

## Spirituality And Healing: Perceptions And Implications On The Akan Of Ghana

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### ABSTRACT

Spirituality, over the years, has become an important concept, though complex. It has served as a means to providing meaning to life through feelings of hope and faith, as well as capable of promoting the well-being of the individual. Healing, on the other hand, implies a complete state of well-being. The paper assesses the perceptions and impact of the relationship between spirituality and healing on the Akan as a people. Using the mixed method approach, the study gives an extensive interpretation of the effects and influence of spirituality and healing on the Akan. It re-introduces the significance of spiritual systems on health and healing, and provides more information on better ways to holistically care for the sick. It suggests a constant observation and recognition of the dimensions of spirituality when considering population health.

**Keywords:** Spirituality, Healing, Population health, disease, cure, Akan.

### INTRODUCTION

In recent times, the interplay and effects of spirituality and healing have been a topical issue. The study of the connection between spirituality and healing, according to Koenig<sup>1</sup>, has a long history particularly among ancient civilizations. Though the aspects that made spirituality and healing great allies are very old<sup>2</sup>, many recent studies consistently suggest a broad protective relationship between spirituality (religious participation) and population health<sup>3</sup>. The effects of the relationship between spirituality and health, Paris<sup>4</sup> observes, are enormous to health development and religious growth. Over the years, physicians and other healers have witnessed how illness focusses attention on “ultimate meaning, purpose and transcendence, and ...relationship to the significant and sacred”.<sup>5</sup> However, some modern day healthcare givers constantly overlook dimensions of spirituality when considering health of patients.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Harold G. Koenig, *Medicine, Religion and Health: Where Science and Spirituality Meet* (2008).

<sup>2</sup> A. Menyeh, ‘Religion and Science: Are they compatible?’ In: *Reflections on Religion and Science*. (2008), 24; H. G. Koenig, *Medicine, Healing and Spirituality: Where Science and Spirituality Meet*. (Pennsylvania: Templeton Foundartion Press, 2008), 8.

<sup>3</sup> T. J. Vander Weele, T. A. Balboni and H. K. Koh, ‘Health and Spirituality’. *Journal of American Medical Association*, 1: 2017, 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Peter J. Paris, *The Spirituality of African People: The Search for a Common Moral Discourse*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995).

<sup>5</sup> O. M. Pulchalski, R. Vitillo, S. K. Hull and N. Reller, ‘Improving the Spiritual Dimension of Whole Person Care: Reaching National and International Consensus’. *Journal of Palliative Medicine*, 17(6): 2014, 642-656.

<sup>6</sup> J. K. Opoku, *Spirituality and Healing: Impacts on the Akan of Ghana*. (Maastricht: Shaker Publishing, 2016), 24.

In spite of the evidence associated with spirituality and illness particularly in traditional healing and in modern healthcare (seen in traditional healthcare systems and chaplain involvement with improved patient satisfaction), formal system of collaboration between spirituality and health remain restricted and inadequate. This has often been attributed to the shift to scientific treatment as well as high patient-physician ratio in many developing countries. The accessibility of healthcare in Ghana, for instance, is illustrated by the ratio of 1:20,000 and 1:200 for biomedical care and traditional healthcare respectively<sup>7</sup>. This leaves physicians and healers with little or no time to assess the spiritual connections with patient's illness. Meanwhile, some systematic population-based studies have shown that spirituality and religious involvement are generally associated with negative outcomes (especially in physical and mental health).<sup>8</sup>

Spirituality has almost been regarded as a new concept, with a lack of recognition amongst some authors of the historical and traditional association between spirituality, religion and health.<sup>9</sup> Described as the search for the sacred<sup>10</sup>, the element of spirituality is the most central function of religion.<sup>11</sup> The idea of the sacred is what distinguishes spirituality from other phenomena.<sup>12</sup> It is a complex, but important concept. Its importance, according to Weathers, is realized in the increase quest for the inclusion of spirituality and spiritual care in healthcare policy across the world<sup>13</sup> as contained in various research works on spirituality. According to Koenig et al<sup>14</sup>, the term spirituality refers to the individual search for "understanding answers to ultimate questions about life, meaning and relationship to the sacred or transcendent, which may (or may not) lead to or arise from the development of religious rituals and formation of community". Spirituality encompasses the existential domain and the essence of what being human is, providing meaning to life through feelings of hope and faith, capable of promoting the well-being of individuals.<sup>15</sup> For instance, among the aged, Reis and Menezes explains that, spirituality is an incentive for facing challenging situations and difficulties in the last years of their life. It serves as resilient strategy and reveals surprising influence on the better quality of life of the older adult.<sup>16</sup>

