traditional healers within their Christian families. The findings align with the study's objectives in different ways. Themes such as identity conflict, seeking validation from families, and the clash between Christian beliefs and traditional healing highlight the second objective, which looks at how traditional healers are affected by their families' reactions to becoming traditional healers. These themes emphasise how people struggle emotionally and psychologically when their Christian families reject them for accepting their ancestral calling. Torn between what they were taught and their spiritual calling, some struggle with identity conflict. Regardless of possible rejection, they were all seeking validation from their families in the hopes of being accepted. The third objective, which explores how traditional healers navigate these challenges, is addressed through themes like the sense of fulfilment and purpose when the calling is accepted. This chapter will explore these themes in detail, illustrating the lived experience of traditional healers.

5.2 Having signs of an ancestral calling

Sigida (2022) articulated that becoming a traditional healer is a long process that begins with signs indicating that the ancestors have called one. These signs differ from one individual to another. All the participants in this study experienced different signs that indicate ancestral calling. The signs included dreams, visions, unusual things happening, behaving oddly, sickness and misfortunes. Participants revealed that dreams played a significant role in realising they had an ancestral calling. Nomkhuleko was interviewed, explaining how she found out she had a calling through the help of dreams.

.....I grew up in a Christian family, and we do not do traditional things. My grandfather was a pastor. Unfortunately, they passed away with my granny, and I grew up with my mom only. When I was young, I always dreamed of things like funerals, accidents and unusual things, and those things would happen in real life. I once dreamed of my aunt as if she were getting married, and on their way back home, she had a car accident. After a week of having that dream, I was told that my aunt had been involved in a car accident and had lost her life. I was shocked because I had that dream weeks ago, yet this is happening in real life. I didn't tell my mom, as she was not going to believe me since we were Christians.

Dreams were endless, and most of them were real. One day, I was told by my friend, who is a traditional healer, to visit a traditional healer about my dreams. I sneaked out and consulted a traditional healer, and the healer told me that my ancestors bestowed me the gift of becoming a healer, specifically umthandazi. I had an idea of umthandazi, but I was a bit hesitant about why they chose me, since they knew that my mother would refuse, and she might chase me out. After a few days, I had a dream sitting with my great-grandmother (ukhokho), telling me that 'we want you to be umthandazi to heal people by praying for them using candles, water, and no one can do this task except you.

We gave your mother this gift, but she refused to accept it. Instead, she called it amadimoni, hence why we gave her this sickness. I told the healer I had this kind of dream, and she said she would help me through my healing journey without telling my mom. When I was hospitalised, I had a vision. My great-grandmother and other grannies visited me, and they gave me a yellow concoction to drink, and they told me I was going to be fine~ **Nomkhuleko.**

Miss Nomkhuleko (44 years old) is a single mother of two children; she lives with her mother, Miss Shangase (65 years old). She grew up in a Christian family (no ancestral worship, but Jesus is the only Healer). She started having dreams related to an ancestral calling when she was young, and she found out that she had an ancestral calling after consulting a traditional healer. Her mother rejected her becoming one as Christian beliefs raised her. She was explaining how dreams played a significant role in her life by identifying that she had an ancestral calling.

Hirst (2005) found that those experiencing ancestral calling may have dreams and visions as messages from their ancestors regarding their calling to become indigenous healers. These dreams also alerted this participant to what was to come, as she had dreams of car accidents. This then proves that this participant was called to become a traditional healer as she had a vision, being visited by her ancestors, giving her the medication that helped her while she was hospitalised. This participant also explains the challenge of learning to believe in ancestors, as she grew up in a family that does not believe in ancestors, and how she will become a traditional healer since her mother does not believe in ancestors.

Sandile had also experienced dreams and visions while he was young, having no idea about the meaning of those dreams, as he was ignored when he tried to tell them to his mother. He also experienced unknown sicknesses related to his ancestral calling:

.....I grew up in a family that combines religions (Christianity and belief in ancestors). I've always had dreams and sometimes visions that I didn't understand when I was young. Sometimes I would see a snake whenever we went hunting with other kids, but no one would see it when I tried to show them.

Sometimes, I would dream as if at home we had amathwasa, yet I didn't know the meaning because I couldn't tell my mom since she was a Christian. Even if I try to tell her, she would say to pray hard to cast out the evil spirits. When I was in my 20s, I was always in and out of the hospital because of unknown sicknesses, sometimes severe headaches; an Indian doctor asked me a very weird question. He said, 'Is there anyone at home who was traditional or who had an ancestral calling because this sickness needs to be consulted traditionally?'. I told him that my mom had a calling; unfortunately, she ditched everything and became a born-again Christian.

*I visited a traditional healer, and he explained everything about endless dreams that I have an ancestral calling to be an umthandazi who will use water and prayer only~ **Sandile.***

Mr Sandile (33 years old) grew up in a family that combined religion (Christianity and traditional religion). Still, his mother (Mrs Khuzwayo) changed and became a Christian after she was a traditional healer, yet that practice did not work for her. Sandile started having dreams

and visions at age 10, but was ignored when he tried to tell them to his mother. He discovered that he had an ancestral calling after visiting a traditional healer and his doctor while hospitalised. His mother refused to accept him, but accepted him along the way. Sandile still practices his ancestral practice of being an *umthandazi* (faith healer).

“I was raised by my mother and granny; I grew up going to a Christian church where we were taught that we should pray to God only, not the ancestors, because they do not exist. I always had weird dreams I couldn’t explain; most would happen in real life. Sometimes, I would dream impophoma, inyoka. Sometimes, I would think that I am possessed by demons because whenever I try to tell someone, they would suggest that I should pray. One day, I decided to tell my boyfriend about these dreams, and my boyfriend advised me to always share my dreams with him because they mean something. I also needed to go and see a traditional healer about these dreams.

*I was a bit hesitant about seeing a traditional healer as I am a born-again Christian, and my beliefs don’t allow me to consult a healer. One day, when I woke up, I heard voices in my ears directing me to a traditional healer’s place (*umthandazi*). Those voices directed me to a traditional healer’s house. She interpreted all my dreams, but she never told me that I had a calling to become a healer. Dreams were endless, but at that time, I had an understanding of what was happening. I dreamed of an old man as if he was cleansing me and healing me traditionally (*ukwelapha ngokwesintu*). In the morning, I decided to visit my neighbour’s church, *iZayoni*; I saw that old man wearing the same clothes as in the dream. I went straight to him and explained everything I saw in that dream, and that’s when he started helping me with my journey of being *umthandazi*. That’s when I realised that I had an ancestral calling” ~ **Zandile**.*

*“I grew up in a Christian home, raised by my great-grandmother, grandmother, grandfather, uncle, and aunties since my mother was married. When I was still young, I always had the weirdest dreams that I didn’t know, and I didn’t see the reason to tell my family because I was still young. One day we went to play *emfuleni* with other kids to swim, unfortunately, I got missing inside the river. The kids had to tell *ukhokho* that I was missing, they got worried, and all the community came to look for me. I was out late in the evening, and I was so*

shocked to see the whole community because, in my mind, I knew that I wasn't missing. All that Ukhokho Wami told me was some of the things I do not remember, as I was young. On that same day, ukhokho wami took me to an ocean (olwandle), and she gave me a white blanket to cover myself; she got closer to the ocean and started to speak.

Miss Zandile (35 years old) lives with her maternal grandmother and child. Zandile grew up in a family that combined Christianity and African religion, as her grandmother did not understand her ancestors. Her mother is a married Christian who no longer lives with them (Mrs Msomi-Ceza). Zandile started having dreams about an ancestral calling when she was 12. She could not discover the meaning of her dreams as she was still young and a Christian, following her mother's religion (Christianity). She knew she had an ancestral gift after visiting a traditional healer and Zion church. Her mother refused to accept her, but along the way, she accepted her, but not entirely; she still does her ancestral practice as a faith healer (umthandazi).

*I didn't know why she did that, as I was still young. Still, I kept hearing her saying 'ngicela nimuxolele usasemncane okwamanje, cela nimulinde akhule', meaning to appease my ancestors to wait for me to be a traditional healer. Dreams were endless, and visions as well. I had complications during my pregnancy; luckily, my mother-in-law was traditional. She advised me to see a healer, as I had endless dreams and visions. I was told that dreams were an indication of an ancestral calling, and I needed to accept it. That is how I knew I had an ancestral calling~ **Nombulelo.***

Mrs Nombulelo (43 years old) is a widow with four children who grew up in a Christian family, but her great-grandmother, grandfather and uncle understood and believed in her ancestors. When she was young, Nombulelo started having dreams related to an ancestral calling and went missing in the river, which was explained to be taken by her ancestors to teach her about ancestral practice. However, she did not understand it as she was still young. After she married, her dreams came back, and she had difficulties. Her mother-in-law advised her to visit a traditional healer, and that is when she knew she had an ancestral calling. She accepted Nombulelo to become a healer, but her maternal uncle (Mr Zulu) and her aunties (Misses Zulu) rejected her. She is still practising her spiritual gift as *umthandazi* (faith healer).

I grew up in a Christian family, raised by my aunties and mother. I started having weird dreams while I was still young. Sometimes, I dream of wearing amabhayi ezangoma, going to empophomeni, or visiting snakes and leopards. I didn't have any understanding of those dreams, and when I tried to tell my family, they couldn't answer me. Instead, I was ignored. I got to experience physical illness, such as a severe headache, lost my eyesight, and my feet swelled. When I went to the doctors, they couldn't tell what it was. My family prayed for me, and I got better. I got married, and the dreams came back again. I was also facing challenges in my marriage. My husband suggested I see a traditional healer, but I was a bit sceptical since I was raised with Christian beliefs. I went to a traditional healer and was told that those dreams indicate an ancestral calling and ngembethwe izalukwazi ezithanda ubungoma, which means I will be a traditional healer, specifically an isangoma. ~ Pretty

Mrs Pretty (43 years old) is a mother of 3 children who grew up in a Christian family. She dreamed of having an ancestral calling in senior primary school, but her family ignored her since they did not believe in her ancestors. She learned she had an ancestral calling after getting married with her husband's help and a traditional healer. Her maternal family rejected her, but her mother (Miss Zuma) accepted her regardless of her Christian beliefs. She is still practising her spiritual gift as an *isangoma* (diviner).

The narratives shared tell a story of how these individuals found out that they had an ancestral calling and how dreams and visions played roles in their lives in identifying their ancestral calling. Sigida (2022) explained that dreams played a significant role in indicating that the participants had an ancestral calling. Dreams also alerted the targeted individuals about what was yet to come, and they also dreamed of the ancestors they had never met. Dreams and visions were taken as a message from the ancestors regarding their calling to become indigenous healers (Sodi and Sigida, 2023). Their dreams were frustrating and causing psychological distress, as most of them had dreams about funerals, and they would eventually become real. Dreams created a sense of panic as they did not know the meaning behind them (Sigida, 2022), and they were told to pray to their Christian families to cast out demons and evil spirits. The ancestors were trying to get attention from them, and that is why the dreams were endless. They served as a mode of communication between ancestors and the chosen individuals (Sigida, 2022). However, participants continued to have mental sickness and senseless meaning about dreams because when they tried to communicate with their parents

about their dreams and visions, they were ignored, not taken seriously or discouraged (Xaso, 2015) as their parents were Christians. Participants praised visiting traditional healers, who confirmed that they have an ancestral calling and were advised to follow their journey because failure to do so would result in consequences.

5.3 Familial Dynamics

After being told and knowing they had an ancestral calling, the participants needed to tell their families to accept it. One of the participants mentioned that “*when you are about to accept the calling, the most support you need is your family’s support*”. Hence, all the participants had to tell their families they had an ancestral calling and needed to accept it. All my participants revealed that their families initially rejected them, but along the way, they were accepted, but not entirely, and some were rejected dismally.

I would say I am rejected. I don’t even want to bother myself to tell my mother because I would be allowing her to chase me out of her house and disown me on top of that. Even before that, I was visited by a lady who is a traditional healer. She wanted to tell me that I should go and see a healer about my dreams. Unfortunately, my neighbour saw that lady, and she told my mom that I had invited izangoma emzini wakhe. My mom asked me, and I had to lie to protect that lady, so she threatened to chase me out of her house because I was inviting evil spirits (amadimoni) into her house by inviting a traditional healer. That’s why I haven’t told her; she would chase me out, and I don’t want to lose my mother and home.

Another reason that made me not tell my mother about my calling is that one day, when I went to a traditional healer, the healer told me that I needed to do imbeleko- a rite of passage ceremony that is performed to introduce and welcome the new arrival in the family to both the living and the living-dead. The ceremony is typically performed after the birth of the child. However, there is no age limit as it is also performed for an adult. This ceremony includes slaughtering a goat or sheep and put isphandla (goat skin as a bracelet).

