


Chapter 4

Transforming Colonised African Mindsets

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates a framework for the transformation of colonised African mindsets towards the promotion of indigenous knowledge practices. The study relied on existing literature to analyse the African mindset towards indigenous knowledge practices. It was discovered that African countries undermine their indigenous knowledge systems and practices, and prefer those initiated by others, especially from European nations. African indigenous knowledge systems and practices are often under-looked, undervalued, negatively viewed, and spoken badly of by Africans, especially by those of younger generations. This disregard for indigenous knowledge systems and practices is predominantly seen in healthcare systems and practices, even after it has been recorded that, through scientific studies founded on participatory observation and interviews, many areas of the Western healthcare system were developed from the same indigenous knowledge practices that are now being disregarded. The study concluded that Africans should view their indigenous knowledge systems positively, promote them globally and preserve them for future generations to come. To do this, it is suggested that some practices be enhanced through technological changes to enable them to compete or be integrated with Western practices.

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The African Indigenous Knowledge System Practices (AIKSPs) have been disregarded and undermined throughout the decades. This stems from colonial powers who subjected Africans to legislative policies and disreputable techniques to completely control their territories and resources (Osman, 2009). Prior to this, Africans were able to provide for themselves and create artefacts and repositories with stone and bone tools, drawing and painting; and engineer infrastructure such as dams, agricultural terraces,

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and navigational aids (Emeagwali, 2014). This indicates that AIKSPs cover a wide spectrum of skills and knowledge that include indigenous knowledge, legislation, skills, beliefs, cultural norms, ways of life, technology, and science. Babalola and Oni (2021) emphasise that there is a dominant belief that Western science cannot learn anything from indigenous knowledge systems and practices. This belief is influenced by the sophisticated analytical tools found within the Western scientific system. As a result, indigenous knowledge system practices continue to degrade at an accelerating rate, exacerbated by the younger generation's continued disinterest in them (Donato-Kinomis, 2016, p.2). This disengagement is prevalent in the healthcare sector where traditional medicine (which combines the use of herbs with African spirituality), is developed through indigenous knowledge and is passed down from generation to generation. This disinterest has meant that traditional medicine has not been sufficiently researched or scientifically explored (Goma, Prasha, Kalungia, Bwalya, Hamachil, Mutati, Zingani, Mwila & Musoke 2016, p.156).

Indigenous health knowledge is an everchanging body of knowledge on the maintenance of health in African communities and is developed over the years through spiritual acumen, observations, and indigenous practice and learning (Janska, 2008). Because of its susceptibility, affordability, effectiveness, and traditional nature, it is mainly utilised by indigenous communities. Indigenous populations possess a holistic belief in health that considers the tangible, psychological, spiritual, social, and environmental aspects of a person. Indigenous knowledge regarding community health needs should be highly thought of and assessed due to its significance to the overall health of the African communities (Bruchac 2014, p.3822). Indigenous health knowledge should be adequately protected to prevent it from being disappearing or being mismanaged. Traditional healthcare providers are gaining recognition and trust within their communities although biomedically-trained healthcare professionals continue to undermine their significance (World Health Organization (WHO), 2014). Nhlapo (2020) supports this notion by arguing that the South African government deferred traditional healers from contributing to the health system, notwithstanding the fact that the WHO's report revealed that approximately 80% of the populations in African countries make use of indigenous health medicine (Makhutso 2021:8). Indigenous activists in South America are confronted by similar challenges concerning the practise and preservation of their indigenous health knowledge systems (Bruchac 2014, p.3821).

Kaya and Seleti (2013, pp. 33-36) indicate that indigenous knowledge practices underpin traditional African ways of learning and acquiring knowledge. These practices are a defining aspect of African existence. Mainly because Africans depend on indigenous knowledge practices and procedures for problem-solving, decision-making, and improving their standard of living through innovation (Olaopa & Ayodele 2021:1). Makhado, Saidi and Tshikhudo (2014) show how community farmers in southern Africa utilise indigenous knowledge to farm in drought conditions. Another example of this use is that during the Covid-19 pandemic, when many African countries faced economic challenges in which healthcare systems could not sufficiently meet their needs (Mphekgwana et al., 2021), these communities who were in desperate need of adequate healthcare utilised traditional practises, herbs, and food. Covid-19 provided a glance into the uses of indigenous skills and knowledge to solve current societal challenges and how this could influence decision-making over time (Olaopa & Ayodele, 2021).

African countries need to encourage and promote indigenous knowledge systems to continue sustaining and developing them. The African continent endured subjugation and colonialism for over 400 years (Keane et al., 2016), and through this domination and the marginalisation of indigenous African practices, the populous accepted Western science as the only way of acquiring knowledge (Sultana, Muhammad & Zakaria (2018, p.18905). The colonial period did not entirely eradicate indigenous knowledge, traditions,

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