In Ghana, the growing interest in spirituality has stemmed from the changes in religion and society as well as their increasing influence on culture. There seems to be a shift from collective search for spirituality to a more personal one (i.e. a personal search for meaning, well-being

<sup>7</sup> M. Tabi, M. Powell, and D. Hodnicki, 'Use of traditional healers and modern medicine in Ghana'. *International Nursing Review*, 53(1): 2006, 52-58.

<sup>8</sup> Paul S. Mueller, David J. Plevak and Teresa A. Rummans, 'Religious Involvement, Spirituality, and Medicine: Implications for Clinical Practice'. *Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research*, 76: 2001, 1230.

<sup>9</sup> E. Weathers, Spirituality and health: A Middle East perspective. *Religions*, 9(33): 2018, 1-17.

<sup>10</sup> P. C. Hill and K. I. Pargament, 'Advances in the Conceptualization and Measurement of Religion and Spirituality'. *American Psychologist*, 58: 2003, 44-65.

<sup>11</sup> A. Ephirim-Donkor, *African Religion Defined: A Systematic Study of Ancestor Worship among the Akan*. (University Press of America, 2012).

<sup>12</sup> P. C. Hill and K. I. Pargament, 'Advances in the Conceptualization and Measurement of Religion and Spirituality'. *American Psychologist*, 58: 2003, 44-65.

<sup>13</sup> E. Weathers, 'Spirituality and Health: A Middle East Perspective'. *Religions*, 9(33): 2018, 1-17.

<sup>14</sup> H.G. Koenig, M. E. McCoullough and D. B. Larson, *Handbook of Religion and Health* (1<sup>st</sup> Ed). (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 18.

<sup>15</sup> A. L. C. B. de Oliveira, C. D. A. Feitosa, A. G. dos Santos, L. A. de A. Lima, M. A. Fernandes and C. F. de S. Monteiro, 'Spirituality and Religiosity in the Context of Drug Abuse'. *Revista Da Rede de Enfermagem Do Nordeste*, 18(2): 2017, 283-290.

<sup>16</sup> L.A. Reis and T.M.O. Menezes, 'Religiosity and Spirituality as Resilience Strategies Among Long-Living Older Adults in Their Daily Lives'. *Revista, Brasileira De Enfermagem*, 70(4): 2017, 761-766.

and power). This has necessitated an increased emphasis on spirituality across many fields including business, governance and healthcare.

Bircher<sup>17</sup> defines health as “a dynamic state of well-being characterized by a physical, mental and social potential, which satisfies the demands of a life commensurate with age, culture, and personal responsibility”. He adds that if the potential is insufficient to satisfy these demands the state is disease. The constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) clarifies health as a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being, not merely the absence of disease or infirmity<sup>18</sup>. In this definition is an emphasis on the indigenous Ghanaian notion of disease and cure. The traditional Ghanaian and for that matter Akan medical theory views disease in the light of spiritual and social causation. However, as a result of contemporary social changes, namely, western education and religion, there has been a call for the development of a medical model which will articulate the medical needs for recipient societies.

The concept of healing remains confusing and inexact.<sup>19</sup> According to Egnew, the confusion concerning healing is evidenced by the lack of consensus about its meaning.<sup>20</sup> Literally, healing means to make whole.<sup>21</sup> It is from the root of the old English word ‘*haelan*’, the condition or state of being ‘*hal*’ -whole. ‘*Hal*’ is also the root of ‘*holy*’ -defined as ‘spiritually pure’.<sup>22</sup> So, themes of wholeness, narrative<sup>23</sup> and spirituality are congruent with the derivation of the term ‘healing’. Dossey et al, therefore, define healing as “the process of bringing together aspects of one’s self, body-mind-spirit, at deeper levels of inner knowing, leading toward integration and balance with each aspect having equal importance and value.”<sup>24</sup> It represents a complete state of well-being. In its holistic sense, the concept of healing has faded from medical attention and is rarely discussed in medical literature.

