



**AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY AS A SOURCE OF WISDOM AND STRENGTH IN
RURAL NDWEDWE**

The work is submitted in fulfilment with the requirements for the Master's Degree in
Child and Youth Care in the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Durban University of
Technology

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DECLARATION

I, Nokwanda Nozipho Mthethwa, declare that this dissertation originates from my work, except where otherwise referenced. All the sources used or quoted have been cited and acknowledged. This dissertation has not been previously submitted to any tertiary education institution.

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ABSTRACT

There has been a growing emphasis on deepening the understanding of African spirituality and its strong potential to strengthen and support the lives of rural families and communities. Rural communities face the phenomenon of grandmother-headed and child-headed households. These families are reported to encounter adversities such as poverty, unemployment, financial constraints, teenage pregnancy, and other challenges that harm their livelihoods, preventing them from thriving and sustaining themselves. Several scholars have written about African spirituality, exploring the diverse and complex belief systems and practices that have been integral to the cultural heritage of various African societies and looking at how it assists the helping professions to develop safe environments for children and families. Little however has been written about how rural families and communities use African spirituality, thereby promoting the need for this study. Furthermore, African spirituality appears to be overlooked as a means of promoting overall well-being and support, which can be employed to strengthen and guide family and community life in rural communities. This study aimed to contribute to the scholarly work on African spirituality. A qualitative research approach was used in this study and its primary aim was to understand how African spiritual beliefs and practices can be used to strengthen family and community life in rural Ndwedwe.

Purposive sampling was used to select the sample, twelve family members and fifteen traditional leaders and community elders made up the final sample due to data saturation. An interview guide and a focus group guide were used to collect data during semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions conducted with these participants. The data reflected the following major themes: (i) understanding African spirituality, (ii) spiritual beliefs and practices that exist within families (iii) healing methodologies, and (iv) spiritual activities that rural families can use.

The major findings, namely, Ubuntu, collective existence within the community, communal prayers and Inhlambuluko (healing the lineage through truth and reconciliation) emerged in this study. Consequently, the community and families in Ndwedwe adopted a collaborative approach to their daily lives and spirituality. Families and the community believed in communal living and collective existence. Therefore,

healing methodologies and prayers were mostly intended to preserve and maintain the individual and, most importantly, the collective.

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“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” – Philippians 4:13

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the Ndwedwe families and the community, as well as to all rural families and communities. Your resilience in the face of adversity is admirable. I hope the study leads to the adoption of more healing methodologies and community strategies to strengthen and support you all, as well as the emergence of new initiatives such as the DUT/NRF Project.

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CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Rural communities are characterised by a growing number of grandmother-headed households and child-headed households, which are vulnerable due to a multitude of adversities, namely, poverty, unemployment, financial constraints, teenage pregnancy and drug abuse (Bhengu 2021: 3; Harris *et al.* 2021: 167; Maushe and Magumbate 2015: 33). Consequently, rural families are in dire need of intervention and support. However, because of their geographical marginalisation, limited resources exist to confront these challenges in rural communities. As a result, they solely rely on African spirituality as a source of strength and support (Masondo 2014: 2).

This study focused on understanding the value of African spirituality in strengthening and supporting family and community life. African spirituality refers to the beliefs and practices that shape the daily lives of African families (Ikeke, Darah and Brume 2022: 29). According to research by Knoetze (2019: 1) this is characterised by the strong connection to the environment, belief in mystical creatures, creation myths, and devotion to cultural rituals and traditions. African spirituality has a significant impact on the worldviews and behaviours of rural families in particular, fostering a deep connection between the visible and invisible realms (Ephirim-Donkor 2021: 122; Lebaka 2018: 22). This spiritual connection is passed down through generations, and the ancestors are seen as guiding influences within a family, therefore, making it a significant resource during times of adversity (Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 407).

African spirituality in this study refers to the belief systems, rituals and healing methodologies that rural families and the larger community adopt during times of crisis to heal and strengthen their well-being (Magezi and Magezi 2017: 26). In Africa, families have a strong conviction in healing through their cultural rituals and practices because they are deeply embedded in their spiritual beliefs and traditional healing methods (Lebeka 2018: 35). A paper written by Singh and Bhagwan (2021: 404) reflected that African spirituality and a traditional way of life are closely linked to the practice of healing.

In South Africa, healing mostly happens when individuals experience mental or physical discomfort, and rural families embrace traditional healing methods that are acknowledged by their clan (Mshayisa, Bhagwan and Dewan 2024: 5). According to Isabirye (2020: 47) these

methods are observed and used by the whole family to protect and preserve family life and community life. Therefore, this shows that African spirituality is communal rather than individualistic and can be used to support and strengthen rural families and communities (Bhagwan 2022: 155). In many parts of KwaZulu-Natal, African spirituality is widely acknowledged and entrenched in the daily life of families and communities, as an effective healing practice methodology. Furthermore, it is also used to strengthen family and community life (Zuma *et al.* 2016: 2).

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

According to Asante and Mazama (2009: 13), African spirituality has influenced the lives and beliefs of many individuals, throughout the continent, as a powerful and important force for decades. This spiritual tradition is based on a strong respect for nature, a link to the ancestral realm, and a deep reverence for the Divine (Mbiti 2015: 16; Marumo and Chakale 2018: 11697). Research has shown that this spirituality has been a source of wisdom and strength, enabling people and communities to face daily challenges with grace and resiliency (Masango 2006: 930; Brown 2021: 44). Additionally, traditional African beliefs continue to have a great deal of influence, especially in the interior of Sub-Saharan Africa, despite Islam and Christianity being the two most popular religions on the continent (Mbiti 2015: 11).

African spirituality is distinguished by its multifaceted perspective on the human experience. Communal practices and rituals are vital in expressing spiritual awareness and understanding one's place in the universe. The African worldview acknowledges the interconnection of all things, with the physical and spiritual worlds coexisting in a delicate balance (Bhagwan 2022: 48; Mbiti 2015: 14; Marumo and Chakale 2018: 11700).

Research by Mashabela (2024: 9022) and Mshayisa, Bhagwan and Dewan (2024: 8) established the importance of African spirituality in rural communities, where no formal social welfare institutions exist, it is firmly embedded within their life as it provides a bedrock on which rural families and communities offer and receive support, assistance, and encouragement from one another. African spirituality is generally largely communal. This is captured in the sentiments of John Mbiti, who stated, "I am because we are; and because we are, therefore, I am" Mbiti (1969: 108). The notion that one's awareness of oneself results from obligations, privileges, and experiences with others is reflected in this quotation. African traditions and

beliefs therefore, amongst other things, play the role that social welfare institutions play in the West (Thabede 2014: 237).

Most traditional African religions place a high value, on respecting both the past and present generations of elders (Knoetze 2019: 2; Mayer and Walach 2018: 171). People frequently engage in various activities, such as prayer, to keep a spiritual connection with their ancestors. Some cultures may have a spiritual leader with a variety of duties. For example, in the Zulu tradition, there are special mediators known as "sangomas/ izinyanga" (traditional healers) who are in charge of both medical and spiritual healing as well as future planning (Mafuta and Kaunda 2021: 122; Slater 2019: 15).

Schoeman (2017: 55), Grillo Van Klinken and Ndzovu (2019: 160) wrote that those who identify with traditional African religions constitute 11.35% of the population residing in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal. The remainder of the population was made up of Muslims (2%), Hindus (1%), and Jews (0.2%). About 0.2% of the population declared themselves atheists or agnostics, while 5.5% said they believed in "nothing in particular" and 1.6% were unsure. Currently, many South Africans identify as Christians (84.2%). Despite this, many individuals however still practice elements of African spirituality. A study by Zuma *et al.* (2016: 2) identified that about 70% of the population in South Africa primarily relies on traditional medicine. This understanding demonstrates that African spirituality is relevant within many African societies. According to research, an increasing number of Black Americans in the United States of America are turning away from institutionalised religion, and many are now embracing spirituality and African traditions (Freenly *et al.* 2021: 209). This return to traditional roots creates the opportunity to revive traditional practices to sustain family and community life. African culture, education, social life, politics, and economy have all been influenced by African religion and spirituality (Yan *et al.* 2019: 230; Marumo and Chakale 2018: 11697).

African Americans' identities have also been significantly shaped by spirituality, which permeates many facets of their daily life (Freenly *et al.* 2021: 209). African American spirituality has its roots in African religious traditions and culture, which is predicated on the notion that people are born as spiritual beings. Hence, religion and spirituality are integrated with their identity (Miellis 2019: 403; Yan *et al.* 2019: 230).

Research by Ndemanu (2018: 70) and Munyai (2016: 106) has shown that in Sub-Saharan Africa, the people continue to practice traditional African beliefs and practices, along with their

strong devotion to Christianity and Islam. In these African countries, for example, half or more of the population believes that offerings to ancestors or spirits protect them from harm. Hence, they continue to adopt African spiritual beliefs and practices to strengthen individual and family well-being (Thema 2006: 30). Research has shown that around one-quarter or more of the population in eleven countries believe in the protective power of juju (charms or amulets), shrines, and other sacred things. Senegal for example has the highest level of belief in the power of such objects (75%), while Rwanda has the lowest (5%) (Lugo and Cooperman 2010: 33).

In South African rural areas, the continued influence of traditional African religion is evident in many aspects of daily life (Magesa 2014: 46). For example, a study conducted in Mpumalanga by Ngobe, Semanya and Sodi (2021: 884) found that more than three-in-ten people say they sometimes consult traditional healers when someone in their household is sick. It is estimated that over half of South Africa's rural population consult traditional healers (Ndlovu 2016: 22). The use of African spirituality may be motivated by financial constraints, a lack of alternative medical care options, religious beliefs about the efficacy of this practice, and other factors (Theron and Theron 2013: 391).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

African spirituality has rarely been acknowledged as a source of strength and healing due to the historical shift from African spirituality to a more Westernised culture. Consequently, indigenous knowledge worldviews, African spirituality, and African worldviews have been disregarded at the government and policy-making levels, which have led to policies and initiatives that lack a deeper understanding of the African worldview. Moreover, Western life has become more pervasive, leading to substance use, criminal behaviour, teenage pregnancy and other social ills which have eroded family and community life in poverty-stricken areas. Families living in rural communities who encounter these challenges can benefit from African spiritual beliefs and practices and derive support and strength from their beliefs and practices (Slater 2019: 2; Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 405; Miellis 2018: 403).

Rural living is often characterized by population density, the number of people who reside in a particular area by geographic isolation, or the degree to which a place's geography isolates people (Bright 2020: 5). Rural areas in South Africa have been experiencing economic and social decay over the past decades due to urban migration which in turn has reduced the

provision of services, facilities and employment opportunities in rural areas. This has also contributed to the increasing rate of poverty in rural communities (Li, Westlund and Liu 2019: 135). Furthermore, lack of access to public transportation, human services and medical professionals are some of the issues that are prevalent in rural communities (Gessert *et al.* 2015: 14). Without social services, social ills become more pervasive, which makes this study all the more important.

Individuals and families in rural communities become vulnerable to poverty and psychological issues because they lack safety nets (Makhalima 2020: 406; Lebaka 2019: 66 and Nzewi 2012: 118). This study therefore sought to explore the role of African spirituality as a source of strength, wisdom and resilience for rural low-income families. There is a need to establish the role of African spirituality in these families because of the number of adversities linked to their socioeconomic status that consequently erode family and community well-being.

Studies conducted by Mafuta and Kaunda (2021: 122) and Morakeng and Lebaka (2020: 160) have pointed out that rural communities experience a magnitude of physical and psycho-social issues that impact low-income families, more than any other community which requires urgent intervention by all stakeholders. There is therefore a need to conduct research that explores the role of African spirituality in enabling families' adjustment to traumatic experiences and in strengthening and preserving family life. Additionally, at the policy level, there is a need for the government in South Africa to implement policies, intervene and protect low-income families, in addition to encouraging collaboration among the traditional leaders, and other stakeholders to make the world a better place for families living in rural communities (Schoeman 2017: 65).

According to Yan *et al.* (2019: 400) majority of individuals and families in rural communities often experience mental health challenges such as anxiety, depression, guilt and shame, trauma, low self-esteem, self-harm, and suicidal thoughts which all can be dealt with through positive spiritual beliefs and practices. Spirituality is associated with good mental health (Gouk 2017: 60; Moyo 2023: 220).

Child and youth care is an emerging field. Empirical work related to African spirituality in social sciences, particularly within the child and youth care context is also sparse, thereby highlighting the value of this study. However, there have been some broader writings on the topic. Some of these writings include a study conducted by Mbiti (1990: 160) on African religions and philosophy which focused almost exclusively on traditional concepts and practices in those

societies. An article by Bhagwan (2017: 64) focused on the sacredness of African spirituality and the relation it has to social work practice.

There are also a few studies undertaken related to African spirituality. These include a study by Knoetze (2019: 2) which focused on the African family and the influence of African spirituality on family and a study conducted by Singh and Bhagwan (2020: 15) which focused on the beliefs and practices underpinning African spirituality, that can assist professions like social work, psychology and child and youth care during their intervention with individuals and families. These two studies however have shared minimal light with the literature on African spirituality. There has been no prior research that has looked at how African spirituality can strengthen family and community well-being. Furthermore, there has not been a research study where anyone inquired from families, community elders and African traditional leaders residing in Ndwedwe as to the specific African spiritual beliefs and practices that can enhance family and community well-being. This study will fill this research gap.

1.4 AIM AND OBJECTIVES

1.4.1 Aim

To understand how African spiritual beliefs and practices can be used to strengthen family and community life in rural Ndwedwe.

1.4.2 Objectives

- To inquire about the African religious and spiritual beliefs and practices of families living in Ndwedwe.
- To understand how these beliefs and practices act as a source of strength and support during adversities.
- To explore how traditional leaders support families who are experiencing challenges in the community.
- To understand what spiritually based activities can be implemented to reconstruct the Ndwedwe community's living space.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are the African religious and spiritual beliefs and practices of families living in Ndwedwe?

- How do these beliefs and practices act as a source of strength and support during adversities?
- How do traditional leaders support families who are experiencing challenges in the community?
- What spiritually based activities can be implemented to reconstruct the Ndwedwe community's living space?

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In the interest of providing the best possible support, it is fundamental to understand the needs and experiences of rural families and communities. Rural communities are confronted with a multitude of social issues such as teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, substance use and the phenomenon of grandmother-headed households and child-headed households where children and grandmothers have little support (Nkosi 2020: 95; Bhengu 2021: 3; Radebe 2022: 51; Ntuli, Sebola and Madiba 2020: 259). This consequently contributes to the increasing rate of poverty in rural communities and an increase in the psychosocial challenges faced by families in these communities. There is often inadequate social service infrastructure to deal with these challenges in rural communities (Makhalima 2022: 406; Ward, Makusho and Bray 2015: 72).

African cultures have long held a various of spiritual practices and beliefs. These practices and beliefs are usually deeply rooted in a profound reverence for the divine, the ancestral realm, and the natural world (Bhagwan 2017: 64; Kanu 2022: 125; Marumo and Chakale 2018: 11695). This study focuses on how rural families and communities may navigate through adversities with a sense of purpose, connection, and hope using these practices and beliefs (Cadwell and Senter 2012: 441). The importance of African spirituality in rural communities stems from its ability to provide an integrated approach to health and wellness, one that recognises the inextricable links between the physical, mental, and spiritual elements of the human experience (Masango 2006: 935; Mbiti 2015: 18; Mdletshe 2023: 95). As such, African spiritual beliefs and practices can provide strength, healing and support to families experiencing challenges and can cultivate wisdom and healthy relationships between both family and community members (Bhagwan 2017: 67).

The current study explores how African spirituality is embraced in the rural community of Ndwedwe to strengthen their individual, family and community well-being. The study may also

help the South African government in focusing more on the value of African spiritual practices and beliefs, consequently providing support to traditional religious leaders, allowing them to better serve majority families in rural communities (Steyn 2003: 67; Mbiti 2015: 90).

Although there are many writings on African spirituality in South Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa by researchers such as Mbiti (2015: 90); Bhagwan (2017: 64); Ephirim-Donkor (2021: 2); Masango (2006: 939); Mazama (2006: 218); Marumo and Chakale (2018: 11695) etc. The current study aims to contribute to the growing body of research on African spirituality, particularly in rural areas of South Africa, to provide greater support for rural families and to draw attention to the various healing strategies that are embedded within their African spiritual beliefs and practices (Mdletshe 2023: 95; Thwala and Edwards 2021: 240). Given that African spirituality has been largely overlooked as an effective healing and intervention method, particularly for families within rural settings makes sense that this study is valuable (Masango 2006: 930). The emphasis on challenges faced by rural communities could contribute to understanding the application of African spirituality in this context.

1.7 RURAL COMMUNITY CONTEXT

A rural community is a geographical area that is located outside of cities and towns. It has many general characteristics, namely, a small population size, a generally low population density, and limited choices when it comes to shopping, medical services, and so on. The rural population is often dependent on agricultural and pastoral practices and has fewer community infrastructure systems than urban settlements (Mabizela and Matsiliza 2020: 9; Cromartie 2008: 26).

Rural communities are also sometimes referred to as "villages." A village community is defined as a group of people who live within a small geographic area and have a similar way of life (Zahnd, Bell, and Larson 2022: 520). People who live in a physical community with common interests, values, and a common way of satisfying them can also be referred to as a village (Bennett et al. 2019: 1985; Wilkinson 2023: 166).

An estimated 3.4 billion people, or around 45% of the world's population, reside in the rural areas of developing countries. For their livelihood and sustenance, the majority rely on small, family farms. In addition to being the producers of food that sustains their countries, rural areas account for 80% of the world's extreme poverty among women, children, and men (Bollman et al. 2022: 75; McManus and Pritchard 2017: 183).

In Africa, there are more than 1.216 billion people, and 60% of them live in rural areas (Alobo Loison 2015: 220). Numerous studies show that people living in low-resource rural communities have unique challenges that differ noticeably from those faced by their urban counterparts in terms of shape and nature (Moseley and Battersby 2020: 149; Bridgman and Von Fintel 2022: 44).

Due to their geographic location, individuals in rural areas endure particular difficulties and frequently have worse health than those who live in cities (Bourke and Lockie 2018: 53; Kilkkinen et al. 2017: 114). Research indicates that compared to persons living in major cities, residents of rural and isolated locations have greater rates of hospital admissions, fatalities, injuries, and lower access to and usage of primary health care services (McManus and Pritchard 2017: 183).

Research has shown that in Ghana, adults living in rural and isolated areas report higher stress levels and less access to social, medical, and educational resources than their counterparts in urban areas (Nanor, Paku-Boansi and Adarkwa 2021: 123). A research study by Opare (2016: 50) asserted that individuals living in these communities are also more likely to be impoverished, less productive, and susceptible to illnesses. This has severe negative effects on their mental health and economic output since it limits their ability to strive for success and adjust to significant traumas, changes, and adversities (Atinga, Agyepong and Esena 2018: 27).

In South Africa, the rural population attained a value of 19.3 million people in 2021. In contrast to the year before, it had a 0.7% decrease in 2021. There was a 0.4% decline in the rural population from 2018 to 2021. During the years 2018 and 2021, South Africa's rural population was highest in 2019 at 19.4 million and decreased in 2021 to 19.3 million people (Visagie and Turok 2021: 50; Mdiya and Mdoda 2021: 25).

Research has shown that women and children make up the majority of the population in rural areas. Research has further illustrated that the majority of this population lives in grandmother-headed and child-headed households. This implies that the burden of poverty and illness falls primarily on women and children (Kapur 2019: 18; Boserup 2015: 45). Rural communities therefore have the most difficult conditions, as it is where poverty and illness are most prevalent (Mdiya and Mdoda 2021: 60).

1.8 DEFINITIONS OF CONCEPTS

1.8.1 African spirituality

African spirituality refers to a set of traditional African beliefs and practices, including different ethnic traditions (Kanu 2022: 125). These practices, which are usually oral rather than written down, involve the use of magic and traditional African medicine, the belief in spirits, honouring ancestors, and a variety of higher and lower Gods, sometimes including a supreme creator (Magesa 2014: 101; Ephirim-Donkor 2021: 125).

1.8.2 Wisdom (African spirituality)

Wisdom encourages living in harmony with spiritual forces and the natural world, as well as taking responsibility for the collective and future generations. These principles represent an awareness of one's role in the cosmos and in the community (Boesak 2006: 175; Ngara 2007: 150). African spirituality is based on a profound respect for ancestral wisdom passed down through generations (Masango 2006: 930).

1.8.3 Strength

According to Biggs et al. (2024: 271), strength includes many aspects of life, namely, people, ideas, traditions, values etc. Strength is one of the qualities that allow individuals to overcome adversity. This could be difficult life circumstances, something physical or mental, as different situations require different types of strength. Regardless, strength allows people to persist when faced with a challenging situation (Cadwell and Senter 2012: 441).

1.8.4 Family life

Chambers and Gracia (2021: 10) are of the view that family life is defined as the common experiences, culture, traditions, exchanges of important values, and interactions between individuals who are defined by their ancestry and blood relationships. Family life is about the whole family, not just one individual, and embraces a sense of shared commitment. Dermott and Fowler (2020: 83) further stated that family is one of the most important pillars of society. Moreover, the family can be distinguished as an agent of socialisation as well as a source of guidance, support, and a sense of belonging.

1.8.5 Community life

According to Health (2012: 12) community life refers to the collective experiences, relationships, and exchanges that people have when they are part of a certain community or group. Day (2006: 22) added that community life includes the social, cultural, economic, and recreational elements of people coming together to create a linked and cohesive society.

1.8.6 Ubuntu

Chaplin (2006) stated that Ubuntu is an African concept with a variety of rough translations, including humanity towards others. "I am because you are" underpins the philosophy of Ubuntu. The Zulu expression "umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu" simply means a person is a person through other people. Bhengu (2010: 10) also asserted that Ubuntu is based on humanism African philosophy, in which the concept of community is one of the foundations of society. Ubuntu is the concept of common humanity, kindness, a sense of community or oneness, and humankind (Mucina 2019: 137).

1.8.7 Resilience

Cadwell and Senter (2012: 441) further stated that it includes behaviours, attitudes, and actions that everyone may acquire and develop. Some individuals may be born with resilience, while others may need to lean on something to develop it.

1.8.8 Rituals

Asante and Mazama (2009: 13) defined rituals as a set of diverse actions, gestures, and expressions performed in a precise order and according to established norms. These actions are frequently accompanied by the use of certain objects. According to Thwala and Edwards (2021: 239), while rituals are typically associated with religious activities, they can also be linked to other traditions or cultures within a community, as well as with ceremonies or other formal occasions. Every community has various rituals, each with its own set of causes and meanings for every action (Asante and Mazama 2009: 13).

1.8.9 Traditions

According to Peters (2021: 23), traditions are a set of beliefs or behaviours (folk customs) that have been passed down within a community or group of people with historical roots. They might have a symbolic or particular meaning. Mdletshe (2023: 95) also asserted that traditions can be a part of folklore and cultural expressions. Classic examples include holidays and outfits that

are both impractical and socially significant, but the concept has also been extended to social conventions and behaviours like greetings. Traditions also refer to a way of life that members of a certain community or group have long adhered to (Thwala and Edwards 2021: 239).

1.8.10 African music

In African culture, music serves a practical purpose and as a means of communication. Songs are part of ceremonies related to healing, marriage, birth and rites of passage. In many African societies, music is frequently used as a healing tool, to ward off evil spirits, and as a way of paying respect to the good spirits, the deceased and ancestors (Belani *et al.* 2022: 4; Morakeng and Lebaka 2020: 63).

1.8.11 African dance

Nkosi (2019: 4) has described African dance as an integral part of African culture and healing. African dance conveys communication through symbolic movements and traditional attire. Mchunu (2020: 51) is of the view that dance routines can range from simple to complex, incorporating movements like fast rotation, body ripples, contractions, and releases. Through African dance, people can express their emotions, sorrows and joy. It is common for bystanders to be invited to participate (Lombo 2017: 150).

1.9 RELEVANCE OF AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY IN SOUTH AFRICAN RURAL CONTEXT

In the South African context, prior research has focused more on how African spirituality is used to combat illness and how it is used to support helping professionals working with children and families (Bhagwan 2017: 64; Mabvurira 2016: 20; Arrey *et al.* 2016: 12; Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 403). This study aims to look at how African spirituality and its beliefs and practices can be used to provide strength, healing and comfort to families faced with adversities, in rural communities. South Africa has an estimated 1.5 million grandmother-headed households and 44,000 children living in child-headed households, with a majority of these households being in rural communities. They are faced with the abrupt increase in poverty and many other challenges and there is a pattern of a lack of service delivery in these communities (Nkosi 2020: 95; Hall and Budlender 2016: 33). As such, families depend on African spirituality for intervention (Makhalima 2020: 406; Cadwell and Senter 2012: 441).

African spirituality is widely recognised for passing down wisdom and knowledge that can help people develop, sustain themselves and provide them with holistic healing. It further impacts

family and community life (Bhagwan 2017: 64; Mbiti 2015: 18; Mdletshe 2022: 95). According to Masango (2006: 935), this notion is further supported by African peoples' deep respect for their ancestors. Research has also shown that African spirituality is far more accessible to rural families and is commonly recognised in rural communities, making it a valuable source of strength in these spaces (Knoetze 2019: 2; Ohajunwa 2021: 14).

African spirituality also helps rural families and communities develop a sense of Ubuntu, which promotes community interconnectedness (Ohajunwa 2021: 14). According to research by Knoetze (2019: 2) African spirituality is also accepted and respected in the majority of African communities. It, therefore, has become necessary for this practice to be acknowledged as a significant intervention and healing mechanism considering the importance it plays to disadvantaged rural families (Marumo and Chakale 2018: 11700).

The absence of resources for intervention and a lack of service delivery in rural communities demands the continued use of African spirituality, its beliefs, practices, and values to promote family and community well-being in rural areas (Bilolo 2022: 276; Hlalele 2012: 111; Knoetze 2019: 8). Additionally, African spirituality should be emphasised as the key focus area when providing social services and support, particularly for families in rural areas (Bhagwan 2017: 67; Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 406).

1.10 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A theoretical framework is a structure that provides support for the hypothesis of a study. The theoretical framework incorporates not only the theory but also a narrative explanation of how the researcher applies the theory and its underlying assumptions to investigate the research problem. This study used Afrocentricity as its theoretical framework. The concept of "Afrocentricity" was developed by Molefi Kete Asante (1987). He first introduced the term in 1980, in his book "Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change" (Thabede 2008: 15).

Afrocentricity is defined as "literally, placing African ideas at the centre of any analysis that involves African culture and behaviour" (Asante 1987:6). Afrocentricity is interested in identifying the African as the central figure in every situation. Asante (2020: 147) stated that the terms "Afrocentric," "Africentric," and "African-centred" refer to the same quality of thought and behaviour that is based on the cultural image and interests of African people and places the people's history, culture, and customs at the centre of analyses.

This framework referred to the notion that Africans view the world, people, and life from their African perspective as opposed to non-Africans, or from the perspective of other Africans who feel segregated from their African identity (Mazama 2002: 387; Thabede 2008: 24; Chawane 2016: 78). Afrocentricity's explanatory approach includes African dance, music, rituals, mythology, literature, and oral histories. Therefore, the Afrocentric framework has incorporated elements of African spirituality as necessary components of African worldviews (Thabede 2008: 62; Nhamo 2022: 31).

Mazama (2002: 218) regarded spirituality and other intuitive methods of accumulating knowledge and emotional responses, used in the paradigm as a complement to rationality, and intimate experience with these cultural and spiritual objects that inform Afrocentric thinking. According to Mazama (2002: 218), this framework intended to modify the conceptual status of Africans from objects that are acted upon to subjects who are agents of that act.

In the current study, Afrocentricity plays a significant role in re-establishing the process by which Africans arrive at spirituality, healing and strength. Through an Afrocentric approach, African families employ African spirituality as a healing tool and as an effective intervention that can be used to strengthen their family and community life (Asante 2020: 147). When using traditional beliefs, practices, values, African music and dance, African families form a mechanism that helps them thrive and achieve resilience to face adversity (Chawane 2016: 80).

Afrocentricity determines African culture, beliefs, and unity of being. These aspects define the way of life for Africans. These values are also found in African families who practise African spirituality. Afrocentricity and African spirituality are closely linked (Mazama 2002: 387; Mazama 2002: 218). The relevance of Afrocentricity made it suitable for this theory to guide the current study. Afrocentricity helps African families remain rooted in their beliefs, culture and way of life. African spirituality is a pathway to ensure that this is achieved (Nhamo 2022: 102).

1.11 OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This study employed a qualitative research approach, with an exploratory study design. According to Brannen (2017: 3) and Arifin (2018:30) qualitative research is a naturalistic inquiry that seeks an in-depth understanding of the social phenomena in their natural setting. It focuses on the "why" rather than the "what" of social phenomena and is based on humans' firsthand experiences as meaning-making agents in their daily lives (Allan and Skinner 2020: 110; Cassell and Bishop 2019: 195). In addition, at its core, qualitative research asks open-ended

questions with responses that cannot be simply quantified, such as "how" and "why." The research questions are open-ended (Hammersley 2012: 144; Tenney, Brannan and Brannan 2017: 14).

The researcher identified the exploratory study design as the most appropriate design for this study given that it aims to explore how African spiritual beliefs and practices can be used to strengthen family and community life in rural Ndwedwe (Nickerson 2022: 80; Pulla and Carter 2018: 9). The lack of literature, on African spirituality that can serve as a source of strength and healing for rural families in South Africa, motivated the use of this design.

The study initially began with a sample of twelve family members and twelve traditional leaders and community elders. The researcher eventually recruited a total of twenty-seven participants, this included twelve family members and fifteen traditional leaders and community elders. The study sample was drawn using the purposive sampling method. Acharya *et al.* (2013: 330) identified that this technique is a qualitative research technique for selecting a specified group of individuals or units for study. Participants are selected "on purpose," not at random. It is sometimes called judgmental sampling or selective sampling (Belina 2022: 5). This technique was used to enable the researcher to gather in-depth views regarding African spirituality from all selected participants.

The interviews were done in a semi-structured format. Adams (2015: 492) stated that this method can be defined as a qualitative research method that combines a predetermined set of open questions with the option for the researcher to examine further particular themes or responses. This interview technique allowed participants to elaborate and give more concise, in-depth answers, which the researcher could further probe for richer data (White and Drew 2017: 12).

1.12 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION

The proposed structure of the dissertation is reflected in Table 1.12:1 which follows:

Table 1.12:1 Structure of the dissertation

CHAPTERS	DESCRIPTION
Chapter one: Overview of the study	The context and background of the study are addressed. The research

	problem, aim, and objectives are also presented.
Chapter two: Literature review	An overview of the literature on the topic is provided.
Chapter three: Research Methodology	This chapter discusses the research design, the population, the sample, the data collection process, rigour and trustworthiness, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study.
Chapter four: Analysis and discussion of findings	The findings of the data collection and analysis are presented in this chapter.
Chapter five: Summary of findings and recommendations	The final chapter includes the major findings, conclusions drawn, findings related to the literature review, and recommendations for application and potential future studies.

1.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter provided an overview of the present study, from the background to the problem statement, following which the researcher discussed the significance of the study. The chapter provided a brief understanding of African spirituality across the continent, as well as its relevance to the South African rural context. Furthermore, an overview of the research methodology used was included. The following chapter will provide an overview of existing literature on African spirituality, locally as well as internationally.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

“When families face tough situations, including health problems, their beliefs and practices can help them fight feelings of helplessness, restore meaning and order to life situations, and help them regain a sense of control. For some families, African spirituality can be a powerful and important source of strength” - Hanna (2006: 211)

2.1 INTRODUCTION

A literature review is a critical analysis and synthesis of existing research done on a specific study topic. It provides a summary of the state of knowledge, identifies the gaps, and highlights important research findings. A literature review is typically one of the first tasks completed in a dissertation after selecting a study topic (Wilson *et al.* 2011: 30). A literature review establishes

the context and theoretical framework for the current study, guiding the researcher in developing research questions and hypotheses (De Vos *et al.* 2011: 110). Furthermore, a literature review allows the researcher to expand on current knowledge, determine possible study methodologies and ideas, and establish the significance and originality of their own (Blanche *et al.* 2006: 19).

