# Traditional Counselling

# Traditional Counselling:

## *Theory, Practice and Research*

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This book is dedicated to my children and grandchildren

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# PREFACE

This book was developed based on the research findings, contextual knowledge, observations, and experiences, gained from the research work on a case study, 'Nature and role of traditional forms of counselling in Zambia' which was conducted by the author. It was motivated partly by the need to contribute reading materials in the field of counselling psychology, and also to give credence to traditional counselling approaches and processes from an Afrocentric orientation. The focus of this book is to discuss the concept of traditional counselling, explore the theoretical framework of traditional counselling, clarify the common problems apparent in the sphere of traditional counselling, delineate the forms of traditional counselling practised, outline the application of research in traditional counselling, and contextualise mainstream modern counselling models. It is hoped that such an approach will provide insights about traditional counselling theory, practice, and research, which ultimately generates scientific knowledge for development. The book is important and useful because it enhances knowledge, understanding, and appreciation, about the theory and practice of traditional counselling, from an African perspective.

The book contains seven chapters. The first chapter provides an introduction to traditional counselling in which the concept, its importance and providers, are discussed. The second chapter discusses the theoretical framework of traditional counselling focusing on the cultural context, collective belief system, initiation rituals, and multicultural theory. This reflects a newer world view in the field of counselling psychology, and it is likely to influence the practice of traditional counselling, given that all counselling is multicultural in nature irrespective of orientation or origin; and multiculturalism cuts beyond continental boundaries and affiliations. The third chapter presents the common problems apparent in the sphere of traditional counselling; the fourth chapter is devoted to traditional counselling practice outlining the counselling process, interventions and the commonly practised forms of traditional counselling, and psychosocial counselling; the fifth chapter discusses the psychology of traditional counselling; and the sixth chapter presents applied research in traditional counselling, integrating excerpts of the research work by the author. The focus of discussion is on qualitative research method, case study design,

case study process, contextualization, and research findings. The last chapter presents a discourse on mainstream modern counselling theories, and their point of divergence with the traditional counselling theory.

Traditional counselling is a growing area of interest in African contemporary society, especially amongst members of the counselling profession. Helping another person experiencing psychosocial or emotional distress can be one of the most enabling human services. During the counselling process, people talk about anything and everything – and yet it is what is involved in the telling and listening, knowing and being known, reflecting and acting, and interpreting what is happening, that can be so complex and challenging. This is true in the practice of both traditional forms of counselling and modern forms of counselling. Traditional counselling becomes both a process of individual learning and an avenue for transformation that has social meaning and interpretation, as well as a cultural means of enabling adaptations to social institutions, services, and systems for personal development. Traditional counsellors play an instrumental role in facilitating this process of learning, transformation and adaptation. Traditional counselling is essentially a community affair and anyone can be in attendance depending on the scope of problem and nature of its representation. When a particular problem affects the community, every member is obliged to take responsibility for its resolution. Some problems are better tackled through collective efforts in their identification, resolution, and management; and this is core in traditional counselling.

Traditional counselling is collectivist in orientation: every member of the family or community would wish to know the outcome of a counselling interaction. This is so, because the traditional counselling process integrates family support and community involvement in its application. Based on the foregoing, it is manifest that, in individual counselling contacts, confidentiality is not assured between the person offering counselling help and the one being counselled. The traditional counsellor and client are both members of the same community, and perhaps the same extended family circle. Contextually, the problems experienced by the client are not alien to the traditional counsellor. Yet boundaries exist. Traditional counsellors are knowledgeable and experienced people whom clients freely contact when in need of counselling help. Traditional counselling integrates mentorship on sociocultural issues, such as initiation at puberty and marriage, as well as the promotion of harmonious co-existence, to foster sound community life. As a social service, many people utilize traditional counselling when faced with psychosocial concerns and other problems in their daily living.

For convenience only, the pronoun 'she' has been used to designate the counsellor, whereas 'he' refers to the client. Most other pronouns are used interchangeably to imply common usage, depending on the referential context of application.