Figure 2: Isiphandla (Zulu bracelet), from Google



My mother caught me wearing isphandla, and she chased me out, saying that I do not respect her and I do as I please in her house. She even called her sister (my aunt) to talk about my disrespect. She ended up forgiving me, and another day, when I was hospitalised, she found ubuhlalu (beads) in my bag while I was sleeping. She asked me why I have this thing in my bag, and she said if she ever finds out that I am performing anything eyokuthwasa (initiation), she will chase me out like trash this time, and she wouldn't forgive me. That's why I haven't told her because I am not ready to lose my home, mother and my kids. My life is like that, ke". ~

Nomkhuleko

The extract above shows that the participant was rejected from becoming a traditional healer before she even told her mother about it. Her mother even caught her while wearing an *isphandla*, and she chased her out, which shows how her mother does not like anything associated with her ancestors. Participants also pointed out how her mother took *umhlalu bakhe*, which helped her while she was hospitalised, and threatened her that she wouldn't hesitate to chase her out once she found that she was doing ancestral practices.

"I had a horrible experience when it came to telling my family about my calling and to accept it. I remember that Ukhokho and my grandfather had passed away, and my mother was married, so I had to tell my grandmother, uncle, and aunties that I had a calling. The only person who stood up for me was my uncle (my mom's brother). My aunties refused and told me Have you ever heard that a person who has died could be alive spiritually, because it is only Jesus who has the power to do that? They said I should stop being crazy and to interrupt rested souls. My grandmother on the other side, every time I try to tell her, she would say she is sick

because of idlozi, and yet it didn't work for her; that's why she chose to join Christian churches to get healed.

So basically, grandmother had ubizo, but she didn't want to accept it, hence why she was always sick. I accepted my calling regardless of rejection from my grandmother and aunties, but with the support of my uncle. My uncle was the firstborn, so he was the one who was in charge of burning impepho since my grandfather was no longer on this earth. When you accept your calling (ukuvuma idlozi), there's a ritual that needs to be performed, including burning incense, ukuphahla, and slaughtering goats, sheep and chickens. So, I needed to do that, and I succeeded with the help of my uncle and my family-in-law. It was so hard, but I had to accept it. ~ Nombulelo

The participant above illustrated how difficult it was to disclose her ancestral calling to her family; after all, she received rejection from most of the family. Her uncle accepted her, and the ritual of accepting idlozi was successful because of her uncle's support. The rejection she got from her grandmother was influenced by the bad experience her granny had with *idlozi* that brought sickness and a miserable life to her.

"It wasn't easy to tell my mother that I have a calling because she was not going to accept it. I remember one day, when I was at work, I got sick, an unusual sickness (ukuvuka komtomdala), having a severe headache, screaming, and I had to walk barefoot as the shoes were not needed that time. My bosses took me and drove me home, and when I got home, my mom prayed for me. The way she was praying, I could hear that she understood what was happening to me because she was also pleading with ancestors not to come in the rough way (mabangezi ngolaka). I heard voices in my ears saying, 'umawakho akayohlale ekuvikela njalo- meaning my mom will not always protect me on this calling because we need you to work for us. On my side, I didn't go to someone to be an initiate (ukuyothwasa), but I was told to go to Empophomeni and Mountain to pray, and everything would go accordingly. My father is the one who accepted me fully, but my mother is still in between and confused as well~ Sandile.

"After I was told that I have an ancestral calling, I had already joined Zion church because my mom's church was not for me. I was living with my grandmother, and my mother was already married to my stepfather. It was easy for me to continue with my journey because my granny understood traditional healing, but I had to tell my

mother about it as well. She didn't want to hear anything since her beliefs were against her ancestors and traditional healing. I had to convince her to understand my calling and to respect it. It was so hard for her to understand it, but she ended up trying to meet me halfway, even though she had not fully accepted my calling. ~

Zandile

"It wasn't easy to tell my family about my calling because I knew they would refuse. I told them, and they rejected me, saying that our beliefs don't allow that. Ancestors do not exist; those are demonic things, and how do I know that I have a calling? It was only my mother who stood up for me and said, 'she is my daughter, so angeke ngifelwe ingane mina (she won't allow them to dictate my life because I might die if I refuse my ancestors' calling). My mom said, 'I will listen to everything you say, and I will support you through your journey. I don't care about our beliefs". We ended up being the two of us against the whole family. ~ **Pretty**

The narrative shared above by the participants highlights the challenges of accepting *idlozi* (calling) as they received a rejection from their families. Participants were rejected by their families because of their calling, as it was said to be against Christianity. This was witnessed by Anderson (1993), who mentioned that most Christians reject ancestor worship. "Even if they do believe that ancestors may appear to their Christian descendants, their general response is to reject such visitations as demonic spirits which need to be exorcised and spurned to avoid further misery" (Anderson, 1993:37). Participants were said to be worshipping other gods and other creations of a false idol. Even News24 (2014, July 09) interviewed Fargone, who said her view is that 'you cannot serve God and be a *Sangoma*'. Christian families said they were following God's commandments, which say, 'You cannot call yourself a Christian but continue to fear other gods, bow to them. Any form of performance of fearing, bowing down, serving, worshipping or sacrificing for an entity other than God Almighty is strictly prohibited and provokes God's anger (Mofata, 2014). Even though the participants were rejected, one noticeable characteristic was determination or perseverance to declare their identities and honour their spiritual calling in the face of family rejection and confusion. This resilience shows the richness of cultural identity and people's deep connection to their ancestors. These narratives also highlighted support, encouragement and love from other families, such as Pretty's mother and Nombulelo's uncle, who accepted and supported them in their initiation journey and graduation (*ukuphuma/ ukuphothula edlozini*). It was not easy for them to accept

their children, but they saw ancestor worship as a social function that emphasised and strengthened kinship and communal identity (Bae, 2004:345).

5.4 Conflict in sense of belonging

Participants in this study indicated having conflict with their sense of belonging and self-confusion. Nombulelo was one of the participants who shared how she lost her sense of belonging and self-confusion after being rejected by her family to become a traditional healer.

*Throughout my initiation journey to become a healer, I was so confused and torn apart on where I belong in this world. There were moments where I doubted myself and felt so unsure if I am following the right path of my journey because of how my family treated me. The way my family was so isolated from me, I felt torn apart, not knowing where I belonged, whether I should ditch my ancestral calling and meet the expectations of my family. Even though I have visions, there were times when I doubted myself and wondered if I was taken seriously at home. I was torn apart because I expected support, but I was confused about where I belonged. I ended up having regrets on why I accepted traditional healing, if I would have conflict on where I belong, and having emotional turmoil- **Nombulelo.***

This participant described feeling torn and confused during her initiation journey. She explained that she often questioned where she truly belonged because of how her family treated her during and after initiation. This aligns with Van der Watt et al.'s (2021) thesis, where they spoke about their participants having confusion about their belonging and self-conflict. Their participants articulated how not being accepted to become a healer, or no one understanding the journey of healing, causes self-conflict or confusion, not knowing where you belong and where you are following the right path.

This narrative shared by this participant shows how traditional healing and being a Christian can be a challenging journey if you do not receive any acknowledgement or support from your family, which causes self-conflicts, regrets and a loss of sense of belonging. Mashau (2016) stated that missionaries also said God only has the power to heal, not the ancestors, any traditional healer, or faith healer. The power of God can protect us from the power of evil ones, ancestors, evil (demonic) spirits, witchcraft and sorcery. This means that Christians adopted these teachings from missionaries by perceiving the power of traditional healing as evil spirits.

Hence, the mother associated traditional healing with her son as *ukuthwala* because of how missionaries used to portray and perceive traditional healing.

5.5 Internal/ identity conflict

“I was always crying and asking my ancestors why they chose me to work for them, since they know my situation. I am still confused even now because my mom doesn’t want this thing, and she isn’t joking when she says the day she finds out that I am doing izinto zamadlozi, I’ll be dead to her—the struggle of praying whenever she’s asleep, hiding amabhayi, and candles, it’s hard.

She even cried because of her hardship, as she was busy talking during an interview.

I even had suicidal thoughts because of this thing of being born in a Christian home, and yet you have a calling; it doesn’t go together. Their beliefs are always against our calling. How can I go to church where I will face judgment left, right and centre? I face ukuncikeselehwa ngekhaya every day because I haven’t had the power to build my own house and practice my healing in peace. I am grateful in the end because my ancestors do appreciate the little things I do for them. That actually encourages me to continue with their gift, no matter what. ~ Nomkhuleko

This narrative reveals a profound internal conflict faced by this participant, who is caught between her ancestral calling and her family’s Christian beliefs. The participant's narratives show a struggle for personal identity as well as a sense of belonging within her family, as they were opposed to her spiritual gift. Being rejected in pursuing her spiritual journey and internal conflict caused psychological distress, as she had suicidal thoughts and endless emotional stress. The hardship of hiding her spiritual clothes and the fear of being judged in her church were also causing emotional distress. Despite facing psychological distress, she finds meaning in her calling as she appreciates the little effort she is making.

Nombulelo’s case seems slightly different from Nomkhuleko's, as she blamed herself for the division within her family. She illustrated like this:

“The internal conflict I had was when my family was divided into two; hatred rose between my family. It was painful. Sometimes, I would feel guilty that maybe I am the one who caused the division. Maybe if I hadn’t been given this gift, we would have been together as a family. It is so painful not to talk to your family for 2 years,

but I had to accept the situation as it is because, at the end of the day, I was given this gift. I have to continue with my life as a traditional healer. ~ Nombulelo

“Most of the time, the internal conflict I had was guilt and even wanting to move out of my home since we were not on good terms with my mom. But along the way, she understood and made amends. It wasn’t that hard because she understood my calling, although she was confused ~Sandile.

As they struggled with the seeming conflicts between their Christian beliefs and traditional healing, the participants discussed internal conflict. Feeling divided between their cultural identity as traditional healers and their loyalty to Christianity, they struggled with issues of morality, ethics and religion. Participants in this internal conflict often experienced emotions of guilt, fear and confusion as they attempted to make sense of their healing methods and their beliefs. Their experiences caused psychological distress to them, as they even felt guilty about the division within their families.

5.6 Seeking Validation and Acceptance

Despite the challenges, participants expressed a deep desire for validation and acceptance from their families regarding their involvement in traditional healing. They longed for understanding and support from loved ones, hoping to bridge the gap between their Christian faith and cultural traditions. My participants got to share their validation and acceptance from their families. All my participants revealed that they only needed support and love from their families through their journey.

“When I dared to tell my mom about my calling, I wished she could support me and still love me like her child. By asking for support, I do not mean that she has to change her religion and go against her beliefs and values, but to understand me. To understand that having an ancestral calling doesn’t mean I am disobeying her or doing evil practices, but I am still a child of God, just like her. To understand that I didn’t choose this calling, but I was chosen by my ancestors to heal people traditionally and that I am still a human being. By doing this, it will be easier for me to no longer hide my things and perform my practice in peace. She will also gain an understanding that ancestors are not demons. They are still our families who continue to live with us spiritually, guiding us, protecting us and continue to plead to God on our behalf as they are angels and closer to God” ~ Nomkhuleko.

“The only thing I need from my mother is to continue to support me; although she is still hesitant, her support and love will make me happy. And to understand my spiritual clothes and candles, I use them whenever I perform my practice. I don’t mean that she needs to let go of her beliefs, but to accept mine as well. By doing that, she will be able to learn more about traditional healing”~ Zandile.

The narratives shared by participants show how familial support is essential when someone has received an ancestral calling. Participants revealed that seeking acceptance from their families would mean a lot to their spiritual journey. They deeply desire family support and acknowledgement of their healing practice, which is also a gift from God that needs to be appropriately used according to the satisfaction of ancestors and God, as stated by Morekwa (2004). Participant (Nomkhuleko) seeks to be accepted to practice her calling openly, without fear of judgment or rejection. This illustrated the psychological burden of living a double life, as Salala (1998:133) argued that ‘many African Christians are considered to be living a double life, one which is essentially Christian and the other which is essentially traditional’. Participants demonstrated how acceptance and support from loved ones can alleviate emotional burdens. They hoped for mutual respect and understanding of their spiritual gift. This will be a powerful reminder that love and support should go beyond different beliefs and practices.

5.7 Sense of Fulfilment and Purpose

Embracing their calling to traditional healing brought participants a profound sense of fulfilment and purpose. They derived deep satisfaction from witnessing their healing interventions' positive impact on others' lives. For many participants, their calling provided a sense of meaning and direction in life, guiding their decisions and actions with a sense of divine purpose.