The search engines that were mainly used to search for relevant studies were Summon (Durban University of Technology) and Google Scholar. These search engines led the researcher to the following reliable databases: ResearchGate, EBSCOhost, SA Publications, SAGE Journals Online, ScienceDirect, Sabinet African Journals, Springer, ProQuest, Taylor and Francis Online Journals, and Wiley Online Library Journals.

The phrases and keywords that were used to obtain relevant journals, and studies are as follows: 'African spirituality'; 'defining the essence of African spirituality'; 'rural community'; 'challenges'; 'religion and spirituality'; 'resilience within African spirituality'; 'strengthening'; 'Ubuntu'; 'rituals'; 'traditions'; 'prevalent rituals and traditions in rural communities'; 'African music'; 'healing', 'drumming'; 'the influence of traditional music in family life'; 'prayer in African spirituality'; 'ancestors', 'praying to ancestors'; 'family life'; 'community life'; 'Indigenous knowledge systems'.

This chapter provides a review of the literature relevant to the study. In exploring the literature, the researcher reviewed various published articles on the role that African spirituality has on families in rural communities, its relevance to strengthening and guiding families amid their adversities, and the rituals, customs, values used within these families and communities. To review the literature, firstly, spirituality and religion will be differentiated. Then there will be a brief overview of African spirituality, a discussion on the rural community context, characteristics of a disadvantaged community and some of the community values found in African spirituality. This chapter also extends to indigenous knowledge systems and discusses their importance in strengthening and protecting families.

2.2 THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

Academic interest in spirituality and religion during the past few decades has increased significantly in the international context (Oxhandler and Pargament 2014: 271). These two constructs are becoming more recognised for the significant impact it has on the daily lives of individuals and families (Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 403; Denton and Flory 2020: 225).

Furthermore, these two constructs are also highly valued by families in rural communities (Bain *et al.* 2014: 1).

Studies have found that while there are similarities, religion and spirituality are distinct constructs (Doka 2011: 99; Cowden, Counted and Ho 2023: 23). Religion is based on a set of structured behaviours that a wider group of people share whereas, spirituality is an individual practice and belief. Studies have shown that it is possible to be spiritual and not religious (Cook 2020: 163; Palmer, Payne and Pavolik 2020: 287).

Religion refers to "the relationship of human beings to what they regard as holy, sacred, spiritual or divine" (Doka 2011: 99). It is typically accompanied by a series of structured practices that help construct a community of like-minded individuals (Greef and Loubser 2008: 238). On the other hand, spirituality involves recognising a sense or belief, in a power beyond oneself. It suggests that there is an aspect to existence than what our senses perceive and that the interconnected system in which individuals exist is cosmic or divine, in essence (Bhagwan 2010: 188; Zinnbauer *et al.* 2015: 29).

Spirituality is also referred to as a person's sense of connection to oneself, to others and to nature. Conversely, religion is an institutionalised or individualistic collection of religious attitudes, practices, and convictions that entail the worship of God or other supernatural beings (Jansen 2019: 166; Gardener 2016: 180; Bosine *et al.* 2022: 177).

According to research by Pajarianto, Pribad and Sari (2022: 170) traditions are typically founded on the life, teachings, and beliefs of a historical or archetypal figure (e.g., Muhammad, Krishna, Christ, Buddha, Moses, etc.). In a community, religious rituals and activities are based around these figures, who are also the objects of worship and devotion. By contrast, the foundation of spirituality is typically the actual implementation of the founder's teachings (Gardner 2016: 180; Vieten and Lukoff 2022: 26).

People who find themselves in difficult situations may find solace in religion and spirituality (Park, Dizon and Malcom 2020: 127). According to research religion and spirituality can be a helpful support system (Furman *et al.* 2007: 242; Marumo and Chakale 2018: 11700). Furthermore, research by Worthington *et al.* (2011: 206) identified that when dealing with the symptoms of mental illness and managing stress, people frequently turn to their religious beliefs for support.

Considering that spirituality and religion play a significant role in the lives of most families, they are important in rural communities as they may enhance the overall well-being of rural families (Pham *et al.* 2020: 295; Bosire *et al.* 2022: 126; Litalien, Atari and Obasi 2022: 373). Studies have indicated that spiritually based activities such as prayer, traditional Zulu dancing, indigenous games, and traditional stick fighting have positive effects on community well-being, and they may also influence family well-being (Coetzee 2000: 98; Ephirim-Donkor 2021: 108; Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 408).

In addition, there have been various attempts to research how religion affects health and longevity (Ohuajunwa 2019: 172; Yoon and Lee 2016: 191). There appears to be a correlation between regular attendance at religious services and overall health among individuals who identify as religious. Due to this, studies on the effects of religion on health have been conducted in an attempt to ascertain whether or not religion can lengthen life (Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 403; Agyekum and Newbold 2016: 674; Jansen 2019: 166).

Research on African spirituality is particularly an essential healing tool because it has proven effective in reducing stress and building resilience (Mbiti 1990: 90; Pham *et al.* 2020: 295). Individuals who have experienced life-altering circumstances often find meaning in spiritual traditions (Von Kapff 2012: 2; Amanze 2011: 22; Marumo and Chakale 2018: 11698). Additionally, spirituality can usually help make sense of life's challenges (Bhagwan 2010: 188; Vieten and Lukoff 2022: 26).

2.3 AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY: AN OVERVIEW

African spirituality is a holistic philosophy rooted in the historical, cultural, and religious history of Africa (Rahmat *et al.* 2022: 43 and Bhugra 2021: 200). It comprises, among other things, folktales, beliefs, rituals, and culture. It is important to recognise that while African spiritualities developed through contact with people from different nations and continents they also originated on African land. African independent or indigenous churches are crucial to developing African Christian spiritualities (Knoetze 2019: 8; Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 403; Dillard and Neal 2020: 370). African spirituality can be described or understood within the context of the following characteristics: beliefs, practices, ceremonies and festivals, religious objects and places, values and norms as well as religious leaders (Ephirim-Donkor 2021: 155; Kobe 2021: 111). As a character strength, African spirituality involves the belief that there is a dimension to life beyond human understanding. The strength of African spirituality has many dimensions. Some of these include meaning, purpose, life calling, belief in higher and lower

Gods, use of magic and traditional medicine, and practices that connect with the transcendent (Mayer and Walach 2018: 170).

African spirituality reflects life's wholeness and plays a significant role in bringing life's fullness into harmony (Von Kapff 2012: 2). African spirituality is concerned with preserving the divine nature of creation and the concept of nation-building (Marumo and Chakale 2018: 11699). Everyone in that life is engaged in the process of reconstruction, and the spirituality of one's ancestors plays a part in this as well (Knoetze 2019: 2; Chiorazzi 2015: 170; Ackah, Dodson and Smith 2019: 202).

The essence of African spirituality is "what healing is all about." African spirituality impacts how Africans think, feel secure, deal with obstacles in life, establish their identities, behave, and make decisions. Therefore, spiritual interventions must be conceived through African families and communities (Young and Lee 2023: 300; Nolte and Downing 2019: 10).

Grillo, Van Klinken and Ndzovu (2019: 215); Mafuta and Kaunda (2021: 125); and Bhagwan (2017: 64) found that three religions dominate the African continent: African Traditional Religion (ATR), Islam and Christianity. The realisation that the behaviours and beliefs of these religions are frequently mixed with Christianity illustrates how religious lines are somewhat blurred in South Africa (Mbiti 2015: 11; Childester 2014: 90; Kobe 2021: 52).

Lebaka (2019: 65) and Nzewi (2012: 120) stated that African Traditional Religion has grown out of the African soil. It is not brought from outside. It is best distinguished as ATR. It is described as the product of thinking and the experience of African forefathers and mothers of former generations. This religion is found in all African peoples. Africans who live according to their traditional ways are very religious (Mbiti 1990: 90; Marumo and Chakale 2018: 11695).

Moyo (2023: 218), Marumo and Chakale (2018: 11695), and Morakeng and Lebaka (2020: 60) found that African people hold a wide range of beliefs due to many ethnic groups and tribes in Africa. In the same view, Knoetze (2019: 118) and Nolte and Downing (2019: 16) stated that there is not just one African traditional religion. Research has shown several parallels between the traditional beliefs of different African groupings throughout Africa. Each ethnic group holds its own set of beliefs. As a result, these ethnic groups share characteristics that form African Traditional Religion (Mndende 2013: 75; Njwambe, Cocks and Vetter 2019: 20).

The African worldview holds that there is a Supreme Being capable of accomplishing feats beyond the capabilities of humankind. Another view of the Creator is that of a formless, self-

aware, and intelligent being (Thabede 2008: 43, Murumo and Chakale 2018: 11695). This view holds that the Creator is uncontainable and capable of transforming into any form, which is how the Earth's many forms came to be. It is believed that everything, living or inanimate, contains this Essence, or Spirit, of the Creator, which bestows form and existence (Bhagwan 2017: 65, Chiorazzi 2015: 87; Mukendi 2017: 218).

2.4 BRIEF HISTORY OF AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY

For many decades, African religions and spiritual beliefs were seen as incompatible with the prevailing Christian worldview, and attempts were undertaken to eradicate or absorb them. The suppression of African religions was to assert colonial power and justify the exploitation of African people (Nkosi 2019: 5; Morakeng and Lebaka 2020: 63).

Despite all this, traditional religion adherents in Africa spread over 43 nations and were estimated to exceed 100 million. The worth and endurance of African traditional religions, as well as their cultural significance, are being more widely recognised today (Olupona 2014: 2). Studies by Bennett (2011: 12); Dowd (2015: 15) and Ashafa (2015: 23) asserted that efforts were undertaken to recover and revive these belief systems, encouraging a more accurate and respectful understanding of their place in African history and culture. In addition to having their roots in Africa, African spiritualities have evolved as a result of interactions with people from other nations and continents (Robert 2009: 25; BurrIDGE 2011: 40; Olupona 2014: 12). The development of African Christian spiritualities is significantly influenced by the independent or indigenous churches in Africa (Knoetze 2019: 8; Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 403).

According to Dowd (2015: 18), African beliefs and practices are exceedingly diverse, encompassing a variety of ethnic religions. These traditions are typically oral rather than scriptural and are passed down from generation to generation through stories, songs, and ceremonies. They include beliefs in spirits, higher and lower Gods, sometimes even a Supreme Being, the veneration of the deceased, the use of magic, and traditional African medicine. (Bhagwan 2017: 67; Ndemanu 2018: 72; Makhoathi 2017: 1).

In many African cultures, spirits are believed to take on various forms, such as natural elements, animals, or even deceased ancestors. These spirits are believed to influence the lives of individuals and communities, and they are often revered and communicated with for guidance and protection (Knoetze 2019: 1).

In South Africa today, people practice spiritual traditions and religious beliefs. Everyone has the right to follow whatever faith they desire, or to not follow any at all (Nkosi 2019: 5; Morakeng and Lebaka 2020: 63). This is noted in the South African constitution which provides religious freedom under Article 21(1)(c), which confers on all persons the right of 'freedom to practice any religion and to manifest such practice' (Coertzen 2014: 126; Heyns and Brands 2000: 699). According to Makhoathi (2017: 1), African spirituality is known as a source of strength and support to family and community life, in many African communities.

2.5 CHARACTERISTICS OF DISADVANTAGED RURAL COMMUNITIES

2.5.1 Poverty

KwaZulu-Natal is home to 3.2 million poor people (of a total population of 10.5 million). Complete impoverished communities are found in all Provinces' rural wards, according to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). One hundred and sixty-nine areas in KwaZulu-Natal are home to communities ranging from extreme to absolute poverty (Stats SA 2021).

For rural families, access to essential resources is limited due to differences between rural and urban living conditions. Accordingly, the health issues and educational deficiencies that individuals and families in rural communities face, are primarily caused by poverty (Mtshali 2015: 75; Dibia, Nwagu, and Odo 2020: 78). Grandmothers in rural areas focus on meeting the basic needs of their grandchildren and thus strive to provide food using their old age pension, which may sometimes be insufficient to cover the household expenses for a whole month (Khumalo 2021: 117; Ntuli, Sebola and Madiba 2020: 259).

In child-headed households, children frequently have to drop out of school for employment and worry about where their next meal will come from (Makhalima 2020: 406). Poverty has a cascading effect on children as it prevents young people from having access to necessities like education and housing which stunts their development (Nkosi 2020: 95; Makiwane, Gumede and Makiwane 2017: 4). As a result, young people from rural areas typically have few opportunities in their later years (Khumalo 2021: 115). Poverty restricts access to opportunities for improving one's quality of life in rural communities. Consequently, families have difficulty remaining motivated to acquire a better life (Ntuli, Sebola and Madiba 2020: 259).

2 5.2 Inadequate housing

The problem of inadequate housing is one of the most serious challenges faced by grandmothers living with orphaned grandchildren. Grandmothers sometimes share the same

inadequate accommodation with their children and grandchildren (Khumalo 2021: 117; Hall and Budlender 2016: 33). In rural communities, these homes are typically one or two bedrooms, with some being mud houses. Grandmothers often have many grandchildren who have been abandoned by their parents or whose parents are deceased (Ward, Makusha and Bray 2015: 69).

Grandmothers face the challenge of accommodating all their grandchildren, which leads to overcrowding in these households. Consequently, this becomes a problem as children grow older and require their own space and privacy (Xaba 2021: 121; Ntuli, Sebola and Madiba 2020: 259). Additionally, inadequate housing is common among child-headed households. These children are often unprepared to run these households, which usually contributes to the deterioration of their poor living conditions. They have no one to look out for them, resulting in them being more vulnerable to the effects of inadequate housing (Makhalima 2020: 406; Tasmassane and Head 2010: 37; Xaba 2021: 122).

2.5.3 Unemployment and financial constraints

Rural communities are forced to endure unpleasant conditions due to their geographical isolation. This makes it difficult for them to acquire employment and other resources. It has been impossible to alleviate poverty in rural areas as expected (Nkosi 2020: 95; Mtshali 2015: 76; Ntuli, Sebola and Madiba 2020: 259).

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the financial stability of families (Mtyapi 2021: 41). Most individuals lost their jobs permanently during the lockdown, resulting in their inability to provide for their families. Two out of every five adults reported that their household lost its main source of income during lockdown. Consequently, this had devastating effects leading to food insecurity and household hunger, especially in rural communities (Xu *et al.* 2021: 105; Harris 2020: 167; Dockery 2020: 156)

It was reported that young people in child-headed households sometimes choose to accept employment that pays minimum wages, and they take on tasks for which they are not yet prepared. Vulnerability results from a lack of assistance in addressing financial difficulties (Mtshali 2015: 76; Harris 2021: 167; Globler and Ross 2012: 263). Either young people or grandmothers take on the role of heading headless families when they lose the sole source of income due to the COVID-19 pandemic and AIDS-related illnesses. Concerning full-time parenting, grandmothers frequently encounter psychosocial and health issues, and young

people are not mentally prepared to take on family responsibilities (Damian 2017: 155; Mthembu, Myburgh and Poggenpoel 2020: 102).

2.5.4 Substance abuse

The departure of adults from rural communities in search of work or the passing of a parent presents a gap in the vital support that these young people require from important family members (Mathibela and Skhosana 2021: 120; Makiwane, Gumede, Makiwane 2017: 30). When faced with challenges in the absence of resources, young people turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as substance addiction. Young people who consume substances may therefore be more likely to participate in dangerous behaviour (Carels *et al.* 2022: 126; Mokwena and Setshego 2021: 67).

Young people in these communities face vulnerability when it comes to their ability to recover from issues like substance and alcohol abuse since they have less opportunity to access supporting resources. Fewer intervention programmes are available to slow down the rising rate of substance misuse because of the remote location of rural areas (Majee *et al.* 2021: 182; Francis *et al.* 2020: 210; Rawson *et al.* 2022: 42).

2.6 RELEVANCE OF RELIGION AND SPIRITUALITY

According to research by Kaba (2020: 18) over 84.5% of South Africans value culture and religion daily. Spirituality and religious beliefs continue to be firmly interwoven in families' daily lives in rural communities (Anagwo 2020: 22 and Thomas 2017: 58). Despite the overwhelming impact of Christianity and Islam, a large percentage of the population continues to rely on African spiritual traditions and rituals (Knoetze 2019: 2; Amanze 2011: 23 and Ephirim-Donkor 2021: 109).

A research study by Matholeni, Boateng and Manyonganise (2020: 123) concurred that this proves the continued significance of indigenous belief systems, despite the country's developing modernisation and urbanisation. While Christianity and Islam have made major advances, traditional African spirituality remains strong, particularly in rural communities (Mbiti 2015: 10; Slater 2019: 15; Mafuta and Kaunda 2021: 122).

According to Bhagwan (2010: 67) this spirituality establishes a holistic approach to health and well-being, integrating biological, social, emotional, and spiritual dimensions. Mbiti (2015: 14) further highlighted that African traditional beliefs and practices are frequently seen as a source of hope and resilience, especially in the face of adversity such as poverty, inequality, financial

constraints and inadequate housing (Slater 2019: 20; Knoetze 2019: 2). These beliefs provide a framework for understanding and navigating life's difficulties, as well as a sense of belonging and connection to nature (Bhagwan 2017: 64; Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 403; Mbiti 1990: 90).

In addition, a substantial body of research has indicated that spirituality and religion function as significant protective factors against a variety of issues and difficulties that affect families and their communities today, this includes encouraging school completion for young people, protecting them from psychological stress, delaying premature sexual activity, and substance abuse (Kwarfordt and Sheridan 2007: 3 and Wright, Yendork and Kliewer 2018: 2610).

A research study by Ephirim-Donkor (2021: 102) found that a strong sense of meaning and purpose, a connection to a higher power, and participation in spiritual practices can provide families with the social and internal resources needed to deal with life's challenges. A similar study by Torralba, Oviedo and Canteras (2021: 9) confirmed the relationship between spirituality, religiosity, and well-being. Moreover, spirituality and religiosity can improve well-being by cultivating a sense of community and social support, which are major predictors of psychological and emotional health (Bosire *et al.* 2022: 1172 and Wright, Yendork and Kliewer 2018: 2620).

A research study conducted by Metz and Molefe (2021: 393) found that religious and spiritual beliefs play a dominant role in the lives of African people, particularly those residing in rural communities. As a result, religion and spirituality significantly impact the social, political, and economic sectors of African people, according to scholars (Mbiti 2015: 29; Knoetze 2019: 8; and Metz and Molefe 2021: 393). A study by Singleton (2012: 13) confirmed this, showing that the majority of families do not attend Christian religious events known as "Prayer Ministries," where individuals seek divine favours and miracles from their spiritual leaders, believed to have exceptional spiritual powers and an air of Godliness (Thomas 2017: 58). In a rural context, most families convene at sacred sites of prophets, spiritual leaders and traditional healers for healing and spiritual guidance (Makgobi 2014: 24; Knoetze 2019: 6 and Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 408).

Religion and spirituality significantly impact cultural traditions, including art, music, language, and gastronomy. They influence how people dress, celebrate, mourn, and engage with others (Bhagwan 2009: 226; Litalian, Atani and Obasi 2022: 373). For example, in African culture, religious beliefs guide both men and women in choosing appropriate traditional clothing for ceremonies and dictate how women in mourning should dress and conduct themselves

(Matsebula 2021: 9; Nhlapho 2022: 10). Similarly, in the Hindu culture, religious beliefs regulate the traditional clothing worn at religious ceremonies and celebrations, which includes sarees for women and dhotis for men (Mohan 2018: 19; Mohan 2020: 137).

According to Bhagwan (2022: 115) spirituality, religious rituals and traditions foster a sense of identity and community cohesion for various communities. They often convey religious principles and serve as significant life milestone symbols (Nhlapho 2022: 15; Dizon and Malcom 2020: 127). Examples include the Islamic five pillars, Christian baptism, and the diverse marriage, birth, and death rituals found in African spirituality and other religious traditions (Schoeman 2017: 55; Holmes 2019: 335; Walsh 2013: 189).

Religious beliefs influence personal values by providing a moral compass and guiding individuals' decision-making processes. They shape attitudes towards issues like marriage, family, sexuality, and social justice (Estrada *et al.* 2019: 6; Kor *et al.* 2019: 377; Schoeman 2017: 22). Religion and spirituality can inspire individuals to prioritise compassion, forgiveness, and empathy in their interactions with others, and thereby influencing the spirit of Ubuntu in community life (Kobe 2021: 92; and Mahoney 2010: 805; Mugumbate and Naami 2023: 54).

Religion and spirituality have the potential to provide consolation and direction to rural families facing adversities, serving as the foundation for moral convictions and actions (Murray 2013: 116; Marumo and Chakale 2018: 116). Furthermore, African spirituality helps foster a sense of belonging and ties to history for the majority of families residing in rural communities. Some research suggests that spirituality might even have a positive influence on health (Bain *et al.* 2014: 11; Denton and Flory 2020: 225).

In addition to offering support and instruction, religion and spirituality can foster a sense of community collectivism. Their effects on mental and physical health have been demonstrated. Positive beliefs, community support, and constructive coping mechanisms can collectively be fostered by religion and spirituality (Dein 2020: 657; Bhagwan 2013: 276 and Zinnbauer *et al.* 2015: 29).

In many rural communities, religious leaders and service providers from faith-based organisations play key roles in improving the well-being of families by focusing on spiritual care (Davey *et al.* 2021: 861; and Jahani and Parayandeh 2024: 12). According to prior research, stakeholders and caregivers have attested to the role of spirituality in shaping the care given and received by families, thus improving their wellbeing (Goodwin and Kraft 2022: 21).

Pastoral care, traditional healing, and counselling are key services that include using traditional beliefs and practices, as well as spiritual support through prayer for rural families. These beliefs and practices serve as interventions that encompass spiritual advice, healing and counselling (Magezi 2024: 789; Nistor 2019: 65 and Moodley and Sutherland 2010: 267).

2.7 THE INTEGRATION OF SPIRITUALITY IN FAMILY AND COMMUNITY LIFE

Various researchers have shown that spirituality has emerged as an essential component of human development and overall well-being (Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 404; Holmes 2019: 335; Denton and Flory 2020: 225). When families face challenging situations, their beliefs and practices can help them overcome feelings of helplessness, restore meaning and order to their lives, and re-establish a sense of control. Furthermore, spirituality serves as a significant source of strength and support for families (Arrey *et al.* 2016: 3; Agada 2023: 8; Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 404).

Research has revealed that in many African cultures, well-being is seen as a state of harmony and balance, not only within the individual but also in connection to the broader natural and spiritual realms (Malone and Dadswell 2018: 28). This holistic perspective is reflected in traditional healing practices, which may include components like herbal remedies, rituals, and prayer, all aimed at restoring balance and promoting family and community well-being (Sandlana and Mtetwa 2008: 122; Sibanda and Grobler 2023: 1069).

The traditional African belief system supports family and community well-being, considering not just their physical symptoms, but also their values, passions, beliefs, social interactions, and spiritual orientation (Sandlana and Mtetwa 2008: 122). The way families use their religious beliefs and spiritual resources to make sense of and cope with challenging circumstances plays a key role in their ability to adapt and thrive (Muruthi *et al.* 2020: 1730; Asante and Mazama 2009: 18).

Studies have shown that spirituality and religion are also used as means of reconciliation for families (Walsh 2010: 330; Murray 2013: 116). Research conducted in rural communities in South Africa indicates that African spiritual families perform practices and rituals that foster reconciliation, which in turn heals their lineage (Mbiti 2015: 16; Mokgabi 2014: 25; Asante and Mazama 2009: 18). Additionally, religious guidance and spiritual support enable rural communities to overcome various adversities (Rowkith and Bhagwan 2020: 3). Studies by

Walsh (2015: 65) and Walsh (2011: 173) have shown that spiritual resources can promote resilience in the face of adversity and strengthen family bonds.

In rural communities, ancestor worship is believed to involve spirit beings who act as intermediaries between God and family members, sending messages and fortune to promote family well-being or to reprimand wrongdoing and disobedience (Ephirim-Donkor 2021: 155; Olupona 2014: 222; Thebe 2018: 106). Families seek counsel from traditional and spiritual leaders, as well as community elders (Collins and Hawkins 2016: 85). A study conducted in South Africa by Ohajunwa, Mji, and Chimbala-Kalenga (2021: 140) found that this is central to the AmaBomvane belief system.

Similarly, a study conducted in Ghana by Morgan and Okyere-Manu (2020: 104) showed that in the Akan belief system, reverence for ancestors includes moral connotations. Ancestors are believed to provide protection, guidance, advice, good health, and sometimes punishment (Opoku 2016:50; White 2015:1; Ephirim-Donkor 2021:115). Furthermore, their belief system promotes harmonious relationships, and family and community well-being (Gyekye 2010: 85).

In Akan moral philosophy, morality uplifts the community's welfare and family well-being. According to the Akan belief system, morality is the sole measure of goodness (Asamoah 2020: 82). Akan social and humanistic ethics define morality as primarily advancing social welfare, solidarity, and harmonious interpersonal relationships (Adu-Gyamfi 2016: 39; Asante and Mazama 2009: 55). Moreover, in the Akan system, morality is judged based on how actions affect people and society as a whole (Asamoah 2020: 82; Gyekye 2010: 85; Ephirim-Donkor 2021: 109). Consequently, this motivates individuals to act according to their community's moral standards (Asamoah 2020: 78; Awuah-Nyamekye 2009: 251).

In the AmaBomvane belief system, individuals maintain their connection with the divine, other people, and the world around them to gain wisdom, healing, and protection for their family well-being and community well-being (Radebe 2022: 51; Ohajunwa, Mji and Chimbala-Kalenga 2021: 5). Rural families maintain relationships through a communal manifestation of their spirituality (Ohajunwa and Mji 2018: 2531). This is usually done through traditional music, dancing, and many familial and communal rites of passage (Lebese *et al.* 2020: 22; Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 406). They hold rites that strengthen their identity and help them connect to all aspects of their relationships (Ohajunwa and Mji 2018: 2525). These activities contribute to cultural continuity and improve their well-being (Ohajunwa and Mji 2018: 2531).

2.8 RELIGION AND HEALING AMONGST FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Religion has long played a significant role in the lives of families and communities, shaping their spiritual beliefs and their approaches to health and healing (Rowkith and Bhagwan 2020: 3; Bosire *et al.* 2022: 1172). According to a research study by Asante and Mazama (2009: 55) the power of religion and "spiritual entities" is crucial in both the cause of trauma and community-based approaches to healing. Spiritual understandings allow families to restore meaning and balance to their lives after traumatic experiences, and many other adversities (Qureshi, Khalil and Alsanad 2020: 845; Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 404). 'Appeasing the spirits' serves as a method for righting past wrongs, healing and restoring well-being within and across communities (Sunday *et al.* 2024: 144; Delin 2020: 657; Walsh 2010: 330).

In many communities, healing involves a combination of prayer, herbal and religious practices, as well as appeals to the spirits (Adu-Gyamfi 2016: 43; Ruman 2014: 37; Mokgabi 2014: 24). Studies have found that in Mozambican rural areas, churches like Zionist, Apostolic and others have incorporated activities and ceremonies related to cleansing and strengthening family and community relationships. Their role in holding exorcisms, and other ceremonies has become important to family and community life (Moosa 2020: 77; Pfeiffer 2002: 176).

Research has demonstrated that in many cultures, spiritual beliefs and practices are central to how families and communities understand and address illnesses, trauma, and other difficulties (Benson *et al.* 2012: 453; Crook 2020: 46). For instance, in certain regions of sub-Saharan Africa, the concept of "ancestral spirits" is intimately linked to understandings of health, well-being, and community cohesion (Muruthi *et al.* 2020: 1723; Young and Koopen 2010: 119). Furthermore, studies have found that appeasing these spirits through rituals and ceremonies are viewed as essential for restoring balance and facilitating healing (Bosire *et al.* 2022: 1173; Delin 2020: 657; Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 407).

Similarly, traditional "folk healing" practices in Latin American communities, which blend Catholic, indigenous, and African-derived spiritual elements, are valuable resources for coping with trauma and adversity at the community level (Crook 2020: 46; Li 2023: 22; Smith 2021: 52). The significance of religion, and "spiritual entities" cannot be overlooked when trying to understand and address challenges and adversities (Bhagwan 2017: 64; Sunday 2024: 145; Wilder 2020: 49). Spirituality and religious practices are deeply woven into the cultural values and everyday lives of many communities, serving as a source of strength, coping mechanism,

and alternative therapy for healing and promoting overall well-being (Arrey *et al.* 2016: 2; Bhagwan 2017: 64; Bosire *et al.* 2022: 1173).

As previously demonstrated in the literature, healing often centres around diverse religious practices, encompassing a wide range of activities such as prayer, consumption of spiritually blessed water, use of herbs, and individual beliefs and spirituality according to the South African context (Mokgabi 2014: 24; Bosire *et al.* 2022: 1172; Ruman 2014: 37). These multifaceted religious and spiritual practices are crucial ways in which people seek healing, well-being, and a deeper connection to the divine and the supernatural realms (Mokgabi 2014: 24; Potgieter 2014: 5; Walsh 2010: 330). Within the African worldview, the relationship between religion, spirituality and healing is a central concern, with traditional healers in rural communities fulfilling a multifaceted role that extends beyond physical healing (Mbiti 2015: 25; Asante and Mazama 2009: 55).

Traditional healers serve as custodians of African traditional religion and customs, educating people about cultural practices (Mokgabi 2014: 25; Mathibela *et al.* 2015: 2; Semanya and Potgieter 2014: 10). They also fulfil roles as counsellors, social workers, and psychologists, as their healing approaches encompass not only the physical but also the spiritual and psychological realms that are deeply ingrained within African culture (Mokgabi 2014: 25; Mokgabi 2012: 30; Chiboola 2019: 62).

2.9 RESILIENCE AND AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY

Research on African spirituality practised by rural South African families and the challenges they encounter offers crucial insights into areas that should be prioritised for policy reform and intervention (Flora 2018: 119; Dillard and Neal 2020: 370). However, existing research on South African rural families does not reflect information about how they work to sustain themselves despite the challenges. Furthermore, there is limited research on the idea that these families might genuinely experience relational and personal progress when faced with adversity (Theron and Theron 2013: 391).

South Africa is a country with a rich and diverse historical background, and the Apartheid legacy of Apartheid remains one of the defining footprints of the country's history (Wilson and Thompson 2022: 155). The historical perspective of rural South Africa is characterised by themes of adversity and resilience, as people in these communities constantly struggle with a variety of socioeconomic difficulties and turn to African spirituality to help them overcome these

challenges and recover (Masongo 2006: 230; Knoetze 2019: 7; Mbvurira 2016: 188). The following paragraph contains a brief definition of the terms resilience and adversity.

Resilience is the process that people participate in to enable constructive adjustment to unfavourable life situations (Walker 2020: 140; Feldman 2020: 135). The dynamic process of resilience is exhibited by people when they demonstrate positive adaptation or results in the face of risk or severe challenges (Ntuli, Sebola and Madiba 2020: 259). People need to heal from adversity and regain states of behavioural, social, and cultural balance (Thobejane and Lorraine 2022: 195).

For the majority of rural South Africans, recent history has been characterised by a never-ending struggle against institutional, structural, and social marginalisation (Madlingozi 2018: 102; Xaba and Akinola 2023: 136). Changes were anticipated in the domains of education, politics, society, and the economy. In several regions of the nation, especially the rural ones, these changes have not yet materialised (Madlingozi 2018: 102). Rural communities still face difficulties that demand adequate and suitable solutions for them to exist (Zhou, Guo and Liu 2020: 12).

Literature has shown that South Africans who live in rural areas, confront high rates of illiteracy and poverty (Ntuli, Sebola and Madiba 2020: 259). The inadequate level of infrastructure development is shown by the high unemployment rate (Ngubane, Mndebele, Kaseeram 2023: 122; Zhang, Kishk and Alouini 2023: 127). HIV/AIDS has been an additional challenge to those already highlighted (Majola *et al.* 2022: 13). Children who are left orphans by the AIDS pandemic are occasionally required to take on parental responsibilities. Being responsible for their younger siblings and taking on obligations for which they are not emotionally or psychologically ready, weighs heavily on older children (Thomas *et al.* 2020: 253; Mamukeyani 2021: 15).