# CHAPTER ONE

# TRADITIONAL COUNSELLING

## Introduction

There are seven chapters in this book. This chapter discusses the concept of traditional counselling; the second chapter explores the theoretical framework of traditional counselling; the third chapter discusses the common problems apparent in the sphere of traditional counselling; the fourth chapter delineates forms of traditional counselling practised; the fifth chapter explains the psychology of traditional counselling; the sixth chapter outlines applied research in traditional counselling; and the seventh chapter presents a discourse on the mainstream modern counselling theories and their point of divergence with the traditional counselling theory. Chapter one highlights the concept of traditional counselling, its importance, and the providers of traditional counselling. The discourse in this book is informed by original research work on a case study, 'The nature and role of traditional forms of counselling in Zambia' which was conducted by the author, as well as on contextual knowledge, literature review, observations, and experiences, gained from the research work. The book is important and useful, because it enhances knowledge, understanding, and appreciation, about the theory and practice of traditional counselling from an African perspective.

Counselling, as casual but purposeful contact and interaction between people, has an origin as ancient as the genesis of humankind. It can be viewed from a dimensional context: on one hand are traditional forms of counselling practised from an Afrocentric perspective, and on the other, modern forms of counselling practised from a Eurocentric perspective. Between these two broad schools of counselling stem derivative approaches, such as psychosocial counselling, child counselling, couples counselling, career counselling, and AIDS counselling. Modern counselling evolved and changed rapidly during the 20th century, and contains within it a variety of different themes, emphases, practices, and orientations (McLeod 2003). The theoretical orientations espoused by different proponents arise from the plurality of modern counselling

practice, problem contextualization, and anticipated counselling process outcomes. There are several classifications of modern counselling based on different theoretical orientations, resulting in specialization, and focused approach, by the practitioner-counsellors. An elaboration of the various counselling models and orientations is outside the scope of this book. Much has been written about the different modern counselling models, clearly defining both the theory and practice of the various orientations, as well as the taxonomy of generic problems and their diagnosis, treatment, and management.

Counselling is, in many respects, an unusual area of study, in that it encompasses a set of strongly competing theoretical perspectives, a wide range of practical applications, and meaningful inputs from various social disciplines. The term 'counselling' is used to describe a variety different activities. Most people have different views on what counselling is, and the context of its application, hence the multiplicity of theoretical models. Some people believe that it is a means of giving good advice, teaching on morality, mentoring for initiation, and guidance on marriage and sociocultural issues. Sometimes it relates to information-giving only. All these views are correct. From a conventional perspective, counselling is a process that involves a special type of helping relationship between a counsellor (generic term referring to a person offering counselling) and a client (generic term referring to a person seeking counselling) that is purposively interactive and ameliorative. The primary aim of counselling is to help people with concerns to reflect on their changed situation, identify possible solutions, and develop action plans to resolve those presenting problems, so that they can continue living resourcefully for personal development and satisfaction.

Traditional counselling applies indigenous forms of helping people experiencing various problem situations, and those that wish to make a transitional commitment, such as initiation at puberty, or marriage, or are aggrieved through loss of a beloved one, due to physical illness, psychosomatic dysfunction, or cardiac failure, injury, or accident. Forms of traditional counselling refer to the various methods or approaches used by traditional counsellors during the process of their interaction with clients in a culturally acceptable environment, using appropriate interventions that are tailored to meet their needs, expectations, and aspirations. The commonly practised traditional counselling approaches or methods are: marriage counselling, pastoral counselling, adherence counselling, initiation counselling, family counselling, community counselling, and bereavement counselling. Depending on the scope of the problem, and its nature of representation, traditional counselling

approaches promote the active involvement of the family and community in problem identification, resolution, and management. The emphasis is on collectivism over individualism, and collaborative relationships between the individual client, his family, and the community. This collectivist orientation ensures that the desired behavioural and attitudinal change not only benefits the affected individual, couple, or family, but also the community as a whole. From an African perspective, this collectivist orientation builds stronger sociocultural bonds, promotes more cohesive avenues of problem resolution, and enhances desirable behaviour change for the common good of the society.

People in all societies, at all times, have experienced emotional or psychological distress and behavioural problems; and in each culture, there have been well-established indigenous ways of helping people to deal with these difficulties. Indigenous ways have existed for the whole of human creation, and they aptly connote traditional ways of doing things, based on traditional systems of knowledge and cultural practices. People in different cultures and societies globally have distinct ways of assisting those experiencing social, psychological, behavioural, emotional, familial, spiritual, and physical, problems. Traditional counselling is closely linked to indigenous ways of doing things which were based extensively on oral history, that is, traditional knowledge and social skills pertaining to some critical issues, customs, or practices, were handed down from one successive generation to another, orally. Oral history as a source and method has been central to the development of African historiography, and no element has served as a clearer signature of, and for, the traditional oral source, within the programmes of recovering the African past (Giles-Vernick 2006).