“Regardless of the challenges I had while I was going through my journey of calling, I am grateful for the gift that I was given by my ancestors. My life is so peaceful now, and I can help other people through my prayers. Remember that before I knew that I had a calling, my life was a mess, I wasn’t working, and I had suicidal thoughts, but the day I accepted their gift, I felt relieved, and things started to go accordingly. My life started to make sense, and I saw direction in my life. The fact that my ancestors are guiding my decisions and I had never gone

wrong with their decisions and guidance. All in all, I am happy and at peace” ~

Zandile.

“The only thing I appreciate about my calling is that it has given me a purpose in life. At first, I was so scared to follow their calling, but now I can see that trusting their decisions was the best thing to happen to me. They took away all the sickness and confusion that I had; I am no longer afraid to ask for their guidance and permission on everything I do ~ Sandile.

The narratives shared by participants highlighted their appreciation of their ancestral calling, as it brought a sense of life to them. Participants outlined that their lives were miserable before they accepted and knew that they had a spiritual calling. Some suffered from psychological distress, as having suicidal thoughts, some were unable to find jobs, and some suffered from physical illnesses as a sign of having an ancestral calling, as Sigida (2022) explained in his thesis, but accepting their ancestral gift brought enlightenment to their lives, a sense of belonging, as they were confused about their Christian beliefs. Their calling also took away psychological distress, physical illnesses and confusion as well; they were praising their ancestors for connecting with them and enlightening their lives.

5.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter was all about analysing data findings. This chapter generated themes from participants who had an ancestral calling but grew up in Christian families, speaking on how dreams and visions helped them to know they had an ancestral calling. Participants outlined that they experienced dreams and visions related to ancestral calling and struggled to tell their families about their ancestral calling, which needed to be accepted with certain rituals called ukuvuma idlozi. This chapter highlighted how participants faced rejection. Their families did not entirely accept some, and there was a lack of support from their families. They experienced an internal conflict that led to psychological distress as some of them blamed themselves for the division of their family while disclosing their ancestral calling to their families. The lack of understanding from their Christian families was also one of the reasons families rejected their members to become healers. Despite the challenges they faced, participants praised their calling as it brought a sense of belonging to them, reconnecting with their roots; this brought a sense of fulfilment and removed their confusion.

CHAPTER SIX

FAMILIES REJECTING HEALERS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will analyse data findings on how family members negatively reacted to the calling of traditional healers to practice. The findings are aligned with the study objectives. The first objective, which aims to understand how Christian families react to the calling of their members to become traditional healers, is reflected in themes generated like fear of spiritual contamination, protecting the family's reputation, fear of rejection and isolation. These themes show reasons why families reject traditional healing; some reject them to preserve their social status, while others reject them because they feel that it goes against their Christian beliefs and teachings. Furthermore, some fear rejection by their respective churches and communities if they welcome a traditional healer within their families. This chapter will explore these themes in detail, presenting Christian families' perspectives. To prevent repetition, this chapter emphasises the voice of the families because Chapter 4 has covered the emotional and social impact of this rejection on the healers themselves.

6.2 Fear of Spiritual Contamination or Sin

Family members express their fear of spiritual contamination when they accept their children to become healers, as their beliefs are against ancestors and traditional healing. My primary participants answered the questions on behalf of their families. The following were the views of the families that rejected their members from becoming healers:

Miss Shangase is a 65-year-old woman and mother to [Nomkhuleko]. Miss Shangase was born and raised in a Christian family that does not believe in ancestors, nor in traditional practices. Her parents were pastors of the church she attends; she rejected her child, Nomkhuleko, to become a traditional healer as it was against her beliefs. She explains as follows:

As Christians, our beliefs do not allow us to believe in ancestors or traditional customs. Ancestors do not exist; those are the demons that are meant to lead us astray as children of God. Even the Bible confirms that we should not worship or

believe in ancestors. Luke 16, verses 19-31, says, 'The Lord Jesus explains that the spirits of the dead cannot speak to us.' 2 Corinthians 11:14 and 1 Timothy 4:1 say, 'Satan sometimes pretends to be an angel of the light. He may, therefore, sometimes pretend to be our ancestral spirits. His purpose is to lead us away from trusting in God alone. Therefore, we sometimes see people healed after bringing sacrifices to the spirits. Satan has a lot of power, but not nearly as much as God. By healing people, Satan wants us to leave the true faith, obey lying spirits and follow the teaching of demons.

*God forbids us to consult the spirits of the dead, so who am I to disobey the word of God? All other sacrifices are sacrifices to demons, and that is a sinful thing. How can I allow my child to contaminate or get into a sinful thing about an ancestral calling? I won't accept it because she is just bringing evil spirits into my home and into our family. **The ancestral spirits cannot intercede for us with God. We have only one Mediator, Jesus Christ. Only he has the power to intercede for us** ~ 1 Timothy 2:5. If I refuse to obey God or my child refuses, we will remain part of the family of Satan, as the book of John 8:44 says. ~ **Miss Shangase** (Nomkhuleko's mother)*

The extract above shows why Miss Shangase rejected her child from becoming a traditional healer because it is against her beliefs. She quoted Bible verses that witness how God does not want people to worship their ancestors, as this was viewed as a demonic/sinful act in God's eyes. Theron (1996:118) points out that "in Biblical terms, sin is essentially a transgression of God's will (John 8:46; James 1:15; 1 John 1:18) and thus constitutes a rebellion against". Traditional healing/ ancestral worship was sinful, according to families' views and the scriptures of the Bible, mainly because it opposed the will of God or was contrary to his laws. Believing in ancestors was seen as idolatry, which was then prohibited according to the Bible, Exodus 20:5 (*for you shall worship no other gods because the Lord is a jealous God*). The families assert that traditional healing is sinful and incompatible with Christianity, arguing that ancestors do not exist and are demons meant to lead believers astray.

Miss Zulu is a 51-year-old aunt to Nombulelo. She was born into a family that combined religion with their great-grandparents. After their death, they changed from combining beliefs to being Christians. As a Christian, she rejected her niece from becoming a traditional healer

as she perceived traditional healing as incompatible with her Christian beliefs and teachings. She explains as follows:

“The reason why I rejected my child’s calling is that I was raised with Christian beliefs that say ‘ancestors do not exist, our deceased relatives are at peace, how can they come and live spiritually to another person?’. That is Jesus Christ of Nazareth who has that power to rise from death and live spiritually. In our churches, we are being taught every day that we shouldn’t allow deceased spirits to control us, as they do not have the power to live again, either spiritually or physically. Even the Bible command us that we shouldn’t make sacrifices because, to our ancestors, it is Satan who needs blood, and when will we stop killing innocent animals for stupid things? We cannot slaughter animals to make sacrifices, yet our God gave us his only Son, Jesus Christ, to be our sacrifice so we can be free. I do not want to disobey the word of God by accepting evil spirits from nowhere. And nowhere in the Bible are we told that the dead act as intermediaries between God and man. But we are told that Jesus Christ was given that role.” ~ Miss Zulu (Nombulelo’s aunt).

This narrative shows prejudice against African religion or traditional healing, as it is associated with darkness and is not incompatible with Christian beliefs. Traditional healing has been seen as essential in communities, as most people consult traditional healers with their spiritual illnesses. Still, through missionaries' teaching, they went straight to the Africans and saw traditional healing as something not incompatible with Christianity. Mndende (1994) openly stated that it is with regret that most civilised or urban blacks, as a result of missionaries' brainwashing, regard the African Spirituality as primitive. They see it as signifying the period of darkness. They leave or ignore their tradition, but do not fit in with civilised traditions. As a result, they are neither one nor the other. That is, they do not practice their ritual practices; they look down on them, and by so doing, they practice the teachings of the missionaries under the umbrella of being civilised.

Traditional healing was viewed as a sin against God during the colonial era. This was argued by Gijima (2016), who quoted Mwandayi’s work investigating the Shona death and afterlife rituals. With the advent of the colonial era, Christians were said to be against the beliefs of traditional healers and ancestors. They felt that traditional healers encouraged other people to divert from worshipping God to the sinful worship of ancestors. The traditional healers were seen as those who encouraged belief in witchcraft and evil. This aligns with participants'

perspectives to reject their members from becoming healers because traditional healing was perceived as a sin to God, and accepting it would encourage them to worship evil spirits (according to Christian views), not God, which is a sin. Hence, they chose to reject their members from becoming healers, as it invites them, as that will haunt the family.

Families mentioned several biblical passages. Families insisted that God forbade consulting the spirits of the dead, framing it as an act of disobedience to God's words. Families express their fear that if they accept their members to become healers, they would be inviting evil spirits into their families. The narratives show how families strongly believed in God's words and disobeying God will lead them into a sin. This viewpoint also portrays prejudice in which only one belief system is accepted, which is Christianity, and all others are regarded as wrong and harmful. These families share the same opinion with missionaries regarding any consultation of ancestors as worshipping them. Thus, they regard that as evil and sinful before God (Ntombana, 2015).

6.3 Protection of Family Reputation and Honour

The rejection of traditional healing practices may be fuelled by misconceptions, stereotypes, or misinformation about indigenous spiritual traditions and their compatibility with Christianity. Participants explained that their families would reject them just for the family's reputation. This interview included information from families. Miss Shangase explains as follows:

“In our communities, we are well known as Christians, families that believe in God only as the Messiah, not the ancestors. My father was a priest, and my mother was a Sunday school teacher. If we do accept their callings, what would our communities say about us? Let alone our church mates and our pastors, are we lost? ~ Miss Shangase

Miss Shangase says her family's reputation is more important than her daughter's spiritual calling. She chooses reputation and being honoured by her family's church rather than allowing her child to follow her spiritual gift. This then proves how missionaries' teachings have negatively impacted the current generations, which allows ethnocentrism to be the beautiful thing to be embraced in Africa. This shows selfishness and prejudice toward ancestral practices. Nombulelo's aunties also prioritised families' reputations more than their family members' spiritual journey to become traditional healers:

Do we allow Satan to rule us? Our families' reputations would never be ruined in hell because of fake dreams. Our social status will be ruined if we hesitate to obey God's word. This thing is confusing because we have to think of our families' reputations and our children's well-being" ~ Miss Zulu.

The narratives above highlighted how families are well known in their communities for their Christian faith, which focuses completely on God rather than ancestors. This strong Christian recognition is essential to their social status and reputation. They were afraid of being seen as lost or allowing Satan to govern them. They are concerned that their social status and the well-being of their members may suffer. Fear of judgement and being rejected was upon them, hence why they chose Christianity over everything—according to Gijima (2016), stated that Christian missionaries viewed African religion as a children's religion of fear, full of black magic, sorcery and witchcraft, full of superstition and senseless taboos; a religion which encouraged people to worship their ancestors instead of worshipping God. Similar to Hassan (2015), who articulated that missionaries also preached that African beliefs were devilish, satanic, and demonic, leading to long-term religious exclusivism. Therefore, millions of Africans converted and became non-Africans as they feared that they would be classified as pagans, backwards or savage. This reflects Christian families that rejected members from becoming healers as they feared ruining the family's reputation and being labelled as people who do not worship God but demons. Another scholar, Ntombana & Meveni (2015), articulates that amakhosi possession is a social and spiritual phenomenon. Some families view it as a sign of backwardness, superstition and even demonic. Many families distance themselves from those going through possession or ancestral calling as they fear harming their religious and family reputation. Similar to this study, families rejected those with ancestral calling because they are worried about how their Christian congregations will see them.

6.4 Fear of Social Isolation and Rejection

Families rejected their children from becoming traditional healers because they feared the community might reject them, since their beliefs were against the ancestral calling or traditional healing. The families preferred to reject their children as they feared that their churches would also reject them they would be seen as hypocrits. For example, they preach that the Bible does not allow them to consult or intercede with spiritual ancestors, but they accept it in opposition

to God's commandments. The families came with their views as they were interviewed. Miss Zulu and Shangase are outspoken:

“The reason that makes us reject our children from becoming traditional healers is the fear of being rejected by our churches. The church would literally reject us, or they could chase us to never come back because we are disobeying their beliefs. They would also claim that we are now inviting the negative spirits to our churches, as the word of God witnesses that ancestral spirits are demons spirits. What would we be once the churches have rejected us? Which means that even God himself has rejected us. Siyaxolisa (we are sorry), but ancestral spirits don't go together with our beliefs; we can't allow evil spirits. Either they follow our beliefs that we raised them with, or we will continue to reject them” ~ Both Miss Zulu & Shangase.