The paper is meant to assess perceptions and existing implications of the relationship among spirituality, health and healing on the Akan as a people. The setting for this research is the Akan community in the Ashanti region of Ghana. In that sense, the study is not extended to cover other Ghanaian Akan communities in different regions.

## METHODOLOGY

The study involved the use of mixed method and relied on primary and secondary data sources. It adopted these procedures in collecting data and information on the implications of spirituality, health and healing. The secondary source of data collection involved published and unpublished documents such as books, articles, reports, conference papers, online materials

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<sup>17</sup> Johannes Bircher, ‘Towards a Dynamic Definition of Health and Disease’. *Medicine Health Care and Philosophy*, 8(3): 2005, 336.

<sup>18</sup> Preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization as adopted by the International Health Conference, New York, 19-22 June, 1946; signed on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1946 by the representatives of 61 States (Official Records of the World Health Organization, no. 2, p.100) and entered into force on 7<sup>th</sup> April, 1948.

<sup>19</sup> J. K. Opoku, *Spirituality and Healing: Impacts on the Akan of Ghana*. (Maastricht: Shaker Publishing, 2016), 65.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas R. Egnew, ‘The Meaning of Healing: Transcending Suffering’. *Annals of Family Medicine*, 3(3): 2005, 255-262.

<sup>21</sup> Oxford English Dictionary. (Oxford, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary. (Springfield: G & C Merriam Company, 1979).

<sup>23</sup> Narrative (therapy) provides a form of healing different from that of medicine and spirituality. It is a form of counseling that views people as separate from their problems. It ensures healing by admonishing clients to get some distance from the issue to see how it might actually be helping them or protecting them more than it is hurting them.

<sup>24</sup> B.M. Dossey, L. Keegan and C.E. Guzzetta (eds.) *Holistic Nursing: A Handbook for Practice* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.). (Sudbury: Jones & Bartlett Publishers, 2005).

and historical documents written on the theme. On the other hand, the survey on the views of individuals from the field covered a sample of 100 respondents. Field data collection involved the use of structured and semi-structured questionnaires and interview guide (as research tools) to collect data from a cross section of respondents.

Using the case study design, the method of simple random sampling was used to pick all respondents who answered the questionnaire. This included individuals within different age groups and of different educational and religious backgrounds who receive healthcare. Though the respondents were of different professional backgrounds, their understanding of the research theme proved essential to their responses and opinions. Also, 15 individuals (both males and females) were interviewed. Interviewees were selected based on their extensive knowledge of spirituality and in both traditional and modern healthcare delivery in Ghana. They included traditional healers/spiritualist (5), modern medical practitioners (5) and religious leaders (5). Some of these selected interviewees needed to have their set of questions interpreted to them in their native Akan language (Asante-twi) to help their understanding of the research variables in order to reduce the rate of non-response. Interview sections took place in palaces, shrines, homes, hospitals, clinics and offices of interviewees. Descriptive analysis was used for the data obtained as well as the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS –version 16.0) software to analyse the data.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Demography of Respondents**

Among the 100 respondents were 57 men and 43 women. The differences in their ages were as follows: 24 respondents below 25 years, 29 between 26-35 years, 21 between 36-50 years and 26 between 51 years and above. Among respondents, 34 were single, 22 were married, 14 were separated and 30 in co-habitation. In fact, none of the respondents indicated to be divorced. In the area of education, 34 respondents had obtained basic level of education, 43 with secondary education and 20 with tertiary education. However, 3 respondents had not received any form of formal education.

Respondents included Christians (38), Muslims (29) and Traditionalist (26). There were also 7 respondents who did not indicate their association with any of the three major religions in Ghana. As to whether they are adherents of any of the Eastern Religions or not leaves much room for further investigation. The table below further elaborates the demographic background of all respondents.