Research has indicated that a significant number of family members and caregivers experience symptoms of psychological distress (46.2%), depression (25.7%), anxiety (17.1%), and suicidal ideation (27.5%) as a result of these adversities. Stressful parenting, food insecurity, and recent deaths in a family or household were linked to a higher prevalence of these symptoms (De Lannoy *et al.* 2020: 115; Diago 2020: 180). Younger caregivers reported higher rates of anxiety, whereas grandmother caregivers reported higher rates of psychological distress and sadness. Consequently, families resort to African spirituality to find healing and strength (Thobejane and Lorraine 2022: 191).

Rural families show individual and community resilience as a result of their community connectedness, hope, and altruism (Mosavel *et al.* 2016: 90). This has important implications for positive well-being among rural families and communities (Mosavel *et al.* 2016: 90). Studies have shown that community connectedness, hope, and altruism are necessary attributes to prevent psychological issues in South African rural communities, due to factors including geographical isolation, inadequate resources, and a high incidence of poverty (Glenn 2018: 155; Young 2018: 208).

Community connectedness, hope and altruism have a strong correlation with African spirituality and the Ubuntu philosophy, which positively impacts resilience (Mugumbate and Chereni 2020: 61; Ohajunwa 2019: 34). While hopelessness, particularly amongst young people, leads them to engage in risky behaviours (such as substance abuse, promiscuity, etc.), community hope, which can come from spirituality or religion, provides the ability to remain optimistic in the face of adversity (Manning 2019: 180; Mosavel *et al.* 2019: 190). In addition, community connectedness was said to provide an opportunity for families to have a sense of belonging, which is associated with positive experiences (Mosavel *et al.* 2016: 118).

In sub-Saharan Africa, a study by Mpofu *et al.* (2016: 182) in Zimbabwe revealed that the resilience practices of families are supported by traditional practices, church affinity and a broad collectivistic cultural model embedded in extended family obligations. Although other protective factors – namely; self-confidence, managing emotions, communication and problem-solving skills - influence resilience, spirituality and religion play a pivotal role in resilience building in the face of stressors, particularly in health issues, thereby enhancing adaptability and coping (Young 2018: 190). Furthermore, spirituality was found to be related to coping with chronic disease (Drutchas and Anandarajah 2019: 177).

Previous studies have shown that some factors associated with resilience include prayer to unseen spirits, music and various types of support. Spirituality and religion also provide families with a sense of self-control, identity, and understanding of their stressful situations (Knoetze 2019: 2; Schoeman 2017: 55; Theron 2023: 108). Families are often strengthened by their faith and beliefs, to cope and build resilience against adversities (Manning *et al.* 2019: 138; Pandya 2018: 103). Research has shown that about 43 to 60 per cent of people with emotional problems turn to their traditional leaders first for help, leading to resilience (Kiyota *et al.* 2015: 142; Mutepa and Maundeni 2019: 165).

The resilience of families in rural areas was also found to be influenced by spiritual meaning-making and perceptions of events, which determine how these families deal with negative life experiences (Manning *et al.* 2019: 168; Freeny *et al.* 2021: 209; Caldwell and Senter 2012: 241). Furthermore, studies have shown that resilience can be interpreted theologically using three themes: spirituality, grace and resurrection/hope (Mhaka-Mutepfa and Maundeni 2019: 211). These components of resilience - 'having divine support, maintaining purpose, and expressing gratitude - promote and maintain well-being (Manning 2020: 2020); Ye and Zhang 2021: 202).

Positive patterns of religious coping such as seeking help in letting go of anger, facilitate resilience (Ephirim-Donkor 2021: 120). The interpretation and components of resilience named herein show a relationship to spirituality and religion (i.e., resurrection, divine, etc.). In rural Australia, research has reported positive associations between Spirituality/Religion and quality of life, hence resilience (Greeff and Loubser 2008: 238; Counted, Possamai and Meade 2018: 201).

Other studies have shown a high correlation between the quality of life and resilience (Crawford, Wright and Masten 2006: 155; Mhaka-Mutepfa, 2018: 160). As previously highlighted, spirituality and religion have always provided a sense of togetherness, belonging, cohesion and comfort from the feeling that an individual is not alone regardless of age (Bhagwan 2022: 155).

In many rural South African communities, poverty, loss of a parent and other hazards have resulted in grandmothers and children facing many challenges in most aspects of their lives (Mhaka-Mutepfa *et al.* 2019: 110). This calls for African spirituality as a resource to help these families gain resilience, heal and cope with their adversities (Fedman 2020: 140).

African spirituality can therefore be used to promote personal beliefs, a sense of belonging, and well-being, helping them to be resilient (Ephirim-Donkor 2021: 8). Families in rural communities do not have access to therapy or counselling nor do they have access to other protective factors to transcend adversity in their communities because they have no control over resources (Payne *et al.* 2021: 115; Wright, Yendork and Kliwer 2018: 2608). However, resilience is the belief that people can thrive in adversity, gain strength, and prosper despite enduring several unfavourable daily situations (Walker 2020: 140). Therefore, African spiritual beliefs and practices can be adopted as effective intervention strategies, that provide families with such resilience (Isaacs, Roman and Savahl 2019: 1634).

2.10 UBUNTU (AFRICAN PHILOSOPHY)

Ubuntu is a traditional African philosophy that educates individuals, families, and communities on how to value and understand, who they are to others, and the environment (Mabvurira 2020: 73). According to Ubuntu (Nguni) and Botho (Sotho) concept "each individual's humanity is through his/her relationship with others and theirs in turn through recognition of the individual's humanity" (Mabovula 2011: 38).

Studies have shown that Ubuntu is a comprehensive ancient African worldview founded upon the principles of profound humanity, sharing, caring, respect, compassion, and related ideals, guaranteeing an enthusiastic and healthy community life in the spirit of family (Broodryk 2008:17; Magumbate and Naami 2023:12). Prior research has identified that "Ubuntu" refers to characteristics like cooperation, reciprocity, warmth, empathy, understanding, communication, interaction, and a shared worldview (Mabele, Krauss, and Kiwango 2022: 92; in Mkhize 2014: 55).

Ubuntu plays a crucial role in community development by empowering the "we" to achieve objectives that are distinctive to collaboration (Thakhathi and Netshitangani 2020: 407). Research by Mugumbate and Chereni (2020: 52) and Chadlin (2015: 222) emphasised that the potential of Ubuntu lies in the capacity to be human, to respect others, to put the benefit of the community above one's interests, and to work towards helping others in a spirit of service. Additionally, Ubuntu regards humanity as an integral part of the ecosystems leading to communal responsibility to sustain life (Marumo 2018: 116; Shumba 2011: 84).

Ubuntu represents the foundation of African spirituality. Africa's greatest gift to the world has been the social ethic embodied in Ubuntu (Aubel 2021: 38). People with Ubuntu possess resilience, which allows them to endure and emerge from attempts to dehumanise them (Bhengu 2010: 31; Marumo and Chakale 2018: 11695; Masango 2006: 230).

Research by Marumo and Chakale (2018: 11695) has shown that African spirituality is concerned with the integrity of creation and nation-building. In that existence, everyone is engaged in the process of rebuilding and restoring others' spirituality; ancestors are not excluded from this involvement (Banda 2019: 203; Mucina 2019: 140).

Research by Knoetze (2019: 8) indicates that African spirituality affects every aspect of life and is holistic. It cannot be considered an individual affair because it manifests itself at all societal levels politically, socially, and economically - and helps construct a nation (Banda 2019: 205).

In agreement, studies by Nyengele (2015: 8); Bhagwan (2017: 64); Singh and Bhagwan (2020: 403) indicated that since there is an external divine connection between humanity and the Supreme Being, people believe in the ancestors' enduring presence, in shared existence, and collective responsibility to uplift one another.

Additionally, the African view approaches the human person holistically (Nyowe 2017: 42). It places the well-being of the individual inside a web of relationships, with the Supreme Being serving as the web's origin, rather than classifying them (Bhagwan 2017: 68; Asante and Mazama 2009: 13). Spiritual, physical and mental diseases are brought on by anything that throws a person out of balance (Mbiti 2018: 108; Kanu 2022: 81).

African traditional religion is a way of life and a quest for well-being within the community in the here and now of everyday experience (Mbiti 2015: 195; Oyekan 2021: 34). It includes ideas about ancestors, a higher power, and the role of rainmakers or diviners in the world (Moyo 2013: 207).

The living values embedded in African spirituality help individuals preserve family and community well-being. This is done by ensuring that children and young people experience positive well-being and community members help one another, through guidance and wisdom from community elders (Èbale and Mulemi 2022: 150; Mabovula 2011: 40).

An example of a practice that contributes to the appropriate behavioural conduct of young people is the traditional reed dance. This practice helps young people make informed decisions, preventing exposure to sexually transmitted diseases and helping curb the spread of HIV/AIDS, which is widespread in the African context (Louw 2019: 114; Eliastam 2015: 5). Additionally, research has shown that this contributes to the positive development of young people as they get to belong to a group with like-minded people accustomed to the same beliefs (Marumo 2018: 170; Van Breda 2019: 150).

Children and youth are raised positively by being guided by these African spiritual beliefs and values (Theron and Theron 2013: 391). In rural communities, traditional leaders, community elders and members mostly promote such beliefs and values (Makoba 2016: 41; Kobe 2021: 110). This is where Africans use the renowned proverb that "it takes a village to raise a child" (Kumar 2021: 32).

Individuals are likely to discover and come to appreciate that they are communal beings nurtured and shaped by the ethos of other villagers. Essentially, it takes a whole village to help

formulate an individual's spiritual life. An individual is nurtured into a responsible, mature human being within a community that upholds the Ubuntu values, norms, and principles (Gathogo 2008: 39; Van Breda 2019: 139).

Families in rural communities live through the spirit of Ubuntu, which, especially in times of adversity, informs their empathy towards one another (Ngomane 2019: 22; Maphalala 2017: 249). Previous studies by Eze (2017: 98) and Theron, Theron and Malindi (2013: 65) emphasised that Ubuntu ethics advocate for the sense that 'umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu' (I am because you are). Every community member fulfils the role of a caring adult in a way that promotes everyone's overall well-being, particularly for the development of children and youth (Bhengu 2010: 116; Eke and Onwuatuegwu 2021: 145).

Collective child-rearing ensures that young people do not engage in criminal behaviours as they are brought up with values that prioritise accountability and honesty in their lives (Eliastam 2015: 8; Mieder 2017: 28). Humaneness and togetherness among families and community members ensure they cope with the adversities they face (Makoba 2016: 41; Louw 2019: 115).

2.11 RITUALS AND TRADITIONS

Each community and culture have a unique collection of customs and traditions that distinguish them from each other. These are unwritten rules and conventions on how one should act and behave in social situations. Studies have shown that customs and rituals relate to the occasions and ceremonies observed in a community, especially those connected with African spirituality (Peters 2021: 23; Mdletshe 2023: 95; Thwala and Edwards 2021: 239).

A ritual is an action, or a sequence of actions carried out or observed during special occasions, festivals, ceremonies, and other events in a society. These rituals have a religious foundation in addition to their symbolic significance (Oguntola-Laguna 2015: 111). A ritual might be performed by a single person, a group of people, or the entire community on a particular day. It can also be limited to a single location and time, and be used privately, publicly, or in front of a particular group of people. In most cases, it facilitates the transition between social or religious states (Mshweshwe 2020: 110; Washington 2010: 24; Adu-Gyamfi and Bing 2016: 125).

A tradition is a behaviour or a belief system passed down through a community or culture from one generation to the next and holds particular meaning for the people who belong to the society (Watts 2010: 17; Savu 2022: 55; Ohara and Anyim 2021: 1024). Most traditions were passed down as folklore or stories so that future generations may recall them and draw lessons

from them. The concepts of harmony, kindness, friendships, bravery, devotion, etc., are customs that have been passed from one generation to the next (Vilakazi 2021: 40; Van Kapff 2010: 17; Mshweshwe 2020: 110).

2.11.1 Music

Research by Moss (2019: 213); and Boyce-Tillman (2020: 29) found that music has been a sensitive source of spiritual healing that not only relaxes mental conditions, thoughts, emotions and feelings but also reduces stress and strain of the central nervous system and muscles, relaxing the entire constitution of the human body. Research conducted by Baxter, Medlock and Graffith (2019: 150) stated that music has always been a vent for pent-up stressful thoughts and depression.

Philpott (2020: 119) further elaborated that music at its perfection, with its particular time, and tonal quality - its tunes, rhythm, and everything - creates an atmosphere of harmony, peace and an arena of mental satisfaction that rejuvenates the forces and spirit of life, balances the mind-body setup. Music praises the positive aspects of life and through its appropriate timings and tones, drives out negative feelings from the inner self-world (Thompson 2015: 32; Mollaoğlu and Mollaoğlu 2023: 49).

According to research by Singh and Bhagwan (2020: 415); Lebaka (2021: 60) and Gouk (2017: 57) there is a connection between African music and healing, as well as between music, culture, and identity. A study conducted by Morakeng and Lebaka (2020: 62) in Limpopo Province, South Africa, indicates that the Bapedi people believe that music itself can facilitate connection with the living-dead and frequently results in ancestral spirit possession, "causing the spirits to descend" because the traditional method of generating music incorporates it into the institutional life of the Bapedi community (Tsabedze *et al.* 2023: 240).

Furthermore, elders and healers in the Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality utilise music to express their emotions and control them during Malopo religious rituals. Relationships between music, expression, and movement, as well as culture, and identity, were clarified (Lebaka 2019: 70; Morakeng and Lebaka 2020: 62). Research by Morakeng and Lebaka (2020: 63) also shows that traditional healers and community elders display the dance's healing ability while performing it. For instance, during the Malopo ritual, after entering a trance, participants became spiritually healed. Villagers who watched the dance and took part in it commented on

how they felt better afterwards because of the Malopo ritual (Morakeng and Lebaka 2020: 63; Tsabedze *et al.* 2023: 237).

Other studies by Belani *et al.* (2022: 4); Podolecka (2020: 108); and Morakeng and Lebaka 2020: 63) have found that music plays a significant role in many cultures, such as the Zulu culture, Bapedi culture, and history. In such studies, it was also discovered that ceremonies like the “Malopo” ceremony in Bapedi culture and the “amagobongo” ceremony in Zulu culture, are performances used to channel ancestral spirits for healing and fortune. If done incorrectly, this may create illness, but if done correctly, this may empower the healing process (Maluleka and Ngulube 2018: 515).

In the same view, research has found that the malopo and amagobongo ceremonies serve as a therapeutic means of healing, and connecting people to their ancestors. To foster harmony between the living and the living dead, songs are sung and recited (Lebaka 2019: 66; Nolte and Downing 2019: 39; and Mafuta and Kaunda 2021: 126).

A study conducted in Northeast and Southern Thailand found that families use music through healing rituals to strengthen their lives and well-being. Healing rituals bring together supportive aspects of the family, the community, and spiritual entities, with the shaman as the leader and conductor of these events. The shaman utilizes music that incorporates the whole community and elicits support from the spirits (Mukherjee 2021: 102; Schoeman 2017: 52; Kobe 2021: 117).

During these ceremonies, music serves as a healing force. It entices and recruits spirits and distracts participants from the unpleasant experiences felt in their bodies (Mukherjee 2021: 102). Even in today’s modern society, these healing rituals have persisted, as they are inseparable from the animistic belief systems in these regions (Ohajunwa and Mji 2018: 230; Mukherjee 2021: 117).

2.11.2 Drumming

African life is enriched by the physical, emotional, and spiritual aspects in which drums play a major role. Hand drums in the African culture are used for celebration, mourning, inspiration, and communication (Gardner 2016: 180; Izu and De Villiers 2022: 64). These are performed through periods of peace and healing, planting and harvesting, and life and death. Additionally, there is more to drumming, particularly in African tradition and culture (Kumbani 2023; 10; Price 2013: 227; Bokor 2014: 165). Research has shown that African drums have a distinct and

deeper symbolic value than Western music. Studies have shown that the significance of these drums varies depending on the location (Gardner 2016: 190; Vinesett, Price and Wilson 2015: 460). The following examples are two popular African drums and a depiction of how they are linked to traditions and rituals in most communities:

According to tradition, drums stand for the spirit of the local community. They are utilised in honour of rituals and ceremonial occasions within the community. They are also used to promote African heritage, and culture, and to bring together community life (Isabirye 2020: 47; Akombo 2020: 63). Nkosi and Van Niekerk (2017: 123) found that drumming is an important element in Zulu traditional celebrations and healing, and it is often paired with dance and chanting.

Ngoma

Ngoma are instruments used by certain Bantu communities in Africa. The Ngoma name comes from the Kongo phrase for "drum" (Janzen 1995: 141).

Ngoma is a tool used by families and traditional healers to call upon the spirits of their ancestors for healing (Friedson 2017: 130). Ngoma is a ritual that involves dancing and drumming to invoke ancestor spirits. Most families may choose to have this ritual performed by a sangoma. Thus, a sangoma and patient, together with family members, or a tribe or clan, can be involved (Monteiro and Wall 2011: 234; Vinesett, Price, and Wilson 2015: 460). These drums are employed in ceremonies in South Africa, primarily in rural communities, with the primary goal of promoting healing. The rituals include regular music and dance, and they help reduce stress, provide social support, and encourage pro-social behaviours (Janzen 2017: 46; Durojaye 2017: 170). Ngoma is commonly used to unite tribes and assist with health or life transitions. The ngoma drum is extremely popular in Zimbabwe, particularly for traditional dances and ceremonies (Jones 2012: 32; Chamisa 2017: 45).

The Djembe or Talking Drum

The talking drum has a thousand-year history, serving as hidden drums in major communities for rites of passage, ancestral worship, rituals, and social dances. In South Africa, the djembe drum is popular and plays an important part in many spiritual and ritual traditions (Vilakazi 2021: 44; Pleasant 2020: 45). According to the Bambara people of Mali, the name of the djembe derives from the phrase "Anke djé, anke bé," which translates to "everyone gathers together in peace." This term explains the drum's purpose. In the Bambara language, "dje" means "gather"

and "bé" means "peace" (Nishimura 2016: 50; Snow 2016: 190; Smith, Viljoen and McGeachie 2014: 441).

The Djembe drum has spiritual significance. According to research by Anderson (2010: 75), it has been used to prevent rain from disturbing ceremonies. Young girls assemble in a circle and use their hands to beat this drum as loudly as possible. Members of the community or those attending should sing a spiritual song (Damm 2017: 55; Nkosi and Van Niekerk 2017: 124)

2.11.3 Traditional dance

Zulu traditional dances are also performed to pay homage to important life events and to promote healing. There is a dance specifically designed to honour each unique occasion. The spear-wielding dance is intended to give men courage (Lambo 2017: 150; Manyeng 2015: 56; Mthombeni 2024: 2). Research has shown that in a majority of rural communities, men have often come together to protect their communities, thus preserving community life. Young men attend the circumcision ritual. Circumcision is performed as a rite of passage during puberty (Yende 2023: 300; Lambo 2017: 150; Isabirye 2020: 50).

As a result, men in these communities assemble to celebrate their unity by dancing while carrying small shields known as *ihawu*. This dance may also only be done on royal occasions. Another traditional dance is the *Indlamu*, which involves two dancers stomping energetically to the rhythm of the drums (Manyeng 2015: 56; Yende 2023: 300). Research conducted by Nkosi (2019: 4) has shown that the reed dance is another popular African traditional dance in rural areas. It is a special yearly occasion where only single girls dance while carrying a long reed above their heads. This signifies their purity and is important to help girls transition into womanhood and it acts as a rite of passage (Manning 2020: 15; Nkosi 2019: 4).

For young girls in rural communities, the traditional reed dance has great cultural and social value. The traditional reed dance displays the rich history and customs of their community, further fostering cultural identification and pride (Masango 2008: 66; Nkosi 2019: 11). Young girls who participate in the reed dance also learn discipline, respect, responsibility, and teamwork. Additionally, young girls from rural communities develop a strong sense of community and belonging through the reed dance (Sone 2010: 130; Mchunu 2020: 51; Nkosi 2019: 4).

2.11.4 Prayer

Ancestral prayer

Prayer is prevalent in South African rural communities, whether practised by Christians or African traditional religions. In traditional African worship, material and physical blessings are primarily the focus of prayers (Henry and Malan 2017: 4; Giordan and Woodhead 2017: 15). A long life, monetary wealth, triumph over adversaries, protection against evil spirits, and protection from sickness and death are a few of the key concerns (Hamilton *et al.* 2020: 168; Podolecka 2020: 110).

Praying to ancestors for healing and protection is an ancient tradition passed down through generations (Bogopa 2010: 2; Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 407). It is a way to connect with the past, to honour and remember those who came before, and to seek their guidance and wisdom as individuals embark on their journey of recovery (Foor 2017: 20; Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 407). One of the most important reasons to pray to ancestors for healing is that they have a thorough awareness of history and cultural roots (Edwards *et al.* 2011: 131; Vandoise 2019: 55; Mayers and Viviers 2016: 101).

Families believe that ancestors went through similar experiences and tribulations and passed on their knowledge and wisdom to them. Connecting with their souls and seeking their direction allows families to gain a better understanding of themselves and their place in the world. *Impepho* (burning of sage) is commonly used on such occasions (Thwala and Edwards 2021: 240; Edwards *et al.* 2009: 11; Bull and Lindquist 2018: 22).

According to Dlamini (2024: 92), most African cultures use “naming ceremonies” as a significant practice for healing their blood lineage. For example, in Zulu culture, a ceremony called *imbeleko* (*naming ceremony*) is performed to introduce the baby to the ancestors, thank them and ask them to protect the baby. Family elders often take the responsibility of performing such a ceremony (Oyama 2016: 8; Bogopa 2010: 5). If there is a newborn in the family, it is a tradition in some families that the child is taken to *umsamo*; a special and sacred place in a traditional hut reserved for ancestors (Bogopa 2010: 5).

The child will then be given a name or introduced to the ancestors, following which the family will pray and request guidance and protection for their child. This ritual is called *imbeleko* (*naming ceremony*), and a goat is slaughtered to make this successful (Nel 2011: 335; Ntsimane 2018: 302; Thwala and Edwards 2021: 240). Introductions and naming ceremonies are essential for the baby's health, longevity, and overall well-being, facilitated by the ancestors' spiritual guardianship. Previous research has shown that in traditional rural homes, names generally convey the hopes and expectations of a family for their child. Furthermore, research

by Reupert *et al.* 2022: 66) has shown that political, cultural and religious values are frequently reflected in names, including religious beliefs.

Similarly, in Sub-Saharan countries like Kenya, the Maasai babies receive names from village elders immediately after birth (Kerubo 2016: 102). These traditions are passed down for generations and are a core aspect of how African spirituality promotes the nurturing of new life and family well-being (Bosire *et al.* 2022: 1172). Furthermore, life-affirming rites of passage are observed to help a person effectively navigate the various stages of life (Asante and Mazama 2009: 18). These rituals primarily centre on life-cycle stages, such as birth, puberty and initiation, marriage, and death, during which the ancestors are revered, and their blessings and benevolence are requested (Lebese *et al.* 2022: 73; Van Gennep 2019: 36).

Sacred sites and prayer

Research has shown that religious practices, such as prayer, have long captivated scholars across diverse fields due to their interplay with the natural environment (Benson 2021: 13; Eade 2020: 649; Geary and Shinde 2021: 385). In traditional rural settings, sacred sites often functioned as unofficially protected areas, where religious customs and beliefs played a crucial role in preserving nature and natural resources (Altman 2002: 6; Rowkith and Bhagwan 2020: 3; Benson 2021: 13). Research by Pikirayi and Magoma (2021: 5) highlighted that rivers and waterfalls are considered sacred sites in an African context. A previous study by Nyamweru and Sheridan (2008: 258) concurred that in many African cultures, waterfalls are seen as sacred sites that mediate social and spiritual relationships and shape the history and identity of people (Geary and Shinde 2021: 385).

The majority of South African rural communities are home to churches like Zion Christian Churches, Apostolic Faith Churches, and many other African traditional religions (Resane 2020: 2; and Kgatle 2023: 4). These religions often use certain rivers as sacred grounds for their prayer sessions (Kgatle 2023: 5; Adebayo, Hunter and Raheem 2023: 92). In most religions, praying for water symbolises life and therefore spiritually blessed water is considered significant to family and community life (Brown, Muckaden and Mndende 2021: 44). Similarly, research has found that the Maasai people in Kenya, describe water as a "sacred artefact" that plays a central role in their way of life (Strang 2015: 2; Borona 2020: 1294).

A paper by Rowkith and Bhagwan (2020: 8) concurred that in many rural Indian communities, nature plays a significant role in community life. For example, plants and animals are

considered sacred, which helps spread cultural values among tribal communities (Nemudzudzanyi *et al.* 2010: 57; Anthwal *et al.* 2010: 962; Rowkith and Bhagwan 2020: 8). By praying to nature and respecting its mystical qualities, tribal people promote happiness and uphold their belief that they can ward off evil (Chatterjee and Sharma 2018; Sehgal *et al.* 2018). Additionally, nature provides them with sustenance in the absence of formal livelihoods, leading to a deep reverence and connectedness with the land and its resources (Kandari *et al.* 2014: 32). This profound connection to the land and its resources ensures their fundamental needs are fulfilled (Rowkith and Bhagwan 2020: 8; Kandari *et al.* 2014: 32). Beliefs, traditions, practices and rituals serve society in many different ways because of their comprehensive structure. They contribute significantly to socialisation, expression, and communication; they support the development and maintenance of a positive sense of self; and they provide an alternative cathartic experience for both families and the community at large (Baxter, Medlock, Griffith 2019: 144; Healey 2020: 405; Mbiti 2015: 150).

2.11.5 Cleansing and Purification Rituals

According to research by Lebesse *et al.* (2022: 20) and Singh and Bhagwan (2020: 408) families practise cleansing rituals to purify and protect their kin from the adverse experiences they face during life challenges. The healing process consists of a series of symbolically charged ceremonies aimed at restoring the individual's identity and reintegrating them into the community (Rowkith and Bhagwan 2020: 11; Honwana 1998: 75).

South African Traditional Zulu homes, use Inhlambuluko (healing the lineage through truth and reconciliation) as a cleansing practice that promotes healing and well-being for rural families and communities (Ndwandwe 2020: 214 and Docus 2017: 105). This practice of truth and reconciliation in African tradition enables people to break free from restrictive patterns and contribute to a more dynamic, integrated future for themselves and their family line by promoting forgiveness, restoring peace and mending broken connections, and honouring the experiences of their ancestors (Mabvurira 2016: 111; Murambadoro, Wielenga and Batley 2020: 43).

2.12 INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

According to Cindi (2021: 52), indigenous knowledge is the term used to describe the traditional wisdom, understanding, and information passed down through the generations. Henri *et al.* (2021: 120) argued that the development of Western education, which substituted traditional

learning methods and undermined indigenous teachings, significantly disrupted this knowledge system.

Indigenous knowledge systems, or IKS, have a long history in South Africa and are firmly rooted in oral tradition. Indigenous knowledge systems are constantly evolving. There's always more to learn (Glazebrook 2021: 730; Breidlid 2009: 140). Indigenous knowledge systems absorb, use, and modify outside knowledge to fit the needs of the local environment as well as create new ideas from within. It has been shown that indigenous knowledge is systematic and organised within indigenous groups (Mukuka 2010: 182; Balogun and Kalusopa 2021: 176).

Indigenous knowledge is communicated through stories, songs, folklore, proverbs, dances, myths, cultural values, beliefs, rituals, community laws, local language and taxonomy, agricultural techniques, tools, materials, plant species, and animal breeds. It is additionally preserved in peoples' memories and activities (Kimmerer 2011: 257; Ntsimane 2018: 302; Govender, Mudaly and James 2013: 154).

Indigenous knowledge holders are becoming more prevalent in South Africa's educational settings, as more families and young people look for alternatives to the current model of education or want their children to learn more (Cindi 2021: 172). African identity is distinguished by indigenous knowledge. Individuals can only remember who they are and feel proud to share that identity with coming generations by taking a close look at the past (Masenya 2020: 464; Ndlovu, Ndlovu and Nyathi 2024: 195).

This is another connection people share with their ancestors. It is how people honour the ones who have passed away and establish the groundwork for modern-day African society. To improve an understanding of the potential benefits that society could gain from indigenous knowledge, it is necessary to break down certain components of this knowledge and focus on their advantages (Bahamonde 2015: 200; Cindi 2021: 172; Khumalo and Baloyi 2017: 15).

2.12.1 Indigenous knowledge in observation from millennia

The foundation of Indigenous Knowledge is information gathered over millennia of observation. Indigenous Peoples have long recorded these observations in their stories, songs, place names, values, and languages (Scwàb 2023: 159; Masenya 2020: 464). These observations are transmitted to younger generations through intergenerational communication (Knight 2011: 160). Children learn from this and feel more connected to future generations and their

ancestors. Indigenous people have continued to gather and refine their knowledge through life experience (Etieyibo 2022: 31; Kalvari and Sasirasi 2023: 786).

For example, traditional or spiritual songs, known as "amahubo" in rural communities, are taught and passed down in family households from generation to generation (Lebaka 2021: 228). When a prayer or ritual is ready to be performed, these songs are sung by a river. Young people are taught these songs in their family traditional huts. These songs are usually sung during difficult times or in response to a death in the family. Their purpose is to offer consolation and give families strength (Schloss 2017: 499; Kimmerer 2011: 260; Sirayi, Kanyane and Verdini 2021: 130).

2.12.2 Indigenous knowledge in environment

Given that Indigenous people are rooted in the land and their knowledge is derived from their observations, their knowledge is likewise spatial. Because Indigenous Peoples are land-dwellers and possess a deep grasp of the local ecology, their knowledge is additionally rooted in place (Mavhura and Mushure 2019: 83; Ubisi, Kolanisi and Jiri 2020: 273). Through subsistence methods, Indigenous families acquire ties to land and place in the early stages and these connections provide them with cultural lifelong protection and well-being (Ayeni and Aborisade 2022: 155).

For example, local knowledge of plants/herbs such as *Umvuyo* (African/ Wild Medlar). When combined with a little sugar and water, the pulp of these pleasant, healthy, and delicious fruits makes an excellent substitute for applesauce. This plant is regarded as a traditional health food of the Zulu Nation and Northern Sotho people (Okem and Odindo 2020: 93).

However, the significance of this South African wild fruit tree is widely used for medicinal purposes, and it is believed to protect homes from lightning. Elders recommend that families have this tree to ensure their homes are always safe. Although these trees grow randomly, research has shown that families find and plant them for these reasons (Dery 1999: 190; Mahmood *et al.* 2013: 114; Asfaw *et al.* 2022: 26).

The UmLahlankosi tree, meaning "which buries the Chief" is another tree believed to protect homes from lightning. Elders have shared that it was once customary that when a Zulu chief died, the tree was planted on his grave to serve as a remembrance or symbol of his final resting place. Hence the term *umLahlankosi* "that which buries the chief" (Impey 2006: 92; Hamber and Hamber 2009: 8).

Families also use branches of this tree to bring home their loved one's spirit from the scene of death. The belief is that this allows the deceased to rest peacefully and prevents family members from passing away in the same manner. These two trees preserve family life by protecting family homesteads and the family lineage (Makhathini 2021: 240; Ntsimane 2018: 306; Shula and Gardener 2006: 9).

2.12.3 Indigenous knowledge in farming

Indigenous knowledge is dynamic and not static since it is based on observation as well as on intergenerational evidence. People's body of knowledge expands from observation and learning, and they adapt their behaviour in response to the new information. Technological developments, the best times for harvesting plants and animals, how many eggs to remove from a bird nest, and a host of other topics might all be included in this knowledge (Shukla and Gardner 2006: 5; Silalahi 2015: 44).

Rural families therefore use nature and their environment as means of survival. This knowledge provides rural families with problem-solving strategies. Consequently, these strategies contribute significantly to the food security of rural households (Ntsimane 2018: 306). For example, crop farming such as sugarcane, maize, and rice is important in supporting families and livelihoods. Skills are passed to children and grandchildren by lifelong application. It is critical to understand which crops to plant and where and when to produce each type of crop (Sithole 2020: 203).

Indigenous people also teach children how to predict rain, so that these crops can be sustained. Crops in rural communities are grown and harvested for subsistence and profit. Studies reveal that in rural areas, crops are usually shared more among communities and families than they are sold for a profit (Fan *et al.* 2013: 109; Mujuru and Obi 2020: 3272; Sibhatu and Qaim 2017: 186).