Families feared that they would not be allowed in churches to be members again if they accepted traditional healing within their families, because Christian teachings do not allow traditional healing or worshipping ancestors. After all, that is associated with evil and demonic. This fear is not unique in KwaZulu-Natal but also in other African Christian communities. Ajayi et al. (2019) found that Christian families find tension in blending Christianity with traditional healing in Nigeria. Some fear that seeking help and accepting traditional healing would cause quarrels and disharmony, and even lead to separation in the families. Some were reluctant to visit healers, but due to life-threatening sickness, they had to visit, and it led to deep emotional wounds and rejection by their communities. This is reflected in the study findings from KZN, as the families rejected their members from becoming healers, not just because of their beliefs. Still, they fear losing their church membership and the community's rejection. Ntombana & Meveni (2015) reveal that youth or learners who experience amakhosi possession faced rejection from schools, families and within their communities. The stigmatisation of these spiritual encounters isolates those who are impacted and perpetuates the notion that practising traditional spirituality in any way is incompatible with Christian doctrine. This demonstrates an ongoing pattern in which religious societies use social rejection to control spiritual views and enforce loyalty to Christian doctrine. Pauline concept in the New Testament teachings says that Christians must work towards and seek reconciliation with all humankind and each other. It is further argued that it is not a request but a command for those who claim to have reconciled with Christ (Ntombana, 2013). In this study, Christian families failed to

reconcile with their members who were to become traditional healers. Still, they rejected them rather than reconcile with them and traditional healing. They failed their Christian teaching from the New Testament, which teaches reconciliation as they are in Christ, but they chose their social status over the well-being of their members.

The colonial government also used power by implementing the Witchcraft Suppression Act, which illegalised traditional healing and practices since the Europeans were associating it with witchcraft and demonic practices. During the colonial period in Africa, European powers and Christian missionaries shaped the narrative around traditional healing practices, often influencing media and cultural representations. The portrayal of traditional healing as something evil or associated with harmful practices was part of a larger strategy to delegitimise Indigenous belief systems and establish the dominance of European values and Christianity. Media, such as newspapers and publications of the time, were sometimes used to propagate Eurocentric perspectives and present traditional healing as superstitious, pagan or even dangerous. Missionaries, in their efforts to convert Africans to Christianity, often depicted indigenous beliefs as primitive or associated with harmful rituals, including the false notion that traditional healers engaged in activities like killing people to gain power (*ukuthwala*).

By bringing this fear and portraying traditional healing practices negatively, European powers and missionaries sought to weaken the influence of indigenous spiritual systems and encourage the adoption of European cultural norms and Christianity. This played a role in the erosion of traditional knowledge systems and contributed to the marginalisation of indigenous cultures. The impact of these historical narratives can still be felt today, as they have influenced perceptions and attitudes towards traditional healing in some African societies. That is why the research explores the challenges faced by those who have an ancestral calling to become traditional healers but grew up in Christian families who still find it hard to accept them.

6.5 Stigma and negative experience with traditional healers

Participants articulated that their families had horrible experiences with ancestral calling and traditional healers, which resulted in them being rejected. Even the media portrays traditional healing as a stigma and a negative image. Some would pretend to be traditional healers and kill people to gain power (*ukuthwala*), and others would prophecy wrong things, which could lead to conflict between families. Families were interviewed, and they stated their views as follows:

*“The reason why I was so scared to accept his calling was because of the stigma about traditional healers. We tend to see, hear and witness horrible things that so-called traditional healers do. Traditional healers are said to be killing people for ukuthwala. They would lie to have a calling, yet they prophecy wrong things which are against God’s will. Another thing is that I had a calling and accepted it, and I followed every process until graduation day (ukuphothula edlozini), but it didn’t work for me. It didn’t help me. Instead, it brought a lot of problems, financial problems and severe sicknesses, that’s why I saw this thing as a scam because I am still confused if I did the right thing to accept him” ~ Sandile’s mother, **Mrs Khuzwayo**}*

Miss Zulu is a 51-year-old aunt to Nombulelo. She was born into a family that combined religions (African religion and Christianity), and her great-grandparents preserved it. After their death, the family changed to become Christians; she rejected her niece [Zandile] from becoming a traditional healer as she perceived it as incompatible with their Christian beliefs. She added as she was interviewed:

*“One thing I could say about traditional healers is that they cause hatred between families about their fake prophecies. How can a person who has died come back spiritually to ask for lots of things, lots of sacrifices, that is demonic? On television, we see a lot of people who say they are traditional healers, but they do evil things like ukuthwebula umuntu (a practice of spirit capturing done immediately when a person dies or at times while one is still alive; they perform evil deeds). That is called interrupting rested souls, but they claim that they are called to heal people; how can they perform evil things on dead people? Some would draw many evil tattoos on their bodies, horrible tattoos, yet they claim to be called to heal people. How? We can’t be fooled by those evil things. I hate it and won’t accept it; even my mom died about it. Even the word of God confirms that ‘you cannot serve God and the ancestral spirits at the same time: 2Kings 17:34-40” ~ **Nombulelo’s aunt, Miss Zulu**}*

The negative perception of traditional healing is not a new phenomenon. It started in the Colonial Era when European colonisers and missionaries portrayed traditional practices as primitive and superstitious. Even in Baganda, diviner healers believed they worshipped the devil (Hassan, 2015). An anthropologist, Lucien Levy-Bruhl, developed a theory about primitive mentality. The theory contributed to a negative view of traditional healing, namely that traditional healing belonged to the primitive category and Western medicine to the civilised category. Traditional healing was backwards compared to Western medicine (Hammond-Tooke, 1989:20). The narratives above highlighted how the stigma in traditional healing has impacted Christian families to reject their members from becoming traditional healers.

With the advent of Christianity in Africa, some traditional views and practices were questioned. Specifically, the questioning of the calling of traditional healers, as this study focuses on traditional healing, was prevalent amongst “Born-again” Christians who believe that there can be no other being that dwells in people other than the Holy Spirit. Those churches were called Pentecostal churches (the self-acclaimed born again), which are still present today. They describe themselves as churches that have nothing to do with their ancestors. They share the same opinion with missionaries regarding any consultation of ancestors as worshipping them; thus, they believe that they are evil and sinful before God (Ntombana, 2015). In their testimonies, they would say Jesus freed them from worshipping ancestors. “With the influence of missionaries, they regard all forms of African practices and rituals as ancestral worship; members were forbidden to participate in any rituals” (Ntombana, 2015:105).

Traditional healers were perceived as harmful people, scammers and liars, leading to mistrust of all traditional healers, regardless of their intentions. Having horrible experiences with traditional healing led to having doubts about traditional healing, as it did not bring the expected benefits. Mlisa (2009) also articulated that *ukuthwasa* is associated with acquiring power or wealth, and it is called *ukuthwala*. A famous healer acquired his abilities through *ukuthwala* Khotso Sethunsa, from the Eastern Cape potency through *ukuthwala*. This then continued to be a stigma on every traditional healer. Due to missionary influence, Pentecostal churches regarded all forms of African practices and rituals as ancestral worship (Ntombana, 2015). Richter (2003:12) was another scholar who wrote about how negative stories related to traditional healing published by the media have also played a negative role in how the current generation views this practice. Unproven stories in the news about suspected killings are linked

to traditional healing, where it is believed that people are killed for their body parts to be used for healing purposes.

6.6 Fear of Supernatural Consequences

Some families revealed that the reason why they rejected their children from becoming healers is because of supernatural consequences, such as spiritual harm or demonic influence. As the missionaries labelled traditional healing as evil and demonic, the Christian families adopted those teachings and viewed them as a demonic practice. Both Miss Shangase and Zulu responded as follows:

*“A traditional healing is a demonic practice, finish. Even the things they wear are so un-understandable and ziyathusa (scary). There’s something they do to their hair; I do not understand the meaning behind it, but it is fearful. How can the spirit of a person dwell in someone’s body? Remember that as people, when we die, we do not have the power to come back and dictate. Their thing is even showing signs of Satanism. They scream, hallucinate and speak a language that you don’t understand. That’s why we pray for them to cast out all those demons. The Bible says, **‘It is dangerous to try to change your life without allowing the Holy Spirit to fill your life- Ephesians 5:18. If you try to walk two roads at the same time, you may become seven times worse than you were before- Mathew 12:45. The word of God warns us as his believers, that we should not mix religions if you do so, you will be judged and siyolahwa for accepting things that God warns us about. So how can I allow my child to accept that evil spirits, to allow her to be against the word of God? I can’t allow that evil practice forever and ever amen”** ~Miss Shangase and Miss Zulu.*

The extract above highlighted how families perceived traditional healing, the same as the missionaries’ viewpoint, as inherently demonic. This aligns with syncretism by Plamana (2024), blending different religious or cultural beliefs, which leads to confusion and negative consequences on the purity of a Christian doctrine. The Bible consistently teaches that there is one true God and that Christians are called to worship Him alone. However, when elements of traditional beliefs, such as ancestral worship, idol veneration, or rituals centred around spirits, are incorporated into Christian practice, the essence of monotheism (One God) is undermined.

By blending Christianity and falling into idolatry, it would be dishonouring God's call to worship Him in spirit and truth, John 4:24. The fear that traditional healing is demonic, unholy and spiritually dangerous reflects these concerns about syncretism. Furthermore, as noted in this literature, syncretism is often seen as a compromise of the purity of faith; it leads to supernatural consequences such as dishonouring God, confusion, spiritual instability, false gods and demonic influence (Plamana, 2024). Therefore, Christian families fear that if their members are to become healers, they will be inviting evil spirits and dishonouring God, which will lead to judgment.

The denigration of African religions and cultures served to legitimise the dominance of European values and beliefs, reinforcing a Eurocentric worldview. During the colonial period, European powers often sought to justify their expansion into Africa by portraying their culture as superior and more civilised than that of indigenous populations. By undermining the significance of African religion and cultures, European powers not only sought to justify their political and economic control but also to assert cultural hegemony. This Eurocentric worldview not only influenced how African societies were perceived globally but also impacted the self-perception of Africans. Whereby we find a person who was raised with African customs and practices but does not associate themselves with African practices, as they label them as evil practices.

It contributed to the erosion of cultural identities and the imposition of European norms, often erasing or marginalising traditional practices and beliefs. The consequences of this historical denigration are still evident today, as many African nations grapple with the legacy of colonisation, including cultural disconnection, identity struggles and ongoing effects of Eurocentric biases. This is why, in this contemporary time, we still have Africans who find it hard to accept their family members who have an ancestral calling to become healers. We have Africans who label themselves as 'born-again Christians' (abasindisiwe) in the Zulu language, who do not associate themselves with African practices and call ancestors demons due to Eurocentrism.

6.7 Lack of Experiential Understanding of Traditional Healing

This theme came from those who want to become traditional healers, explaining how the lack of experience in traditional healing led their Christian families to reject them. Sandile was accepted at first, but his mother rejected him.

“My mom did know what an ancestral calling and ancestors are, but she is confusing herself with the knowledge she was raised with. My mom does have spiritual dreams, where she dreams of something that would happen, but she is still in denial that those are the ancestors that are gifting her with those spiritual dreams. The knowledge she has about her ancestors is that they are demons, evil spirits, and witchcraft, whereas that knowledge is totally wrong. That is the reason she still rejects or has challenges to meet me halfway, bridging the gap because she doesn’t have any experience and wrong information about traditional healing” ~

Nomkhuleko.

Nomkhuleko highlighted that the lack of knowledge about her ancestors from her mother resulted in her being rejected from becoming a healer. Her mother is still adhering to colonialist religious views of traditional healing as going against the church’s beliefs and dogma (Van der Watt et al., 2021). Nomkhuleko believed that her mother had the wrong information about ancestors, as she viewed it as colonialist and demonic, yet Adamo (2011) stated that ancestors are people who have made it to the spirit land and are venerated by their descendants. According to Oborji (2002:24), ancestors are part of the elders of families and have enhanced powers to bless, protect, or punish the family. Ancestors are seen as symbols of peace, unity and prosperity in the family. Ancestors act as intermediaries between God and the members of their families. Moreover, Anderson (2011) testified that ancestors are people who have died, but this does not mean that they have ceased to exist. They are people who are very much concerned about us and our lives.

Nomkhuleko continued to say how her mother viewed traditional healing and ancestors according to the missionary view:

..... She is still associating traditional healing with witchcraft and demonic spirits. I wish she could learn from other sources about traditional healers and ancestors that they are not bad people or evil things, but aiming to heal and love just like Jesus, Angels ~ Nomkhuleko.