The words 'traditional' and 'indigenous' are used in the context of the original experience of the sacred, cultivated by the African people, and the concrete expression of that experience within the different ecological and socio-historical settings (Ejizu 2013). Being traditional does not mean static or unchangeable, but rather, in keeping with the original sense of the term, it means that the living experience of cultural customs and practices is handed down from one successive generation to another in perpetuity. These reflect the period, circumstance and cultural factors surrounding a particular generation or human society, which acts as a reference point. Tradition and culture are indigenous entities, they are dynamic, and in constant flux. Traditional counselling has always been part of the fabric of all human cultures and societies, present in the very midst of peoples and communities worldwide, from time immemorial. Like in the past, it takes place within the kinship system, family and community.

Traditional counselling is beset by cultural nuances: it takes place in the local environment, it is offered by the local people, it reflects a mirror of the society in which it is offered, and it has always been part of the human experience since ancient times. This analysis of traditional counselling has a global interpretation and application as well. Most people globally practice some forms of traditional counselling, based on their sociocultural context, and the nature of presenting problems. It is in the context of this understanding that it becomes imperative to promote and strengthen indigenous approaches of traditional counselling that are responsive to the social life and expectations of the local people.

## The Concept of Traditional Counselling

The concept of traditional counselling is rooted in traditional systems of knowledge and sociocultural values, customs and practices, and it promotes a collective approach to problem identification, resolution, and management. Traditional systems of knowledge deemed essential for each generation are passed on successively to the next generation by elderly people who do not only have the necessary wisdom and experience, but are also adorned with social competences and skills. The collective wisdom of Africans is that elderly people are generally regarded as a valuable resource in the community. They are the repositories of traditional knowledge, the embodiment of cultural competences, the experts in social skills, and the cherished models for emulation at the community level. This view is supported by Ampim (2003), who states that, "an elder is someone who is given the highest status in African culture, because she has lived a life of purpose, and there is nothing more respected than living a purposeful life […] she is a living model for the other groups in the society to emulate" (Ampim 2003, 2).

The sociocultural life of Africans is generally anchored on recognition of traditional norms and practices, ancestral worship, religious cults, and sexual-related taboos (Taylor 2006). These values are instrumental in shaping people's beliefs and attitudes. The conceptions of sexual-related taboos and ancestral worship translate into the collective belief systems inherent in traditional systems of knowledge, and cultural customs and practices. Traditional knowledge is applied through avenues such as tradition, initiation, rituals, marriage, social and religious ceremonies. These avenues are important, not only for sustainable social integration and the perpetuation of cultural identity, for the common good of the society and individual wellbeing, but also for the practice of traditional forms of counselling, at the various levels of contact.

# The Importance of Traditional Counselling

Importance is a broad concept that can be interpreted in many ways, and it integrates parameters, such as functional roles and contribution to the effectiveness of service delivery to needy people. From a practical context, is traditional counselling important and useful? The interpretive explanation of the importance of traditional counselling is twofold: firstly, the factor of whether or not traditional counselling produces the desired impact or satisfactory results; and secondly, the factor of the role of traditional counselling approaches. The factor of impact is driven by an understanding of how effective traditional counselling approaches are, in relation to counselling service provision, and their degree of utilization at the various levels of contact. Do traditional counselling approaches create a noticeable effect or demand at community level? This question of influence is cardinal to a determination of the interrelationships, linkages, and associations, of the various approaches of traditional counselling, and their effectiveness from a practical view. Effectiveness means doing the right thing and producing the desired demand and satisfactory results. Are traditional counselling approaches effective? In the absence of correlational evidence from a quantitative perspective, this question could forever remain unanswered. From a qualitative perspective however, it is plausible to argue that traditional counselling approaches create the desired demand, and produce satisfactory results, through their functional outcome role, and level of utilization at community level.