2.12.4 Indigenous knowledge in kinship

Indigenous knowledge describes how individuals relate to their kin in the natural, metaphysical, mystical, and divine realms, thereby organising the universe in a holistic and inherently spiritual manner. Indigenous people find spiritual fulfilment and a sense of well-being in their kinship relationships to everything, which they use to engage in spirituality daily (Tynan 2021: 297; Killback 2019: 34; Khumalo and Baloyi 2017: 14).

Another method to engage in spirituality and establish connections with the natural world, the spiritual world, many Gods and Goddesses, the Creator, and each other is through the practice of ceremony through various means e.g., prayer, dances, song, tales (Sponsel 2020: 226; Ferguson 2010: 108; Rowkith and Bhagwan 2020: 549).

Naming ceremonies are among the earliest rituals children and their families go through in many indigenous cultures. Names connected to African proverbs are purposefully given to children (Machate-Kabinde, Mandende and Cekiso 2023: 10). Indigenous Knowledge passed down through storytelling and proverbs also connect children with their ancestors, the land, and their identity through these names (Mutunda 2016: 75; Irvine and Gunner 2018: 173).

African proverbs are deep-meaning statements of knowledge gained from observing society's surroundings. A proverb is a phrase, saying, sentence, statement, or expression from folklore that incorporates ethical behaviour, wisdom, truth, experience, lessons learned, and guidance (Alli 2012: 27; Masenya 2020: 464; Dudgeon and Bray 2019: 23).

In rural communities, elderly relatives can link children's names to proverbs and use those proverbs to warn them against risky behaviour, remind them of who they are or give them life-changing advice. Additionally, it gives them a voice that has been silenced by patriarchy. Women also employ African proverbs and further impart them to female children (Hoderi 2009: 34; Masenya 2020: 464; Gyan, Abby and Baffoe 2020: 22). Due to their wisdom and knowledge, these African proverbs help foster close relationships between elderly women and young children. Furthermore, these African proverbs protect the family lines (Nkuna 2015: 48; Steward 2013: 17; Lajul 2024: 151).

The significance of indigenous knowledge systems in South Africa should therefore be emphasised. These behaviours should be understood, documented and taught to young people. It is possible to compare losing one's Indigenous knowledge to losing one's identity, or the inherent aspect of an African society (Tynan 2021: 300; Henri *et al.* 2021: 122; Mangare and Li 2018: 10).

2.13 CONCLUSION

This chapter examined the literature relevant to the aim of the study. The literature that was sourced was determined by the objectives of the study. The body of research on the use of African spirituality to strengthen, protect and preserve family life was analysed and reviewed. The research focused on several themes, namely, the resilience of rural communities, the use

of different rituals, customs and indigenous knowledge by families to preserve and restore family life, and the importance of Ubuntu in preserving community life (Waghid 2020: 299; Dillard and Neal 2022: 370). The following chapter will describe the methodology employed in this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This study used qualitative research methodology to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the use of spiritual beliefs and practices by rural families in the community of Ndwedwe (Silverman 2016: 110). An exploratory design was adopted, enabling a more comprehensive insight into the lived experiences of the participants (De Vos 2018: 30). The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews, gathering data from twelve family members, and facilitated a focus group discussion with fifteen traditional leaders and community elders to achieve the study objectives. This study provided a thorough understanding of the participants' feelings, opinions, perspectives, experiences, and interpretations of events (Swedberg 2020: 17).

This chapter outlines the research methodology, the research design, the sampling process, the process for data collection and the data analysis procedures. It further details the role of the researcher, reflexivity, ethical considerations, and the limitations of the study.

3.2 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative research methodology. According to De Vos (2018: 30), qualitative research is the systematic inquiry of social occurrences within natural environments. These phenomena include how individuals experience aspects of their lives, how people and groups behave, and how interactions shape relationships. A study by Aspers and Corte (2019: 139) stated that in qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary data collection tool. The researcher explores why events occur, what happens, and the significance of those events for the participants under study (Jackson, Drummond, Camara 2007: 21).

Flick, Von Kardorff and Steinke (2004: 3) asserted that qualitative research employs a variety of data collection techniques such as in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, ethnographic observations, and document analysis. Some of the key characteristics of this approach are flexibility and its focus on understanding processes, meanings, and experiences, rather than quantifying variables or testing hypotheses (Kalu and Bwalya 2017: 44; Chesebro and Borisoff 2007: 3). Additionally, qualitative research allows the researcher to incorporate their interpretations and observations into the inquiry (Silverman 2016: 110).

Fossey *et al.* (2002: 717) are of the view that to better understand the research participants, the social and environmental contexts must be explored. The current study included the rural community context, the living conditions, adversities faced by rural families, the use of African spiritual beliefs and practices, and the support networks within African spirituality (De Vos 2018: 90).

In using the qualitative approach, the study sought to understand African spirituality from the perspective of rural families, traditional leaders and community elders' perspective through interviews, a focus group discussion, and the analysis of the data. Considering the semi-structured nature of the interview, and focus group methods, the flexibility allowed for continued exploration and investigation of diverse perspectives as the research progressed (Horton, Macve and Struyven 2004: 339).

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

According to Dannels (2018: 402) a research design can be referred to as a framework or the overall strategy used when conducting a research study. It outlines the procedures necessary for obtaining the information required to structure or solve research problems (Leavy 2017: 2; and Wright *et al.* 2016: 97). Fundamentally, the research design is a blueprint that outlines the

methods and procedures used for gathering, measuring and analysing data. Myers, Well and Lorch (2013: 32) further stated that a research design considers various factors before it is developed, namely, the objectives timelines, available resources, and how the key variables will be studied, measured and analysed. As a critical component of the research study, the research design has helped the researcher select the most effective method to generate results for the research questions.

This study adopted an exploratory, interpretivism approach as it sought to explore and understand how African spiritual beliefs and practices can be used to strengthen family and community life. Exploratory research seeks to investigate a problem or phenomenon that is not well understood (De Vos 2018: 30; Starke, Luce and Sillito 2009: 157). It is often used to identify new ideas and insights, and to develop hypotheses for future research (Swedberg 2020: 17). Exploratory research is typically conducted at the initial stage of a research project. It is characterised by a flexible and open-ended approach to data collection and analysis (Steven and Wrenn 2013: 53).

According to De Vos (2018: 30), exploratory research can help in defining the research design, sampling strategy and data collection method. This type of inquiry is commonly used to examine emerging problems that have received limited or no prior investigation. Additionally, exploratory studies often employ interpretive research methods to investigate research questions focused on understanding the "what," "why," and "how" of a phenomenon (Waters 2007: 275; Mabaka and Isiramen 2021: 27). The purpose of exploratory research designs is not to provide final or conclusive answers, but rather to explore and investigate the research topic in-depth (De Langhe and Schliesser 2017: 227). This study was exploratory as it sought to explore and provide information on the African spiritual beliefs and practices used to strengthen family and community life in a rural context. This research method was suitable for this research study because it explored human behaviour, people's interactions, and social relationships and gained a thorough understanding of people's lives, knowledge and experiences within the context of African spirituality (Pulla and Carter 2018: 9).

According to Alharahsheh and Pius (2020: 41), interpretivism is mainly concerned with an in-depth examination of factors related to a given context. It considers humans as distinct from physical phenomena, as they create further depth of meaning, with the assumption that human beings cannot be explored in the same way as physical phenomena (Alharahsheh and Pius 2020: 41; Pulla and Carter 2018: 10). Interpretivism considers differences such as cultures,

circumstances, as well as periods which contribute to the construction of diverse social realities (Gichuru 2017: 2)

Pulla and Carter 2018: 10; Pervin and Mokhtar 2023: 419). Interpretivism aims to include richness in the insights gathered rather than attempting to formulate definite and universal laws that can be generalised and applicable to everyone regardless of some key variables and factors (Sullivan 2016: 172; Alharahsheh and Pius 2020: 42).

According to Gichuru (2017: 5) the interpretive research paradigm allows a researcher to examine different factors, such as the behavioural aspects stemming from participants' experiences. This approach helps to describe reality based on the assumptions and beliefs held by the interpretivist researcher (Potrac, Jones and Nelson 2014: 31). Additionally, the interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to treat the research context and situation as unique, taking into consideration the given circumstances and involved unique participants (Pervin and Mokhtar 2022: 419; Alharahsheh and Pius 2020: 42). This paradigm also supports a more focused investigation of the specific topic, deterring the research from heading towards a broader generalisation (Sullivan 2016: 172; Potrac, Jones and Nelson 2014: 31).

3.4 THE RESEARCHER AND REFLEXIVITY

According to Haynes (2012: 72), reflexivity is when a researcher acknowledges their role in research. Reid *et al.* (2018: 69) confirmed that a qualitative researcher is part of the research process which means prior experiences, assumptions and beliefs will influence the research process. Haynes (2012: 72) further identified that researcher reflexivity is a critical reflection of the position that the researcher will be taking and the stance that is taken into account regarding their research. Reflexivity must be utilised and reported on as it is important to establish and produce a rigorous and trustworthy report (Dodgson 2019: 220; Nadin and Cassell 2006: 208).

Hsiung (2008: 211) Being reflexive involves considering the cultural, political, social, and intellectual origins of one's perspective, the opinions of those interviewed, and the viewpoints presented in the study (Reid *et al.* 2018: 70; Haynes 2012: 73). This section covered three aspects of reflexivity. It begins with explaining the role of the researcher which this study will provide a clearer understanding of the motivation behind the study. Then it describes how reflexivity was implemented, and lastly, it reflects on the researcher process.

3.4.1 The researcher in context

The researcher grew up in the rural community of the Maphumulo area, in KwaZulu-Natal, in a grandparent-headed household. The researcher identifies as an African Christian, which means her family practices Christianity in an African worldview, and they also uphold the beliefs of African spirituality. The researcher's upbringing exposed her to diverse spiritual traditions, and she continues to engage with African spiritual beliefs and practices alongside her Christian faith.

The researcher acknowledges that this upbringing has in some way influenced her approach to the current study. The findings are not biased as the experiences, spiritual beliefs and practices differ according to each person's place of birth, family background and culture. For quite some time, the researcher has had a deep desire to help children and families, especially those who reside in rural communities. Professionally, the researcher holds a Bachelor's Degree in Child and Youth Care. The field of discipline the researcher chose, helped influence her desire to help rural families.

The knowledge and practical experience gained from her undergraduate degree have helped expose her to different interventions that help disadvantaged children and families. This study allowed the researcher to consider integrating African spiritual beliefs and practices into the multifaceted problems faced by families in rural communities, as an effective healing tool. Consequently, this helped the researcher develop a study that explored the role of African spirituality as an intervention and source of support for rural families and communities. Although the Ndwedwe area was a neighbouring area of Maphumulo, the researcher had never been to Ndwedwe before this study. This meant that the researcher was unfamiliar with this area. This confirms that the researcher did not know anyone from Ndwedwe and had no pre-existing informal relationship with the participants. Therefore, this served as a boundary because the researcher could not influence the participants' responses.

3.4.2 Reflecting through diary keeping

According to Mosurska (2022: 51) keeping a diary is an effective approach for maintaining awareness. Researchers can gain a better understanding of how their subjectivities have influenced the research by keeping a journal of their thoughts, feelings, and choices during research.

Dickson-Shift *et al.* (2007: 327) asserted that the diary includes information about the researcher, including their challenges, what the researcher does, and the process of research.

It improves the data provided by the research methodology. The researcher kept a detailed diary, recording her personal experiences and challenges encountered throughout the research process. The diary included a section for reflections and tips that could benefit future students who may embark on a similar research journey.

There was a stage where interviews and the analysis process raised concerns and uncertainties. Greene (2014: 1) stated that keeping a diary and engaging in discussions with two trusted individuals whose diverse perspectives differed from the researcher, helped with the direction of the interview, focus group discussion and analysis process. Participant confidentiality was maintained when this occurred after the interview or focus group discussion (Robinson 2020: 338).

Following the conversations with two trusted individuals, the researcher engaged in a process of working through their concerns and uncertainties. This was beneficial as it helped inform and refine the researcher's views. According to Olmos-Vega (2023: 241) discussions with the two trusted individuals, and some of the participants, created opportunities for the researcher to examine and clarify their perspectives and thoughts thereby enabling a more thorough and rigorous interpretations of their work. Engaging in these discussions meant the researcher could explore her assumptions and understandings of African spirituality and rural communities. As new information and knowledge were generated, these assumptions and understandings were enhanced and adjusted (Olmos-Vega 2023: 242).

3.4.3 Reflecting on the research process

The current study is the first that the researcher undertook, and being someone who grew up in a rural community, and practised African spirituality, made it a natural phenomenon to explore. Due to personal experience, the aim and objectives resonated with her journey. Once the research process began, the researcher realised that there were some studies related to this topic, but nothing specifically targeted at looking at the context of rural families. This lack of literature made the study significant and valuable.

Choosing the setting and population was based on the needs of the Ndwedwe community, as evident within the Isibindi project reports, which found that there is a growing number of grandmother-headed households and child-headed households. In such households, there is a spread of poverty, inadequate housing, employment scarcity and financial constraints. Consequently, this has led to the instability of families (Allsopp *et al.* 2018: 338). The researcher

therefore concluded that the households could benefit from the study. The population, family members, traditional leaders and community elders, were selected because they were suitable to give

in-depth rich answers to the research questions. To avoid coercion, the researcher asked the gatekeeper to help with the recruitment process, instead of the researcher recruiting participants directly. This also allowed participants to decline if they did not want to be part of the study. The similarities between the participants and the researcher were that they were both African from a rural community and practised African spirituality. The differences were mostly their socioeconomic status, and they were older than the researcher.

The participants knew that the researcher shared similar spiritual beliefs. This allowed participants to open up and freely express themselves. This made the process easier because the researcher could quickly grasp the participants' answers and details regarding their spirituality. In a way, both the researcher and the participants contributed to the research process, resulting in a rich collection of data that addressed the research questions.

Conflict sometimes occurred between gaining new knowledge because it was interesting and gaining knowledge that met the research aim and objectives as the participants deviated from the study objectives. In cases where new knowledge was gained, and existing assumptions were challenged, engaging in dialogue and diary-keeping helped the researcher explore how this new information could expand or reshape her perspectives.

When the gatekeeper introduced the researcher, they shared the researcher's background with the participants including where the researcher was from. Individuals who chose to participate knew the researcher's background and beliefs, which helped build rapport between the researcher and participants. Some participants also felt more comfortable after this information was provided.

To create a sense of shared vulnerability and encourage open and honest communication, the researcher answered all personal questions from the participants honestly. Another approach the researcher used to make the participants more comfortable was to be flexible with the interview dates, considering the individual's schedule, when choosing the focus group discussion date (Dempsey *et al.* 2016: 480; Hennink 2013: 35).

The researcher assumed that participant availability would be challenging, especially on days when the weather was bad (i.e. heavy rains) since they lived in a rural community with poor

roads. This assumption proved true in some cases. In other cases, flexibility was still applied with the expectation that participants might not be as invested in the research as the researcher.

3.5 STUDY SETTING

According to Luborsky and Rubinstein (1995: 89), a study setting refers to the specific environment or context in which the research study is conducted. The study setting significantly impacts the research process and findings. The geographical setting of this study was Ndwedwe, a mission area in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. Ndwedwe can be described as a predominantly Zulu-speaking, traditional rural community (Tuli 2016: 1).

According to Municipality and BAG (2016), Ndwedwe municipality is a Category B municipality within the iLembe District in the KwaZulu-Natal Province. The Ndwedwe area is 1, 200 square kilometres in size and situated 80 kilometres north of Durban (Tuli 2016: 1). Ndwedwe consists mainly of poor black communities whose livelihoods depend on subsistence farming and crafting. Despite being near major urban and economic growth areas, the region has remained significantly underdeveloped, disadvantaged, and impoverished (Stats SA 2016; Municipality and BAG 2016).

- The population of the Ndwedwe area in 2020 was 143 117 people (Stats SA 2020; Community Survey 2016). According to the race demographic, this population consisted of 99% Black. Information on the Ndwedwe area was accessed through Wazimap, an online database that provides useful facts and grants access to South African census and elections data (Municipality and BAG 2012; Shangase 2017: 18). The data from the 2016 community survey applicable to the current study setting is as follows:
 - The population by age: 10% (65-year-olds and over), 19% (35- to 64-year-olds) and 36% (15- to 34-year-olds).
 - The languages spoken: 96% isiZulu, 2% Not applicable, 1% isiXhosa and 1% English.
 - There were 33 883 households: 48.9% House, 37.1% Traditional, 6.8% Shack, 3.4% Flat in backyard, and 3.9% Other.
 - Household heads: 45% men and 55% women. Three hundred and thirty-three households were headed by children under 18 years old.
 - People employed: 14.1%, with an average annual household income was R15 000.

Regarding families in the Ndwedwe mission area, at least 89.9 % of the households identified as African Christians. This meant they believed in African spirituality and practiced various

spiritual beliefs and practices (Shangase 2017: 53). The majority of women-headed households were made up of grandmothers raising their grandchildren (Makhalima 2011: 44).

The 2016 Community Survey also showed that 1.8% of children (14 years and under) had no living biological parents (Stats SA 2016). In addition to the high number of grandmother-headed households and child-headed households the Ndwedwe community faced issues of poverty, inadequate housing, teenage pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and alcohol abuse (Stats SA 2016).

3.6 STUDY POPULATION

According to Sherbinin *et al.* (2007: 345), a population is a distinct group of individuals, such as a nation or a group of people with common characteristics. A population is a pool of individuals from which a statistical sample is drawn for a study. A set of individuals grouped by a common feature can be said to be a population. The population for this study was taken from the community of Ndwedwe, mission area. The specific number of people who resided in the Mission area was unknown; however, according to the 2016 Community Survey, the population of Ndwedwe was estimated to be 143 117.

3.7 STUDY SAMPLE

The study sample refers to the participants in a study. It essentially represents the number of participants involved (De Wind *et al.* 2019: 46). The sample is broken down by major demographic characteristics such as age, gender, language, race and socio-economic status. A study sample should be a smaller and manageable version of a larger group (Hennik *et al.* 2019: 80).

For this study, there were two samples. The study began with an initial sample of twelve family members and twelve traditional leaders and community elders. Data saturation was reached after in-depth interviews with twelve family members and a focus group discussion that included fifteen traditional leaders and community elders, totalling 27 participants. The samples included individuals who were disadvantaged, faced adversities and understood and practiced African spiritual beliefs and customs. Each participant was given a pseudonym to protect their identity.

The age range for this study was between 29 and 86 years old. This range was chosen purposefully to provide diverse perspectives, experiences and depth in responses. The entire sample was selected from within the Ndwedwe community, and data was collected until saturation.

According to Hennik *et al.* (2019: 80), the study selected a smaller number of participants due to limited time, the aim to gain rich information on the use of African spirituality in combating adversities and to determine whether the further inquiry would be useful in contributing to the field of social sciences. After approaching the councillor with gatekeeper permission (Appendix C), twenty-seven participants were contacted by the researcher and participated in the study.

3.8 INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

According to Patino and Ferreira (2018: 84), inclusion criteria determine the study population in a consistent, dependable, uniform and objective manner. Exclusion criteria include aspects or characteristics that make the recruited population ineligible for the study. Hornberger and Rangu (2020: 3) stated that the population parameters and inclusion and exclusion criteria used to decide who could and could not be included in the study sample are outlined below.

Sample 1:

Inclusion Criteria

- Family members who are currently residing in Ndwedwe, mission area
- Family members who believe in African spirituality
- Diversity of all sexual orientations
- Those who give consent

Exclusion Criteria

- Family members who are living outside Ndwedwe
- Family members who do not believe in African spirituality
- No one will be excluded based on their sexual orientation
- Those who do not give consent

Sample 2:

Inclusion Criteria

- Traditional healers/community elders currently residing in Ndwedwe, mission area
- Traditional healers with at least 5 years of experience in African spirituality practice
- Community elders with an understanding of African spirituality
- Community elders over the age of 60 years
- Diversity of all sexual orientations

- Those who give consent

Exclusion Criteria

- Traditional healers/community elders not residing in Ndwedwe, mission area
- Traditional healers with less than 5 years of experience in African spirituality practice
- Community elders without much understanding of African spirituality
- Community elders younger than 60 years of age
- No one will be excluded based on their sexuality
- Those who do not give consent

3.9 SAMPLING PROCESS

This study used a non-probability sampling strategy, specifically a purposive technique to select participants. Vehovar and Toepoel (2016: 329) defined non-probability sampling as a method for selecting individuals from a subjective population (i.e., not random). Kohler (2019: 1) stated that non-probability sampling is a quick, simple, and cost-effective approach to collecting data because it does not require a complete survey frame.

According to Campbell *et al.* (2020: 652), purposive sampling is the intentional selection of individuals based on characteristics, expertise, experiences, or other criteria. Andrade (2021: 86) stated that this sampling strategy, also known as judgemental sampling, focuses on the researcher's judgement to identify and pick the individuals, cases, or events that will generate the most information to accomplish the study's objectives. Nyimbili and Nyimbili (2024: 90) asserted that purposive sampling is common in qualitative and mixed-methods research. It is particularly beneficial if a researcher needs to find information-rich cases or make the most effective use of limited resources. This technique assisted the researcher in finding participants who met the population parameters and had the knowledge, interpretations, interactions, and experience that the researcher needed (Rai and Thapa 2015: 8).

3.9.1 Recruitment of participants

Sample 1:

The researcher obtained ethical approval from the Durban University of Technology (Appendix G), after which the researcher took a gatekeeper letter (Appendix C (1)) and the research proposal to the councillor of Ndwedwe, mission area. The gatekeeper letter requested that families, African traditional leaders/healers and community elders of the Ndwedwe community

be recruited from the community, and to use the community hall for conducting interviews. The ward councillor granted the researcher gatekeeper permission, and a formal signed letter was sent back to the researcher (Appendix C (2)). After the ward councillor granted the researcher gatekeeper permission, the researcher asked the ward councillor to help recruit and identify suitable participants for sample 1, i.e., the family members who practiced African spirituality in Ndwedwe, mission area. The researcher felt it as convenient and necessary to approach the ward councillor to recruit participants because he is a community leader who is well-known and respected. The potential participants were also better familiar with the community councillor, making it easier and more efficient to reach them.

The researcher then gave the ward councillor a letter of information (Appendix D (1) and Appendix D (2)) which included a summary of the study, what was expected from each participant, and the criteria for possible participants. Recruitment happened through invitations that were sent out to community members who were potential participants and deemed suitable for the study, this meeting occurred in a community hall and it was between the ward councillor and community members who were invited, the ward councillor explained to the community members the purpose and significance of the study, and those who were interested in participating in the study provided their contact details which was shared with the researcher. The ward councillor provided the researcher with a list of family members who agreed to participate and met the criteria of the study. This list included their cell phone numbers. Once the researcher received the list of family members who agreed to participate in the study, the researcher reached out via phone calls to set up interviews with the respective family members. Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted to get in-depth and meaningful discussions on the topic. Osborne and Grant-Smith (2021: 105) identified that one-on-one interviews were advantageous because they provided the researcher with an opportunity to speak with participants more effectively and explore different aspects of the topic in-depth with each interviewee. After recruitment took place, the researcher gave participants an information letter (Appendix D (1) and D (2)), a letter of consent (Appendix F (1) and Appendix F (2)) and an interview guide (Appendix A (1) and Appendix A (2)). No form of coercion took place. All participants who took part in the study participated voluntarily, and only participants who gave consent were included in this study. The questions on the interview guides aimed to understand families' perspectives on African spirituality and how it improves and strengthens their family and community life.

The questions were also aimed at understanding the challenges and adversities that families encounter and some of the key traditions that families and the community of Ndwedwe use. All interviews were conducted face-to-face in Ndwedwe, Tholimpilo Organisation Hall. The venue was convenient and quiet. Each interview took approximately 30 minutes for individual interviews, and they were audio recorded.

Sample 2:

After the ward councillor granted the researcher gatekeeper permission, the researcher asked the ward councillor to help with recruitment and identify suitable participants for sample 2. The ward councillor identified and recruited traditional leaders and community elders residing in Ndwedwe, mission area. The researcher then gave the ward councillor a letter of information (Appendix E (1) and Appendix E (2) which included a summary of the study, what was expected from each participant and the criteria for possible participants. The researcher felt it as convenient and necessary to approach the ward councillor to recruit participants because he is a community leader who is well-known and respected. Moreover, the ward councillor was more familiar with the community and knew of traditional leaders and community elders who would make suitable participants. The potential participants were also better familiar with the community councillor, making it easier and more efficient to reach them. Recruitment occurred through invitations that were sent out to traditional leaders and community elders who were potential participants and deemed suitable for the study, this meeting occurred in a community hall, and was between the ward councillor and traditional leaders and community elders who were invited, the ward councillor explained to the traditional leaders and community elders the purpose and significance of the study, and those who were interested in participating in the study provided their contact details which was shared with the researcher.

The ward councillor gave the researcher a list of traditional leaders and community elders who agreed to participate and met the criteria of the study. This list included their cell phone numbers. Once the researcher received the list of traditional leaders and the community elders who agreed to participate in the study, the researcher reached out via phone calls and met with some of them to set up a focus group discussion. The researcher facilitated a focus group discussion to get in-depth and meaningful discussions on the topic. After recruitment took place, the researcher gave participants an information letter (Appendix E (1) and E (2), a letter of consent (Appendix F (1) and F (2), and a focus group discussion schedule (Appendix B (1) and

Appendix B (2). No form of coercion took place. All participants who took part in this study participated voluntarily, and only participants who gave their consent were included in this study.

According to Robinson (2020: 338), focus groups are especially useful as a complementary method to other forms of data collection, providing in-depth information in a relatively short period. One of the biggest benefits of a focus group is that people tend to be more honest in their answers, and it allows participants to build on the ideas of others. Focus groups are qualitative by nature; therefore, researchers can understand or confirm the significance of the data by examining beyond what may be learned from group discussions (Hennink, Kaiser and Weber 2019: 183). Focus group discussion questions aimed to understand the challenges and adversities facing families and the community in Ndwedwe, the knowledge of African spirituality and its impact on family and community well-being, and the healing methodologies traditional leaders use to support and help families cope. A focus group discussion was conducted face-to-face at Ndwedwe, Tholimpilo Organisation Hall. This venue was convenient and quiet. After participants decided to participate, they submitted their completed consent papers. The focus group discussion ran for approximately one and a half hours.

Data collection ceased once data saturation was achieved, meaning the researcher had collected enough rich data to address the study questions. After twelve interviews and a focus group discussion with fifteen participants, it was clear that sufficient themes, variations, knowledge and experiences were emerging to fulfil the research objectives (Braun and Clarke 2021: 201).

3.10 DATA COLLECTION PROCESS

According to Wilson and Miller (2014: 15), data collection is the process of gathering, measuring and analysing accurate data from various relevant sources to find answers to research problems. During the data collection, the researcher must identify the type of data, sources and methods to be used. Accurate data collection is crucial for maintaining the integrity of the study (Dawson 2019: 621).

3.10.1 Semi-structured interviews

The researcher used semi-structured interviews to interview Sample 1, which comprised family members of Ndwedwe, mission area. As described above, the qualitative research method gathers participants' experiences, behaviours, knowledge and perceptions regarding a particular topic (De Vos 2018: 30). Therefore, the most effective method to collect data, and

explore the adversities faced by families and the community in Ndwedwe, their spiritual beliefs and practices, was one-on-one, in-depth interviews with family members. Interviews ensured that the researcher gathered the necessary information required for this study.

The researcher chose semi-structured interviews to maintain flexibility, as this form of the interview was more appropriate for the research topic, which was complex and personal (Mannan and Afni 2020: 2). According to Adams (2015: 492), semi-structured interviews are a qualitative research method whereby a researcher asks a series of predetermined open-ended questions but also allows the flexibility to explore additional relevant topics that may arise during the conversation. Longhurst (2003: 143) stated that this form of interview finds a balance between structured and unstructured interviews, ensuring consistency and flexibility. The interview guide, which included the questions and prompts, was based on the research questions of the study and a review of the existing literature on the topic (Ahlin 2019: 3; Raworth *et al.* 2012: 1).

Face-to-face interviews proved to be the most useful method to collect data, as they helped explore and better understand traditional leaders' and community elders' interpretations of events, challenges, strategies and lived experiences. The interviews lasted 30 minutes per participant (Schober 2018: 290). As the interview progressed, the participants felt more comfortable and shared richer information that addressed the research questions.

According to Ruslin *et al.* (2022: 22) the advantage of using semi-structured interviews is that it allows two-way communication, making participants feel that their viewpoints are valued. Another advantage is that the researcher could probe, allowing the interview to gather deeper answers as the participants expanded on what they had shared. This enabled the researcher to have a richer understanding of the participants' perspectives (Belina 2023: 331).

3.10.2 Focus group discussion

The researcher used a focus group discussion for Sample 2 which comprised traditional leaders and community elders of the Ndwedwe, mission area. One effective method to collect data and understand the spiritual beliefs and practices of the community was a face-to-face discussion with traditional leaders and community elders.

According to Nyumba *et al.* (2018: 21), a focus group discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research method in which a researcher facilitates a selected group of participants who can discuss a given topic or issue in-depth. A focus group discussion often comprises a schedule that includes

predetermined open-ended questions. It allows the flexibility to explore additional relevant topics that may arise during the group discussion (Gammie, Hamilton and Gilchrist 2017: 372). A focus group discussion allows the researcher to obtain the participants' narratives and their differences in terms of experience, attitudes, and worldviews. The researcher had an interview schedule for focus group discussion, which included the questions and prompts. This was based on the research question of the study and a review of the existing literature on the topic (Nyumba *et al.* 2018: 20).

According to Schober (2018: 290), face-to-face discussions proved to be the most useful method to collect data. This method helped explore and understand traditional healers and community elders' feelings, attitudes, interpretations of events, challenges, and lived experiences. The focus group discussion lasted 1 hour and 30 minutes. As the discussion progressed, participants felt more comfortable and open. They engaged in the discussion and shared richer information that addressed the research questions.

The advantages of using a focus group discussion are that it allows participants to build on one another's responses and generate ideas they might not have thought of in an individual interview setting. Moreover, the researcher could easily interact with the participants, which allowed for follow-up questions (Nyumba *et al.* 2018: 20; Gammie, Hamilton and Gilchrist 2017: 372).

3.11 DATA COLLECTION TOOL

An interview schedule (Appendix A (1) and Appendix A (2) and a focus discussion group schedule (Appendix B (1) and Appendix B (2) were used as the data collection tools. According to Prescott (2011: 16), these were the most appropriate tools, as the set of predetermined open-ended questions helped guide the interviews, but did not limit the researcher from further questioning during the interview process.

The interview and focus group questions were developed based on the objectives and research questions of the study. During the initial write-up of the interview schedule and focus group protocol, the questions were pre-tested with colleagues to ensure they were suitable and not overly ambiguous. The interview questions allowed the participants to describe the challenges they face, their feelings, and how they use spiritual beliefs and practices to strengthen family and community life. Focus group questions allowed participants to openly discuss the adversities they faced, their interactions, social relationships and the various spiritual beliefs

and practices they sought as a support mechanism (Robinson 2020: 338). The final interview guide and focus group protocol were piloted and modified according to suggestions from an initial group of family members, traditional leaders and community elders who did not participate in the study.

3.12 PROCEDURE FOR COLLECTING DATA

3.12.1 THE PROCESS FOLLOWED FOR COLLECTING DATA

Individual interviews

For individuals who agreed to an interview, dates and times were set according to their convenience. All parties agreed on the set dates. The researcher ensured the venue was convenient, private, and comfortable for all participants. The researcher also ensured that the venue had privacy, and comfort and was easily accessible for all participants. The venue also contributed to the motivation of participation and interaction during interviews.

The interviews were conducted face-to-face. The researcher ensured that refreshments were available for participants on the days when interviews took place. Since data was collected in person, the researcher ensured that the recording device was charged and that appropriate writing materials were available and easily accessible. The recorder and field notes were used to verify that all information was accurately recorded (Back 2020: 137). Before the interview, the researcher obtained permission to audio record the interview from each participant. According to Monday (2020: 15) using a recorder allowed the researcher to focus on what the participants were saying rather than trying to write down every word. Additionally, it allowed the researcher to record any notes, feelings and thoughts throughout the interview sessions.