The extract above highlighted that there are still people in this current state we are living in, associating traditional healing with witchcraft. They refer to every traditional practitioner as a witch. Nevertheless, there are other unfounded views that traditional practitioners are evil-doers. Instead, they protect people from evil powers and witchcraft (Morekwa, 2004). A traditional healer gets healing powers from the Supreme Being or God (Morekwa, 2004).

On the other hand, Sandile has also pointed out how her mother lacks knowledge of traditional healing, regardless of being a traditional healer. Sandile felt like his mother needed to gain more knowledge about traditional healing and start to respect *idlozi* to work according to it, which was not the way his mother opted for:

.....my mom has experience with traditional healing, and she does have knowledge about ancestral calling, as she was a traditional healer before, but now she is confused. My mom wanted idlozi to work according to her timing, not the ancestors' time. She wanted Idlozi to work after she graduated from ephehlweni (initiation). Meanwhile, Idlozi has time to work. That's why she decided to ditch everything of traditional healing; all she needed to do was wait and continue to pray edlozini (ukuphahla) so that her ancestors would work. I would say she lacks experience and understanding of idlozi. That's why she said idlozi didn't work for her; instead, it made her poor, and she started to get sick. She rejected my calling because she felt like I would be falling into this trap just like her, since she's claiming to be a trap if you accept idlozi. I think our families still need to be taught more about traditional healing and ancestors, that it is not what they think it is. By doing that, there won't be any challenges we face as children who are gifted spiritual" ~ Sandile.

The passage above shows how the lack of good knowledge about ancestral calling can be one of the reasons for rejection. Sandile articulated that his mother rejected him first to become a traditional healer because she felt like Sandile would fall into a trap that her ancestors made for her while still practising her spiritual calling. Fear and lack of knowledge can have a dangerous impact on other people's lives, and having horrible experiences with healing can close doors for other people. This is similar to what Ntombana (2015) proved in her thesis about having a lack of knowledge that could lead to the rejection of practices. She said, "Missionaries opposed African rituals and practices as they did not know what was going on there and had no access to the rituals and meetings". This lack of understanding led to a negative portrayal of African practices, including traditional healing. It is similar to the Christian families today that view traditional healing as evil spirits or witchcraft. This view does not come just because people believe that healing is terrible, but due to not having the understanding that missionaries have.

Another lack of knowledge that was pointed out by an academic, philosopher and theologian, Joshua Maponga, on YouTube (2021) was that when missionaries arrived in Africa, they would see an African kneeling at a tree/ praying; they assumed that this person was worshipping the tree. However, African people did not worship the tree; they used it as a sacred place to connect with spirits, as Africans did not have religious buildings like churches. This misunderstanding of missionaries misinterpreted African beliefs and spiritual practices as evil, showing a lack of knowledge. This is similar to the Christian families today, misunderstanding due to a lack of knowledge. These cases show how limited knowledge can result in a negative perspective. Family members need to detach themselves from colonialist teachings that embrace ethnocentrism, yet try to learn more information and view traditional healing as part of God's gift that is for healing, unity and love.

Mndende (2017) quoted Kili's (1988) and Mxekezo's (1991) work, which spoke about spreading dualism to African children through education. Traditional beliefs and practices are kept at home, while Bible education is taught in schools, as prescribed by the syllabus. They have also found that it is in the interest of the parents, teachers and students that traditional religion be taught together with Christianity to remove confusion. The desire for future generations is to embrace the idea that there can be multiple valid religions or significant cultural practices that do not need to be measured against one another.

The upcoming generation needs to have an open mind, recognising that there is a vast and diverse range of beliefs and cultural traditions that need to be respected, as there has been a long history of ignorance and division when Christians could not accept their children with an ancestral calling. On the other hand, we have a pluralist approach, which speaks to different systems coexisting, each seen as necessary and equal. (Longley, 2019) define pluralism as “a political philosophy holding that people of different beliefs, backgrounds, and lifestyles can coexist in the same society and participate equally in the political process”. Religious pluralism refers to the existence of multiple religions in a given environment. However, as a model, religious pluralism equals the beliefs of the coexistence of various religions in society, wherein each religion is accepted as legitimate and is provided equal opportunity to flourish without any form of inducement or prejudice in favour of or against any of them by the government (Got Question, 2020). Pluralism says no superior religion exists, as all religions are considered equal. All religions are valid or genuine in their respective ways of beliefs, worship and practices, irrespective (Asadu et al., 2020). Yet Christian families are failing to reconcile with traditional healing to accept their members to become traditional healers, as Ntombana (2013) said that Christians would rather read about God’s blessings, prosperity, evangelism, church growth, than issues that expose their brokenness.

6.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has analysed data findings from Christian families. Several themes were generated from families that rejected their members from becoming traditional healers, as it is associated with demonic and evil spirits. Families are outlined, fearing consequences for disobeying God's word when they accept traditional healing within their families. Families used bible scriptures as they aligned with God’s word and Bible verses that say God does not allow his person to consult the dead because that is sinful. Families choose their reputations and social status rather than their family members’ well-being. They find traditional healing incompatible with Christian beliefs, hence why they did not allow that thing in their families. Participants feared that if they allowed traditional healing within their families, the church and communities would reject them as they preached something else. So, something is sinful in God’s eyes. Families articulated that it is God only who has the power to heal people and also has the power to dwell in someone's body, not the dead one. Families seemed to be still living under colonial missionaries’ rule, and to perceive other religions and cultures as superior to Christianity. They seemed to have inherited the missionaries’ prejudices about African Spirituality.

CHAPTER SEVEN

ACCEPTANCE OF HEALERS BY THEIR FAMILIES: THE RISE OF DUALISM, PLURALISM AND SYNCRETISM

7.1 Introduction

This chapter will develop and analyse the data findings of participants. The study aimed to explore the experiences of individuals who received an ancestral calling to become traditional healers within Christian families. The findings align with the study objectives in various ways. Themes like cultural heritage and pride, healing as service to the community, and spiritual pluralism and syncretism represent the first objective, which aims to understand how Christian families react to their members becoming and being traditional healers. The themes show how some families accept traditional healing as a way of giving back to the community (healing as a service to the community) and as an essential, vital part of their cultural identity. The themes will be discussed in detail as follows.

7.2 Cultural Heritage and Pride

This theme reflects embracing cultures and a sense of belonging. The family members spoke about accepting their children to become traditional healers, bringing a connection to their ancestors, and going back to their roots by embracing cultural practices. Their views are discussed.

Mr Zulu (70 years old) is an uncle to Zandile and a brother to Miss Zulu. Mr Zulu continued to combine African religion and Christianity, like his great-grandparents. He accepted his niece [Zandile] to become a traditional healer as he still believes in traditional healers and that they play a pivotal role in communities. Although the majority of the family was against him and his niece, he supported her spiritual journey. His view was as follows:

“By accepting my child’s choice to become a traditional healer, I was allowing her to connect with her cultural roots and her identity. I know Whites tried so much to detach us from our cultural practices and customs, and it succeeded because I have witnessed it at home, whereby my sisters were refusing to allow

my niece to be a healer, as they were claiming to be Christians and they don't associate themselves with traditional practices. If we start to accept our children to embrace their cultural heritage, we wouldn't have this problem, clashing of faith and traditions in our families, ~ Mr Zulu (Nombulelo's uncle)

Pretty's mother emphasised that traditional healing is also part of a unique gift from God and must be embraced. This was supported by Morekwa (2004), arguing that the gift of being a traditional healer comes from God. God provide different gifts to different people; for instance, some people are good at rainmaking, herbs, etc. She pointed out that by supporting her child in following her spiritual journey, she was not giving her support only. Still, a sense of belonging, as most people, especially young people, are convinced that the idea of ancestral veneration has no meaning (Morekwa, 2004).

Miss Zuma (70 years old) is a mother to Pretty. She was born into a Christian family, but she accepted her daughter [Pretty] to become a traditional healer despite her Christian beliefs. After she fully accepted her daughter to become a healer despite how the majority of the family was against her daughter's calling, she also became a traditional healer as she had an ancestral calling. She discovered that she had an ancestral calling. Miss Zuma added the following:

The ancestral calling is a unique and important gift from your ancestors because it shows that your spirit is clean and you are chosen. In isiZulu, we say 'uyisitsha esihle esingadleli nanoma ubani' because the ancestral spirit doesn't want to dwell on a person with a negative spirit. You are being taught to embrace nature by healing people using plants, herbs, prayer and water; you don't even waste so much money on Western doctors. I am not implying that Western doctors are bad, but we need to embrace our cultures and our forefathers' traditions. By accepting your child to be a healer, you do not support him/her only, but also provide a sense of belonging to them ~ Miss Zuma (Pretty's mother).

Although other families find it hard to accept their members becoming traditional healers, the narrative above shows us that other families choose to accept their members to pursue their spiritual journey, regardless of their Christian beliefs and values. This extract highlighted the significance of supporting their family members' decisions to follow their ancestral journey to becoming traditional healers, which helps them maintain their connection with their cultural roots and identity. Families see colonial detachment from the cultural past as the reason behind their Christian family members' rejection. The families argued that embracing cultural

practices (including traditional healing) can resolve conflict and clashes of faith and provide a sense of belonging and identity to those who are to become traditional healers. As Van de Watt et al. (2021) research, those who had an ancestral calling to become healers experienced internal conflict, struggle and confusion due to their families' rejection.

7.3 Spiritual Pluralism and Syncretism

Mrs Msomi-Ceza (52 years old) is a mother to Zandile, and she was born in a family that combined religions and traditions (Christian and African religions). After getting married, she became a Christian who does not believe in ancestors or traditional practices. At first, she rejected her daughter from becoming a traditional healer, but it was against her beliefs. Along the way, she accepted her daughter to become a traditional healer.

Zandile's mother praises traditional herbs that cured her illness, so medical doctors could not tell what it was. She pointed out the significance of pluralism between Christianity and traditional healing, as it will bring harmony within families and among different religions.

.....as much as I didn't want to accept her ancestral journey, seeing her heal my illness using traditional herbs and ichibi, that really opened my eyes. I was convinced that if we can put aside our religious statuses (Christianity, Islam, etc.), we can build a diverse country that could blend religions and healing remedies. I told myself that it doesn't matter, but as long as we respect each other and work together, we can beat this prejudice on traditional healing.

*I saw that if we respect each other's religions and beliefs, we will have harmony and peace in our families. Maybe that's what God chose for her as her gift, and that's how she will help people~ **Mrs Msomi-Ceza** (Zandile's mother)*

In isiZulu, we say 'UNkulunkulu angeke asiphe iziphiwo ezifanayo', meaning God cannot gift us with something that is similar to the other one; our gifts are unique, but respecting each other will always be the best solution for everything.

*Even in the Bible ~ **Mrs Msomi-Ceza***

Nkulu-Sengha (1996:535) spoke about an organisation (Societe Africaine de Culture) that prompted the coexistence of religions, where people of religious beliefs could gather as equals. For example, when brothers of the same family embraced two religious beliefs, they were forced to interact. The narrative above highlights the importance of coexistence/ pluralism in

African Religion and Christianity when there is mutual support and respect within the families. The coexistence of religions can create harmony and peace within families. As missionaries introduced ethnocentrism to Africans, this narrative challenged it, advocating pluralism, acceptance and diverse beliefs and practices. Religious pluralism was also supported by Asadu et al. (2000) in their thesis, which states that it gives equal opportunities to different religions to function in a particular state. Therefore, no force should be used to make converts. Instead, religious institutions must operate flexibly so that religious adherents can decide to practice the religion of their own choice. No religion is superior to or more than another (Asadu et al., 2020).

The turning point for acceptance came through a personal experience where Zandile's mother was ill, and her daughter helped her through traditional healing. This often validated a crucial role in changing the perception of traditional healing and accepting her daughter. The narrative also shows the importance of respecting religious and cultural diversity. To acknowledge that traditional healing is also a unique gift from God that needs to be embraced, as Morekwa (2004) said. Families accepted their members regardless of their beliefs to emphasise familial bonds and unconditional love.

Syncretism goes along with pluralism, where Mullins (2001:801) defined it as "a combination of elements from two or more religious traditions, ideologies or values". It is the notion of two or more beliefs, so the synthesised form is new (Gehman, 1989:271). There is a notion that the Christian faith must show its ability to meet our time's deep human needs and make people of different cultural backgrounds feel at home in the new world. We intend to argue that they can be seen as plural and syncretic rather than dual. Here, we compare Christianity with the traditional African religion.