The factor of role refers to the function of a subject matter, or its part contribution to the whole phenomena under consideration. In the context of this understanding, the broad picture to be drawn about the functional outcome role of traditional counselling approaches is that, *inter alia*, they contribute to the acquisition of traditional systems of knowledge, practical skills, and social competences, related to cultural customs and practices; they contribute to sustainable interpersonal relationships through recognition of established family roles, and patterns of interaction and communication; and they enhance socio-behavioural change, harmonious co-existence, and good neighbourliness amongst members of the community. Further, they promote traditional values and norms for sustainable social integration and sound community life; they facilitate educational and informational processes at puberty and premarital stages, including other aspects of social life; and they enhance learning for transformation whereby traditional systems of knowledge are passed on from one successive generation to another in perpetuity. They act as a platform for the identification and resolution of human problems, as well

as guidance on sociocultural issues; and they contribute to improved social welfare and moral development of young people, including primary health care provision at community level.

Traditional counselling is readily available, easily accessible, practically affordable, and widely utilised, because it is offered within the local environment by the local people. In most African countries generally, and Zambia in particular, the utility of traditional counselling is likely to be higher than that of modern counselling, which relies on fewer professionally trained counsellors for service delivery. Modern counselling is a conventional innovation whose practice is not widespread, especially in rural communities. Traditional counsellors are part of the community in which traditional counselling thrives, they are many in number, and they provide wider coverage in both content and contact. This enhances the utility value and quality of counselling services offered to needy people. Traditional counselling is regarded as equally important in the context of its timely mentorship, and induction on pubertal and marital issues, and the promotion of fidelity in marriage and faithful-couple relationships.

Another aspect closely associated with importance is usefulness. The usefulness of traditional counselling hinges on many factors. The first factor relates to shaping the behaviour of young people. It is apparent that induction of children and initiation of adolescents play a pivotal role, and greatly contribute to the socialization process and the moral development of children. In most African cultures and societies, there is a systematic approach to initiate boys and girls, wherein they are taught the ways of adulthood, including the rules and taboos of the society, moral instruction and social responsibility, and sustained clarification of their life goals. This is in sharp contrast to Euro-American societies where, according to Ampim (2003), "the lack of fundamental guidance or transformation from a child to an adult in Western cultures, this leave-it-for-chance approach to adult development, is the root of most teenage and youth 'adult' confusion, chaos, and uncertainty" (Ampim 2003, 2). It is commonly acknowledged that much of the socialization of children involves the shaping of behaviours directed toward other people. Any avenue, approach, or method that is linked to the socialization process of young people is very relevant and useful in fostering the quality of social life.

The second factor relates to the forum for teaching and information exchange. The practice of traditional counselling provides a forum for teaching, mentoring and information exchange; and it promotes sustainable cultural norms that are of great value to clients. For instance, marriage is given pomp and splendor at the wedding ceremony, premarital counselling precedes the wedding ceremony, pastoral counselling anoints

the wedding, and post-marital counselling sustains the wedding, hence the marriage. These various levels of contact are performed by traditional marriage counsellors; and they are deemed important and useful by individuals, families and communities wherein they are applied, hence their perpetuation. The third factor relates to the observance of traditional customs and practices. Rituals, and the observance of traditional taboos, are an integral part of the African cultural life. Sexually-oriented prohibitions are promoted and perpetuated to enhance cultural identity. From a contemporary perspective, some traditional practices deemed contradictory to modern practices or religious doctrine, or that hinder educational prospects and the advancement of young people, are being shunned. For instance, early marriage, and accidental or unwanted pregnancy, thwart the future prospects for progression and advancement of young women.

Traditional counselling is offered within a culturally acceptable environment, using appropriate interventions that are tailored to meet people's needs, expectations and aspirations. Many people utilize traditional counselling services in their social life, not only in Africa, but also in many other continents worldwide. To a greater extent, traditional counselling is practically affordable, and widely used by many people, at various levels of contact. Accessibility and quality of service are instrumental in influencing the behaviour of people, and inducing demand for community-based social services. People can be more inclined to use a service if they perceive some utility value in it, including efficacy of the methods used, and the desired process outcomes, in terms of instantaneous problem-solving, decision making, affirmative social action, and restoration of normal functioning.

## Providers of Traditional Counselling

The art of traditional counselling is intergenerational. In most instances, it is offered by elderly people, and those socially appointed as leaders, at the community level, who apply counselling approaches that are embedded in African traditions and cultures. There are many providers or practitioners of traditional counselling, which include: traditional leaders (chiefs, village headmen, and other eminent people), religious leaders (clergymen/women with leadership roles in the church), traditional healers (diviners, herbalists, and spiritualists), elderly family members, and grandparents. These are collectively referred to as traditional counsellors in the context of traditional counselling practice.