The researcher ensured that the participants signed a consent form (Appendix F (1) and Appendix F (2) before the interview. Participants were provided with an interview guide, letter of information and consent form days before the interview dates were set. When interviews began, the researcher introduced herself and explained the purpose of the study, the role of the interview in research, why the participants were specifically selected, the estimated time needed for an interview, and that all information and details of the interview would be kept confidential.

The interview process was quite long. As a result, the researcher had to be familiar with the interview schedule to keep the conversation on track and probe for more information. Most participants read the interview schedule before the interview. The researcher was mindful of

language appropriateness. The interviews were conducted in IsiZulu and translated verbatim into English. The translation was done by the researcher. According to Municipality and BAG (2012) Ndwedwe area comprises of 96% Isizulu speakers, and the researcher's home language is IsiZulu which made it easier for the researcher to translate the data. This study aimed to reach a wider audience hence the translation. Moreover, the translation helped the researcher to determine the quality of literature to find in order to substantiate the data.

The researcher allowed participants to answer questions in their preferred order. Most participants narrated their stories and answered follow-up questions actively. During the interview, the researcher ensured to listen to the participants attentively, showed interest in what was being said and showed understanding of the participants' viewpoints. As the interview concluded, important points were summarised, participants' questions were answered, the researcher's contact details were provided to them, and they were thanked for their participation and availability.

Focus group discussion

For individuals who agreed to a focus group discussion, a date and time were set according to their convenience. All parties agreed on the set date. The researcher ensured that the venue was convenient, private, comfortable, and accessible for all participants. The researcher and participants agreed on a central venue. This contributed to the motivation of participation and interaction during the focus group discussion. Once the focus group discussion began, no disturbances occurred.

The focus group discussion was conducted face-to-face. The researcher made sure that refreshments were available for participants on the day of the focus group discussion. Since data was collected in person, the researcher ensured that the recording device was charged and that appropriate writing materials were also available and easily accessed. The recorder and field notes were used to verify that all information was accurately recorded (Back 2020: 137).

Before the focus group discussion, as with the individual interviews, the researcher obtained permission from participants to audio record the discussion. Using a recorder allowed the researcher to focus on what the participants were saying rather than trying to write every word (Monday 2020: 15). Additionally, it allowed the researcher to freely record any notes, feelings and thoughts throughout the group discussion session.

The researcher ensured that the participants signed a consent form (Appendix F (1) and Appendix F (2)) before the discussion. Participants were provided with an interview guide for the focus group, a letter of information and a consent form, days before the focus group discussion date. When the focus group discussion began, the researcher first introduced herself and explained the purpose of the study, the role of the focus group discussion in the research, why the participants were specifically selected, the approximate time needed for the focus group discussion and emphasised that all information and details of the group discussion would be kept confidential. To ensure participants could be easily identified while maintaining confidentiality, the researcher gave them labels with pseudonyms.

During the focus group discussion, the researcher paid careful attention and listened closely to the participants' viewpoints and discussions. The researcher ensured to be natural and comfortable so that participants could feel relaxed. Most participants were happy to narrate their stories. They were free to engage and discuss with each other and they answered follow-up questions actively. The focus group discussion was conducted in IsiZulu and translated verbatim into English. The translation was done by the researcher. According to Municipality and BAG (2012) Ndwedwe area comprises of 96% Isizulu speakers, and the researcher's home language is IsiZulu which made it easier for the researcher to translate the data. This study aimed to reach a wider audience hence the translation. Moreover, the translation helped the researcher to determine the quality of literature to find in order to substantiate the data.

Hennink (2013: 2) stated that the interview schedule for the focus group, consisted of predetermined questions, and the researcher asked questions in order preferred by participants. The researcher was able to keep the group discussion focused without leading it. The researcher emphasised the importance of hearing a range of views to prevent the discussion from being dominated by one member (Knott *et al.* 2022: 73). Participants were encouraged to answer and address each other with positivity and respect

Once the interviews and focus group discussion were done, the researcher transcribed verbatim what had been recorded and began analysing the data. Before any raw data was entered, a copy was made and stored safely. Monday (2020: 15) asserted that field notes helped note down questions and interpret responses during the data analysis stage. The interviews took two days to complete and the focus group discussion was completed in one day.

The researcher explained that written notes and a backup of the voice recordings would be securely stored. All data was stored in a locked file cabinet, and the voice recordings were kept in a password-protected encrypted computer only accessible to the researcher. The researcher explained to the participants that all data and copies would be destroyed after five years. Hard data would be shredded, and electronic data would be safely deleted and removed from deleted files.

3.13 PILOT STUDY

According to Lowe (2019: 117) pilot testing is a rehearsal of a research study. It allows the researcher to test the research approach with a small number of test participants before conducting the main study. The researcher conducted a pilot study with five family members, three community elders, and two traditional leaders. These individuals were residents of the Ndwedwe area and did not participate in the main study. Modifications suggested were made to the piloted interview guide and focus group protocol. Doody and Doody (2015: 1074) stated that before actual data collection, it is necessary to pilot the interview schedule. This allows the researcher to determine if the schedule is clear, understandable and capable of answering the research questions, and if any changes to the interview schedule are needed (Lowe 2019: 117).

3.14 DATA CAPTURING AND ANALYSIS

According to Stuckey (2015: 7) data analysis summarises the collected data. It includes an interpretation of data using analytical and logical reasoning to identify patterns, relationships or trends. Lee (2021: 60) stated that data analysis helps the researcher understand complex phenomena, test hypotheses, and find patterns and trends that might be tricky to identify otherwise. To categorise data, the researcher looks for patterns, and codes, and simplifies the information gathered into understandable scientific language (Spencer 2013: 25).

In this study, data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis. According to Clarke and Braun (2017: 297), thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative research method that involves identifying, analysing, and interpreting patterns or themes within data. It is a flexible approach that can be applied across a range of epistemologies and research questions. Christou (2022: 79) stated that thematic analysis is often used to explore the experiences, perceptions, and views of research participants, and to identify meaningful themes that can provide insights into complex phenomena. Dawadi (2020: 62) asserted that conducting thematic analysis typically involves several crucial steps. Firstly, the researcher familiarises themselves with the data by

reading and re-reading the transcripts or documents to become immersed in the information (Labra *et al.* 2020: 1). The researcher then generates initial codes, systematically identifying and labelling relevant features of the data (Peel 2020: 2). These codes are then grouped into broader themes that capture the essence of the data (Lawless and Chen 2019: 92).

According to Lawless and Chen (2019: 92), this ensures that the final report on the findings is of high quality and that rigour is maintained. This method also enabled the identification of common responses in the data, allowing the researcher to draw accurate and reliable conclusions when reporting study findings. During this process, the researcher used highlighters to generate themes and sub-themes that emerged throughout the collection. The data was coded with different colours, making it easier to reread repeated responses.

3.15 RIGOUR AND TRUSTWORTHINESS IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

For a study to be accepted as trustworthy, qualitative researchers must demonstrate that data analysis has been conducted precisely, consistently and exhaustively through recording and disclosing methods of analysis with enough detail to enable the reader to determine whether the process is credible (Stahl and King 2020: 26). In this study, trustworthiness, which is formed by credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability, was ensured.

3.15. 1 Credibility

Credibility allows others to recognise experiences contained within the study through the interpretation of participants' experiences. To establish credibility, a researcher must review individual transcripts, looking for similarities within and across all participants (Cope 2014: 1). To ensure credibility, the researcher thoroughly assessed and ensured the accuracy of the information given by participants. This was done by examining the information and conducting member checking. Each participant was debriefed after each interview. Themes and codes were used to identify similarities in the participants' information, and in the final report, the researcher made sure to use the participants' words and views.

3. 15. 2 Transferability

Transferability is established by providing readers with evidence that the research study's findings could be applicable and transferred to other contexts, situations, times and populations (Maxwell 2021: 111). All other studies established around African spirituality in the South African rural context can refer to this current study which can be repeated. The researcher ensured that

the data collection, design, procedure, and data analysis process were clearly stated for it to be understandable to readers and transferable to any other researcher who accessed it.

3. 15. 3 Dependability

Dependability is related to the consistency of the findings. It indicates whether the findings of a study would be consistently repeated if the study were replicated with the same or similar subjects in the same or similar context. If the study is repeatable following the audit trail, it meets dependability (Gunawan 2015: 10). The researcher ensured that all information collected, written and researched for this study was reliable, recorded, assessed and critically analysed.

3. 15. 4 Confirmability

Mandal (2018: 1) stated that confirmability occurs once credibility, transferability and dependability have been established. Qualitative research must be reflective, maintaining a sense of awareness and openness to the study and results. The researcher needs a self-critical attitude, considering how his or her preconceptions affect the research. Confirmability is concerned with ensuring that the study findings are directly derived from the participant's responses and not from the researcher's biases.

In this study, the researcher achieved this by following rather than leading the direction of the interviews and focus group discussion. This was done by asking for clarifications when needed and taking notes regarding personal feelings and insights after every interview and focus group discussion. The researcher further ensured that the findings were made available to all participants in this study before publication, allowing them to confirm whether the reported findings were consistent with their responses. The researcher received confirmation from all twenty-seven (27) participants.

3. 15. 5 Authenticity

According to Noble and Smith (2015: 34), authenticity implies that research is real and consists of legitimate research conduct and evaluation. The research should be meaningful and contribute to the field. Based on the current study, the topic/subject was not overly explored, so the researcher ensured the exploration of the knowledge and lived experiences of the participants. All citations of literature used were appropriately acknowledged through the DUT Harvard style of referencing. The findings were proven credible and valid through the mentioned process of obtaining the study's trustworthiness.

3.16 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are guidelines to ensure that participants or people do not act harmfully to others or society. Hardicre (2014: 564) stated that in a qualitative study, ethical considerations have particular resonance due to the in-depth nature of the study process. Manton *et al.* 2014: 92) indicated that ethics pertain to morally good or correct practice and avoiding any harm that may arise during the study. Ethical considerations guide a researcher's design and practices, including how the researcher conducts research involving key principles (Fiesler 2019: 1).

The principles used in this study are avoidance of harm, voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality. Hardicre (2014: 564) concluded that ethical concerns involve four basic principles: weighing risk-benefit, respect, merit, integrity and justice. These principles lay the foundation for any argument regarding human research ethics. According to Manton *et al.* (2014: 92) approval must be granted before the commencement of data gathering from human participants because a human research ethics committee cannot approve research after the data collection has begun. The ethical approval of this study was permitted by the Durban University of Technology Institutional Ethics Committee (IREC) (see Appendix G).

Gordon (2020: 34) asserted that avoidance of harm means that the researcher has a moral obligation to avoid causing harm to the participants. Bos (2020: 287) further stated that the different types of harm that participants might encounter include physical harm, which is rare in such studies, and emotional distress or discomfort, which is more likely common. The researcher ensured that no potential harm was done to participants during the research. The researcher explained beforehand to the participants that if they felt any discomfort at any point during the interview, they were allowed to withdraw. The researcher also ensured that the interviews were to be conducted respectfully.

According to Mumford, Higgs and Gujar (2021: 113), voluntary participation in a research study means the participants need to be adequately informed about the research, comprehend the information, and have the freedom to choose whether to participate or decline. The participants in the research study were not forced, and there was no form of coercion; they voluntarily participated in the study.

Wiles (2012: 128) stated that informed consent means providing a clear explanation regarding the purpose of the study and the procedures that will be followed throughout the study, identifying any experimental procedure and informing participants about any discomfort, risks

or potential power differentials that may occur during the study. Khan, Hassain and Alam (2021: 189) identified that informed consent also describes any benefits or changes that may be expected in individuals and provides clear answers when inquired about the procedure. Hadicre (2014: 564) emphasised that informed consent is an integral part of ethics in research carried out in different fields and stresses the researcher's responsibility to fully inform participants of different aspects of the research's incomprehensible language. The researcher ensured that the participants were aware and fully informed about the study and obtained their consent m before the interviews and focus group discussion.

Hoft (2021: 223) asserted that the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants were preserved by not revealing their names and identities in the data collection, analysis, and reporting of the study findings. Kang and Hwang (2023: 1) stated that confidentiality means that information cannot be revealed except in certain situations. The privacy of all participants was ensured, and identifying details were protected throughout this study. When necessary, they were accessed in code form by the supervisor and editor. Anonymity and confidentiality were ensured when analysing and using data collected from the participants.

There was no compensation for participating in the study. The participants were allowed to reflect on the process, and there was debriefing time after the interview sessions and the focus group discussion. The researcher's conduct and competence resulted in successful data collection and reporting. The researcher remained honest, respectful and non-judgmental towards the participants throughout the process. The researcher also remained responsible for avoiding plagiarism and storing and disposing of data correctly.

3.17 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

According to Cooper, Hedges and Valentine (2019: 517), research limitations are practical or theoretical shortcomings in a study that is usually outside the researcher's control. While these weaknesses may limit the generalisation of the study's findings, they provide a platform for future research. Limitations may be caused by tangible factors such as financial and time constraints, equipment, and participant availability (Gates *et al.* 2020: 135).

There were limitations in the current study. This study was limited to Ndwedwe, the mission area. The Ndwedwe community comprises several other areas and municipal wards, but the researcher could not reach all these areas or municipal wards as they were too scattered. This limits the findings because there could have been more unique information that might not have

been explored, contributing significantly to the richness of the research findings. More diverse family members, traditional leaders, and community elders who practise African spirituality could have contributed an immense amount of knowledge and experience on African spirituality, and the use of spiritual beliefs and practices to combat adversities and act as a source of support and strength. Involving a ward councillor in the recruitment process limited the researcher to interview participants from only one ward in Ndwedwe, which was led by the ward councillor. Other wards were led by different ward councillors, so the researcher would have had to obtain another gatekeeper permission to contact prospective participants in those wards. This limited the study because there could have been more valuable information that was not explored, potentially contributing to the depth of the research findings.

This study was limited to mostly female participants. Male participants were four out of 27. Statistically Ndwedwe, the mission area had more females than males (Stats SA 2016). This meant households were mostly headed by women, and the population of traditional leaders and community elders comprised mostly women. An equal number of female and male participants could have impacted the overall findings of the study. This limits the findings because there may have been more unique knowledge in terms of experiences and perspectives that have not been explored.

3.18 CONCLUSION

The current study explored and described twelve family members and fifteen traditional and community elders who practised African spirituality. A qualitative approach informed the study. All participants resided in Ndwedwe, mission area. This study adopted a purposive sampling method, and data was collected until saturation was reached. Data was collected through interviews and a focus group discussion, which were analysed using thematic analysis. The study adhered to the ethical guidelines established by Durban University of Technology.

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the data collected from interviews with family members, community elders and traditional leaders who practice African spirituality and discusses the findings. The study aimed to understand how African spiritual beliefs and practices can be used to strengthen family and community life in rural Ndwedwe. There were four objectives of the study:

1. To inquire about the African religious and spiritual beliefs and practices of families living in Ndwedwe.
2. to understand how these beliefs and practices act as a source of strength and support during family and community adversities.
3. To explore how traditional leaders support families experiencing challenges in the community.
4. To identify spiritually based activities that can be used to strengthen family and community life in Ndwedwe.

The data was collected using semi-structured interviews which were conducted face-to-face using an interview schedule (Appendix A (1) and a focus group schedule Appendix B (1). The data was analysed using thematic analysis, resulting in the generation of various themes and

sub-themes. The following subsection contains participants' demographic profiles, which are presented in Table 4. 2.

4.2 DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Table 4.2: 1 The demographic profiles of participants are displayed as follows:

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Type of participant	The data collection method used
PI (1)	34	Female	Family member	Individual interviews
PI (2)	36	Female	Family member	Individual interviews
PI (3)	32	Female	Family member	Individual interviews
PI (4)	29	Female	Family member	Individual interviews
PI (5)	44	Female	Family member	Individual interviews
PI (6)	42	Female	Family member	Individual interviews
PI (7)	36	Female	Family member	Individual interviews
PI (8)	49	Female	Family member	Individual interviews
PI (9)	41	Female	Family member	Individual interviews
PI (10)	45	Female	Family member	Individual interviews
PI (11)	29	Female	Family member	Individual interviews
PI (12)	30	Female	Family member	Individual interviews
FGD (1)	65	Female	Traditional leader	Focus group discussion
FGD (2)	82	Female	Community elder	Focus group discussion
FGD (3)	64	Female	Traditional leader	Focus group discussion
FGD (4)	86	Female	Community elder	Focus group discussion
FGD (5)	77	Female	Community elder	Focus group discussion
FGD (6)	60	Female	Traditional leader	Focus group discussion

FGD (7)	78	Male	Community elder	Focus group discussion
FGD (8)	75	Male	Traditional leader	Focus group discussion
FGD (9)	69	Male	Traditional leader	Focus group discussion
FGD (10)	70	Female	Traditional leader	Focus group discussion
FGD (11)	60	Female	Traditional leader	Focus group discussion
FGD (12)	65	Female	Traditional leader	Focus group discussion
FGD (13)	61	Female	Community elder	Focus group discussion
FGD (14)	70	Male	Traditional leader	Focus group discussion
FGD (15)	82	Female	Community elder	Focus group discussion

Summary of the demographic data

A total number of twenty-seven participants were interviewed in this study. This comprised twelve family members and fifteen traditional leaders/community elders. Data was collected through individual interviews and focus group discussions. Most of the participants were female, with only a few male participants. All participants were of African descent, and their ages ranged from 29 to 86 years, with most being in their 30s, 40s, 60s and 70s. All participants were residents of the Ndwedwe community. This diverse sample provided a comprehensive understanding of the experiences of different participants within the community.

4.3 DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Table 4.3: 1 Theme and sub-themes

THEME 1: Understanding African Spirituality	1. Presence of ancestors and unseen spirits
	2. Ubuntu
	3. Collective existence within the community
	1. The use of “umsamo” (sacred place in African traditional hut)

THEME 2: Spiritual beliefs and practices that exist within families	2. Protection of kinship networks through sacrificial worship
	3. Respect for authority and elders
	4. Prayer and spiritual water
THEME 3: Relevance of beliefs and practices in strengthening and supporting rural families	1. Reinforcement of a family's spiritual center
	2. Strengthening family well-being
	3. Resilience
	4. Influences positive upbringing and self-discipline
THEME 4: Healing methodologies	1. Traditional healing ceremonies
	2. Inhlambuluko (healing the lineage through truth and reconciliation)
	3. Rituals and sacrificial offerings
THEME 5: Spiritual activities that used by rural families	1. Traditional music and dance
	2. Drumming
	3. African storytelling and proverbs
	4. Traditional stick fighting

4.3.1 THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY

The first theme related to the participants' understanding of African spirituality and its importance. Three sub-themes emerged under theme one, namely, (i) the presence of ancestors and unseen spirits; (ii) Ubuntu and (iii) collective existence within the community.

4.3.1.1 Sub-theme 1: Presence of ancestors and unseen spirits

The first sub-theme that emerged from the data reflected the huge presence of ancestors within African spirituality and the African community at large. In the following excerpts, the participants reflected on their understanding of African spirituality and its interrelationship with the ancestors and unseen spirits:

“I know African spirituality as believing and consulting with the ancestors. In my family, we are very traditional people... we also believe and pray to God...I think praying to God and consulting with our ancestors goes hand in hand. God is our creator, and those who have passed, connect us with God... in our culture, we connect with our ancestors using “Impepho” (burning sage); to plead with our ancestors and ask for guidance, we also ask for healing and prosperity... I believe that’s what African spirituality is.” PI (9)

“African spirituality is having a sacred connection with unseen spirits... for example, when someone comes to consult me, spirits and my ancestors send me a message. As a result, I always know when someone is coming to consult. Upon introduction, my ancestors and that individual’s ancestors unite and guide me on how to assist the individual. They tell me exactly what to say and what should be done next” FGD (11)

African spirituality is characterised by a strong belief in and connection with ancestral spirits. As reflected in the excerpts, participants shared that they believed their ancestors played an important role in connecting them with God. Prior research also found that Africans believe that ancestors are intermediate between humankind and the Supreme Being, thus they appease them in times of need (Ephirim-Donkor 2021: 22; Magezi and Magezi 2017: 26).

Research has found that some rural families find it difficult to communicate directly with a hierarchy (or Supreme Being). The same system of using a spokesperson (Indunas or mediators), particularly when speaking to a king, is used when the ancestors serve as mediators (Ushe 2022: 15). In the current study, participants reported that they consult with their ancestors using observances like burning "Impepho" and seeking their wisdom, guidance, and blessings.

The data further highlighted how African spirituality is seen as a way to maintain a sacred bond with unseen spiritual forces, particularly the ancestors in African homes. A similar study by Lebaka (2018: 35) established that in the Bapedi culture, emphasis is placed on ancestors and spirits to interact directly with the living. Lebaka (2019: 2) and Thema (2006: 30) found that ancestors exist in the spirit world and serve as mediators between their families and the realm of the divine. They are regarded as providers of security and are called upon to help during times of despair. Some participants (traditional leaders) reported that the ancestors send messages, unite individuals with their ancestors, and provide direct guidance on how to help individuals.

Ancestral spirits are a spiritual resource that helps families deal with challenges and support traditional healers in making sure that they gain insight into difficult circumstances so that they can help families (Lebaka 2018: 35; Ephirim-Donkor 2021: 22). Other participants reflected that they viewed African spirituality as a means to uphold the moral standards and traditions passed down by their ancestors, which help them avoid negative consequences:

“African spirituality is knowing that you are not alone, there are people who are with you and watching over you always, as you go through every aspect of your life. Those people are our ancestors... it is also to use oral traditions that have been instilled within us, by them to guide us, so that we behave according to the moral standard of African spirituality and not suffer the consequences” PI (5)

Generally, the data reflected the profound significance of ancestral veneration and guidance within African spiritual traditions. Ancestors are seen as ever-present, watching over and providing participants and their families with protection. This coheres with a study by Ikeke, Darah and Brume (2022: 29) which found that ancestors are revered in African spirituality as the guardians of African people’s lives. Their descendants hold them in high regard and are in awe of them. Connecting with the ancestors is thus one of the greatest pillars of African spirituality and is seen as crucial for achieving fortune, healing, and prosperity within the African community. Consequently, when people endure hardship, they turn to their ancestors for guidance.

4.3.1.2 Sub-theme 2: Ubuntu

The second sub-theme to emerge from the data was Ubuntu. According to Theron, Theron and Malindi (2013: 63) Ubuntu can be articulated as "a person is a person through others" (umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu, IsiZulu) or (Motho ke Motho ka Batho, SeSotho). Participants emphasised how their understanding of African spirituality extends beyond the ancestors and unseen spirits to how they live, communicate, and treat one another as individuals with similar beliefs. This was evident in the excerpts that follow:

“Ubuntu is to work together. I think African spirituality is exactly that... we build one another in this community. As African people, we know first-hand each other's struggles and what we go through daily so we can take charge and control the situation and not get out of hand. We will work together to fix that situation.” FGD (11)

“Ubuntu is about showing compassion and humanity to others. African spirituality embodies that. One cannot believe in African spirituality and not practice Ubuntu... each one cannot exist without the other. Ubuntu is important in an African community like ours that mostly practises African spirituality. We live by it.” PI (7)

In the narratives above, participants shared that Ubuntu emphasises the importance of working together, showing compassion and humanity towards others, and fostering a sense of community. Ubuntu acknowledges that each individual's humanity is shaped by their relationship with others, and their recognition of this humanity is reciprocal (Aubel 2021: 38; Maphalala

2017: 249). Participants emphasised that African spirituality goes beyond ancestor reverence and promotes Ubuntu, which teaches community harmony, grace, and empathy. This is reflected in the narrative that follows:

“African spirituality goes beyond respecting ancestors... it is about the practice of Ubuntu and teaching the community how to live with one another, showing grace and empathy to one another. I think that how we act, the qualities and values embedded in us show what African spirituality is.” FGD (8)

Similarly, a study by Samuel (2023: 21) found that Ubuntu in an African context, informs individuals, families, and communities how to value and comprehend who they are about others and the environment. The above excerpts conveyed that Ubuntu and African spirituality have a strong connection, with each, being essential to the other. African spirituality is embodied in each person's behaviour and principles, which are interrelated and fundamental to the community's survival. As outlined in a study by Swanson (2010: 38), people in society tend to believe that they are isolated from one another, but in reality, everyone is connected, and our actions as individuals impact the community as a whole. Aspects related to collective existence within a rural community are presented under the sub-theme that follows:

4.3.1.3 Sub-theme 3: Collective existence within the community

The third sub-theme from the data demonstrates the importance of collective existence under the African spirituality practice. The core of collective existence is a person's unity with their community (Sandlana 2021: 185). The following excerpts provide insights into the communal nature of African spirituality:

“If there's death in a family, we come together as neighbours and go to a night vigil. We do a sleepover which is a sign of showing support amongst us as women. That's what I think African spirituality is. Sympathising with each other and making sure that as people who share the same beliefs, we never go through trials and tribulations alone but together, work and help one another.” FGD (15)

“If you perform a ceremony without inviting people from the community or your neighbours, it is believed the ceremony won't be recognised by the ancestors. In African spirituality, you cannot exist alone. It is impossible, it is important to be communal” PI (4)

Participants shared that when death occurs in one family, the community comes together in solidarity, with women even staying overnight to provide emotional support. In keeping with the research findings, women provide strength and support, to keep their communities together. To preserve African traditions, those attributes manifest in the form of mothers or warriors (Falola and Amponsah 2012: 22; Moyo 2022: 56). This demonstrates the importance of shared experience and mutual care within the African spiritual worldview. Families valued community participation as it was seen to be essential in ceremonies and rituals, and for recognition by the ancestors.

Whitehouse (2021: 139) states that social bonds are strengthened, and communal unity is upheld through communal ceremonies and celebrations. These gatherings often involve music, dance, and storytelling, which allow those in attendance to show their appreciation and respect for one another's spiritual journeys (Izu and De Villiers 2023: 65). The excerpts above suggest that in African spirituality, the individual cannot exist in isolation, but rather, their identity and spiritual experience is profoundly shaped by their participation within the broader community. This communal emphasis appears to be a defining feature of this spiritual tradition. This was collaborated by Singh and Bhagwan (2020: 403) who stated that African spirituality places a strong emphasis on community and emphasises the interconnectedness of all life in many of its traditions.

One participant shared how African spirituality is underpinned by harmonious relationships through the spirit of sharing within the community:

“African spirituality is about living in harmony with people with whom you share the same beliefs and practices. In this community, we perform rituals, and traditions and have ceremonies... it is tradition that you invite people to gather with you during these events. So, when there is a

ceremony at home, we invite people to come gather with us, drink traditional beer and eat meat...” PI (3)

Findings in a study by Sandlana (2021: 186) revealed that participants believed in the importance of sharing meat and home-brewed beer with community people. Furthermore, the study outlined how this view fostered a sense of belonging and communal living, which defined the essence of African spirituality within African communities. African spiritual traditions coalesce into a collective existence through principles of unity and generosity. Participants in the current study shared how this understanding is conveyed in an African context as follows:

“When we are invited, we carry food parcels or even monetary contributions to show support to the family that is doing the ceremony... this is done to lessen the burden because we understand that providing for hundreds of people during a ceremony is not an easy task and it can strain one financially... all of this done within African spiritual traditions.” FGD (2)

These traditions foster a collective existence and mutual support that shape the lived experiences of individuals and communities across the African continent. Afrocentric theorists emphasise collectivism, interconnectedness, interdependence, and spirituality as fundamental aspects defining cultural African existence (Ohajunwa and Mji 2018: 252; Whitehead 2018: 125; Pack-Brown and Fleming 2004: 183). The findings reflect that the acts of contribution are embedded within the broader context of African spiritual traditions, emphasising the communal nature of these cultural practices. These beliefs support human well-being at all levels of human interaction (Makhubu *et al.* 2018: 53). They are therefore important considerations when undertaking psycho-therapeutic work with African families.

4.3.2 THEME 2: SPIRITUAL BELIEFS AND PRACTICES THAT EXIST WITHIN FAMILIES

The second theme in the data pertains to the spiritual beliefs and practices that underpin African spirituality amongst rural families. Four sub-themes emerged under this theme:

1. the use of umsamo (a sacred place in African traditional hut).
2. the protection of kinship networks through sacrificial worship.
3. The respect for authority and elders.
4. The prayer and spiritual water

4.3.2.1 Sub-theme 1: The use of umsamo (a sacred place in African traditional huts)

The first sub-theme that emerged under theme two, reflected that the use of umsamo shaped participants' lives. Umsamo is the foundation of the ancestral traditions, spiritual beliefs and many other practices that rural families have passed down through the generations (Mkhize 2012: 2). This is reflected in the following excerpts:

"We use umsamo at home, which is often in an African traditional hut house called "indlu yabadala," which translates to "the place of our resting forefathers". Whether returning home or moving away, getting a job, etc., my father as leader of our household insisted that we needed to start at "umsamo", where he would report everything that occurs in our lives through the use of "umsamo," and he still does. This has been part of our tradition and beliefs for as long as I can remember" PI (9)

"In everything that we do or that needs to be done, we have to go to a very sacred place in our homes, "umsamo" where No one enters wearing their shoes., As women, we must put on our "doeks" and we are not allowed to wear pants but rather only dresses and skirts ... we use umsamo when we want to feel the connection with our ancestry and communicate with them, and we also use it to heal. This is a way of life for us as African people who believe in African traditions" PI (11)

"I was given this calling not only to heal African people but to guide them in the right direction... sometimes people will come and see me for advice, confused that things are suddenly not going accordingly, and because I can see what they cannot, I tell them what they are doing wrong... most of the time people think they need to perform some kind of ritual when things are going wrong but only to find that they just need to go to "umsamo" and everything shall be okay" FGD (6)

The above excerpts provide an in-depth look into the role of "umsamo" in African traditional practices. Participants described "umsamo" as a sacred place within the home where connections with ancestry and communication with ancestors are facilitated. Similarly, a research study by Whitelaw and Mazel (2023: 19) outlined that "umsamo" is a physical manifestation of the interconnectedness between living and dead, serving as a centre for family ceremonies and providing direction. The use of "umsamo" is deeply ingrained in the lives of the people, whether for important life events, seeking healing and guidance, or maintaining tradition. A study by Mkhize (2012: 2) also found that "umsamo" is seen as a unique and sacred space within a traditional African home, serving as both an altar and a repository for a family's most important and spiritually significant possessions.

Furthermore, “umsamo” has been described as being demarcated by a thin and half-linear wall inside the traditional hut homes, signifying that no one may walk there unless it is necessary. Amid troubles, it serves as a platform for meditation, prayers and healing, not solely for the worship of the dead (Gumo *et al.* 2012: 530; and Echtler 2020: 32). “Umsamo” is therefore a traditional cultural and spiritual practice that serves to protect and provide a "secret weapon", to address challenges faced by rural families over generations. The following excerpt underlines this understanding:

“In our family, when we are sick, we can go to a traditional hut and just sleep there for a few days, then we get better, and that is the power of “umsamo” ... it has healing powers and most families in this community have the same belief, that this is our secret weapon and answer to every hardship... I want to maintain this tradition and relationship forever so that it will be transferred to my children someday.” PI (2)

Similarly, research by Abah and Ugwu (2021: 183) has found that in the Igbo culture, families frequently develop ancestral altars in their traditional huts, ornamented with personal objects, offerings, and symbols to honour and appease their ancestors. According to Chuks (2020: 45), these altars are places of contact, communication, and reverence of ancestral spirits. This is where prayers and offerings are presented with the hope that families receive direction, healing, protection, and blessings. The aforementioned excerpts convey the profound importance of "umsamo" in the African traditional worldview and its central place in the lives of those who uphold these beliefs.