**Table 1: Demographic background of respondents**

<b>Variables</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Gender</b>	57	43	100
<b>Age of Respondents</b>			
Below 25 years	13	11	24
26-35 years	12	17	29
36-50 years	16	7	21
51 years and over	17	9	26
<b>Marital status</b>			
Single	20	14	34
Married	10	12	22
Separated	6	8	14
Co-habitation	17	13	30
Divorced	-	-	-
<b>Education</b>			
Basic	12	22	34
Secondary	31	12	43
Tertiary	14	6	20
None	-	3	3
<b>Religious affiliation</b>			
Christianity	21	27	38
Islam	21	8	29
Traditional	19	7	26
None	5	2	7

**Source: Authors' construction 2018**

On the other hand, among the 15 interviewees (traditional healers, spiritualist, modern medical practitioners and religious leaders) from the Akan community, it was identified that each interviewee was affiliated to one of the major religions in Ghana. The data obtained revealed that traditional healers and spiritualists had the lowest level of formal education as compared to religious leaders and modern medical practitioners. The reason being that all traditional healers and spiritualists had received only basic and secondary education indicating that higher level formal education is not common among this category of respondents. The table below provides the distribution of interviewee's religious affiliation and educational background.

**Table 2: Religious affiliation and educational level of interviewees**

Religious affiliation	Traditional/ Spiritual Healer	Modern Medical Practitioner	Religious Leader	Total
Christianity	0	2	3	5
Islam	2	3	0	5
Traditional religion	3	0	2	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>
Educational Level				
Basic	3	0	0	3
Senior High	1	0	2	3
Tertiary	0	5	3	8
Non-Formal Education	1	0	0	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>

Source: Authors' construction 2018

### **Spirituality-Healing Relations: Respondents' explanation of key concepts**

Respondents shared views on the concept of spirituality, healing and medicine. All 100 respondents from the Akan community indicated to have an idea about the concepts. Depending on different educational and religious backgrounds, the understanding of the concepts varied among most respondents.

Spirituality was understood by respondents to mean the possession of forces beyond human control that might be as a result of his/her pious life; involvement in matters of the metaphysical realm; part of life which is invisible on the outside; dealing with divinities, and connection with miracles. Other respondents explained the concept to mean events in the world of the spirits, the sensitivity or attachments to many gods, spirit beings and religious values. According to the respondents who were Christians, spirituality is simply the acceptance of God and Jesus and the active relationship with the Holy Spirit. In an interview, some religious leaders explained it is the search for the sacred (i.e. set apart from the ordinary and worthy of veneration). Other interviewees also stated that it is the use of supernatural powers in the physical world. With this, it can be stated that respondents indicated an understanding of the concept as a way of life separate from the physical and beyond it.

Healing was explained by respondents as the art of overcoming diseases; reducing infirmity and disorders as well as regaining strength and good health –mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. For other respondents, it is the art of feeling better after a short or long period of illness; a positive state of health; a restoration of health; relief; growing sound and getting well. To a larger extent, the view of respondents indicated an idea of being well again. Many respondents also stated that healing is the relief or freedom from pain and disorders through prayers, supplications and deliverance, while few mentioned that healing emanates from divinities and supernatural world. In an interview, some interviewees (who were basically medical practitioners) disclosed that healing is when a “person recuperates or recovers fully from an ailment or sickness be it physical, spiritual or psychological”. Other interviewees also asserted that healing is the permanent holistic restoration of health. In their view, healing must set people free from both physical and spiritual disorders. However, healing is realized when there has been proper medication (treatment) and prayer (spiritual and divine assistance).

In answering questions pertaining to the relationship between spirituality and healing, many respondents were specific. 86 respondents were certain that spirituality of the traditional Akan society plays some role in healing. However, 14 respondents did not agree. Meanwhile, 87 respondents were of the view that healing is inseparable from spirituality as against 13 who thought otherwise. Nevertheless, 85 respondents agreed that spirituality and healing are good for the health system of a person as against 15 who did not. Interviewees stated that, in the past, healing and spirituality played a vital role in human life and in both modern and traditional medicine. They further stated that, in all forms of treatment, the combination of the use of herbs and spirituality has proven to be beneficial. In their view, since not all diseases can be treated by either medicine or spirituality, it will be appropriate to consider both aspects so that the positive effects of each may be fully realized.