Although not formally trained in the field of traditional counselling, a majority of traditional counsellors are experienced and knowledgeable people with varying social skills and competences, which they acquire mainly through apprenticeship and interaction with elderly family members, through their leadership roles in the church and community, through life experiences and practical exposure, through spiritual trance exposition in the case of traditional healers, and through formal induction and training in the case of religious leaders. The various informal educational processes embrace learning for transformation, acquisition of indigenous knowledge, and development of social skills and competences that are deemed adequate for the practice of traditional counselling.

## Conclusion

Traditional counselling focuses more on helping people with presenting concerns or sociocultural issues, so that they gain knowledge and practical skills. It is part of the African tradition and custom, and has been part of human experience since time immemorial. Traditional counselling is offered within a culturally acceptable environment by the local people, using appropriate strategies that are tailored to meet the clients' needs and aspirations. It not only plays a very important and useful role in enhancing the provision of effective and quality counselling services, but it also represents an integral component of social and human relations programmes offered to people at the community level. The next chapter presents the theoretical framework of traditional counselling.

# CHAPTER TWO

# THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## Introduction

This chapter discusses the theoretical framework of traditional counselling. The concept of traditional counselling involves a broad perspective that enhances learning for transformation and social integration of cultural values, customs and practices that are peculiar to each human society. Traditional counselling is often regarded as part of the formal interpersonal interaction and communication that is integral to community life. What is the theoretical framework of traditional counselling? What are the key elements in traditional counselling theory and practice? Based on the literature review (Ampim 2003, Colson 2006, Giddens and Sutton 2009, Janssen 2007, Jigau 2007, McLeod 2003, Repetto 2002, Taylor 2006), there are three key elements that inform the theoretical framework of traditional counselling from an African perspective: cultural context, collective belief system, and initiation rituals (Figure 1). The multicultural theory can adequately inform the theoretical framework of traditional counselling when an African perspective is integrated. These key elements are elaborated hereunder.

## Cultural Context

The term culture is novel and broad. It can mean different things to people at different times and in different circumstances. Culture refers to a general process of intellectual, spiritual, and aesthetic development; a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period, or a group; or the works and practices of intellectual and artistic activity (Storey 2009). It includes much more than belonging to a categorical group, and encompasses a society's shared values and beliefs such as individualism, collectivism, equality, freedom, peace, historical background, and evolution (Yali and Revenson 2004), as well as the arts and other intellectual achievements, customs, and civilization of a particular time or people (Giddens and Sutton 2009). These broad and inclusive descriptions

of culture suggest that there are variable factors which define a people's culture, which are learned, assimilated, and integrated, over time. Culture is complex, dynamic, and bears both overt and covert differences which are unique to each human society. The concept of culture has serious implications for traditional counselling theory and practice. Understanding the sociocultural context of a client's behaviour and belief system is an essential psychological ingredient for the accurate assessment, amelioration, and management of problem situations presented by clients.
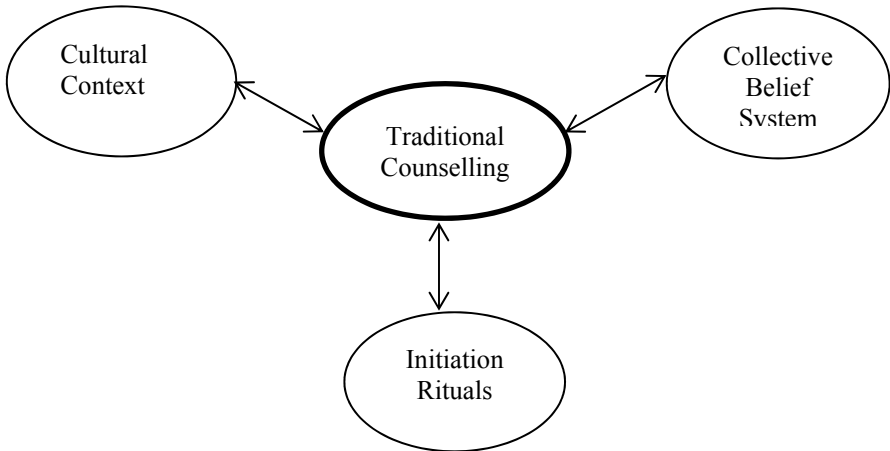