4.3.2.2 Sub-theme 2: Protection of kinship networks through sacrificial worship

The second sub-theme that emerged under theme two was the protection of kinship networks through sacrificial worship. In the following excerpts, participants demonstrate key concepts of African beliefs and practices that are acknowledged through sacrificial worship and how they may affect their kinship networks and cultural and spiritual life:

“We express our tradition and continuance of our family name through the tradition of slaughtering animals... we usually slaughter during celebrations and healing ceremonies; this strengthens our bloodline... attendance from family members is compulsory otherwise the ritual or ceremony may not be received well by ancestors.” PI (4)

“If a family member does not attend such a ceremony, they should have a valid reason for not attending... an elder will call upon ancestors, communicate with them, explaining why that

family member is not present, and apologise on their behalf. This way, the family may not be affected by this or possibly be required to do it again and that family member may not be affected by this in the long run and suffer consequences” FGD (14)

The excerpts above highlight the deep significance of family traditions and rituals in protecting family life and adhering to African cultures. The practice of animal slaughter during celebrations and ceremonies is seen as a way to preserve family heritage and strengthen kinship bonds. Similarly, a study conducted in Kenya found that when a large family or clan is in danger, goats are slaughtered. However, when the entire tribe is threatened by illness or another shared enemy, a bull is offered (Muga 2016: 125; Idang 2015: 98). Participants shared that attendance at these events is compulsory and if a family member is absent, an elder must communicate with the ancestors and apologise on their behalf to avoid potential consequences for the family.

Families show their respect and honour for their ancestors by remembering and including them in family events and decision-making procedures. According to DeSliva (2022: 125) they are believed to bring wealth and protection, but they also have the power to punish individuals for breaking traditions or failing to observe ceremonies. Furthermore, through sacrificial offerings, people can restore connections with their kin and ancestors (Kitts 2022: 65; Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 407). In the current study, participants reported that wearing of "isiphandla," a protective piece of animal skin, is a communal practice that reinforces the interconnectedness of the family:

“We slaughter during every family ceremony or ritual at home, this strengthens our kinship... once we have done the sacrificial ceremony, we have to wear “isiphandla” on our wrists which is a piece of cow/goat skin... “isiphandla” is for our protection and everyone in our family is obligated to wear it. All family members must be present to do this practice together” PI (8)

Families further reported how they adopted a resolution of maintaining peace and order within the kinship network as follows:

“If a family does not slaughter during their ceremony, ancestors do not recognise that ceremony or ritual... the family is then obligated to do the ceremony again, properly this time. If not, consequences are suffered by everyone in the family...to prevent this, the family buys a goat and apologises to the ancestors for attempting to deceive them with a bogus ceremony or ritual... the family must further do a celebratory ceremony that represents a continuance of life and healthy relations” FGD (15)

Mbiti (1977: 66) in his book *Introduction to African Religion*, proposed that sacrifice worship is widespread in African communities and that life is inextricably connected to blood. When blood is shed in a sacrificial context, it signifies that life is returned to God, who is, in reality, the ultimate source of all life. As described by Mbiti (1975: 56), common routines like "good health, healing, protection from danger, safety in travelling or some other undertakings, security, prosperity, preservation of life, peace and various benefits for individuals" have religious connotations. The data presented in this study illustrate that traditions and beliefs serve to maintain kinship networks and reinforce the cultural identity of the community.

4.3.2.3 Sub-theme 3: Respect for authority and elders

The third sub-theme that emerged under theme two was respect for the elders and authority. Families in rural communities rely on community leaders and family elders for guidance and support (Olupona 2014: 310). The following excerpts reflect how elders and leaders support, and monitor the moral decisions, beliefs, experiences and traditions of individuals:

"Elders of the family always lead the way when it comes to family ceremonies or rituals that need to be conducted... elders are respected and given their position of authority because they are more knowledgeable, and most of the time this means they know the appropriate approach to perform ceremonies and rituals" PI (12)

"When elders are absent for a family ceremony or ritual, it can be challenging for the family. In such cases, individuals often seek assistance from a community elder or Induna... elders are known as transmitters of tradition, and they play an extremely important part in families...the majority of the time elders have direct interaction and connection with the ancestors" FGD (4)

"We show respect to the Chief because a rural community is known as "isizwe seNkosi," which translates to "the tribe of the Chief." The Chief is the ruler and leader of all the families... the Chief oversees and presides over all affairs affecting families, community practices and customs, if the Chief is unavailable, the Induna takes his place as his deputy" PI (6)

"We report all traditional practices to the Chief... the Chief or Induna must be informed before any ceremony or ritual begins. If this occurs without their knowledge, especially without the knowledge of a Chief, a family may face serious consequences, such as paying a fine. The Chief has to give their consent and blessings for the ceremony to go accordingly" FGD (7)

These narratives reflect the role of elders and authority figures in the community's cultural traditions and practices. Elders are highly respected for their knowledge and are responsible

for leading family ceremonies and rituals. Their presence is seen as a key element, and when elders are absent, individuals seek assistance from other community elders or the Induna, the deputy to the Chief.

This was collaborated by Singh and Bhagwan (2020: 410) who reported that participants sought the guidance of family or community elders when faced with challenges. Lombo (2017: 165) found that people and families who benefit from kinship networks reported feelings of connection, belonging, comfort, and improved overall well-being. In the current study, participants reported that the Chief was regarded as the ultimate leader and ruler of the community. This aligns with Chapter 11 of the Constitution of South Africa, which recognises the role and status of traditional leadership under customary law in African communities (September 2023: 42; Shabangu and Khaloh 2008: 324). In this community, traditional practices are reported to and approved by the Chief or the Induna. Community ceremonies are blessed for prosperity and order by the Chief.

According to September (2022: 42), in many African countries, the traditional chieftaincy system has long been an important source of authority and government, with Chiefs and Kings playing an essential duty in the life of their communities. A study by Olupona (2014: 310) added that in African societies, Kings were revered as sacred beings associated with Gods, responsible for state well-being and prosperity. Their role in maintaining social order led to frequent ceremonies to reassure people of their well-being (Mbiti 2015: 90). The data presented emphasises the hierarchical structure of authority and the importance of deferring to elders and traditional leaders in matters of tradition and community practices.

The following excerpts highlight the importance of adhering to spiritual beliefs, practices, guidelines and authority rules within a community:

“In this community, we honour uNomkhubulwane (Zulu goddess/ Mother Earth). We gather by the river to plead to the Zulu goddess by creating a garden specifically for her near the river as an offering so that she brings in sufficient rain and blesses our crops so that we can provide for our families and overcome poverty... every community member must do this” PI (12)

“Mondays are respected... we honour Monday because of uNomkhubulwane (Zulu goddess). If you are caught working, for example, in the fields on a Monday, you may cause suffering for the whole village and therefore must pay a fine since you put community life at risk. Respecting this day involves avoiding working in the fields or engaging in other activities involving land or

nature. Even as traditional healers, we are prohibited from going to the forest to collect herbs. Everyone in this community must respect this day including leaders.” FGD (1)

This excerpt reflects one salient cultural practice and belief surrounding this African community. It highlights the reverence of Mondays, as it is observed in honour of uNomkhubulwane. Lombo (2017: 169) found that uNomkhubulwane, often known as Mother Earth, is the Zulu goddess of rain, nature, and fertility. For many years, the Zulu community would plough their fields, with a specific and unique field that was ploughed by the entire village. According to Ndlovu (2016: 92) this field was never weeded or harvested until the following ploughing season, when the cycle would start over. As a result, communities would be blessed with many crops and blessed births. Therefore, there are days selected by the community authority to observe uNomkhubulwane for such blessings, and there are Nomkhubulwane festivals that are in place for when it is harvest time (Peta 2021: 143; Tapela 2015: 92).

In the current study, many participants shared that working in fields on Mondays was prohibited in this community, as it is believed to bring potential harm to the entire village. This rule extends to everyone, even traditional leaders. The community strongly emphasises the need for everyone to respect this cultural tradition, with violations resulting in the imposition of fines. This understanding shows the importance of Monday observance in maintaining the well-being and cohesion of this traditional African community. Similarly, a study by Shoko (2022: 137) found that the Karanga tribe in Zimbabwe observes Wednesdays as chisi (holidays) to pay tribute to their ancestors. It is believed that failure to do so can result in adversity. Overlooking these taboos leads to penalties, such as goat offerings to the chief. Rural communities are guided by their strong belief systems and authority.

4.3.2.4 Sub-theme 4: Prayer and spiritual water

The fourth sub-theme that derived from theme two is prayer and spiritual water. According to Bradley (2012: 1) prayer and spiritual water usually symbolise cleansing, renewal, clarity, reflection and the gift of life. In the following excerpts, participants reflected on their perspectives and the value surrounding prayer and spiritual water in the African worldview as follows:

“We go to the waterfall and pray there. In this community, the majority of people rely on prayers... the waterfall is a very spiritual and powerful place, it symbolises the process of letting go of negative thoughts, getting rid of misfortune, cleansing and continuous flow of energy and

life. After washing up and praying, you feel as though a huge weight has been lifted off your shoulders, and you feel lighter and much better.” PI (3)

“Going to the waterfall helped me in my spiritual journey; there have been experiences when I had to deal with so much that my faith shifted... during a difficult time in my life, a neighbour convinced me to accompany her to a waterfall. Since then, we have been meeting in groups to pray by the waterfall. This happens at least twice a year” PI (1)

“As community members, we pray to uNomkhubulwane Zulu spiritual princess after ploughing her garden. We pray for blessings and prosperity; we believe she resides in the river, which is why we plough and pray near the river... she does not only bless us with rain, but she also blesses community women with fertility and blesses the births” PI (12)

In the aforementioned narratives, participants described the spiritual use of waterfalls and rivers in community. Participants explained that visiting places like waterfalls and rivers to pray was a deeply meaningful practice that helped them let go of negative thoughts, find cleansing and renewal, strengthen their spirituality, and provide them with blessings. According to research, certain natural elements, such as rivers, trees, rocks, and animals, are thought to be inhabited by nature spirits. They are said to have power over these aspects of nature and, depending on their nature, might affect human lives (Rowkith and Bhagwan 2020: 8). Mbiti added that "for the community at large, prayer may ask for rain, peace, the cessation of epidemics and dangers to the nation, success in war or raids, the acceptance of sacrifices and offerings, and fertility for people, animals and crops" (Mbiti 1975: 56).

The aforementioned narratives outlined how the waterfall and river spirits have been a source of solace and rejuvenation, especially during trying times. The waterfalls and rivers are sacred and transformative sites for this community. Other studies have also found that natural landscapes, particularly waterfalls, have profound spiritual and therapeutic effects on individuals and communities (Smith 2015: 132; Nguyen 2018: 25; Okafor 2020: 167). A similar study by Nyamweru and Sheridan (2008: 258) concurred that in many African cultures, waterfalls are seen as sacred sites that mediate social and spiritual relationships and shape the history and identity of people.

Prayer and the sound of falling water are connected through the forces of spirituality that help bring healing to those in need. Participants reported that they get a sense of peace and tranquillity through this practice, which strengthens their families and communities. Similarly,

research findings indicated that the Maasai people in Kenya described water as a "sacred artifact" that plays a central role in their way of life (Borona 2020: 1292). Cultural veneration of sacred rivers, mountains, and animal species has contributed to the preservation of their ecosystems due to their spiritual significance (Sponsel 2016: 132; Gump *et al.* 2012: 525; Pungetti, Oviedo and Hooke 2012: 224).

The following excerpts define how spiritual leaders use spiritual practices to support families in an African context:

"I am a prophet. People come to me when they are experiencing problems and when they need clarity about those problems. After telling them the cause of the problems they have, I then instruct them to fill a 2-litre bottle with water. I light one matchstick and insert it inside this bottle, then I pray for this water (we call this Isiwasho). I instruct them to cleanse themselves, bath and steam using this water... I give them measurements that they can use so that isiwasho (spiritually blessed water) can last them for at least three days. After using isiwasho they should see a positive change in their lives" FGD (1)

"I also work with "isiwasho" (spiritually blessed water). In this community, we believe in the power of "isiwasho" ... rainwater is believed to be more effective, as it is believed to be more spiritual and is considered a blessing from God. Using rainwater to make "isiwasho" brings good fortune" FGD (10)

Spiritual leaders use spiritually blessed water, "isiwasho" to help people face problems and seek clarity. Participants reported that using rainwater as a spiritual water cleanser led to positive change and prosperity. Rainwater holds spiritual significance in various cultures, as it is seen as divine water for cleansing, renewal and its' inherent value of life-giving nature. In Hinduism, rain is also associated with the God Indra, who is believed to provide spiritual growth and enlightenment (Chapple 2020: 271; and Scharf 2020: 751). Similarly, in Greek mythology, rain is also associated with Zeus, the God of the Sky and Thunder (Johnson 2020: 160; Ćurić and Spiridonov 2023: 31). These practices and beliefs also appear to be deeply embedded in the spiritual and divine aspects of this community's culture.

Prayer is interwoven with spiritual singing in an African spiritual context. This is reflected in the following excerpt:

"I know that another weapon for healing is prayer. If a family has lost their loved one... we gather women in this community, and then we visit that family. When we get there, we pray, and

we do “ihubo” (traditional spiritual singing). This is very important when paying respect to a family, as it’s a sign of strengthening them and giving hope that they will heal and be okay.”
FGD (5)

A paper written by Rowkith and Bhagwan (2020: 9) reflected that while tribals prayed individually at home with their families, they also engaged in communal prayer together. Songs had distinctive meanings which participants considered as an important part of tribal life. Participants in the current study also shared that songs are recited to promote healing. Such spiritual practices can be described as a meaningful way to offer families much-needed comfort, inner strength, and a renewed sense of resilience as they navigate the challenging process of healing and recovery. The next theme delves deeper into several aspects of how families are strengthened and supported in this rural community.

4.3.3 THEME 3: RELEVANCE OF BELIEFS AND PRACTICES USED TO STRENGTHEN AND SUPPORT RURAL FAMILIES

The third theme from the data that emerged, related to the critical role played by African traditional beliefs and practices in strengthening and supporting rural families. Examining how these factors shape and support families in rural settings is essential for developing effective strategies to enhance their well-being. Four sub-themes emerged under theme three, namely, (i) reinforcement of a family’s spiritual centre, (ii) strengthening family well-being, (iii) resilience, and (iv) influences positive upbringing and self-discipline

4.3.3.1 Sub-theme 1: Reinforcement of a family’s spiritual centre

The first sub-theme derived under this theme related to the reinforcement and preservation of longstanding spiritual centres within rural families. Under this sub-theme participants discussed ways in which families maintain and strengthen their connection through spiritual beliefs and practices.

One of the traditional healers shared as follows:

“As a traditional healer, I help families strengthen their spiritual centres... it depends on what the family prefers but we do various practices to achieve this. Protecting a home and family is one of the most important things in this community and African spirituality. This practice demands a very high-powered spiritual force and that’s where I come in, to make sure that families successfully achieve this... families do this to strengthen their homes and to live a pleasant long-lasting life” FGD (14)

“We make isiwasho to protect our family and homestead. To create it, we use sea water and a candle. We burn the candle into the sea water... sea water is important because of the salt it contains, the salt wards off negative energy and preserves a spiritual covenant ... many African families use sea salt to form protective barriers” PI (7)

“We believe in planting trees like umLahlankosi (that which buries the Chief). Although this tree is popularly known for the practice of sending the Chief's spirit to a peaceful place after death, as families we also use it for the same purpose. Not only that, but we also use it for protection of the spiritual centre in our homes... this tree is important to us because it can prevent even external threats like witchcraft in our homes” -PI (10)

In the narratives above, participants described various practices used by families to strengthen their spiritual centres and protect their homes and families. A key approach involved the use of “isiwasho”, a combination of seawater and a candle. Using seawater is believed to harness the protective power of sea salt. Some families plant trees like umLahlankosi for spiritual protection and the peaceful afterlife of their elders. Studies found that families use branches of this tree, to bring home their loved one's spirit from the scene of death. The belief is that this allows the deceased to rest peacefully and prevents family members from passing away in the same manner. These trees preserve family life by protecting family homesteads and the family lineage (Makhathini 2021: 240; Ntsimane 2018: 306; Shula and Gardener 2006: 9).

One participant explained that protecting the home and family is of utmost importance and requires significant spiritual force, which they can provide to help families live a pleasant, long-lasting life. According to Ayeni and Aborisade (2022: 155) through subsistence methods, Indigenous families acquire ties to land and place in the early stages, and these connections provide them with cultural lifelong protection and well-being.

4.3.3.2 Sub-theme 2: Strengthening family well-being

The fourth sub-theme that developed under this theme, is related to strengthening family well-being. African spirituality places a high value on family well-being and relationships (Lebese *et al.* 2022: 73). In the excerpts that follow, participants discussed how deeply rooted beliefs and practices influence identity, support, healthy relationships and family well-being:

“When a baby is born, we normally visit "umsamo" to introduce it to our ancestors. We go straight there and talk to our ancestors, introduce the baby through the imbeleko ritual, and thereafter we do a small ceremony to name the baby and make sure we call it by its full name

in umsamo... such introduction is important because the baby must be known and by our ancestors so that they stay healthy, and they live a long-lasting life” PI (6)

“We introduce our babies to our ancestors and we do the Imbeleko ritual so that they can see them as part of the family, and then protect them from harm... after the introduction, we believe that ancestors fully accept the baby as their own, and from then on, the baby forever remains under their spiritual protection, for as long as they live, even in their adult life. This has been done for generations, and this is how our well-being is facilitated in African spirituality” PI (11)

The excerpts reveal the centrality of introducing newborn babies to their ancestors through a ritual called *imbeleko*. Participants shared that this practice is done to formally integrate the baby into the family, allowing the ancestors to recognise and protect the child throughout their life. A research study by Dlamini (2024: 92) found that in Zulu culture, a ceremony called *imbeleko* is performed to introduce the baby to the ancestors to thank them and ask them to protect it. The family elder responsible for talking to the ancestors, calls the baby by its name when presenting it to the ancestors, and at the same time a goat is being slaughtered. The introductions and naming ceremonies are seen as essential for the baby's health, longevity, and overall well-being, facilitated by the ancestors' spiritual guardianship.

In line with this, previous research has shown that in traditional rural homes, names generally convey the hopes and expectations of a family for their child. This is why African proverbs may sometimes be associated with a child's name. Some names convey the family's past or their relationships with people in the community. Other names may inform of the time or the weather at the time of the baby's birth, and so forth (Wacera 2023: 3). Political and religious values are also frequently reflected in names. Religious beliefs are also reflected in names (Reupert *et al.* 2022: 66).

Similarly, a study by Bollig (2009: 327) found that the Himba of Namibia and Wodaabe of Niger have unique practices for naming babies. For example, the Wodaabe of Niger avoid naming children before their 12th birthday to prevent identification by the spirit of death (Williams 2016: 21; Nevins, Seffal and Spilling 2019: 35). On the other hand, according to Kerubo (2016: 102) in Kenya, the Maasai babies receive names from village elders immediately after birth.

These traditions are passed down for generations and are a core aspect of how African spirituality promotes the nurturing of new life and family wellbeing. Furthermore, life-affirming rites of passage are observed to help a person effectively navigate the various stages of life.

These rituals primarily centre on life-cycle stages, such as birth, puberty and initiation, marriage, and death, during which the ancestors are revered, and their blessings and benevolence are requested (Lebese *et al.* 2022: 73; Van Gennepe 2019: 36).

In an African spiritual context, family well-being is contingent on healthy kinship networks:

“Our family relies on one another for guidance and support. Our beliefs and traditions teach us at a young age to take care of each other because family stands together. We cannot survive without each other, therefore, I will never turn away from my family and relatives. I understand the importance of caring for them... in our tradition, if we do not maintain good relations with family and relatives, we face consequences that may lead to misfortune” PI (2)

“Family relationships are important in our ancestry. We believe that if you maintain conflict with your family, you will never find peace and will always be distressed. If there is bad blood within our family, we believe that we will encounter bad luck. We believe that nothing will go as planned until that issue has been addressed... maintaining a strong family bond is so important to us; we survive because of it... our ancestors can recognise us if we look out for each other and maintain good relationships always.” PI (12)

“Our ancestors get upset when there is a disagreement or misunderstanding among family members. Especially when that altercation happens on our family homestead... ancestors do not want any noise on the family homestead. Therefore, family members must forgive one another and ask ancestors for forgiveness to make this right... each involved family member must purchase a goat to officiate this.” PI (8)

The above excerpts reinforce the importance of family relationships and maintaining strong kinship bonds within African culture. Participants emphasised the belief that family is fundamental to survival and well-being, with traditions and ancestors guiding the need to care for one another, resolve conflicts, and preserve harmonious relationships. Participants also shared that failure to uphold these family obligations is seen as inviting misfortune and disrupting the natural order.

Similarly, a study by Melati *et al.* (2018: 80), highlighted the importance of family as a social institution, reflecting a culture of collectivism and community. Participants in this study were reported to have shown respect, gratitude, and appreciation for family in their culture, as family members lend support towards each other (spiritually, physically, and mentally). According to Barnard (2018: 120) African culture values ceremonies and rituals that promote harmonious

relationships and the resolution of disputes. Thus, these narratives convey strong attention to family cohesion and the elaborate rituals involved in restoring family unity when it is threatened. Aspects of African spiritual and familial support in the face of adversity are discussed in the theme that follows.

4.3.3.3 Sub-theme 3: Resilience

The second sub-theme that emerged under this theme is resilience. This sub-theme outlines how spiritual beliefs and practices upheld by rural families are crucial in fostering resilience, which is essential for navigating the challenges and uncertainties that often characterise life in rural communities (Schoeman 2018: 101). Participants reported that these beliefs and practices provide them with a profound sense of purpose, connectedness, and the ability to cope effectively with adversity:

"I found resilience through prayer... I have been unemployed since Covid-19, and I lost all hope and wanted to give up. One day, my grandmother encouraged me to visit a prophet... that prophet called me to the river. I was scared but I went, and she dipped me three times into the water and prayed for me... ever since then, it's like this dark cloud has been lifted off my shoulders. I have so much hope and faith today that things will work for the better and I will get a job soon" PI (3)

"I (community elder) have ten grandchildren, all reliant on me. Two finished school but struggled to find work. My pension could not cover our needs. I performed "ilata" in umsamo (a sacred place in a traditional hut house) to ask ancestors for financial luck and job opportunities, a few days later my niece said she found a job for one of my grandchildren. God and ancestors answered me through her. Now, one of the grandchildren works and helps at home, and another is getting interviews" FGD (5)

"I (family member) was unemployed and had financial difficulties. I was hesitant to ask my family for money even to buy essential items... I almost fell into depression last year... I joined a local spiritual church. The church members and leaders took me to eChibini (spiritual river) to pray for me. The spiritual leader there told me I needed to mend my relationship with my mother, and then things would start improving. I followed their advice, and that's when I saw a positive change in my life and even got a job." PI (11)

The aforementioned narratives highlighted the role of spiritual and familial support in overcoming adversity. Participants described turning to prayer, visiting spiritual leaders, and

connecting with ancestors to find resilience and hope during unemployment, financial hardship, and depression. A study by Hobongwane-Duley (2015: 60), in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, reported that participants mentioned that they sought advice from spiritual leaders when faced with a crisis or issue, and that these leaders provided support through prayer and spiritual direction. Furthermore, participants also shared that they prayed for financial support.

In this study, prayer was found to be a source of resiliency. African spiritual practices foster resilience, making it a crucial psychological well-being construct, that empowers families to withstand life challenges and bounce back from adversity (Mhaka-Mutepfa and Maundeni 2019: 211). Previous research has also found that it is cultivated through shared beliefs, organisational patterns, and communication patterns (Schoeman 2018: 110; Walsh 2015: 51). The data showed that these beliefs help family members attach meaning to hardship, form a hopeful outlook, and organise family processes and approaches to crises.

Participants attributed positive changes in their lives, such as finding jobs and receiving support from relatives to these spiritual practices and strengthened family bonds. According to Theron and Theron (2013: 391), African spirituality is a crucial family dimension that fosters adaptation and unity among family members. The data reflected how African spirituality and familial ties can provide vital resources for individuals facing significant life challenges. Furthermore, traditional practices and community-based support systems play a key role in strengthening the resilience and well-being of rural families facing adversities.

4.3.3.4 Sub-theme 4: Influences positive upbringing and discipline

The fourth sub-theme under this theme focused on the importance of positive upbringing and self-discipline as highlighted in African beliefs and practices. Participants discussed how these beliefs and practices influence the importance of community, respect, and personal responsibility, which in turn, significantly influence positive upbringing and self-discipline in rural families, fostering a nurturing environment that develops important life skills:

“In our family, a ceremony like Umemulo plays an important role. Teenage pregnancy is something that has been quite a challenge in this community. This has led to our children dropping out of school... when a young girl knows that Umemulo has to take place when they reach a certain age, they have to abstain from sexual activity and remain pure... This also keeps them safe from diseases and they never have to drop out of school” PI (5)

“When preparing for Umemulo, a group of girls practice traditional singing and dancing beforehand for weeks. These meet-ups foster bonds with like-minded individuals who attend practice or occasions such as traditional reed dances. Developing such relationships can affect our children's life choices, teaching them self-esteem and to be goal driven... because of such relationships, when our children face distress, they get support from their traditional dancing peers and instructors. This keeps them going.” PI (9)

The aforementioned narratives highlight the significant role that cultural ceremonies and traditional practices embedded in African spirituality, play in the upbringing and discipline of children. A research study by Mabingo (2020: 98) found that African communities emphasise childhood as a time for learning responsibilities, skills, creativity, and participation in communal ceremonies, thereby fostering a holistic journey of human experience. In this study, the Umemulo ceremony, for example, is seen as a way to instil values of abstinence and purity in young girls, preventing them from sexually transmitted illnesses and dropping out of school due to teenage pregnancy. Similarly, Mshayisa, Bhagwan and Dewan (2024: 108) concurred that “such practices are also used to curb the spread of HIV/AIDS, which is rampant in the African context.” In this community, the circumcision rituals for young men are also viewed as a means to teach self-discipline, respect, and responsible behaviour. This was described as follows:

“We take our boys to the mountain for circumcision... the goal is to help prevent young people from diseases while also teaching them self-discipline. We educate these young men about the importance of abstinence, just as we do with young girls... in that mountain, young boys are taught about respect... respect that needs to be given to elders, and people in general. They are also advised on how to be responsible and respected young men in society” FGD (13)

“In the mountains, young men are trained to spend their time efficiently, so become better members of society. Young men are taught about activities that can prevent them from engaging in risky behaviours such as crime and drug usage... some of the activities that we advise them on, include gathering in groups to do traditional music or traditional stick fighting” FGD (4)

A study by Amanze and Masango (2020: 292) also found that rites of passage (initiation) are a notion that continues to impact African spirituality and individual values in the context of transformation during the maturational process. This practice benefits the elderly, allowing them to share their experiences with young people in places like, initiation schools (Mugambi 2023: 160; Amanze and Masango 2020: 292). Essentially, rites of passage, such as circumcision, are a good example of forming the process of maturation that leads to socialisation and integration

of a person or group so that they can live in harmony with others (Mugambi 2023: 160; Muriithi 2023: 201).

A study by Amanze and Masango (2020: 292) further reported that within African communities, adults must mould young people for them to learn how to coexist with others. The excerpts also emphasise how these cultural practices foster positive relationships among community members, providing support and guidance for young people. The participants described how group activities, such as traditional singing and dancing, help develop self-esteem and a sense of purpose in young people.

Additionally, the community's beliefs and traditions are essential for instilling effective values and lessons that can be passed down through generations, ultimately keeping the community grounded and united. One of the community elders said:

"Beliefs and practices guide us as African people, to be respectful, live an honest life and conduct ourselves appropriately. These beliefs and traditions instil effective values and lessons in adults and children, which they can pass down to their own families. Our practices and beliefs bind our community together, and we get to remind each other of the necessity of our traditions, which helps keep us grounded." FGD (15)

The above narratives ultimately suggest that the positive influences of cultural upbringing and discipline play a crucial role in shaping the lives and choices of the children in this African community. Traditional community practices are important in teaching young people to live a positive lifestyle. These practices are frequently led by adults who serve as role models for suitable cultural behaviours in the community. As a result, young people gain by participating in and learning from such activities (Mshayisa, Bhagwan and Dewan 2024: 108)

4.3.4 THEME 4: HEALING METHODOLOGIES

The fourth theme that emerged in the data related to the healing methodologies found in this community. Healing methodologies include a diverse set of beliefs and practices focused on restoring and improving holistic well-being. These practices which are based on many cultural traditions, seek to harness the individual's potential to heal and maintain balance in the physical, emotional, and spiritual realms (Moodley, Sutherland and Oulano 2008: 153). Three sub-themes emerged from the data, namely, (i) traditional healing ceremonies, (ii) inhlambuluko (healing the lineage through truth and reconciliation), and (iii) rituals and sacrificial offerings:

4.3.4.1 Sub-theme 1: Traditional healing ceremonies

The first theme that emerged under this theme related to the traditional healing ceremonies, that are performed by the traditional healers to assist families. Traditional healing ceremonies are ancient practices used to promote physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. Participants reported how these ceremonies involved the use of herbs, rituals, and spiritual elements to help them, their family and community heal from different illnesses and challenges:

“A traditional healer did a ceremony of amagobongo for me, which is a healing ceremony through a mixture of herbs, this ceremony helps individuals to heal and stay connected with their ancestors... I had to digest a mixture of herbs every day for a month with the sole purpose of connecting with my ancestors and healing... when I completed my healing term, there was traditional dancing and singing involved, it represented the success of my healing ceremony”
PI (1)

“One day I got very sick, and my family took me to a traditional healer. I spent three months in esigodlweni (a sacred place for traditional healers). She helped me heal through traditional medicine... she also discovered that I had to do a ceremony of Amagobongo, and she volunteered to help me do this ceremony..., my family came to fetch me, and they brought a goat as a donation to the traditional healer for all her help” P (7)

“I have done Amagobongo for many individuals in this community and I believe it is important for anyone in an African household who values spirituality and traditions to do Amagobongo as this healing practice is necessary in our culture and spirituality - eventually it affects every individual who practices African spirituality... ancestors send individuals a message to do this practice.” FGD (12)

The aforementioned excerpts, emphasise the significance of traditional healing ceremonies, particularly the *Amagobongo* ceremony in traditional African households. Participants described their experiences undergoing the *Amagobongo* ceremony, which involves consuming herbal remedies and reconnecting with one's ancestors. Similarly, research by Lebaka (2019: 66) found that the “malopo” ceremony in Bapedi culture, acts as a ritual conducted for healing and placating the ancestral spirits. Research by Mafuta and Kaunda (2021: 126) has highlighted that the malopo and amagobongo ceremonies (ceremonies involving the use of mixed traditional herbs) serve as a therapeutic means of healing and as a means of connecting people to their ancestors. To foster harmony between the living and the living dead, songs are sung and recited (Nolte and Downing 2019: 39).

The above excerpts emphasise the healing and spiritual benefits of this practice which is deeply woven with their cultural and spiritual traditions (Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 409; Young and Koopsen 2010: 222). African spiritual practices are important for family and community well-being. Consequently, traditional healers play a crucial role in performing ceremonies, often providing free assistance to families in need, due to inadequate healthcare systems:

“I have performed many healing ceremonies for the majority of families in this community, sometimes even free of charge as long as the person gets out of danger. That is my top priority. I understand that I am part of an impoverished community which is far from everything... we do not have the best healthcare systems in place... but we have learned to work with what we have, and since I was given this gift, I can pick and mix healing medicine in the forest and help my people” FGD (1)

This proves that traditional healers act as the doctors and instructors of spiritual beliefs and traditions in an African context. Similar findings were obtained by Rowkith and Bhagwan (2020: 11) in their study in India where healers function as doctors in deep forest regions and constitute the cornerstone of tribal healing methodologies. In South Africa, there are more than 200,000 traditional healers, and almost 80% of the population consults them. They are located primarily in rural areas. For their primary healthcare requirements, many South Africans still turn to traditional medicine (Mothibe and Sibanda 2019: 15; Belani *et al.* 2022: 4; Izu and de Villiers (2023: 20). Furthermore, the data has shown the important function of the communal nature of the healing process, with families and communities participating in and supporting such ceremonies.