These two religions are different, but they work together and are equally important in their own ways. Here, I speak in a post-colonial era where the government has implemented laws to protect traditional healing and cultures, allowing them to practice according to their preferences, and their religion is essential to them. Furthermore, in various ceremonies and rituals, people have been able to believe in the religion they love without judgment. In essence, I am emphasising that in this concept of pluralism, even though we have different religions, we must respect, accept and love one another, teaching the next generation that we may have differences. Still, it is crucial to coexist with all the religions that exist. This is consistent with Christian family teachings, which strongly emphasise accepting people for who they are,

regardless of their ancestral calling or traditional beliefs. The idea that is taught is to practice understanding and respecting diverse views on religion rather than passing judgement on others based on their beliefs. Since religious diversity exists, people's beliefs should be recognised and honoured. This method can encourage acceptance, open communication, and support for people with ancestral callings who grew up in Christian families. Since family support is essential, it might make people feel more at ease talking to their families about their calling (ubizo) before starting their initiation journey. Furthermore, this will promote a broader understanding by allowing us to discuss emotionally and intellectually without fear of judgment.

7.4 Healing as Service to Community and Faith

This theme is whereby Christian families may view traditional healing as a form of service to the community and in churches. Some families who accepted the calling emphasised that traditional healing is a good service to the community. They view traditional healers as essential people who can work with Christian pastors to heal people through prayers, and they can use their natural plants and herbs.

“At first, I didn’t want to hear anything about amadlozi as they are witches and worship demons. But whenever my child used to ask me to accept her, as this journey was important to her, I knew I should reconcile and accept her. The day she prayed for me and gave me ichibi, that’s when I saw how powerful she is, and even God himself is covering her. I even witnessed some of her clients coming to consult, and she would help them, and izinto zabo zikhanye (their things go accordingly). That is when I saw that her calling is a good service to me and the community. I even heard that in her church, iZayoni, she is doing mysterious things, helping people, praying for them” ~ Mrs Msomi-Ceza.

Family members saw traditional healers as essential people in communities that heal traditionally. Mokgobi (2014) also acknowledged this, saying that traditional healers are resourceful and pivotal in many spheres of people's lives. This participant [Zandile's mother] was a bit sceptical about accepting her daughter to become a healer, as healing was associated with witchcraft and worshipping demons. She began to shift her perspective on traditional healing since her daughter made her ichibi, which cured her illness. Families witnessed the

work of traditional healers within their communities, which then changed negative perceptions of traditional healers.

Berhe et al. (2023) were one of the scholars who perceived traditional healing as a service to the community in the article. They said “ traditional healers used different treatments to treat people with mental problems. Some of the treatments are holy water, spirituality to remove the illness, talk therapy and rehabilitation as an additional service for people with mental problems. Traditional healing provided mental, emotional and physical care to the community. Traditional healers were found to be effective in treating mental illness and service to this centre”. Furthermore, the study reveals that patients with mental illness would visit traditional healers first when they develop mental health issues for the first time. This proves how communities rely on traditional healers to provide health to them; they are perceived as essential and provide service to the community (Burhe et al., 2023). Acceptance can lead to a more inclusive and harmonious community where different spiritual and healing traditions can coexist and complement each other.

Africans may attend a church service while practising rituals and visiting traditional healers”. Some churches, like Zionists, also have similarities with some Christian churches, which have some level of tolerance for the traditional African religions. Such churches allow people to continue with their traditional ways of living whilst continuing to be members of their congregations. Sunday Live (26 June 2023), I am relieved that some Christian families accept their members with an ancestral calling, such as Phelo Bala, a former Joyous Celebration member. Phelo Bala grew up and was raised in a Christian family. Still, he discovered that he had a calling from his ancestors to become a sangoma after consulting a traditional healer due to his illness, and doctors couldn't help him. Even though his family is Christian, he said that his family supported him, especially his mother, who was even present at his graduation ceremony/ritual (*ukuphothula*). Zipho was also one of the individuals her Christian aunt accepted as a traditional healer (Dolamo, 2024). Dolamo (2024) articulated that Zipho's aunt would give her unconditional regard and support, no matter her beliefs prohibit her from witnessing her become a sangoma. The psychological turmoil her aunt faced transgressed her church rules to support the family; it was something she was willing to negotiate with God. Her heart of hearts, supporting and showing up for the family, was a morally superior thing to do, which shows that she was brave.

There were some organisations which supported traditional healers, such as the Traditional Healers Organisation, which is a non-statutory body established in 1970, which offers training on how to treat different kinds of diseases through programmes, some of which are accredited by the Health and Welfare SETA (Sector Education and Training Authority). Dolamo (2024) argues that Intwaso is not an individual project but a group effort; the group is your family. Specific rites require the participation and representation of patriarchal and matriarchal ancestors. The roles of physical family members representing these ancestral groupings are seminal in rituals like *ukuphahla* (communicating with family members residing in the ancestral realm) and *ukusila* (preparing traditional beer). Family's support is everything, especially when you are about to be a traditional healer.

7.5 Community Support and Solidarity

Families show that the community also convince them to support their children's choices. The support they received from their communities, neighbours, and friends made them accept their children to embark on their spiritual journey.

“As I was still confused about whether to accept my daughter or not, I was even told by my pastor, who is a Christian, that my daughter has a strong gift, but I need to allow her to explore it and embark on her journey and I should also let her decide which church she needs to join as she was not coming anymore in my church. I was so shocked to hear my pastor say that, but one day, I noticed that he was supportive of encouraging pluralism (diversity of religions and cultures). Even in her community, whenever I would visit her, as I am married and living with my husband, I would hear blissful news that she has helped a lot of people; some got jobs. I thank the solidarity and support they gave my daughter to not criticise her, since I am a Christian. I know it is still hard for me, but little by little, I will bridge the gap between us” ~ Mrs Msomi-Ceza.

Mrs Khuzwayo (62 years old) is a mother to Sandile; she was born in a family that combined beliefs (Christian and African religions). After she got married, she had an ancestral calling, accepted it, went into the initiation process, and became a traditional healer. This gift did not work out for her as it brought severe sicknesses, loss of a job and being poor; she went to become a Christian {no traditional practices, consulting

traditional healers}. It was hard for her to accept his son [Sandile] as a healer due to a bad experience; she took so long to accept him. She added as follows:

“On my side, I heard different people praising him for how he helps them through prayers. I was once visited by my neighbour, who came saying that he was so sick, but through my son’s prayer, he was healed. It was not only that man; even at his workplace, I would receive a lot of calls thanking me for how I raised my son and giving him a chance to be a healer. Those words started to change my mind, and he would dream of amakhandlela amnyama (black candles) buried in our gate, and when he woke up, he would find those candles. I started to respect him and allowed him to continue with his journey. He has helped other people to get jobs and promotions through his prayer and going to the mountain to pray as he has isthunywa that doesn’t use imithi but prayer and water only” ~ Mrs Khuzwayo.

The families praised the support from the communities they received for their children to become traditional healers. Communities and churches were said to be supportive as they brought good testimonies on traditional healers’ families, which resulted in families accepting their members to become healers. It taught them that traditional healers are also healers who heal with traditions. It is also similar to Jesus Christ and God, who healed people with traditional plants in the Bible. Jesus, too, used rituals and herbs. He healed with spittle and earth; he sent the leper to show himself to the Priest per the Jewish rituals regarding leprosy and impurity (Bate, 1999). Ezekiel 47:12 says, ‘and on the banks, on both sides of the river, all kinds of trees will grow for food.

Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing. In their thesis, Berhe et al. (2023) explained how the families of patients with mental illnesses appreciated and were satisfied with the service they received from traditional healers while sick. The families’ support of traditional healing showed that traditional healers are also people who can heal, unlike the missionaries' worldview of perceiving traditional healing as primitive. Furthermore, Sigida & Sodi (2023) argue that many Africans rely on indigenous healers as the first option when seeking illness treatment because they are trusted within communities. Indigenous healers are given respect and recognition within their communities as mediums for communicating with the living and the spiritual world occupied by ancestors and God to heal people.

7.6 Celebration of Diversity and Cultural Richness

“By accepting my daughter to become a healer, it brought light to me and reminded me where I come from, as I also became a traditional healer after accepting my daughter. I always had unknown sicknesses, but because we were raised with Christian beliefs, I had to go to medical doctors, but they did not see anything. After accepting and supporting my daughter, I was able to consult traditional healers, and they told me that I also have an ancestral calling that I need to accept.

All that brought a sense of belonging, going back to my roots and embracing my traditions. Her journey taught me that you can be a Christian and have your own beliefs, but it is important to respect other people’s beliefs. We are not saying you should leave your beliefs, but respect someone’s gift as much as you respect your beliefs. By doing that, we wouldn’t have children who are still struggling to tell their parents about their ancestral calling because of rejection. I think we should be more considerate of other people’s gifts and religions and start to respect one another.

*Such as Zion and Ibandla lamaNazareth, those churches you’ll never feel so lost or unwanted because they accept you as you are. They never judge, but they respect your religious choice. Ezayoni, you can start iculo lezangoma (traditional healers’ song), and they will sing for you; you can even start a song from a Pentecostal church such as Faith Mission. They will sing it for you. How I wish we can be a rainbow and start to respect each other in terms of religious and traditions. **Masingavumeli abamhlophe basilawule ngezinkolo kunye namasiko ethu**, meaning let us not allow white teachings to dictate us or break us apart as families and Africans. Let's perform rainbow nation and pluralism” ~ **Miss Zuma.***

This narrative highlights the importance of respecting diverse beliefs and the value of recognising and honouring the gifts, traditions and religions of others. This participant shows transformation on her journey to become a traditional healer by accepting her family members as traditional healers. She was able to consult traditional healers after having incurable illnesses that doctors could not diagnose. This acceptance led her to reconnect with her roots and embrace her traditions while she was a Christian, despite her Christian beliefs and being raised with them. She finds that Christianity blends with traditional healing as long as mutual respect exists.

Her daughter's journey provided a sense of belonging and a deeper understanding of her cultural heritage. This participant advocates religious pluralism and mutual respect within families and religions. Participants praised how non-Pentecostal churches like Zion and Ibandla LamaNazaretha allow everyone without judgment. These churches allow individuals to express their traditional and Christian beliefs freely without judgment. Galvin et al. (2024), participants in their research, also witnessed this, who found that non-Pentecostal churches welcome sangomas and often blend traditional African practices with Christian practices. Mokhoathi (2021) articulated that people, when they tried to blend African religion and Christianity in their Christian churches, were discriminated against, misunderstood or accused of witchcraft. They felt rejected by their respective churches unless they visited the Zionist church. Participants advocated that all religions should coexist where different beliefs are valued and respected, fostering unity and understanding within communities and religions. Galvin et al. (2024) found that even nurses subscribed to pluralistic systems, drawing on both African and Western cultures without absolute allegiance to either. An Anthropology lecturer, Dr Darong Gyang Darong, opted for pluralism and diversity in communities, stating, "I will consider growing up in a community where being different, diversity in languages, religion and cultural practices" (Darong, 2023) as beneficial.

Foster (2023) outlines that Southern Africa was not previously monolithic or doctrinally cohesive. Some believe that African Indigenous religiosity and culture are out of step with the Christian beliefs they inherited from their missionary ancestors, and some believe that to have historical and contextual integrity, their faith needs to embrace and rediscover the richness of African Indigenous religiosity and culture. Foster (2023) quoted Hick's work (1980:51-52), where he draws a metaphor and argues that "many believers (including himself in his early life) have sort of 'Ptolemaic' view of their religion, where their religion is the 'earth' around which other religions 'orbit'. He further says that for many people, their religion, beliefs, and practices are the centre of the world they stand; those were Christians. All other beliefs and practices are thought to orbit around what constitutes their centre. For diversity of beliefs and practices, Hicks (1980:52-53 as cited by Foster, 2023) argues that "people should move towards a 'Copernican' (view of religious plurality) where the universe of faiths centres upon God. People should not centre, but God is".

Foster (2023) highlighted that numerous contemporary scholars in the Christian tradition (Maluleke, 2021; Mokhutso, 2021; Bentley & Williams, 1991) and African Indigenous Religion (Mndende, 2019; Uka, 1991) have issued strong calls for respect and courageous engagement that seek greater truth and authenticity for African religiosity. A philosopher, psychiatrist and political activist, Frantz Fanon, with South African philosopher and psychologist Phumla Gobodo-Madikizela, argued that “South Africans need a deliberate engagement with the structures and beliefs of dehumanisation that colonialism and apartheid enacted upon them and to liberate themselves from the psychological and social harm enacted by the pathologies of the colonisers” (Foster, 2023). This meant Christians should change how they perceive traditional healing and liberate themselves from harmful teachings from missionaries. An African theologian, Vuyani Vellem, said, “African Christianity need to know that the West is not our creator and given that, African Christians need to engage in a deliberate attempt to unthink the West” (Vellem, 2017:248).