Figure 1: Theoretical framework of traditional counselling

   The African cultural life has been unique since time immemorial. The most notable features are the chieftaincy, village headship, tribal clanship, extended family systems, initiation rites, totems and rituals, ancestral worship, religious cults, witchcraft, and social and traditional ceremonies (Taylor 2006). In rural communities, large land areas are divided into chiefdoms under the command of Chiefs. In Zambia, with particular reference to the Nkomeshya chiefdom in Chongwe district for instance, the chiefdom comprises almost 150 villages that are supervised by village headmen (Chiboola and Luputa 2005). For administrative purposes, between 15 and 20 villages are demarcated to constitute a zone whose committee is chaired by an elected headman. The zone is a second tier in the administration hierarchy, just below the Chief's council. At village level, the village committee constitutes the third tier in the hierarchy. This administrative structure underscores the importance of not only the

management functions of villages and zones in a chiefdom, but also the levels at which traditional counselling is offered.

In rural communities of most African countries, people live in relatively small villages. They know each other very well, they share many things in common, and the behaviour of individuals is monitored and controlled by elderly and eminent people in each community. There is direct observation of what people do, and how they behave, and quite often, direct action is taken to deal with social deviance through scorn, censure or exclusion, or in extreme cases, court action. In dealing with an individual client, or group of clients, the traditional counsellor involves the family or community during the traditional counselling process. Advice and guidance is given to the family or members of the local community when young people are being initiated at puberty, or prepared for marriage, when people are in bereavement, and when people attend traditional, religious, ritual, and social ceremonies. Children are advised on many aspects of social norms and moral conduct, including education on acceptable behaviour, and collective responsibility in conformity with community life.

Most concerns or problem situations affecting an individual are initially dealt with at the family level. Depending on severity and complexity of the problem situation or social issue at hand, it may be referred to the village headman, prior to referral to either the village committee or the zone committee. When there is failure, or dissatisfaction with a problem resolution at the zone committee level, the matter can be referred to the Chief, who is the final authority. Her counsel is binding, and it cannot be disputed or challenged. These indigenous approaches to traditional counselling can be referred to as family counselling, and community counselling, respectively.

Activities such as initiation, ritual, marriage, social, and religious ceremonies are practised to symbolize the cultural heritage and traditional value systems. They are an avenue for sharing information on traditional knowledge, customs, and practices that are acknowledged as essential and worthy perpetuation for the common good of the society. Besides, they are intended to promote indigenous ways of knowing and doing things, as part of the African cultural heritage, expressed through ceremonies and other interpretive messages. The historical continuity of a culture endemic to a particular human society is fundamental to the interconnectedness of all things that define its traditional values, beliefs, customs and practices (Grayshield 2010). Society exists, and exerts credence, where people behave and interact with one another based on mutual recognition, acceptance, and respect, and culture plays a significant role in the sphere of

social life, as it is central to the development of any human society (Giddens and Sutton 2009). Traditional systems of knowledge and sociocultural norms underlie the basis of traditional counselling theory and practice.

The institution of marriage is an important cultural heritage in most African countries. Marriage is a legally recognized union between a man and woman, in which they are united sexually, cooperate economically, interact socially, and live together productively, as a unified entity. Marriage is a very important institution in almost all human societies worldwide; it has survived human existence as an instrument for social interaction, procreation and protection from extinction, and it can be a critical factor in achieving happiness throughout family life. The African traditional context of marriage is buttressed by the payment of a bride-price or dowry which forms a basis for the union and family obligations. The institution of marriage represents the behaviours, norms, expectations, and values, that are associated with legally, socially, and culturally-recognized marriages between a woman and a man. It bears a symbolic value and importance.

A successful marriage is not only measured on the basis of fundamental aspects of stability, longevity, and prosperity, but also on the number of children born. Children are the adornment of a home, an investment for the couple, and the lineage of the family. They constitute links in the ancestral chain for generations in perpetuity, as a lifeline for the family and clan, genealogically. For most people, getting married and bearing children are important transitional life events on their ladder to adulthood. Marriage counselling is offered to a couple intending to marry, or experiencing marital and other psychosocial problems; and it is commonly practised at community level in most African countries. Although most people wish to maintain nuclear family structures, the exigencies of retroviral disease, poverty, and unlimited numbers of children per family, have all contributed towards the extended family obligations. In many instances, orphaned children have to be supported and cared for by extended family members or grandparents. Orphan child-headed families are an emerging phenomenon, and are progressively moving toward institutionalization, not only in Zambia, but in most African countries. This poses sociocultural challenges that will be difficult to contain in the coming generations.