4.3.4.2 Sub-theme 2: Inhlambuluko (Healing the lineage through truth and reconciliation)

The second sub-theme that emerged under this theme was Inhlambuluko. According to Moyo (2021: 51), African spirituality is underpinned by practices that involve healing, reconciling and protecting the family lineage. Participants reflected on how they acknowledge the truth of past harms or trauma, and strive towards consciousness, unity and healing. They said as follows:

“Inhlambuluko is about truth and reconciliation while healing generational curses... many things can divide families and the community members I arrange a sit down with those involved and we try to resolve the issue ... parties involved are required to tell the truth, no matter how painful, harsh or uncomfortable it may be. Everyone is given an equal opportunity to voice themselves. Individuals must acknowledge their wrongs and shortcomings. They all listen to one another

and acknowledge each other respectfully. Individuals ask for forgiveness, let go and forgive each other, resulting in peace. I then have to officiate this by doing a small ritual and cleansing” FGD (9)

“After a bad fight with my mother, I cursed her and threatened to leave my family forever. I did not mean what I said and didn’t expect it to have an impact, but I still left home. When I returned home, my family welcomed me warmly, but I became ill and almost died. My mother went to consult, and it turned out that my ancestors were unhappy with me for the way I left home and what I said. They requested an apology through a ritual and wanted me to do “inhlambuluko” with my family, led by a spiritual leader” PI (4)

“My aunt and uncle, who are twins, had a conflict at our family home. My uncle got very angry and left, and never wanted to return... everyone including my aunt, tried to persuade him to come back and make peace, but he refused. A traditional healer told us that we needed to perform inhlambuluko, a reconciliation ritual, or one of them might lose their sanity. Eventually, the whole family came together to do inhlambuluko, and we were able to resolve many underlying issues.” PI (2)

Inhlambuluko is a reconciliation process in African spirituality that addresses conflicts within families and communities. For example, if there is a conflict between family members, whether they had a physical or verbal conflict, ancestors get upset. If they do not fix this and make peace, there will be punishment, and it becomes severe as a person can lose their sanity. For example, it is done when family members are engaged in a dispute, whether physical or verbal. This type of conflict within the homestead may involve demeaning, vulgar language and physical altercations. This usually disrupts and affects the ancestral spirits. In such cases, the rest of the family must intervene and resolve the dispute using the Inhlambuluko ritual. Failure to do so can result in one of the involved parties losing their sanity or becoming ill, as a form of punishment from the ancestors.

Participants (family members) reported that through open sharing, acknowledgement of wrongdoings, and mutual forgiveness, inhlambuluko aims to heal the family lineage and combat generational curses. Previous research studies have also found that reconciling through the deeply personal healing practice of inhlambuluko (lineage healing) is an extremely powerful transformational tool. Such practice recognises the significant impact that intergenerational legacies, ancestral wounds, and family patterns can have on personal lives and well-being (Carver 2008: 22; Awoh and Nkwi 2017: 17).

Most participants shared that the process involves a facilitated meeting where those involved voice their truth, listen respectfully, and participate in a ritual and cleansing ceremony led by a spiritual leader. Participants also discussed that the process helps resolve conflicts and further addresses underlying issues within the family, ultimately leading to a restored sense of peace. Inhlambuluko is recognised as a central means of promoting truth, reconciliation, and healing within rural families and communities. Participants in a study by Awoh and Nkwi (2017: 140), reported that by actively looking into one's family history, developing empathy and understanding, and significantly confronting areas of disconnection or unresolved conflict, people seek to release the burdens of the past and reclaim a sense of wholeness and belonging within their family lineage.

Furthermore, a study by Murambadoro, Wielenga and Batley (2020: 43), stated that the practice of truth and reconciliation in African tradition enables people to break free from restrictive patterns and contributes to a more dynamic, integrated future for themselves and their family line by promoting forgiveness, restoring peace, mending broken connections, and honouring the experiences of their ancestors. This establishes that beliefs and practices within African spirituality, promote wisdom in an African context.

One participant described how African spirituality is underpinned by communal justice. Peace offerings are made through a court justice system overseen by a Chief committee, and this is how peace is restored between families. One community elder described this process as follows:

“Families that take each other to court are obligated to ask for forgiveness and give the other, a cow as a peace offering if found guilty by the chief and committee. A community elder is selected to witness the exchange, share wisdom, and encourage unity, then ask the families to shake hands... I have been selected before by the chiefs committee as a community elder to witness and facilitate this process” FGD (2)

4.3.4.3 Sub-theme 3: Rituals or sacrificial offerings used for healing

The third sub-theme which emerged under theme 4 involved rituals and sacrificial offerings used for healing within families and the community. Participants highlighted that they use traditional healing practices that involve rituals and sacrificial offerings to promote reconciliation and the spiritual and physical well-being of families.

Another practice that traditional healers use is sacrificial offerings. This was explained by participants below as follows:

“I officiate inhlambuluko with slaughtering white chickens. I take the chicken gall and pour it in water and all parties involved have to wash their hands in it. As a traditional healer, it is important for me to stay neutral and to understand what inhlambuluko signifies because if this ritual is performed wrong, it can destroy families and a community but if done correctly, it creates healing and peace.” FGD (9)

“When performing Inhlambuluko, using a goat is appropriate if the individuals in dispute are community members or from different households. As a traditional healer, I monitor and lead this process... the key requirement is that the goat must be slaughtered, cooked, and eaten on the same day by those involved and the invited community members. This communal meal is a sign of peace among those affected.” FGD (3)

The aforementioned excerpts provide insight into the rituals and practices of inhlambuluko, traditional healing through a truth and reconciliation process. The participants (traditional healers) described officiating inhlambuluko through the slaughtering of white chickens, using the chicken gall in water for the involved parties to wash their hands. The participants shared that as a healer, maintaining neutrality and understanding the true meaning of inhlambuluko is crucial, as performing the ritual incorrectly can harm families and communities, but proper execution can foster healing and peace.

When performing inhlambuluko for community members or those from different households, a goat is the appropriate offering. The traditional healer must monitor and lead this process, which requires the goat to be slaughtered, cooked, and eaten on the same day by the involved parties and community members. It is regarded as a symbol of peace among those affected. Research by Mabvurira (2016: 111) asserted that such practices have been upheld for decades in various African cultures. This coheres to a study by Docus (2017: 105) who found that the Acholi people of Uganda sacrifice an animal to achieve reconciliation. Initially, the animal's blood is applied to the godly shrine and the individual requests forgiveness. Subsequently, as a symbol of their reconciliation, those involved share the bread and beer.

The following excerpt describes specific healing rituals that participants shared as follows:

“There are many rituals and healing methods performed in this community. If two families are not getting along, the Chief or Induna selects a traditional healer to conduct a ritual called

"ukuthelelana amanzi" ... as a traditional healer, I take a bowl, pour water, and place a silver coin inside. Once the families have forgiven each other, they wash their hands in the bowl. I then discard the water with the coin, allowing the families to reconcile and maintain community unity and harmony." FGD (1)

As shared by a traditional healer above, a community healing method called "ukuthelelana amanzi" (forgiveness ritual) is used to resolve feuds amongst families. The ritual involves a traditional healer using water and a silver coin, facilitating forgiveness and community harmony. Similarly, a study by Ndwandwe (2000: 214), reported that a third party mediates in community disputes, encouraging the parties to manage their anger. Thereafter, families wash their hands with water and medicine, express their complaints, and the mediator summarises their words. A study by Olawa (2021: 109) has also found that when families pour water on each other's hands, drink beer and take part in a purification communion, that represents spiritual reconciliation.

Mbiti has also highlighted sacrifice as a common act of worship in Sub-Saharan Africa, distinguishing between slaughtering animal life and offering food or items. He argues that sacrifice helps restore the ontological balance between God, humans, deceased ancestors, and the cosmos, as misfortune can result from imbalances. This understanding is based on African cosmology (Mbiti 2008: 58)

4.3.5 THEME 5: SPIRITUAL ACTIVITIES THAT CAN BE USED BY RURAL FAMILIES

The last theme emerged from data related to spiritual activities that can be used by families in this rural community. Spiritual activities facilitate community participation, and cultural expression, and promote healing and spiritual fulfilment. Four sub-themes emerged from the data, namely, (i) Traditional music and dance, (ii) drumming, (iii) African storytelling and proverbs, and (iv) traditional stick fighting

4.3.5.1 Sub-theme 1: Traditional music and dance

The first sub-theme that emerged under this theme related to traditional music and dance, which are essential to African spirituality and the healing practices that underpin this spirituality. Participants discussed how these spiritual activities function as impactful interventions for their families, providing physical, psychological and spiritual advantages as follows:

"We have traditional music groups for grandmothers in this community. We formed this group for fun at first, and to stay active. However, the songs have helped me as a community elder

significantly... these spiritual songs help me forget about my problems and help me feel less stressed... we now enter competitions and earn money, which we use to buy seeds for our gardens. This allows us to grow and sell vegetables while keeping some for our families.” FGD (13)

“I think having more traditional music groups for all age groups would be a great activity for this community... I know grandmothers have one and I like it because they get to belong in a group with like-minded people and develop healthy relationships, so even if they feel bored or troubled, they have something to look forward to and people they can share their troubles with ...” PI (6)

“In times of sorrow, as elderly women, we are invited to console families through "amahubo" spiritual singing... we give families support and they gain resilience through spiritual singing so that they can withstand what they are going through in that moment... spiritual songs encourage families to have faith and that everything will be okay” FGD (2)

The above narratives reflect the important role traditional music plays in the spiritual and communal life of this community. Participants shared that traditional music groups for grandmothers provide a sense of purpose, joy, and community and have helped women cope with their problems and stresses. The singing is described as deeply spiritual, allowing the women to find solace and meaning. Beyond personal benefits, the groups also generate income to support women's livelihoods. Additionally, the excerpts highlighted how traditional music provides comfort and resilience to families in times of sorrow, drawing on the healing power of communal prayers. The excerpts emphasised the multifaceted ways that traditional music functions as an effective spiritual activity that strengthens the community.

Similarly, a study by Trehub, Becker and Morley (2015: 96) found that traditional music could stimulate emotional responses. Because music could move people deeply, members of communities all over the world used it to promote consolation, create unity and construct cultural identity. Furthermore, music is a sensitive spiritual healing method that relaxes mental conditions, reduces stress, and relaxes the central nervous system, and the entire body (Moss 2019: 213; Boyce-Tillman 2020: 29). Traditional dancing is a cultural and spiritual expression tool for young people in an African community, teaching them about its significance and symbolism. One community elder said as follows:

“We can encourage young people to participate in a traditional dance known as “Indlamu,” which combines singing, drumming, and barefoot dancing... young people can be taught about the traditional attire used during this dance and the significance of this traditional dance on both a cultural and spiritual sense” FGD (7)

“Many young people in this community have a talent for traditional music and dance, often seen in celebrations and ceremonies like umemulo... these talents can motivate young people to unite for the community's and their benefit, helping them overcome boredom that can lead to issues like teenage pregnancy and school dropout... with limited facilities to support young people in this community, it's important to encourage such activities.” PI (1)

Traditional and spiritual music and dance groups are suggested and valued by participants, for their ability to unite the community, provide spiritual support, and give young people positive outlets to avoid risky behaviours. Similarly, in Sub-Saharan Africa, families have various teachings about life, respect, resilience and survival. According to Van Breda and Theron (2018: 237) teaching children while they are young helps prevent them from making poor life choices. It plays a huge role in making them responsible adults with great qualities.

Additionally, a study by Lebaka (2022: 120) in Limpopo, South Africa, found that the informal learning of indigenous music and dance through observation and imitation is an integral part of the Bapedi culture. Consequently, young people's behaviours are influenced by social interaction and holistic learning processes (Lebaka 2018: 68; Ageh and Lall 2019: 51). With limited community resources, these practices are viewed as important for supporting family well-being and youth development in rural communities.

4.3.5.2 Sub-theme 2: Drumming

The second sub-theme that emerged under this theme was drumming. African drumming is an integral part of spiritual practices for many African communities. Participants shared the importance of this spiritual activity and how it provides a range of benefits for individuals, particularly in a rural community like their own as follows:

“Drumming... I think drumming is a very essential part of our community. Elders who are more knowledgeable about drumming can teach people from the community how to drum... drumming can be very therapeutic. In this community hand drums are more famous... in the African culture, these are used for celebration, mourning, inspiration, and communication.

Drumming is usually done in a period of peace and healing, planting and harvesting, and life and death.” PI (9)

“Drumming is a good spiritual activity for this community... I would love to see people in this community engage in it... when you drum you feel this relaxing effect that helps you feel a strong spiritual connection. It consumes you to a point where you feel it’s only just you and the drum that exists, it can also help people release their aggression... drumming can be an escape for many individuals who do not know how to express themselves properly and who yearn for a deep connection” FGD (1)

“Drumming... when you listen to the rhythm of the drums, you instantly feel stimulated... drumming can connect us to powerful spirits and allows us to connect with our cultural heritage. This knowledge has to be imparted to many individuals of this community, and we need more individuals to participate in drumming... we must share this experience as a community, it can make us connect in a very special way” FGD (6)

The narratives shared by traditional leaders reflect the importance of drumming as a spiritual and communal activity in their given community. Participants described drumming as an essential part of their community's culture, used for various purposes such as celebration, mourning, inspiration, and communication. Previous research has found that several rural communities used drums throughout times of peace and war, planting and harvesting, and birth and death. Drums have been an integral part of Africans' daily lives for so long, that drumming runs through their collective unconscious (Durojaye *et al.* 2021: 65; Akinbo 2021: 382).

Elders possess valuable knowledge of drumming, which they can share with the community. Drumming is said to have therapeutic effects, inducing a sense of relaxation and spiritual connection. It is also seen as a way for individuals to express themselves and release aggression. Other research studies have also found that aside from connecting with ancestral spirits through drumming, group drumming can help reduce depression and anxiety (Singh and Bhagwan 2020: 409; Fancourt *et al.* 2016: 105; Baron 2015: 15). The narratives of the participants emphasise the need to impart this cultural knowledge and encourage more community members to engage in drumming, as it can foster a strong sense of connection and unity within the community.

4.3.5.3 Sub-theme 3: African storytelling and proverbs

The third sub-theme that emerged under this theme was characterised by African storytelling and proverbs. African stories and proverbs are effective in preserving and transferring knowledge, values, and customs from one generation to another. These stories and wise sayings provided insights into the lives, beliefs, and perspectives of African communities (Mabvurira 2016: 132).

Participants shared how these can be used as effective spiritual activities adopted by the community as follows:

"I think an African storytelling and proverbs group would be a great idea... the younger generation needs to be told these stories and proverbs, and as an elder, I would be happy to narrate and interpret them... one important proverb they should learn is "Izandla ziyagezana" (you wash my hands, I wash yours), which can promote togetherness and mutual support, so no one has to face tough situations alone in this community." FGD (11)

"We need activities like circles of storytelling, where we can share stories and interpret African proverbs to our children, for this tradition to carry on and hopefully they can pass it on from generation to generation ... we can also include drumming... I remember when growing up my great-grandmother would share African stories through drumming. The emotion behind it made it very interesting and spiritual" FGD (5)

"African proverbs such as "ligotshwa lisemanzi" refer to - teach children while they are young. In our family we live by this African proverb, by teaching children from a young age the importance of attending reed dance and virginity testing, they grow up knowing that every year they have to attend this ceremony until they get married. This helps instil values, moulds them and prepare them for the future" FGD (9)

In the aforementioned excerpts, participants suggested that African storytelling and proverbs are an effective spiritual activity, because of their potential to nurture and instill values within the community. A study by Emberly and Davhula (2016: 438) with Vhavenda communities, in South Africa, found that there has been an erosion in the transmission of knowledge in African communities, between elders and young people through song and storytelling (Kanu and Ndabisi 2020: 155). Despite this, participants (community elders) in the current study expressed a deep desire to share these rich cultural elements, including proverbs like "Izandla ziyagezana" and "ligotshwa lisemanzi", through engaging activities such as storytelling circles and drumming. Participants also shared that they believe this activity can cultivate a strong sense

of togetherness and mutual support while facilitating the intergenerational transmission of important values and customs in this community.

In support of these findings, a study by Mawere (2014: 102) also identified that African communities are establishing new methods of transmission of knowledge, not just for the sake of cultural heritage, but also for the preservation of integral cultural knowledge embedded in African storytelling practices. These excerpts highlight the transformative power of African oral traditions in shaping and preparing young people for the future. The centrality of African proverbs and storytelling is preserving traditional and spiritual traditions within communities. The emphasis on narrating these stories in larger gatherings to encourage wider interaction is outlined in the following excerpt:

“I have heard many stories about iNkosazane uNomkhubulwane and how she helps our families. These stories maintain our spiritual and traditional practices, with rules and standards that must be upheld in our community... we respect the spirit of uNomkhubulwane because our elders shared it with us through African storytelling and proverbs... these stories connect us to our elders and traditions and should be shared in group settings where everyone can participate.” PI (4)

As evident in the above excerpts, African storytelling and proverbs are commonly used when interacting with and relating to others. They bring together extended family networks, neighbours, and the larger community (Ngomane 2019: 102; Asemah, Kente and Nkwam-Uwaoma 2021: 26). African people deeply integrate spirituality into their life cycle, seeking fulfilment and transcendence. From an early age, elders share stories and proverbs that help individuals develop awareness of the spirit and connect with ancestors and the community. These stories and proverbs therefore serve as a source of support during hardships (Addei and Addei 2010: 13; Mbiti 2015: 94; Ammerman 2013: 20). These African-centred stories are deeply ingrained in this community's culture.

4.3.5.4 Sub-theme 4: Traditional stick fighting

The fourth sub-theme that emerged under theme 5 was traditional stick fighting. Bucaille (2019: 120) asserted that engaging in traditional stick fighting was found to help young men in rural families connect with their cultural traditions and promote rich oral traditions that influence holistic well-being. Participants shared that this activity would not only teach young people physical skills, but would also enhance their discipline, respect, and spirituality as follows:

"I (community elder) think Traditional stick fighting could be an important activity to revive in this community... traditional stick fighting is when two opposing male figures fight each other to see who is the strongest. As per tradition, it takes place in the mountains away from homesteads... we believe men must be barefooted to impact their balance and strength and to feel connected with the soil of their forefathers. FGD (4)

"Traditional stick fighting has been known as a skill taught to young men to defend themselves and their families... currently this tradition is recognised as an African sport or activity for young men in rural communities...if a young man is known as a champion in this, he becomes famous for carrying himself well and usually earns the respect of the community members" FGD (8)

"We need to teach these young men traditional stick fighting, which usually takes place in mountains or by the river... young men today turn to drugs and theft to deal with their psychosocial issues, but they require effective intervention that is cost-effective. Traditional stick fighting can help young men with anger management etc... through this activity, the leader or trainer can help instil values and good teachings in these young men." FGD (10)

The above narratives highlight the cultural and social significance of traditional stick fighting for young men in rural African communities. Participants viewed traditional stick fighting as a valuable skill that teaches self-defence, builds respect and community standing, and prepares young men for responsible roles in their families and community. Similarly, stick fighting has been known as a culturally accepted way to resolve disputes among individuals, groups, and clans for years. Bucaille (2019: 120) stated that this activity was developed as a way to establish respect and harmony among community rivals. Various scholars have argued that today, stick fighting is still performed in rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal as a process of socialisation, self-defence and instilling values (Nxumalo 2010: 67; Van Selm 2019: 56; Green and Svinth 2010: 72).

This study found an interconnectedness between traditional stick fighting and a natural environment. Previous studies described how regular exposure to green spaces reduces stress levels, anxiety, and depression (Braçe *et al.* 2020: 7014; Thompson *et al.* 2012: 221; Dadvand *et al.* 2016: 161). Thompson *et al.* (2012: 61), stated that the powerful combination of physical activity and the peaceful surrounding of nature promotes the release of endorphins, which stimulate emotions of contentment in human beings. Nxumalo, Semple and Longhurst (2015: 32) found that traditional stick fighting further encourages social connection and community building within various African communities. Similarly, participants in the current study indicated

that traditional stick fighting has the potential to be an effective, cost-efficient intervention for addressing issues like gender-based violence and psychosocial problems faced by men in this community:

“Traditional stick fighting must be taught to young men to prepare them for responsible roles in their families and community... this activity strengthens young men, and it also teaches them that their strength is equivalent to that of other men and should not be used to harm women. We must teach them this so that the statistics of gender-based violence in this community can decline.” FGD (4)

Afrocentric researchers Mkabela (2005), Asante and Karenga (2005) advocated for the restoration and reconstruction of mental health and care delivery through culture-specific and applicable interventions (cited in Anakwenze 2022: 124; Dana 2002: 3). By instilling values, teachings, and anger management skills through this activity, community elders, traditional leaders and trainers can positively influence the development of these young men while providing much needed, appropriate intervention to them. In line with this, the data presented traditional stick fighting as a culturally grounded practice that strengthens young men physically and spiritually, while also benefiting their families and the broader community.

4.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the themes and sub-themes which emerged from an analysis of the data from twelve individual interviews and fifteen focus group discussions. The themes and sub-themes were presented in Table 2 and discussed in the rest of the chapter. The findings demonstrated how African spirituality is used to provide healing and wisdom. Participants employed a variety of beliefs and practices to protect and strengthen their families and communities. These findings further emphasised that beliefs and practices adopted by participants are primarily communal. The following chapter provides recommendations based on the findings and concludes the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The study aimed to understand how African spiritual beliefs and practices can be used to strengthen family and community life in rural Ndwedwe. The theoretical framework guiding the study was the Afrocentricity theory. The objectives that were developed to guide this study were:

- to inquire about the African religious and spiritual beliefs and practices of families living in Ndwedwe
- to understand how these beliefs and practices act as a source of strength and support during family and community adversities
- to explore how traditional leaders support families who are experiencing challenges in the community
- to understand what spiritually based activities can be used to strengthen family and community life in Ndwedwe.

The findings birthed an in-depth understanding of the African religious and spiritual beliefs and practices that can be used in the Ndwedwe community and a community context. Understanding and becoming aware of these beliefs and practices provided valuable insights into how more rural families and communities may adopt and integrate them to navigate their challenges.

Interviews with twelve family members and a focus group discussion with fifteen traditional leaders and community elders provided the data for the study. Five themes and eighteen sub-themes emerged to answer research questions. Chapter four presented the findings and discussion. This chapter will consolidate the major research findings, elucidate the conclusions, offer recommendations to enhance interventions and make recommendations for further research.

5.2 DISCUSSION OF MAJOR FINDINGS

The table below presents the five major themes emanating from the interviews, and focus group discussion.

Table 5.2: Themes and sub-themes

THEME 1: Understanding African Spirituality	1. Presence of ancestors and unseen spirits
	2. Ubuntu
	3. Collective existence within the community
THEME 2: Spiritual beliefs and practices that exist within families	1. The use of “umsamo” (sacred place in African traditional hut)
	2. Protection of kinship networks through sacrificial worship
	3. Respect for authority and elders
	4. Prayer and spiritual water
THEME 3: Relevance of beliefs and practices in strengthening and supporting rural families	1. Reinforcement of a family’s spiritual centre
	2. Strengthening family well-being
	3. Resilience
	4. Influences positive upbringing and self-discipline
THEME 4: Healing methodologies	1. Traditional healing ceremonies
	2. Inhlambuluko (healing the lineage through truth and reconciliation)
	3. Rituals and sacrificial offerings
THEME 5: Spiritual activities to be used by rural families	1. Traditional music and dance
	2. Drumming
	3. African storytelling and proverbs
	4. Traditional stick fighting

5.2.1 African spirituality in rural spaces

The first objective of the study sought to inquire about the African religious and spiritual beliefs and practices that families living in Ndwedwe ascribe to. The findings revealed that for these participants, African spirituality is a way to maintain sacred bonds with unseen spiritual forces such as ancestors in African homes. A study by Lebaka (2019: 2) found that ancestors exist in the spirit world, and they serve as mediators between their families and the divine realm. In many cultures, ancestors are called upon to help, comfort and strengthen during times of despair and are believed to provide security (Thema 2006: 30).

The findings revealed that Ubuntu and African spirituality are deeply interconnected. For participants, believing in African spirituality meant honouring the benefits of Ubuntu. This meant that they showed compassion, support and humanity towards other people. Samuel (2023: 21) found that Ubuntu in an African context, informs individuals, families and communities on how to value and comprehend who they are to others and the environment. The findings also reflected the interconnectedness between African spirituality, Ubuntu and collective existence within the community. Participants formed communal unity with each other, building and strengthening their relationships through African spirituality, its beliefs and practices. When death occurred in one family, the community came together in solidarity to support the affected family. This manifested in financial, emotional and physical support. The same belief applied to sacred ceremonies and rituals, as the study found that families valued community participation in the traditional ceremonies. Larger community participation also meant that a ritual or ceremony was successful and well-recognised by ancestors. Whitehouse (2021: 139) opined that social bonds are strengthened, and communal unity is upheld through communal ceremonies and celebrations. These gatherings often involve music, dance, and storytelling, allowing those in attendance to show their appreciation and respect for one another's spiritual journeys (Izu and De Villiers 2023: 65).

Another major finding was that participants used "umsamo", a sacred place in African homes, where families communicate and connect with their ancestors. For participants, "umsamo" was used for healing, guidance, reporting important life events and a centre for family ceremonies and rituals. A study by Mkhize (2012: 2) identified that in many cultures, "umsamo" served as both an altar and a repository for a family's most important and spiritually significant possessions.

Participants believed in strengthening and protecting their kinship networks. This was officiated by slaughtering a bull or a goat. Sacrificial worship was one of the most important practices in African homes, occurring during every ceremony and ritual. Lombo (2017: 165) found that individuals and families who benefited from kinship networks reported feelings of connection, belonging, comfort, and improved overall well-being. Elders usually hold authority or leadership roles when such rituals or ceremonies occur. The study found that all family members were to be present during such ceremonies and rituals. If not, a family elder was to apologise to the ancestors for those who were absent. The studies discovered that elders were highly respected for their knowledge and were responsible for leading family ceremonies and rituals (September 2022: 40; Lombo 2017: 165; Mkhize 2012: 2). A study by Singh and Bhagwan (2020: 410) also found that participants sought the guidance of family or community elders when faced with challenges. Participants considered the Chief as the ultimate leader and ruler of their community. Everything that happened in their homes and the community, especially related to ceremonies, had to be approved by the Chief. A study by September (2022: 42) found that the traditional chieftaincy system has long been an important source of authority and government, with Chiefs and Kings playing an essential role in the life of their communities.

For participants, the observance of uNomkhubulwane and Mondays was deemed necessary for their communal well-being. Participants revealed that when this communal belief and practice was done correctly, there would be abundant blessings in every household, especially crops and births. The study also found that overlooking this communal belief and practice led to the suffering of the whole community. Lombo (2017: 169) shared that uNomkhubulwane, often known as Mother Earth, is the Zulu goddess of rain, nature, and fertility. For many years, the Zulu community would plough their fields, with a specific and unique field that was ploughed by the entire village. According to Ndlovu (2016: 92) this field was never weeded or harvested until the following ploughing season when the cycle would start over. As a result, communities were blessed with many crops and blessed births. Therefore, there are days selected by the community authority to observe uNomkhubulwane for such blessings, and there are Nomkhubulwane festivals for when it is harvesting time (Peta 2021: 143; Tapela 2015: 92).

It was also found that most participants visited waterfalls and rivers to pray and find cleansing. Praying in waterfalls and rivers helped families feel renewed and blessed and strengthened their well-being and spirituality. Rivers and waterfalls were seen as sacred and transformative sites in this community. Participants felt a sense of peace and tranquillity through this practice. According to Nguyen (2018: 25) natural landscapes, namely, rivers and waterfalls, have

profound spiritual and therapeutic effects on individuals and communities. Smith (2015: 132) stated that prayer and the sound of falling water are connected through the forces of spirituality, helping bring healing to those in need. Communal prayer at these sacred sites fostered resilience and hope in families. Prayer was also discovered to be interwoven with spiritual singing, as it was mostly women in the community who often gathered to pray and sing “ihubo” (traditional spiritual singing), which offered families and the community much-needed comfort, strength, resilience, hope and healing. Moreover, music was found to be a spiritual healing method that created relaxation, reduced stress, and relaxed the central nervous system and the entire body (Moss 2019: 213; Boyce-Tillman 2020: 29).

5.2.2 Beliefs and practices used to strengthen and support families and the community during adversities

The second objective sought to inquire about the beliefs and practices used to strengthen and support families and the community during adversities. The findings revealed that families use various beliefs and practices to protect their spiritual centres, strengthen their family well-being, and maintain family bonds and kinship networks. The study also found that these beliefs and practices fostered resilience among families facing adversities and influenced their positive upbringing and discipline among young people.

The study found that participants, used “isiwasho” (spiritually blessed water) in their homes to protect and strengthen their spiritual centres. Some participants described making “isiwasho” by combining seawater and a candle, believing that sea salt had protective powers. In most religions, praying for water symbolises life, and therefore spiritually blessed water is considered significant to family and community life (Brown, Muckaden and Mndende 2021: 44). Similarly, the research found that the Maasai people in Kenya described water as a “sacred artefact” that plays a central role in their way of life (Borona 2020: 1294). The findings also showed that families planted trees like umLahlankosi (“that which buries a Chief”). For participants, this tree was used to bring home the spirit of a deceased loved one. It was also used to ensure that those who had passed had a peaceful afterlife and for spiritual protection in family homesteads and family life. The study found that umLahlankosi also prevented the curse of families passing away in the same way. For example, if a family member died by suicide or car accident, participants took preventative measures such as planting this tree in their home. According to a study by Makhathini (2021: 240), families use branches of umLahlankosi to bring home their loved one's spirit from the scene of death. The belief is that this allows the deceased to rest

peacefully and prevents family members from passing away in the same manner. Trees such as umLahlankosi preserve family life by protecting family homesteads and the family lineage (Ntsimane 2018: 306; Shula and Gardener 2006: 9).

It was also discovered that family well-being in African homes was strengthened through naming practices such as “imbeleko” (a Zulu naming ceremony). Some participants stated that it is mostly family elders who assume the role of performing this ceremony. For participants, a naming ceremony was important for the baby’s health, longevity and overall well-being. This meant that the child would be guided spiritually by ancestors as they navigated all stages of life. According to Dlamini (2024: 92), most African cultures use “naming ceremonies” as a significant practice for healing their blood lineage. For example, in a Zulu culture, a ceremony called imbeleko (naming ceremony), is performed to introduce the baby to the ancestors and to thank and ask them to protect the baby. Family elders often take the responsibility of performing such a ceremony (Oyama 2016: 8; Bogopa 2010: 5).

Further findings found that family well-being is contingent upon healthy kinship networks in African spiritual contexts, with a strong emphasis on family obligations, conflict resolution, and preserving harmonious relationships. For participants, these beliefs helped them face their adversities. According to Khumalo and Baloyi (2017: 14), Indigenous people find spiritual fulfilment and a sense of well-being in their kinship relationship. They use spirituality to engage with everyone daily. Similarly, a study by Melati *et al.* (2018: 80) highlighted the importance of family as a social institution, reflecting a culture of collectivism and community. The data revealed that spiritual and familial support played a significant role in overcoming adversities. Participants described that while they faced adversities such as unemployment, financial constraints, and depression, spiritual beliefs and practices such as prayer and spiritual direction from traditional leaders were central to their well-being, promoting resilience and harmony. Participants in a study by Hobongwane-Duley (2015: 60) in the Eastern Cape, South Africa, reported that they sought advice from spiritual leaders when faced with a crisis or issue, and these leaders provided support through prayer and spiritual direction. In the current study, prayer fostered positive change (i.e. finding employment) and a hopeful outlook for their lives. Familial and community support networks rooted in African spiritual practices encouraged healing and the overall well-being of families.

For the participants, cultural ceremonies and traditional practices embedded in African spirituality also played a significant role in the upbringing and discipline of their children, instilling

values, and responsibilities, and guiding them towards holistic development. According to Mabovula (2011: 40), the living values entrenched in African spirituality help individuals preserve family and community well-being. This is done by ensuring that children and young people experience positive well-being and community members help one another through guidance and wisdom from community elders (Mabovula 2011: 40). The current study revealed that spiritual beliefs and practices such as “umemulo” (coming of age) and circumcision protected young people from illnesses and were seen as means to teach young people self-discipline, responsible behaviour, and respect. Practices such as “umemulo”, traditional reed dance, and circumcision promote appropriate behaviour among young people, prevent sexually transmitted diseases, and curb the spread of HIV/AIDS in Africa (Louw 2019: 114; Eliastam 2015: 5; Tamasane and Head 2010: 96). The study also found that these practices were interwoven with traditional singing and dancing. This helped young people in the community develop a sense of purpose, enhanced self-esteem, and fostered positive communal living.

5.2.3 Support offered by traditional leaders to families experiencing challenges in the community

The third objective sought to uncover the support provided by traditional leaders to families experiencing challenges in the community. The study found that traditional leaders provided physical and spiritual support to families, helped them adhere to the rules and regulations of living in a rural community, and assisted them in navigating life through various traditional healing ceremonies and rituals.