Interviewees added that though healing and medicine may be different from spirituality, their purpose for humans can be similar in terms of disease treatment. If it is understood in this way, then healing and spirituality will be difficult to separate. A number of 96 respondents stated that they use medicine, while 4 said they did not. Among the 96 respondents, 35 of them preferred the use of traditional medicine as against 31 who preferred western medicine. Meanwhile 30 respondents said that they use both forms of medicine.

In explaining the concept of medicine, views of all respondents (100) attested to the fact that the concept of medicine was well known to them. Some respondents explained medicine to be the art of healing and treating illnesses, injuries and other bodily disorders; any substance applied internally and externally to the body for the purpose of curing diseases. Other respondents also explained medicine to mean the art of diagnosing in order to cure and prevent the occurrence of illness or the substantive means for ensuring good health. Furthermore, most respondents mentioned that medicine represents any solid or liquid substance used in curing infirmities. They stated that it was a substance intended for the purposes of healing. According to them, medicine is meant to restore, reduce and cure ailments. Generally, respondents mentioned some forms of medicine to include shrubs, syrups, herbs, tablets, capsules, seed, concoction, barks, roots and other chemical substances. From the views of respondents, it is clear that the purposes of medicine include healing, restoration, prevention, curing and promoting health.

Presently, there are two major types of medical practices (the traditional and modern scientific medical practices) In Ghana, and both forms of practice deal with illness and disorders.<sup>25</sup> The data obtained revealed the existence of both modern (orthodox) and traditional medicine among the Akan of Ghana. This is evident in the strong usage and appreciation of both medicines among the Akan. In various interviews, many medical practitioners acknowledged the use of traditional medicine themselves and were much concerned about their preparation and mode of preservation by some local practitioners. It was observed that both traditional and orthodox medicines have the same purpose; treatment of disease and restoration of health (whether scientific or non-scientific). It was further observed that the type of medicine which was preferred and used was as a result of its efficacy, availability, low cost of production, high scientific basis and support. Although the number of people who use traditional medications weighs more than those of orthodox medication, the effectiveness of both forms of medicines in the provision of good health is highly appreciated by many Ghanaians.

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<sup>25</sup> P. A. Twumasi, *Medical System in Ghana: A Study in Medical Sociology*. (Accra: Ghana Publishing Corporation, 1975), 1.

### ***Spirituality and Medicine***

It was also realized that the use of traditional medicine involved the use of spirituality to achieve the appropriate cure, though some respondents denied the usefulness of spiritualism in traditional medicine. Some respondents believed that it is the herbs that actually heal and not the spiritualism that is most often associated with it. According to these respondents, God is the creator of all herbs –which are then meant to provide healing –and it is up to humans to know the herbs needed for a particular kind of disease or infirmity. This goes against some popular views like that of Quarcoopome<sup>26</sup> that God is the giver of all medicines and provides them to man through the tutelary or lesser spirits in the various communities. The world according to the view of indigenous societies is a world which is primarily spiritual, in that, what exists is spirits or spiritual beings which are capable of having an influence on the environment.<sup>27</sup>

The research uncovered that spirituality cannot be separated from medicine (especially, traditional medicine). Spirituality connotes things that happen in the world of the spirits, divine life, supernatural forces, attachments to religious values, the relationship between man and religious objects, values and sacred. It is that which is believed to be beyond humans, their capabilities and thinking. In the traditional Akan society like many indigenous African societies, medicine is closely associated with religion and spirituality. Indeed, religion and spirituality are part of the life of the traditional Akan whose being stems from his relationship with the spiritual realm. A misreading of the spiritual realities of the African primal world has often resulted in the lack of recognition for such an identity with African medicine. It must be stated that what goes on in the actual daily religious life and spirituality –in the company of divinities, ubiquitous spirits and ancestors –is left virtually untouched.<sup>28</sup> This is in line with Nkemnkia-Nkafu's view that the connection between spirituality and medicine is inseparable and that the bond needs to be strengthened.<sup>29</sup>

Many interviewees further stated the relevance of mystical powers to medicine among the members of traditional Akan societies. They asserted that mystical forces exist differently among different traditional spiritualists and healers. They revealed that mystical powers exist in the midst of indigenous medical care. They are sometimes used in the treatment of pregnant women and infants to protect them from spiritual attacks and ailments such as convulsions. They are used also in other health related problems as well as in problems of a social, economic or religious nature as a way of influencing the outcomes, both physical and spiritual. It was, however, noted that some mystical forces had the propensity of being used to cause evil. Some individuals acquired some of these forces to bring down other people and to cause them diseases and misfortunes like accidents and injury, the opposite of preventing diseases and promoting good health.