Religion is another important institution in the cultural life of not only the African people, but also others in almost all the continents worldwide. Religious gatherings are at the centre of human creation, and are strongly connected with personal identity formation and group belonging.

Religious history reveals that human beings have defined their existence in consort with, or relation to, some supernatural, omniscient and omnipotent beings in the celestial realms. In expressing this interdependence, most people resort to religious gatherings as a form of maintaining communication and communion with the heavens above. It is also a cultural expression. Religious leaders are representative 'shepherds of God', responsible for the caring for people on earth. In discharging this shepherding function, they play a dual role, namely, the ecumenical or spiritual function, which involves caring for people from a biblical context, and the pastoral counselling function which involves caring for people from a human relations context. The epicenter of these functions is mostly the church and community, and religious gatherings constitute a formidable social network that is perceived as desirable and relevant to peoples' social life.

Traditional herbal remedies constitute yet another symbol of cultural heritage in African culture and society. Traditional medicine plays an important role in the provision of primary health care. Traditional healers provide affordable and accessible primary health care that is culturally appropriate and traditionally convenient. For instance, most Africans, in both rural and urban communities, especially relatively poor people who cannot afford the cost of modern medicine and transport costs to sparsely located health facilities, generally use traditional healers for their primary health care needs. From an African perspective, the traditional healer is a psychiatrist, medical doctor, fortune-teller, diviner, social worker, and traditional counsellor, all rolled into one. Traditional healers are a valued category of people in the community, as they possess the cultural knowledge and social skills to make an impact on health promotion.

The implication of these observations is that traditional healers combine their practice of healing with adherence counselling through the provision of primary health care in both rural and urban communities. What seems to be central to their traditional healing practice is the determination of physical illness, and a ritualistic approach to resolving some of the problems presented to them, especially in the context of extrasensory phenomenal concerns and richness enhancement. Inadvertently, most people rely on traditional healers because their herbal treatments are easily accessible, readily available, and practically affordable. They are given in the context of a patient's culture, beliefs, and values, as well as within the confines of his expectations and aspirations. Traditional medicine is shrouded in ritualistic observance and practice. Traditional healers offer adherence counselling that focuses on advice and guidance related to taking the herbs, or actions contained within the

rituals. They have an obligation to inform, guide, and advise their patients on the many aspects that surround the herbal treatment, observance of rituals related to the herbal remedies, and sexual prohibitions related to traditional taboos and customs.

# Collective Belief System

The culture of people in any human society is partly determined by their belief and value systems which influence the pattern of their social behaviours and actions. Values and beliefs are an important component of people's lives as they are used to interpret, judge, and evaluate, external situations or events (Milkman and Wanberg 2007). Beliefs in bad luck, fate, or chance, are generally associated with failure to engage in constructive behaviours and depression in the face of chronic illness. The behaviour of people varies from one culture to another. Expressive social behaviour drives the actions of people through their lifespan, and behaviour is one of the primary currencies used by natural selection. The evolutionary history of natural selection is anchored on developmental issues through life, such as transition changes and adaptation. When behaviour changes are disconcerting, especially during pubescence and senescence, for instance, they affect attitudes toward the changes unfavourably. The reverse is true when the changes are deemed beneficial to the individual. This is the locus of the collective belief system: people believe in both the seemingly good and bad things that affect their social behaviour, communication patterns, interactions, and interpersonal relationships with others, and their environment. This is central to the expression of societal norms, values and practices.

Values represent the base upon which a person builds a satisfactory personal existence (age, geographical area, generation); they are crystallized through social models and personal experiences (cultural, professional, societal), and they represent the fundamental or universal paradigms, such as autonomy, equality, liberty, solidarity, freedom, justice, and fairness (Jigau 2007). Values are an enduring belief that a specific end-state or mode of conduct is preferable. There are two categories of values: terminal values refer to desirable end-states, or goals, such as wisdom, comfort, peace, and freedom; whereas instrumental values refer to the means by which the end-states are to be achieved, for instance through ambition, honesty, and competence (McLeod 2003). The values of people are a representation and reflection of their prior experiences during their developmental journeys through life. They are derived from socialization and culture, environmental influences, and

education, among many other factors. All these aspects contribute to the determination of how a person ought to act or react when confronted with problem situations. In the context of this understanding, it is plausible to infer that people's attitudes and feelings about their culture, what is good or bad, what is acceptable or not, what is preferable or not, and why people act the way they do, all lay a sound foundation for the collective belief and value system.