They will need to engage in the process of understanding both what has shaped them (and thus what they must unlearn), but also where they are and what has been here before the missionaries arrived” (Mahokoto, 2020:27-44, as cited by Foster, 2023). John Mbiti rightly notes in his book *Concepts of God in Africa* that “African people are not religiously illiterate” (Foster, 2023). Long before the arrival of colonial missionaries on our shores, African persons and communities held religious beliefs and made sense of our lives and the world. However, Maluleke (2021, as cited by Foster, 2023) said we must look at the influence of African religions and traditions as past and present hosts of Christianity in Africa. Even Desmond Tutu once remarked, ‘I am ecumenical because I am a good Anglican’ (Foster, 2023). South African churches need to bring this richness and creative dialogue with one another rather than relegating them to conflict and secrecy. That would also liberate those practising traditional healing in secrecy, [such as Nomkhuleko], because of their Christian families (Foster, 2023).

7.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter discusses the data findings that were obtained during data collection. Findings were demonstrated through the use of thematic analysis. Twelve themes were constructed in this chapter. Christian families chose to accept their family members to become traditional healers, regardless of their Christian beliefs. Families saw traditional healing as something that could coexist with Christianity as long as there was mutual respect and support for each other. They viewed traditional healing as reconnecting with your roots and embracing your identity.

They chose solidarity within families over their religious beliefs and values. They desired diversity and religious pluralism within their families and in other communities and churches. It was said that if other churches could be similar to Zion church, accommodating every culture and religion, that would bring diversity to the world and remove dualism between African religion and Christianity. Foster also added his critiques on pluralism, that South Africa should adopt pluralism because, before the arrival of missionaries, Africa had always been a syncretic and pluralistic country that respected other people's religions. He also articulated that Africans should distance themselves from colonial missionaries' teachings by quoting Frantz Fanon (a philosopher) and Phumla-Madikizela (a philosopher).

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to summarise, discuss and contribute to the presented study. This chapter will articulate recommendations for future researchers and summarise findings according to their themes. The study aimed to navigate the challenges of becoming an indigenous healer within Christian families in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The study used a phenomenological research design, as the participants spoke about their everyday life experiences to become traditional healers within their Christian families. The study targeted Christian (Pentecostal churches) families and had members with an ancestral calling to become traditional healers. Eleven participants were sampled using heterogeneous and snowballing sampling techniques. One-on-one and telephonic interviews were used to collect data aligned with research questions, and the data were gathered for 5 months, from October 2023 to February 2024.

8.2 Summary of the findings

Data collected was analysed thematically, and themes of the study were constructed/ generated in chapter five. The study's findings included emotions, confusion, conflict, and struggle as they spoke about their challenges while becoming traditional healers within their Christian families. The study had primary participants, the traditional healers, and secondary participants, one family member of each healer, to understand their perspective on either rejecting or accepting the calling of a member. The study draws on Critical theory as the framework of this study, as it is concerned with the issues related to social justice, power imbalances, and how dominant ideologies maintain control and marginalise certain groups. Using the Critical framework in this study helped the researcher to look closely at how power, culture, and beliefs affect people who feel called to be traditional healers in Christian families.

It provides insight into individuals' challenges due to their spiritual calling and how it conflicts with their families' Christian beliefs. The study revealed that Africans have always had their Indigenous religion and traditions. Still, due to the arrival of Christianity with Europeans and missionaries having more power, they suppressed Africans' religion by forcing them to detach from their religion and customs. Their domination resulted in traditional healing being banished

by an apartheid government under the Act of Witchcraft Suppression, as it was seen as an evil, barbaric practice. This continued to the present generation, where there's division among Africans. We have Africans who are Christians (they have nothing to do with ancestors or traditions, as they perceive them as evil practices) and African Christians who combine beliefs. They still preserve Indigenous practices, embrace them and yet, Christians. This then caused struggle and confusion to members who have an ancestral calling but were raised and born in Christian families because the Christian beliefs are against traditional healing or African Spirituality. The clashes of faith and traditions occurred as participants were being interviewed, and a summary of the findings will be discussed with headings.

8.2.1 Challenges of traditional healers

Sigida (2022) explained that dreams were identified as one of the signs indicative that one has an ancestral calling. This was supported by Kubeka (2016) and Bakow and Low (2018) on Sigida's thesis, who indicated that the individuals called by their ancestors have constant dreams. When the chosen individual starts having these dreams, they communicate this to their families, who often do not take the individual chosen by the ancestors seriously (Sigida, 2022). This was also evident in a study conducted by Xaso (2015), in which it was noted that the participants communicated their dreams to their parents. Still, they were either ignored, not taken seriously or discouraged.

The study's findings, which speak to the study's second objective, revealed that the individuals were ignored and discouraged as they had or experienced dreams related to an ancestral calling. All participants were said to be dreaming of demons; they needed to pray harder and had to consult traditional healers to find meanings behind those dreams, and that is where they found an ancestral calling. From an African perspective, these dreams communicate from the ancestors that the ancestors are calling the person (Mlisa, 2009). Thus, they play a significant role in connecting the chosen individual and the ancestors. According to Sigida (2022), dreams contain instructions from the ancestors, and when these dreams are ignored, the chosen individual will experience misfortune. According to the study, participants experienced misfortunes such as car accidents, not finding jobs, lousy luck, disabilities and losing jobs. Because their families were Christians, they had their own perspective on ancestral calling, which they viewed as worshipping gods and demons. This then delayed them in responding to their ancestral calling, and they ended up experiencing misfortunes as punishment from their ancestors (Sigida, 2022).

The study revealed that participants faced rejection and felt left out when they tried to disclose their ancestral calling, which was against their families' beliefs and values. When they try to tell their families about their spiritual calling, they often encounter negative names such as evil, worshipping demons, witches, being possessed by evil spirits, etc. In their Christian families, there is a belief that traditional healing does not go together with Christianity. This makes it hard for participants to mix their ancestral beliefs with their families' Christian faith. This led to family conflict, clashes of faith and traditions, and disagreements as participants/ traditional healers wanted to honour their family history by accepting their spiritual calling.

The study underscores that most indigenous healers were rejected by their families to become healers. Data analysis revealed that some were chased out of their homes, some were called to have dirty spirits, or they wanted *ukuthwala*. They did not face rejection only from their families, but internal divisions also occurred within the families. The other members accepted, and some rejected their children for having an ancestral calling. Participants' struggles were made more difficult by this internal family division, which increased stress and emotional suffering. Some participants feared being judged or chased out of their homes because of their spiritual calling, so they decided to hide their spiritual practices and ancestral clothing from their parents and continue practising traditional healing in secret.

8.2.2 Summary of Christian families

The study revealed that Christian families rejected their children from becoming indigenous healers because of their beliefs, as Christians are against traditional healing, and they used verses from the Holy Bible to conform. This finding speaks to the study's first objective. While religious doctrine often plays a significant role in this rejection, this study found that many parents had additional reasons rooted in personal experiences, societal perceptions, and fears related to the stigma associated with traditional healing practices.

The findings from this study were that many parents rejected their children to become traditional healers; it was due to personal experiences with ancestral calling/ traditional healing that it did not help them, it was not fulfilling, made them poor and brought so many sicknesses meanwhile, it was said to bring life, happiness and healing, hence why they did not want their children to fall on that same trap as them. These experiences shaped their views about traditional healing, which they consider risky, does not help, and is the wrong path, leading to discouragement of their children from pursuing it.

Traditional healing has been associated with wrong things, negative stereotypes and harmful things for a long time, such as ukuthwala, witchcraft, and scamming people, because Europeans were not even interested in studying African history. This stigma or the portrayal of traditional healing in a negative way still exists, and it contributes to the stigma of traditional healers that all of them are harmful to people and do *ukuthakatha* to the people. This then made parents worry about their children becoming healers because of the stigma that traditional healing has.

Parents were concerned about their reputation, especially those in church positions. What did the congregants/ church community say about having a child who is a traditional healer? They feared being gossiped about, judged and excluded from their societies and religious communities, so they refused to allow their children to become healers.

8.2.3 Families that accepted their children

This study did not focus on Christian families that rejected their children from becoming healers but highlighted families that embraced and supported their children's spiritual journey to become traditional healers regardless of their Christian beliefs and values. Some families spoke about how open-mindedness helped them to reconcile their Christian beliefs with traditional healing. They prioritised their children's desire to become traditional healers and preserve indigenous knowledge. Some parents even revealed that accepting their children's calling brought significance to the family's heritage and did not diminish the gift of the family. This finding speaks to the study's third objective.

Families accepted their children's journey to becoming healers because they heard blissful news and testimonies from their clients or the people they were helping through prayers and *imithi*. Their children even helped them when they were sick and had unknown sicknesses, which is why they could see that this ancestral gift was working. Families spoke about the support they got from the communities, churches, friends and neighbours while they refused to accept their children becoming traditional healers due to their Christian beliefs. They had very touching testimonies, and the non-criticism they received from them was terrific. Some parents talked about their pastor, who was a Christian, but told her to support their daughter and let her choose the church she wanted to attend, which helped her to realise that mixing Christianity and traditional healing or supporting one another is not a crime, but to promote diversity, pluralism within religions and cultures.

They spoke about how supporting each other will be the way forward for everyone, which will teach the next generation not to be scared to come out if they have an ancestral calling. It will provide a sense of belonging to the child and that we are given one gift to heal people, but it comes in different ways. What we need to do is respect one another; if you are a Christian, you do not have to change your beliefs to accept your child's desire, but you need to support, learn and accept; the same applies to indigenous healers or whoever has a different religion and tradition.

8.3 Contributions of the Study

This study contributes significantly to understanding the relationship between traditional healing practices and Christianity in African societies. It sheds light on the difficulties faced by those who are to become and are indigenous healers but are rejected by their families due to conflicting beliefs. The study provided an in-depth perspective on religious, societal and cultural issues that influence rejection by recording interviews with indigenous healers and their Christian families. Furthermore, the study investigated the historical foundation of the stigma associated with traditional healing, tracing it back to colonial times when missionaries and Europeans negatively portrayed African religions and customs. This research challenges long-held assumptions/ stereotypes and sheds light on the historical exploitation of African identity and traditions. The study advocated for educational awareness programs that promote pluralism and mutual respect and provide initiatives towards understanding and reconciliation among various belief systems and cultural traditions. This study significantly contributes to religious studies, cultural anthropology and African history by advocating a more diverse and sensitive approach to cultural and religious diversity.

8.4 Recommendations

This study should be integrated into schools from senior primary because those who have grown up are wise to the high school curriculum. This will be done by proposing it to the Department of Education to collaborate with church leaders and community members to agree to be on the school's curriculum. The study's findings revealed that participants did not know about their dreams related to ancestral calling when they were young; this study will help children in schools be taught about different religions and traditions of different ethnicities. They will be taught about traditional healing, Christianity, and how people know they have an

ancestral calling and related dreams. They will be taught about other religions' beliefs and values and, most importantly, the diversity of religions and cultures.

This will shed some light on children who, no matter what they believe in, need to respect others' religions and cultures as much as they respect their own. They will grow up respecting one another, such as through disability education. It will also shed light on the children who experience dreams related to spiritual healing because having *idlozi* does not have age restrictions or categories. This will also shed understanding to the children if someone *uvukwa idlozi* or *kuphakama idlozi* while at school; evil spirits are not possessing that child, but *idlozi* only. The same applies to the children from families who combine Christianity and traditional healing, not to grow up judging those families who do not believe in their ancestors, but respect their choices and the values of their beliefs. By teaching them a diversity of religions and cultures, we are helping them to break the stigma on traditional healing, on Christianity as the only religion that is better, and we are also teaching them to break the curse that Europeans planted during apartheid about portraying African religion as evil and Christianity as the better and superior religion. I would also recommend support groups for indigenous healers who are scared to come out about having an ancestral calling due to being born in a Christian family, and for Christian families who are still finding it hard to accept their children becoming indigenous healers. Those groups will serve as a mentoring, creating a safe and therapeutic space for everyone.

I would recommend that future researchers also write on the impact or the results of implementation or advocacy for educational awareness and initiatives programs that earlier researchers and I wrote about between indigenous healers and Christian families, if it did have positive or negative outcomes. Were they also effective in the communities, churches and schools?