Historically, medicine and its practices have existed in almost all societies whether modern or primitive and that its provision has been the responsibility of families and individuals alike.<sup>30</sup> It is an institution concerned with combating disease and improving health.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, it is to be stated that the improper intake of medicine, in respect of the dosage, also affects medicine

<sup>26</sup> See: T.N.O. Quarcoopome (1987), p.146 and 148; The Akan proverb 'if *Onyame* (God) gives you sickness, he also gives you medicine, means that god is the author and source of medicine'. Furthermore, every divinity is believed to have in his possession a particular set of remedies for the cure of his devotees.

<sup>27</sup> K. Gyekye, *An Essay on African Philosophical Thought: The Akan Conceptual Scheme*. (Philadelphia, 1987), 79.

<sup>28</sup> See: Bolaji Idowu in his seminal book '*Olodumare*' and other writings in: *God of Yoruba Belief*. (London, 1962).

<sup>29</sup> Nkemnkia-Nkafu, *African Vitalogy: A Step Forward in African Thinking*. (Nairobi: Pauline Publ., 1999), 189.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 517.

<sup>31</sup> J. J. Macionis and M. L. Gerber, *Sociology* (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.). (New Jersey: Hall Allyn and Bacon, 1999), 516.



negatively. This may lead to the contraction of other diseases - thus, by inducing several other diseases (leading to the Doctrine of Double Effect<sup>32</sup>).

### **Effects of their relationships Spirituality and Healing on the Akan**

In an interview, some traditional healers and spiritualist asserted that the major impacts of spirituality may be seen in the recognition and treatment of spiritual attacks and sicknesses. According to them, spirituality as a way of life is important for humans and their well-being as healing and spirituality combine to treat diseases outright (physical and spiritual). In the opinion of many respondents, the use of spirituality serves as an alternative means to medicinal treatment of diseases. Concerning the implications of spirituality on medicine and healing, a majority of 92 respondents stated that spirituality has an impact on medicine and healing. However, 8 respondents did not acknowledge any effect of spirituality on medicine and healing.

In relation to the above, 65 respondents talked of having obtained spiritual healing in one way or the other. They talked of having received spiritual healing for diseases like; malaria, fever, hepatitis, ulcer, asthma, broken bones, barrenness, impotency, cancer, lungs infection, tuberculosis, headache, jaundice, typhoid, menstrual disorders, insanity, convulsion, blindness and joint pains. 22 respondents said they had not obtained any healing of this kind and 11 respondents did not express any view in this regard.

Respondents further explained that through prayers, rituals, communion, fasting, sprinkling and drinking of concoctions and through wearing mystical objects like talismans around the waist, they were able to experience healing. While 13 respondents attested that they still appreciate the use of spirituality in healing, 67 were indifferent, and 19 had no opinion. Some respondents (45) accepted the fact that healing provided by spirituality and mystical forces was effective as against 47 who rejected the idea and 8 who did not answer the question. 40 respondents were of the view that spiritual healing and mystical powers were meant to heal only diseases whose causes were spiritual: 60 did not agree. The latter (60 respondents) believed that spirituality was enough to heal both physical and spiritual diseases.

Belief in the impact of spirituality and healing was very positive among 94 respondents, though 6 respondents shared other views. The effects of spirituality and healing in Ghana were diverse among respondents. 21 respondents believed that the impacts were social, and 16 believed that they were economic. Also, 25 respondents agreed that the impacts were religious, and 15 that the impacts were psychological. However, the effects of spirituality and healing, according to 19 respondents, were possible in all spheres of life and in all societies. Meanwhile, 4 respondents indicated not to be aware of the above. The table below further explains the views of respondents as pointed above.

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<sup>32</sup> The Doctrine (or Principle) of Double Effect is often invoked to explain the permissibility of an action that causes a serious harm, such as the death of a human being, as a side effect of promoting some good end. It is claimed that sometimes it is permissible to cause such a harm as a side effect (or "double effect") of bringing about a good result even though it would not be permissible to cause such a harm as a means to bringing about the same good end. This reasoning is summarized with the claim that sometimes it is permissible to bring about as a merely foreseen side effect a harmful event that it would be impermissible to bring about intentionally.