The belief and value system may be influenced by four factors: syncretism, totemism, universalism, and culturalism. Syncretism relates to a reconciliation, or fusion, of differing systems of belief, especially with partial success or heterogeneous result; totemism represents an emblem of a clan or family which is revered, such as its founder, ancestor or guardian; universalism refers to a common conception of the origin of the universe and people; and culturalism refers to traditional customs, norms and values enshrined in a particular society that defines its beliefs and practices (Nasry 2013). From an African perspective, the origin of the universe, and of their ancestors as a people, is a mystery the reality of which was revealed at its genesis, through spirit mediums. The revelation may have occurred near a river, rock, cave, mountain, tree, or any such other notable emblem. This yields the notion of totems and rituals, ancestral religion and customs, and special shrines which serve as places of intimate personal memory and repositories of traditional knowledge, although ritual practices are much more diverse and fluid. The mythical interpretation of the universe is an active part of everyday life and a vital social force. It not only supplies accounts of the people's origin, but also relates past precedents to current traditional beliefs, actions, and behaviours, which are conveyed to successive generations in perpetuity.

The totemic character is inherent, and a symbolic figure to all the individuals of a given clan. Totemic ritualism is influenced by the collective belief system that has evolved through a blending of various beliefs, values, and customs as a result of enlightenment, evangelism, socialization and globalization. For the vast majority of traditional African protagonists, it is the collective belief in, and reverence of, the ancestors, fear of spirits, totems and symbols, ritual sacrifice, initiation rituals, divination, and charms, as well as their interrelationships and interconnectedness to the enhancement of life, and the genealogical continuity which are fundamental issues of the traditional consciousness (Ejizu 2013). This observation permeates through modernity, and it is an expressed social behaviour of many traditionalists in most African countries. Besides, it is a cultural expression.

There are several thematic beliefs that underlie the value systems of most African cultures and societies. The most notable ones are: an acceptance that human action can influence natural forces; a reliance upon the mediation of the revered spirits of the dead, who possess new powers over the living and influence human lives and actions; the importance given to shrines and cult ceremonies; reliance on charms or herbal medicines to enhance power, and wealth, and provide safeguards; recognized categories of spiritual entities, and the nature of religious cults; and the belief that much misfortune is caused by human greed and malevolence (Colson 2006). The history of witchcraft, spirit possession, and experiences of extrasensory perception, is old and deep-rooted, and part of the African culture (Udelhoven 2008). Witchcraft is closely linked to magic and sorcery, and sorcery is a form of destructive magic.

The social interpretation of witchcraft is that evil and misfortune is embodied in the person of a witch. It involves covert actions by people to cause misfortune. The interplay is between one person and the other, usually arising from envy, jealousy, and resentment, and is motivated by the desire for inheritance, revenge, malice, or appropriation of magical power, or for economic gain, enrichment, and prosperity. Magic is the umbrella term and is categorized, according to whether its application is for offensive, defensive, divination, or communication purposes, given that witchcraft is derived from the same empowering herbal medicines which can be used for personal protection, such as from bewitchment, for public common good, such as divination and traditional herbal treatments, and for evil, such as placating bad luck, inducing physical illness or causing mysterious death.

When magic is applied for offensive purposes it assumes the label of witchcraft. Traditional healers use magic in a broad context. For instance, diviners apply divination to discover the cause of sudden illness or death, or perceived bad luck; herbalists apply herbal medicines to treat illness or placate the spirit of the deceased, or induce good luck; spiritualists claim a special link to the underworld or dead ancestors as a source of their magical power to help people experiencing extrasensory phenomenal problems; and faith healers apply biblical inscription and prayer to ward off demon possession or enduring physical illness. Some traditional healers apply exorcism to cleanse evil spirits or demons at the individual or family level. Most people are motivated to contact traditional healers because of their perceived magical power and social influence.

The contextualization of this collective belief in witchcraft is centred on the assumptions that magic is good, for instance the traditional healer who cures physical illness or induces good luck, but also bad, for instance