8.5 Limitations of the study

Failing to interview family members during data collection was a study limitation. Due to the sensitivity of the study, I wasn't able to get the chance to hear family members speaking on their own (from the horse's mouth) and their perspective regarding this topic. It was the topic they did not want to hear on their ears, as their children (participants-traditional healers) told me so. As a result, I had to get answers from my participants (indigenous healers) as they answered questions about their behaviour.

8.6 Conclusion

This study aimed to navigate becoming an indigenous healer within Christian families. The study found that participants who were to become indigenous healers were rejected by their families because of their families' Christian beliefs. Themes were generated while interviewing participants as they faced rejection while disclosing their ancestral journey. The study found that rejection of traditional healing started during colonial times when Europeans and missionaries introduced Christianity in Africa. Missionaries viewed African religion and traditions as something evil, satanic and inferior; they forced Africans to embrace Christianity and detach from their African religion because it was not aligned with God's word. This then went to Africans by viewing African religion and their Christianity as something evil, just like missionaries taught them. It occurred in contemporary times when Africans described themselves as Christians, did not follow African traditions, and did not believe in their ancestors. This happened to my current participants, who faced rejection to pursue their ancestral calling because of the teaching of missionaries that made their Christian families view ancestral calling as evil and worshipping demons. Some Christian families decided to accept their family members to become traditional healers, regardless of their Christian beliefs and values. They viewed traditional healing as one of the unique gifts from God and needed to be embraced. This study prompted religious pluralism rather than dualism. The study uses Foster's critique to show religious pluralism as one of the good things that need to be employed within Christian families, African churches and schools.

The study found that syncretism by itself does not correctly resolve the tensions and conflicts that occur within families, even if it found cases of syncretism, where Christian families combined Christian beliefs with African spirituality. Partial acceptance brought on by syncretism often creates the possibility of rejection and misunderstanding. On the other hand, religious pluralism, which Foster's critique supports, offers a structure that honours and embraces each religion separately without pressuring them to combine. The study emphasises pluralism rather than dualism or syncretism to encourage peaceful relationships with Christian families, African churches, and educational institutions. The study also came up with recommendations for consideration.

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APPENDIX ONE: ETHICS APPROVAL



Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee

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5 September 2023 Nosipho Portia Hlombe

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Review Reference: 2023-7421-8016

Dear Nosipho Portia Hlombe

Title: Dualism, Pluralism, or Syncretism (?): Navigating becoming and being a traditional healer within Christian families in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa Researcher:

Nosipho Portia Hlombe

Supervisor(s): Dr Gabriel Darong

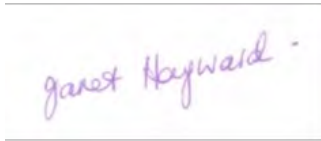
This letter confirms that the above research proposal has been reviewed and **APPROVED** by the Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee (RU-HREC). Your Approval number is: 2023-7421-8016

Approval has been granted for 1 year. An annual progress report will be required to renew approval for an additional period. You will receive an email notifying you when the annual report is due.

Please ensure that the ethical standards committee is notified should any substantive change(s) be made, for whatever reason, during the research process. This includes changes in investigators. Please also ensure that a brief report is submitted to the ethics committee upon completion of the research. This report aims to indicate whether the research was conducted successfully, if any aspects could not be completed, or if any problems arose that the ethical standards committee should be aware of. If a thesis or dissertation from this research is submitted to the library's electronic theses and dissertations (ETD) repository,

please notify the committee of the submission date and/or any reference or cataloguing number allocated.

Sincerely,

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Janet Hayward".

Dr Janet Hayward

Chair: Rhodes University Human Research Ethics Committee, RU-HREC

cc: Ethics Coordinator

APPENDIX TWO: INVITATION LETTER

INVITATION LETTER



RHODES UNIVERSITY
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RE: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH

Dear Inchanga Community Member

This letter serves as an invitation to participate in a research project titled: *Dualism, Pluralism, or Syncretism (?): Navigating becoming and being a traditional healer within Christian families in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*. This research is part of an anthropology module in medical anthropology.

The research project aims to explore how Christian families whose members are called to become traditional healers react to this calling, how the healers experience this reaction, and what its effect is on them as they become traditional healers. The research has the following objectives:

- To understand how Christian family members in the rural KwaZulu-Natal community react to the calling of their family members to become and be traditional healers.
- To understand how traditional healers in rural KwaZulu-Natal communities are affected by the reaction of their Christian family members towards them becoming and being healers.
- To explore how traditional healers in rural KwaZulu-Natal communities navigate how their Christian family members react to them becoming and being healers.

Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project (2023-7421-8016), and I have seen/may request to see the clearance certificate by contacting the Ethics Coordinator (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za).

By participating in this research project, you will be contributing towards a deeper understanding of the interplay between traditional healing practices and Christianity. This will shed some light on family dynamics, showing the acceptance or resistance encountered towards

traditional healing and healers, and promoting cultural diversity and respect for diverse belief systems.

You will participate in the project by being visited by a researcher (myself) at least twice or more when needed, the interview will last about 30-45 minutes. During these visits, the researcher (myself) will engage with you on how growing up in a Christian family shaped your acceptance to become a traditional healer, the reaction you got from your Christian family to becoming and being a traditional healer, how that reaction affected your training journey, and how you manage the conflict that might arise between the two religions within your Christian family.

Your participation is entirely voluntary, and if you wish to withdraw from participating further at any stage, you may do so without any negative consequences.

You will not be compensated for participating in the research, but your out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.

The following risks are associated with your participation: potential emotional triggers, recalling and speaking about experiences of rejection by family members when accepting your calling to be a traditional healer.

To mitigate this, interviews will be immediately stopped, and you can either continue with the interview on a different day or withdraw from participating in the study. You will also be encouraged to seek free counselling at the closest public counselling centre or the closest healer in trauma counselling. The counselling centre is The South African Depression and Anxiety Group, which runs 24hours; their toll-free number is 0800456789. The counselling can be done via telephone. I will also ensure that when I ask questions, I do not trigger conflict that might arise, since these are two different religions, I will not be biased toward the situation and will be sensitive to the participants.

The Researcher intends to submit the findings as a thesis, present at conferences, and publish the research results as a journal article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained. Your name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been

involved in the conducting of the research unless you indicate to the contrary/recognise that, as a public figure, your identity will inevitably be/made known, in which case you agree to accept the loss of anonymity.

Regarding the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013), it remains your right to request the Researcher to explain how confidentiality and anonymity of the data you provide will be achieved. You may also request to know exactly how your personal information will be stored securely, and for how long it will be stored.

The data generated from the study may be used for further studies in future.

Any further questions that you might have regarding the nature of the research and/or your participation in it will be answered by the researcher, Nosipho Hlombe, who can be contacted by email: g23h0002@campus.ru.ac.za[mailto:](mailto:g23h0002@campus.ru.ac.za), or phone number: 0813451635. I live at Inchanga, Panekeni Area and my supervisor, Dr Gabriel Gyang Darong, who can be contacted at this email: g.darong@ru.ac.za, is from Rhodes University, Makhanda.

I may request an audio recording of my comments and opinions during interviews to ensure the accurate recording of your views/responses. Furthermore, you can request a copy of the interview transcriptions to confirm that your opinions are accurately recorded.

Yours sincerely
Nosipho Hlombe

APPENDIX THREE: CONSENT FORM

1. PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION

(To be signed by research participant/s)

Project Title: Dualism, Pluralism, or Syncretism(?): Navigating becoming and being a traditional healer within Christian families in rural KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

Nosipho Hlombe, a Master's Student from the Department of Anthropology at Rhodes University, has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The research project aims to explore how Christian families whose members are called to become traditional healers react to this calling and how the healers experience this reaction and its effect on them as they become traditional healers. The study has the following objectives:

- To understand how Christian family members in the rural KwaZulu-Natal community react to the calling of their family members to become and be traditional healers.
- To understand how traditional healers in rural KwaZulu-Natal communities are affected by the reaction of their Christian family members towards them becoming and being healers.
- To explore how traditional healers in rural KwaZulu-Natal communities navigate how their Christian family members react to them becoming and being healers.

2. Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project (2023-7421-8016), and I have seen/may request to see the clearance certificate by contacting the Ethics Coordinator (ethics-committee@ru.ac.za)

3. By participating in this research project, I will contribute to a deeper understanding of the interplay between traditional healing practices and Christianity. This will shed some light on family dynamics, showing the acceptance or resistance encountered towards traditional healing and healers, and promoting cultural diversity and respect for diverse belief systems.

4. I will participate in the project by being visited by a researcher at least twice or more when needed. The interview will last about 30-45 minutes. During these visits, a researcher will engage with me on how growing up in a Christian family shaped my acceptance to become a traditional healer, the reaction I got from our Christian family members to me becoming and being a traditional healer, how that reaction affected my training journey, and how I manage the conflict that might arise between the two religions within my Christian family.

5. My participation is entirely voluntary, and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.

6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.

7. The following risks are associated with my participation: potential emotional triggers, recalling and speaking about experiences of rejection by family members when accepting my calling to be a traditional healer.

To mitigate this, interviews will be immediately stopped, and I can either continue the interview on a different day or withdraw from participating in the study. I will also be encouraged to seek free counselling at the closest public counselling centre or the closest healer in trauma counselling. The researcher suggested the counselling centre, The South African Depression and Anxiety Group, which runs 24hours, their toll-free number is 0800456789. The researcher will also ensure that when asking the questions, it does not trigger the conflict that might arise since these are two different religions and will not be biased and sensitive to the participants.

8. The Researcher intends to submit the findings as a thesis, present at conferences, and publish the research results as a journal article. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained. My name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conducting of the research unless I indicate to the contrary/recognise that, as a public figure, my identity will inevitably be/become known, in which case I agree to accept the loss of anonymity.

9. In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013), it remains my right to request the Researcher to provide me with a detailed explanation of exactly how confidentiality and anonymity of the data I provide will be achieved. I may also request to know exactly how my personal information will be stored securely, and for how long it will be stored.

10. The data generated from the study may be used for further studies in future.

11. Any further questions that I might have regarding the nature of the research and/or my participation in it will be answered by the researcher, Nosipho Hlombe, email: g23h0002@campus.ru.ac.za, or phone number: 0813451635, who lives at Inchanga, Panekeni Area and her supervisor, Dr Gabriel Gyang Darong, email address: g.darong@ru.ac.za, from Rhodes University, Makhanda.

12. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record by the Researcher.

13. I *agree/disagree* to the Researcher's request to take audio recordings as part of this research project, recognizing that agreement here is likely to raise the risk of compromising my anonymity and that steps will be taken to ensure this will not happen if my consent is given.

I,, have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all questions that I wished to ask, and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurised in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

.....

Participants signature

Witness

Date

APPENDIX FOUR: INTERVIEW GUIDES

Title of Study: Dualism, Pluralism, or Syncretism (?): Navigating becoming and being a traditional healer within Christian families in rural KwaZulu Natal, South Africa.

Interview guides and questions

Interview questions for Christian families that rejected their members

1. What are your Christian beliefs and values?
2. How do your Christian beliefs and values shape your views on traditional healing practices?
3. How did you take the news when you learned that your relative had a calling to become a traditional healer?
4. How do you think your relative becoming a traditional healer might impact your family?
5. What will you suggest they do since the ancestors have called them to become healers and you do not agree with them doing that? How would you describe the current state of your relationship with the family member called to be a traditional healer?
6. What can be done to ensure that the family member is able to accept their calling while still having a good relationship with you?

Interview questions for Christian families that accepted their members

1. What are your Christian beliefs and values?
2. How do your Christian beliefs and values shape your views on traditional healing practices?
3. How did you take the news when you learned that your relative had a calling to become a traditional healer?
4. What made/ influenced you to take a decision to accept someone in your family who has an ancestral calling or become a traditional healer?

5. How do you uphold your Christian belief despite having a family member who is a traditional healer?
6. How do you handle any conflict or tension between these two beliefs in your family?
7. How did the Christian community and churches respond to your family's acceptance of traditional healers?

Interview questions for traditional healers

1. How did you know that you have an ancestral calling to be a traditional healer?
2. How did you inform your family members about your calling to be a traditional healer?
3. What was your family's reactions when they discovered that you have an ancestral calling or becoming a traditional healer?
4. How did the reaction of your family members who accepted/rejected your calling affect your journey to accepting your calling to be a traditional healer?
5. How did/do you manage the conflict that emanate(d) from your family's realisation that you are called to be a traditional healer?
6. How would you wish that your family relate/respond to you and your calling to be a traditional healer?
7. How would you describe your current belief in, and practice of, Christianity?
8. How do you manage being a healer in a Christian family?