**Tab.10: Implications of spirituality and healing**

Impacts of healing and spirituality	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent
Social effects	21	31.3	31.3
Economic effects	16	17.0	17.0
Religious effects	25	17.3	17.3
Psychological effects	15	23.0	23.0
All the above	19	7.7	7.7
None of the above	4	3.7	3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**Source: Authors' construction 2018**

Significantly, the connection between spirituality and healing was believed to provide essential implications on Ghanaian societies. These specific effects, according to interviewees, were essential for individuals and society at large. Many interviewed herbalists mentioned some of the major effects as: it provides cure for all alternative diseases that may prove difficult to be cured in orthodox healing as well as providing income and assistance for its practitioners and avoiding the expense of modern (scientific) medication. This emphasizes the fact that inasmuch as spirituality and healing were relevant, their relationship was effective for human development as well. Some of the impacts defined by respondents are outlined below.

#### **a. Social Impacts**

Among the social effects respondents stated that healing and spirituality ensured;

- Good relationship among humans in society (i.e. promote social relationship among spiritualist, healers, physicians and clients and also among family members).
- The provision of solutions to physical problems.
- Proper living conditions (as a result of the alternative form of cure provided by spirituality and medicine).
- The prevention of over exploitation of individuals by some spiritualist on one hand and healers on the other hand in the name of providing cure and healing.
- Assistance and direction to the social health needs of individuals.

#### **b. Economic Impacts**

Respondents further stated that the economic impacts of the relationship between healing and spirituality included the following;

- Provision of good (holistic) health for trading, schooling, farming, fishing, selling, and driving to obtain income and development.
- Restoration and recuperation of strength and health for socio-economic life and a resulting increase in productivity.

#### **c. Religious Impacts**

In addition, respondents stated that religiously, the relationship between medicine and spirituality;

- Eradicates negative notions that medication adulterates some basic doctrines of some religious groups
- Strengthens individual faith and spirituality
- Promotes changes in personal religious and spiritual lifestyle with regard to health.
- Sometimes leads to an attitude of indifference towards (personal) faith (especially when prayers and spirituality have proven futile).
- Ensures reverence for spirituality and the use of magical forces
- Ensures spiritual and emotional support

- Promotes religiosity, (thus, for some people medicine and spirituality serves as the reason for religion).

#### d. Psychological Impacts

Respondent stated some of the psychological effects of healing and spirituality as follows.

- Lack of realization of the natural cause of disease or ill-health
- Failure to seek proper scientific healing and treatment in times of sickness
- The attribution of diseases to spiritual causes only.
- Belief in the permanent cure of diseases/illnesses
- Certainty in treatment and healing
- Eradication of depression, Assistance and hope

#### e. Health Impacts

The last of the impacts, according to the respondents, were health related. They stated that healing and spirituality lead to the;

- Complete/absolute restoration of physical health.
- Holistic deliverance and healing of the body from diseases.
- Prevention and treatment of diverse forms of disorders.
- Proper growth and mental well-being of individuals/patients.
- Total prevention and protection from infections.

**Tab.11: Percentage distribution on specific implications by respondents**

List of impacts	Frequency	Per cent	Valid Per cent
Holistic healing of the human person	45	15.0	15.0
Regain socio-economic development	67	22.3	22.3
Commitment to spiritual values	56	18.7	18.7
Psychological support	63	21.0	21.0
Recognition for Proper health care	58	19.3	19.3
Not applicable	11	3.7	3.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Source: Author's construction 2018

#### *Negative Impacts of Spirituality-Healing Relations*

On the other hand, the research outlined a number of observations that sought to deny the positive impacts of healing and spirituality in the Akan community of Ghana. First among them is the fact that the inclusion of spirituality in disease treatment can lead to the lack of confidence in physical, scientific and secular treatment of diseases. This, according to informants, challenges the credibility of secular treatment (orthodox medicine). As a result of this, the patronage of such forms of treatment can be affected. This in their view seeks to depreciate modern medicine which they believe primarily exists outside spirituality.

