

Editor's Note

I am very delighted to introduce and welcome readers to the Special Issue No. 6.1 (November 2023) of the *AASR E-Journal for the Study of the Religions of Africa and the African Diaspora*, a peer reviewed, open-access journal of the African Association for the Study of Religions (AASR). We are thankful to the guest editors, Lovemore Togarasei and Rebecca Kubanji, for putting together interesting articles based on an ethnographic research study “The impact of religious beliefs on health seeking and health provision behavior: lessons for theological education review at the University of Botswana” carried out under the Nagel Institute’s African Theological Advance project, funded by the Templeton Religion Trust (TRT). This research conducted between July 2018 and September 2019 in Botswana sought to establish how religious and cultural beliefs and practices influence health seeking and health provision behaviors among Batswana and how this knowledge can help in reviewing theological education at the University of Botswana. The primary questions addressed by the study are: How do religious beliefs influence one’s health seeking and health provision behavior? Based on their reading and interpretation of the Bible, how do African Christians view traditional and modern medicine? Does the un/availability of good medical facilities in one’s society influence people’s views of the different health systems? What about the health and medical training programs, do they have courses or content on spirituality and health? How do they view the relevance of religion in their medical training? How do the answers to these questions influence the direction of theological education in Botswana and other African countries?

The study utilized theoretical formulations from literature review on the subject of religion, culture and health together with empirical data collected from Botswana. Empirical data was collected through survey questionnaires, in-depth interviews and focus group discussions. Specific communities that represent the diversity of religion, ethnic groups, geography and access to health care were purposively selected. Respondents were health seekers, traditional, medical and faith healing practitioners, academics in the areas of health and medical sciences and theology and religion and government and non-government health policy makers. Health seekers and health providers were selected from those who claim to be Christians and/or traditional religious adherents in selected geographical areas. Data was analyzed using basic statistical and qualitative analysis tools and techniques.

Generally, the findings of this research, as demonstrated through the Introduction and eight chapters in this special issue, indicate that the majority of Batswana are influenced by their religious and traditional cultural beliefs and practices in their health seeking behaviors. Despite the need to stick to professional health ethics, health practitioners - medical, faith and traditional including health policy makers, are influenced by their religious and traditional cultural beliefs and convictions in their provision of health services. Findings also show that the relationship between religion, health and healing beliefs and practices are not satisfactorily addressed in theological and medical health

curricula in Botswana. Thus, drawing from the research findings, the contributors propose a review of theological, medical and health education for the purposes of promoting holistic health through the integration of medical, traditional and faith healing. It is hoped that the findings of this study will be used to review theological education at the University of Botswana, but broadly speaking, impact on interdisciplinary curriculum review and change across universities and theological institutions in Africa.

Dear friends and colleagues, I wish you happy reading!

Afe Adogame
Editor-In-Chief
November 2023