Interviewees revealed that absolute healing based on spirituality in the view of many respondents will in the course of time lead to over-reliance on spiritual/faith healing to the neglect of modern scientific medicine. They posited that until equal recognition is given both to secular and spiritual treatments, over-reliance on any of the two forms of treatment cannot be halted.

They added that over-reliance on spiritual healing has directly or indirectly led to the influx of patients into religious camps rather than hospitals, resulting in the following;

- Misuse of spirituality by some spiritualists and charlatans to extort money from patients and manipulate clients.
- Use of indigenous mystical forces to cause evil and diseases instead of providing healing.
- Relegation of patients' spirituality in healthcare by some medical professionals.
- Lack of recognition for traditional medicine due to its relationship with spirituality by modern and scientific medical practitioners.

As a matter of urgency, these problems need to be solved in order to harmonize the relationship between healing and spirituality and their impacts on the Akan people.

This is not to say that healing and spirituality may not have negative effects on individuals. In respect of this, not all medicines are accepted or used by people for curing diseases. This is because some of them may be put to detrimental use by immoral individuals.<sup>33</sup> In same vein, there are people on whom no spirituality has any effect, even though there may be diverse forms of spirituality. While some people may have a secular spirituality<sup>34</sup> or a religious spirituality, others have none at all. Spirituality, of course, may be used for good and for bad purposes. It may be used in harming physical life, more than promoting it.<sup>35</sup> This is not to talk of the misuse, overuse and side effects of medicine as exposed to be real in the World Health Organization survey in 2003.<sup>36</sup>

### **Development of Healing and Spirituality in Promoting Akan Healthcare**

The nature of spirituality and healing is such that it has attracted several diverse views with respect to its development. 61 respondents asserted that spirituality, mystical powers and indigenous religious objects must be advanced in modern medicinal practice. This view was, however, not the same with all respondents as 39 of them rejected such a suggestion. In view of this when respondents were asked whether they must be allowed to exist only among the rural folks, 41 responded yes and 69 said no. Significantly, 56 respondents asserted that spirituality and healing must be promoted but 44 rejected the idea. Overall, healing and spirituality are recognized among many respondents. 71 respondents regarded spiritual healing as very relevant in health care in general, but 29 thought otherwise.

### **IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY**

It is worth noting that the overall health of an individual is achieved through a combination of physical, mental, emotional spiritual and social well-being. This research is very important for all involved in the health care industry as it throws more light on the connection between spirituality and healing. It provides more insights to health personnel and authorities on better ways to promote holistic healthcare, while resolving the constant barrage of negative press on Akan traditional healthcare and spiritual systems. In furtherance, an assessment of the impact of the relationship between spirituality and healing, as contained in this paper, re-introduces the significance of spiritual systems on health and illness, and provides more information on better ways to holistically care for the sick.

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<sup>33</sup> Nkemnkia-Nkafu, *African Vitalogy: A Step Forward in African Thinking*. (1999), 189.

<sup>34</sup> Secular Spirituality is the adherence to a spiritual philosophy without adherence to a religion; it emphasizes the personal development of the individual, rather than a relationship with the divine or spirits.

<sup>35</sup> Nkemnkia-Nkafu, *African Vitalogy*. (1999), 189.

<sup>36</sup> World Health Organization, *Medicines: Safety of Medicine -Adverse Drugs Reactions*. (2003 updated on 2008). (<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs293/en/index.html>: 7<sup>th</sup> December, 2017).

## CONCLUSION

Knowledge on spirituality and healing as dual means in ensuring good health, though complex, has become very common. It is of greater insight to mention that though several individuals have sought to separate healing from spirituality, the research to a larger extent has established an existing relationship between them. This relationship has existed for several centuries since the introduction of medicine. In traditional Akan societies of Ghana, a lot of significance is attached to the concepts of spirituality and healing which in many ways aid development. Similar to global research trends<sup>37</sup>, this research establishes connections between spirituality and quality of life. This study indicates that healing and spirituality ensure and maintain holistic health which, in effect, promotes an increase in productivity, social relationship, hope and religious commitment among the Akan people and Ghanaians as a whole. However, the paper cautions against over-reliance on spirituality which may be detrimental to physical development.

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