The study found that traditional leaders often helped families perform traditional healing ceremonies. These ceremonies are therapeutic and foster harmony and healing within rural African households. For participants, “amagobongo” (spiritual herbal remedy) was a common ceremony conducted in the community. According to Maluleka and Ngulube (2018: 515), the “amagobongo” ceremony in Zulu culture is a performance used to channel ancestral spirits for healing and fortune. If done incorrectly, this may create illness, but if done correctly, it may empower the healing process.

In the current study, this ceremony created a closer connection between families and their ancestors and provided them with healing and spiritual benefits. Research by Lebaka (2019: 66) found that “amagobongo” ceremonies served as a therapeutic means of healing, and a way of connecting people to their ancestors. To foster harmony between the living and the living dead, songs are sung and recited (Nolte and Downing 2019: 39; and Mafuta and Kaunda 2021:

126). The data reflected that traditional leaders brought families and communities together to help form communal unity and support. Since participants faced financial hardships and had inadequate healthcare systems, traditional leaders often provided them with free assistance.

It was further discovered that traditional and spiritual leaders mended broken connections, restored peace and promoted forgiveness among family members through practices such as Inhlambuluko (healing the lineage through truth and reconciliation). For participants, “Inhlambuluko” addressed conflicts within families and communities. Those involved in this would participate in a cleansing ceremony, listen respectfully, voice their truths and undergo a journey of healing and forgiveness. Participants described the whole process as a release of burdens of the past to reclaim a sense of wholeness and belonging within their family lineage or community. According to research by Lebesse *et al.* (2022: 20) and Singh and Bhagwan (2020: 408), families practice cleansing rituals to purify and protect their kin from adverse experiences. The healing process consists of a series of symbolically charged ceremonies aimed at restoring the individual's identity and reintegrating them into the community (Rowkith and Bhagwan 2020: 11; Honwana 1998: 75).

It was found that traditional and spiritual leaders often facilitated this ceremony, ensuring that everything went smoothly. The ceremony involves a facilitator staying neutral and understanding the calibre of such a ceremony, as improper execution could do more harm than good, leading to misfortune.

Participants described that for Inhlambuluko to be successful, sacrificial offerings such as a white chicken are made. A successful ceremony promotes healing and peace in families and communities. Ndwandwe (2020: 214) described that in South African Traditional Zulu homes, this practice of truth and reconciliation enables people to break free from restrictive patterns and contribute to a more dynamic, integrated future for themselves and their family line by promoting forgiveness, restoring peace and mending broken connections, and honouring the experiences of their ancestors (Mabvurira 2016: 111; Murambadoro, Wielenga and Batley 2020: 43).

5.2.4 Spiritually based activities to strengthen family and community life

The fourth objective sought to understand what spiritually based activities could be used to strengthen family and community life in Ndwedwe. It was found that spiritually based activities such as drumming, traditional music and dance, traditional stick fighting, African storytelling and

proverbs, would facilitate cultural expression, promote healing, and provide spiritual fulfilment for most families, including young people.

Drumming

The study found that drumming was perceived as a spiritual and communal activity in the community. For participants, drumming played an important role in their culture, especially at times of mourning, communication, and celebrations. Drumming fostered a strong sense of unity and connection among participants. The study found that drumming helped participants express themselves and release aggression. It was revealed that more individuals should immerse themselves in drumming, as it can be therapeutic and impart cultural knowledge to them. According to Isabirye (2020: 4), in African tradition, drums stand for the spirit of the local community. They are also used. They are also used to promote African heritage, and culture, and to bring the community together. Nkosi and Van Niekerk (2017: 123) found that drumming is an important element in Zulu traditional celebrations and healing, often paired with dance and chanting.

Traditional/spiritual music

The findings revealed that traditional and spiritual music in the community was a common practice among elderly women as it helped them overcome their stresses and problems. It provided a sense of purpose, joy, and community for women. Participants described the singing as deeply spiritual, as it allowed them to find meaning and solace when all hope was lost. Research has found that elders and healers in the Greater Sekhukhune District Municipality, utilise music to express their emotions and control them during spiritual/religious rituals. The relationship between music, expression, and movement, as well as culture and identity, was emphasised (Lebaka 2019: 70; Morakeng and Lebaka 2020: 62). Some participants revealed that they were able to form music groups, enter competitions, and generate income that supported their livelihoods. The study found that participants used traditional music to promote communal unity, cultural identity and consolation. For participants, traditional and spiritual music meant that they could support each other, provide comfort and help families gain resilience in times of sorrow. A study by Lebaka (2022: 120) in Limpopo, South Africa, found that the informal learning of indigenous music and dance through observation and imitation was an integral part of the Bapedi culture. With limited community resources, these practices are viewed as important for supporting family well-being and youth development in rural communities. The data further revealed that spiritual music was interwoven with prayer in this

community. Consequently, communal prayers provided a great deal of healing power for participants.

Traditional dance

Traditional music was also discovered to be strongly interlinked with traditional dance. For participants, traditional dancing was seen as a tool for cultural and spiritual expression that could help young people realise their significance and symbolism. Traditional/spiritual music and dance groups were viewed as practices that provided spiritual support, gave young people positive outlets to avoid risky behaviours, and were valued for their ability to unite the community. For participants, traditional singing and dancing created a more social and communal connection. A study by Lebaka (2022: 138) showed that traditional dancing allows communities to honour their history, strengthen social bonds, and transmit their cultural heritage to future generations, ensuring their continued existence and historical value. Traditional dancing brings people together, promotes wellbeing, and provides communities with strength and identity (Nkosi 2019: 2). It was seen as an activity that could be a therapeutic tool and provide intervention to families, especially for young people. A study by Lambo (2017: 150) uncovered that Zulu traditional dance is performed to pay homage to important life events and to promote healing. There is a dance specifically designed to honour each unique occasion.

African storytelling and proverbs

It was also found that participants had a profound desire to share values and rich cultural elements through African storytelling and proverbs, which have been viewed as effective spiritual activities. In this community, knowledge between elders and young people is transmitted through song and African storytelling. A strong sense of togetherness and mutual support has been demonstrated through these activities. For participants, there has also been an intergenerational transmission of important values and customs in stories such as uNomkhulwane (the Zulu River Goddess). Participants revealed that traditional and spiritual beliefs in this community could be preserved through the centrality of African proverbs and storytelling. For participants, elders have shared proverbs and stories with them from an early age. This has helped them connect with their spirituality, traditions, community and ancestors. It has also acted as a source of support during adversities. A study by Mawere (2014: 102) found that African communities are establishing new methods of transmission of knowledge, not just for the sake of cultural heritage but also for the preservation of integral cultural knowledge embedded in African storytelling practices. African storytelling and proverbs are

commonly used when interacting with and relating to others. They bring together extended family networks, neighbours, and the larger community (Ngomane 2019: 102; Asemah, Kente and Nkwam-Uwaoma 2021: 26)

Traditional stick fighting

The study found that most participants suggest traditional stick fighting as one of the spiritually based activities that can be used in their community. For participants, this activity instilled values and skills in young people, thereby redirecting their focus from risky behaviours and dangerous surroundings. Traditional stick fighting prepared young people for responsible roles. It was found that traditional stick fighting was effective for the holistic development of young people and was seen as a valuable tool for intervention and anger management, especially as young people face challenges. For participants, traditional stick fighting has been accepted as an activity that promotes social cohesion and community building. Bucaille (2019: 120) asserted that traditional stick fighting was developed as a way to establish respect and harmony among community rivals. A study by Nxumalo (2010: 67) found that stick fighting is still performed in rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal, not only as an activity and process of socialisation and self-defence but as an activity that instils values in the younger generation of men. Young men, their families and the broader community benefit from this culturally grounded activity because it is physically and spiritually stimulating. According to Van Breda and Theron (2018: 237), teaching children while they are young helps prevent them from making poor life choices. It plays a huge role in making them responsible adults with great qualities.

5.3 CONCLUSION

The current study provided rich and meaningful insight into the African religious and spiritual beliefs and practices that families adopted to deal with their adversities. These findings can assist families, the community, auxiliary child and youth care workers, organisations, and the Department of Social Development to integrate spiritually based strategies and activities to promote the well-being of families and communities, particularly rural communities in KwaZulu-Natal.

The major findings from the study illustrated that African spirituality is interwoven with communal living, and it is significant to the lives and functioning of families and the broader community. African spirituality plays a major role in strengthening and supporting families and

the community. Most spiritual beliefs and practices were communal, meaning individuals and families had all the support required to combat their adversities and thrive.

It was evident that families faced challenges such as poverty, unemployment, financial constraints, drug abuse, and teenage pregnancy which severely affected their family life and community life. The use of sacred African religious and spiritual beliefs and practices helps families, and the community navigate these challenges. Various African religious and spiritual beliefs and practices emerged from the data. The presence and veneration of ancestors was one common belief and practice in the community. Establishing healthy relationships with families and communities was another common belief and was predicated on the philosophy of Ubuntu. This was one of the most crucial support systems fundamental to the community's survival.

In this community, African spirituality was underpinned by harmonious relationships through the spirit of giving and sharing. This meant families also shared each other's struggles and experiences. A study by Singh and Bhagwan (2020: 403) also found that African spirituality placed a strong emphasis on community and highlighted the interconnectedness of all life in many of its traditions. Swanson (2010: 38) similarly asserted that people in society tend to believe they are isolated from one another, but in reality, everyone is connected, and our actions as individuals impact the community as a whole.

Many participants felt that they could transcend every adversity with the power of prayer and praying in sacred sites. Prayer was found to be interwoven with spiritual singing and the natural environment in an African context. Participants felt interconnected with each other and their spirituality through a variety of beliefs and practices developed within African spirituality. Because beliefs and practices were communal, there was significant unity, healthy relationships and strong family bonds within the community. Participants felt equipped and well-immersed in African spiritual beliefs and practices that could help them deal with their adversities. Participants mostly encouraged the use of traditional music/dance, drumming, African storytelling, and proverbs groups or circles to promote their spiritual connection, cultural identity, social interaction, intervention, and transmission of indigenous knowledge.

The current study filled a research gap on African spirituality within rural literature by exploring how African spirituality provided wisdom and strength to families and the spiritually based strategies, support and interventions that could be implemented in such communities.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE USE OF SPIRITUALLY BASED INTERVENTIONS

- To help the functioning and well-being of families, traditional leaders, the Chief's council and community organisations, should develop strategies to integrate African spiritually based programmes into their services. The Department of Education and the Department of Social Development should work hand in hand with community leaders to initiate these programmes.
- Support groups should be developed for young people. The Department of Social Development, community organisations and all stakeholders should construct these groups to promote the development of young people and encourage discipline. Spiritually based activities such as drumming circles, African storytelling/poetry sessions, and traditional music and dance competitions should be implemented in this community.
- Formal support groups for community members, including elderly people, should be developed. The groups should focus on handcrafts and beadwork. The councillor and the municipal government should provide financial support and offer exposure to such groups. This can help community members sustain themselves. In later stages, young people can then be integrated into these groups, and elders can teach them about crafting and beadwork. This can be a form of passing Indigenous knowledge to the younger generation, enabling them to develop strategies to combat poverty and survive.

5.5 THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS CAN BE MADE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:

- Further research can explore the influence African spirituality has on family structures, gender roles and intergenerational relationships.
- Studies exploring the impact of African spirituality on adoptive households can be undertaken.
- The role of traditional African spiritual practices in promoting mental health can be investigated.
- A study on the impact of African spirituality on urban communities can be undertaken.
- Studies exploring the influence of African spirituality on the development of young people and their education systems can also be conducted.
- An explorative study of the integration of African spirituality into parenting and child-rearing can be implemented.

5.6 CONCLUSION

This study aimed to understand how African spiritual beliefs and practices can be used to strengthen family and community life in rural Ndwedwe. Twelve semi-structured interviews with family members and a focus group of fifteen traditional leaders/community members were conducted to explore the challenges faced by families in Ndwedwe, the role of African spirituality in dealing with these challenges, the African spiritual beliefs and practices adopted to strengthen families, and the support offered by traditional leaders to families and the community. The findings revealed that African spirituality played a valuable role in providing healing, and support for family and community life. The findings highlighted a variety of beliefs and practices aimed at protecting and strengthening families and communities, emphasising the primary communal beliefs and practices adopted by participants. The findings and recommendations were beneficial in filling the gap in developing effective and appropriate interventions for rural families and communities.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A (1)

Interview guide (individual interviews)

1. Can you share with me your understanding of African spirituality?
2. What are some of the major challenges your family faces? Financial, parenting issues?

3. How do you use African spirituality to cope with your difficulties?
4. What specific traditions and rituals do you embrace?
5. Can you share an interesting African proverb/story that can guide family and community well-being?
6. How can traditional African spirituality benefit your family and community?
7. What are key rituals and practices used by your family?
8. What African spiritual activities would you like to see happening in the community?
9. What support do traditional healers in this community provide your family or other families with?

Appendix A (2)

Umhlahandlela weNkulumoluhlolo (yamuntu ngamunye)

1. Ngokuqonda kwakho ungangicobelela ukuthi yini inkolelo yesintu noma yangokomoya yabantu abamnyama?
2. Iziphi izigqinamba ongathi umndeni wakho ubhekene nazo? Ngokwezimali kumbe ababhekene nakho ekukhuliseni izingane?
3. Inkolelo yesintu noma yangokomoya yabantu abamnyama inisiza kanjani

ukubhekana nalezizigqinamba?

4. Imaphi amasiko izinkolelo kanye nemicimbi yesintu wena oyibungazayo?
5. Ungangicobelela ixoxo ethakaxelisayo yesintu nengasiza inhlalanhle yemindeni nomphakathi?
6. Ungathi umndeni wakho kanhaye nomphakathi uzuza kanjani kwinkolelo yesintu kumbe yangokomoya yabantu abamnyama?
7. Iziphi izinkolelo ongathi zisebenziswa kakhulu kumndeni wakho?
8. Imaphi ama-ekhitiviti angokomoya ongathi ukubona enziwa kulomphakathi?
9. Uluphi uxhaso abantu besintu noma abasenza ngenkolelo yomdabu abaninika lona kumndeni wakho neminye imindeni?

Appendix B (1)

Focus group guide

Age:

Gender:

1. Can you describe your understanding of African spirituality, in your own words.
2. What challenges are encountered in the Ndwedwe community?

3. How do you use African spiritual beliefs and practices to assist family and community members when the challenges arise?

Can you share with us your role in helping family and community members in Ndwedwe?

4. What are some of the rituals, traditions and healing methodologies you use to help families and the community?
5. What beliefs and practices would you say are most important to creating family and community well-being?
6. What are some of the key traditions that are prevalent in this community?
7. Can you share on interesting African proverb/story that can guide family and community well-being?
8. What spirituality-based activities would you suggest that can be used to strengthen family and community life in Ndwedwe?

Probes: Prayer, indigenous games, spiritual music and drumming

Appendix B (2)

Umhlahandlela weNkulumoluhloll weqembu lokugxila

Umnyaka:

Ubulili:

1. Ngamagama akho ungnqichazela ukuthi iyini inkolelo yesintu noma yangokomoya yabantu abamnyama?
2. Iziphi ezinye ezigqinamba ongathi lomphakathi waseNdwedwe ubhekene nawo?

3. Uyisebenzisa kanjani izikolelo namasiko esintu ukusiza imindeni nomphakathi bebhekana nezigqinamba?
4. Iliphi igalelo lakho okulapheni kumbe ekupholiseni lomphakathi?
5. Iziphi izindlela zokwelapha uzisebenzisayo ukusiza imindeni yakulomphakathi?
6. Ungathi imaphi amasiko nezikolelelo ezibaluleke kakhulu ekwakheni inhlalanhle yemindeni nomphakathi?
7. Ngokubona kwakho, iziphi izinkolelo ezilekelela inhlalanhle yeimindeni nomphakathi?
8. Kungabe imaphi amasiko ajwayelekile kwimindeni ekulomphakathi?
9. Ungathi imaphi ama-ekhithivithi abandakanya inkolelo yesintu ongathi engasiza ukwakha kumbe ukuqinisa inhlalo yalomphakathi?

Uphenyo: Umthandazo, imidlalo yesintu, umculo wesintu kanye nomgido wesintu

Appendix C1



14 June 2023

Councillors Officers
Ndwedwe

Request for Permission to Conduct Research

Dear Sir

My name is Nokwanda Mthethwa. I am a master's student in the Child and Youth care programme at the Durban University of Technology. The research I wish to conduct for my master's dissertation involves African spirituality as a source of wisdom and strength in rural Ndwedwe.

I am hereby seeking your consent to conduct this research study, to involve families, African traditional leaders/healers and community elders of this community, further I would like to seek your consent to use the community hall when conducting interviews (where necessary).

I have provided you with a copy of my proposal which includes copies of the data collection tools and consent and/ or assent forms to be used in the research process, as well as a copy of the approval letter which I received from the DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Committee (DUT-IREC).

If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me [0710016885 and 21829677@dut4life.ac.za]. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Nokwanda Mthethwa
Durban University of Technology

Appendix C2

To: Nokwanda Mthethwa
Durban University of Technology
Department of Community Health Studies

DATE: 20/10/2023

RE: Permission to Conduct Research

Dear Nokwanda Mthethwa,

I am pleased to grant you permission to conduct interviews with the traditional leaders, community elders and community members of Ndwedwe, mission area for your study titled "African spirituality as a source of wisdom and strength in rural Ndwedwe." Furthermore, I would like to let you know that you have my full support in recruiting participants for this study. Once their consent is obtained, I will provide you with their contact details.

For any further assistance and support for your study, please do not hesitate to contact me. I have provided you with my contact details.

Kind regards,


..... 7

Cllr L.S. Moahloli
Councillors Office
Private Bag X503
Ndwedwe, 4342

Appendix D (1)



LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Title of the Research Study: African Spirituality as a source of wisdom and strength in rural Ndwedwe

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Nokwanda Mthethwa

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: Professor R. Bhagwan

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

The essence of African spirituality is 'what healing is all about.' African spirituality has an impact on how Africans think, feel secure, deal with obstacles in life, establish their identities, behave, and make decisions. Therefore, it is crucial that spiritual interventions are conceived through African families and communities (Wane and Ilmi 2019: 35; Note and Downing 2019: 10).

This will be a qualitative study which will take place at Ndwedwe, mission area. There will be two samples in this study, sample one will consist of family members residing in Ndwedwe, mission area and sample two will consist of traditional healers/leaders and community elders. In this study the researcher will use semi-structured interviews approach. The purpose of this study is to examine how the community of Ndwedwe uses African spirituality for healing, wisdom and strength. It is to examine the practices and beliefs that are prevalent in the community and that people use for the betterment of their family well-being. Furthermore, to found out what support are the families receiving from the traditional leaders within African spirituality.

Good day, I hope that you are well.

I am a master's student doing research in the field of Child and youth care. I am currently enrolled in DUT (Durban University of Technology) and I am conducting interviews and asking for help so that I can get crucial information on my literature.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research study.

What is Research:

Research is defined as the creation of new knowledge and/or use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it leads to new and creative outcomes.

Your participation in the study is voluntary, you are not forced to participate in any way, and you are welcome to withdraw from the study at any given point. If you feel that you are uncomfortable with the Interview, you are not obligated to continue. You will be provided with the consent form so that you indicate that you agree to participate in this study.

Outline of the Procedures:

This study will use a qualitative research methodology to examine the use of African spirituality by families living in Ndwedwe community and the healing methodologies they use within African spirituality. There will be two samples adopted in this study. Sample one consists of 12 family members residing in rural Ndwedwe and sample two will be one focus group consisting of 12 traditional leaders/ community elders. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews to collect the necessary information, until data saturation is reached. The individual interviews will take about 30 minutes each participant. You are required to share your thoughts and experiences on the research topic. The interviews will be recorded with a tape recorder to gather the necessary information, and they will be handled with confidentiality. The responsibility of the participants is to be present on time.

The aim of this study is to understand how African spiritual beliefs and practices can be used to strengthen family and community life in rural Ndwedwe.

Objectives

- To inquire about the African religious and spiritual beliefs and practices of families living in Ndwedwe
- To understand how these beliefs and practices act as source of strength and support during adversities.
- To explore how traditional leaders support families who are experiencing challenges in the community.
- To understand what spirituality-based activities can be implemented to reconstruct the Ndwedwe community living space.

The individual interviews will take place from 10: 00 am to 14:00 pm. You will be given enough time to take a break and have refreshments.

Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

Sample 1: Inclusion criteria

- Family members who are currently residing in Ndwedwe, mission area
- Family members who believe African spirituality
- Diversity of all sexual orientations
- Those who give consent

Exclusion criteria

- Family members who are living outside Ndwedwe
- Family members who do not believe in African spirituality
- No one will be excluded based on their sexual orientation
- Those who do not give consent

The expected duration of your as a participant commitment is at least 30 minutes for individual interviews.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:

No risks or discomfort are anticipated during the course of this study.

Explain to the participant the reasons he/she may be withdraw from the Study:

You are entitled to withdraw from this study at any time should you wish to do so. If there is non-compliance, illness, adverse reactions, etc this research may be terminated. Should you feel uncomfortable in any way, you are allowed to withdraw. You can speak to the researcher and state your reasons of withdrawal and be released.

Benefits:

During this study, you will learn various healing methodologies from those who are more knowledgeable and wiser than you are. This study aims to give you knowledge, hope, strength and healing amidst the challenges and adversities you deal with. Groups will be formed during

the course of this study, whereby healing practices are done and there are discussions on healing, strength and wisdom. The researcher also hopes to grab the attention of government so that more support is given to the practice of African spirituality and the traditional healers that practice it, so in turn, the well-being of Ndwedwe community is encouraged and developed.

Remuneration:

No remuneration will be awarded to you (i.e no payment)

Costs of the Study

This study will not require you to cover any costs.

Confidentiality:

Your personal identities in this research study will be kept confidential. The researcher will ensure to adhere to best practices in protecting the confidentiality of all your data. In this study your identifying details will be kept anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used during reporting and no identifying details will be published.

Results:

The results will be out on a journal/article so that as a participant you get to see the findings.

Research-related Injury:

There are no injuries anticipated. You will not be injured as this study does not involve anything clinical. It will only be discussions done; hence it is a qualitative inquiry.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings:

The tape recordings will be kept on the USB and protected by a password. Both the hard copies and tape recordings will be kept safe on a file, which will be safely locked in a cabinet. There will only be one key, the researcher and supervisor are the only people who will have access. The data will be retained for 5 years, after 5 years it will be disposed of by deleting the recordings and hard copies will be destroyed e.g burnt or shredded.

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries: Supervisor: Prof. Raisuyah Bhagwan Please contact the researcher (0710016885.), my supervisor (0313732197.) or the

DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Acting Director: Research and Postgraduate Support on researchdirector@dut.ac.za

Appendix D (2)



INCWADI YOLWAZI YOMUNTU NGAMUNYE

Isihloko socwaningo: Inkolelo yesintu noma yangokomoya yabantu abamnyama njengomthombo wokuphilisa nobuhlakani emakhaya eNdwedwe

Umcwaningi/ umcwaningi oyinhloko: Nokwanda Mthethwa

Ophethe/ongumqondisi walolucwaningo: uProfesa R. Bhagwan

Ingqikithi yenkolelo yesintu noma yangokomoya yabantu abamnyama kungulokho ukuphulukiswa okumayilana nakho. Inkolelo yesintu noma yangokomoya yabantu abamnyama kunomthelela ekutheni abantu ba cabanga kanjani, bezwa futhi bavikeleke kanjani ukubhekana nezigqinamba zempilo, ukusugula ukuzazi, ukuziphatha nokuthatha izinqumo. Ngakho ke, kubalulekile ukugenelela ngokwenkolelo yesintu nekamoya kuyo imindeni nemiphakathi (Wane and Ilmi 2019: 35; Note and Downing 2019: 10). Lolucwaningo lufuna ulwazi lweqiniso endaweni yase yaseNdwedwe, emission. Umcwaningi uzobe enabahlanganyeli abawu 12 abazosisiza kulolucwaningo kwinkulumoluhlolo labahlanganyeli abazobe behlanganyela ngamunye. Lawa amalunga emindeni aseNdwedwe. Kuphinde kube abangu 12 abangabahholi benkolelo yesintu noma yomdabu

Umcwaningi uzosebenzisa inkulumoluhlolo ehlelelwe ngaphambilini kanye nenkulumoluhlolo yeqembu lokuhlanganyela ukuze athole ulwazi kubahlanganyel. Kulolucwaningo, umcwaningi ufuna kuthola imiphumela yokuthi umphakathi waseNdwedwe uzisebenzisa kanjani izinkolelo neziqubomgomo zenkolelo yesintu noma ekamoya yabantu abamnyama, ukuze bephulukiseke, bebenobuhlakani namandla. Umcwaningi ufuna nokuphenya ukuthi uluphi usizo noxhaso imindeni eyitholayo kulo mphakathi nakubahholi benkolo yesintu kakhulu mayilana nayo inkolelo yesintu noma yangokomoya yabantu abamnyama.

Ngiyabingelela, ngithembe uphilile

Ngifundi ofunda owenza izinqo zeMastazi kumkhakha weChild and Youth care. Ngifunda eDUT (Inyuvesi yobuchwepheshe eThekwini). Ngizokwenza inkulumoluhlolo maduze, ngisacela isizo lwakho ukuze ngithole imininingwane ebanzi kulolucwaningo.

Ngingathanda ukukumema ukuthi uhlanganye nami kulolucwaningo

Luyini ucwaningo?

Ucwaningo ukudalwa kolwazi olusha noma usebenzise ulwazi olukhona ngendlela ewubuciko ukwakha umqondo noma izisho ezintsha.

Ukuhlanganyela kwakho kulolucwaningo kuyisinqumo ekungesakho. Awuphoqelekile futhi awucindezelekile ukuthi usenze. Uvumelekile ukuyeka ukuhlanganyela kulolucwaningo uma ungasazizwa ukhululekile. Ungayeka noma inini.

uHlelo lwezinqubo: uyacelwa ngokuzithoba ukuba ubambe iqhaza kwinkulumoluhlolo. Indawo umcwaningi azoyikhetha yobe ihambisana nawe, iphephile futhi ngeke ikudinge ukuthi ukhiphe imali. Izinkulumoluhlolo zizothathelwa endaweni eyimfihlo, engenawo umsindo futhi ekhululekile. Inkulumoluhlolo zizokhondwa okuchaza ukuthi amagama azobe engashiwo. Lezixoxo zizothatha imizuzu engu 30, kakhulu inkulumoluhlolo yomhlanganyeli ngamunye.

Izinjongo zocwaningo

- Ukuphenya mayilana nezinkolelo nequbomgomo yenkolelo yesintu noma yangokomoya yabamnyama kwimindeni ehlala eNdwedwe
- Ukuqonda ukuthi izinkolelo nemiqubomgomo zilingisa kanjani njengomthombo wamandla noxhaso kwimindeni exakekile
- Ukubhekisisa ukuthi iluphi uxhaso nokusikeleka izinyanga/izangoma/nabaprofethi abakulomphakathi abakupha imindeni ebhekene nezigqinamba
- Ukuqonda ukuthi okwimigomo yenkolo yesintu noma ekamoya engasugulwa ukulungisa kabusha inhlalompilo yomphakathi nemindeni yaseNdwedwe

Izinkulumoluhlolo zamuntu ngamunye zizokwenzeka ngo10:00 kuya 14:00. Abantu bazohlulaniwa bebe amaqembu amabili. Izinkulumoluhlolo zabantu abazobe benza ngamunye zizokwenziwa izisuku ezimbili. Umcwaningi uzokwenza lokhu ngenxa yokuhapha iskathi.

Imibandela yokufakwa nokukhishwa

Sampula 1: Imibandela yokufakwa

- Amalunga omndeni ahlala eNdwedwe, emission.
- Amalunga omndeni akholelwa kwinkolo yesintu noma kwinkolo yomoya yabantu abamnyama
- Ukuhlukana bobulile buvumelekile
- Laba abanikeze imvumo

Imibandela yokukhishwa:

- Amalunga omndeni angahlali eNdwedwe, emission.
- Amalunga omndeni angakholelwa kwinkolo yesintu noma kwinkolo yomoya yabantu abamnyama
- Akekho umuntu ozocaswa ngobobulile buvumelekile
- Laba abanganikezi mvumo

Izingozi noma ukuphazamiseka komhlanganyeli: Azikho izingozi empilweni yakho noma okunye ubungozi ngezikhathi zezixoxo ozohlangabezana nazo.

Izinzuzo: Ayikho inzuzo ebhekene nawe ozoyithola njengomhlanganyeli.

Isizathu/ ukuthi kungani umhlanganyeli angase akhishwe esifundweni: uma kwenzeka ufuna ukuhoxa ngeke kube nemiphumela emibi ngokuba ukubamba iqhaza kungokuzithandela.

Iholo: Alikho iholo ozolithola ngoba ukubamba iqhaza kungokuzithandela.

Izindleko zocwaningo: Azikho izindleko ozothweswa zona ngalolucwaningo

Okuyimfihlo: igama lakho lizobe liyimfihlo kuzosebenziswa ikhodi endaweni yegama.

Ukulimala okuhlobene nocwaningo: Akukho ukulimala okulindelekile kulolucwaningo, yonke into ezobe inokuphepha.

Ukubekwa kokuqoshiwe emaphephe/emanhukwini nasemakhompuyetheni:

Izingxoxo zizoqoshwa nge peni nange phepha, ngenxa yeskhathi ezinye zizoqoshwa ngekhompuyutha ngezinhloso zokuhlaziywa. Imininingwane izobe igcinwe kahle ebhukwini nakhona kwi khompuyutha evikelwe nge password futhi namazwi a recodiwe sizowafaka kwi usb senzele inkulumo ingalahleki futhi ivikeleke. Leminingwane sizoyiphephisa iyaziwe abantu engenabo kanye nomphathi wami futhi nale mininingwane esbhukwini sizoyivalela

kahle ekhabethweni elino khiye o wodwa futhi ozohlala kithi esenza lolucwaningo. Yonke lemininingwane kanye nezinkulumo sizozigcina iminyaka emihlanu kuphela mase siyaqiniseka ukuthi sikucekela phansi konke. Ekupheleni kocwaningo, sizoziniseka ukuthi alikho igama elizophuma futhi zonke izinto ezisisize senza lelucwaningo ngeke zishiwo ngamagama ngisho nezindawo.

Abantu ongaxhumana nabo uma kungenzeka ukuba unenkinga noma unemibuzo: (osiza ukuqondisa mphenyi oyinhloko uProfesa Raisuyah Bhagwan) Ngicela uxhumane nomphenyi (inombolo 0710016885) Osizana nomphenyi (iNombolobo 0313732197) noma sikhungo socwango (Research Ethics Administrator) ku 031 373 2375. Izinkinga zingabikelwa uMphathi (Director): uxhaso locwaningo lungatholakala: researchdirector@dut.ac.za



LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

Title of the Research Study: African Spirituality as a source of wisdom and strength in rural Ndwedwe

Principal Investigator/s/researcher: Nokwanda Mthethwa

Co-Investigator/s/supervisor/s: Professor R. Bhagwan

Brief Introduction and Purpose of the Study:

The essence of African spirituality is 'what healing is all about.' African spirituality has an impact on how Africans think, feel secure, deal with obstacles in life, establish their identities, behave, and make decisions. Therefore, it is crucial that spiritual interventions are conceived through African families and communities (Wane and Ilmi 2019: 35; Note and Downing 2019: 10).

This will be a qualitative study which will take place at in Ndwedwe, mission area. There will be two samples in this study, sample one will consist of family members residing in Ndwedwe, mission area and sample two will consist of traditional healers/leaders and community elders. In this study the researcher will use semi-structured interviews approach. The purpose of this study is to examine how the community of Ndwedwe uses African spirituality for healing, wisdom and strength. It is to examine the practices and beliefs that are prevalent in the community and that people use for the betterment of their family well-being. Furthermore, to found out what support are the families receiving from the traditional leaders within African spirituality.

Good day, I hope that you are well.

I am a master's student doing research in the field of Child and youth care. I am currently enrolled in DUT (Durban University of Technology) and I am conducting interviews and asking for help so that I can get crucial information on my literature.

I would like to invite you to participate in this research study.

What is Research:

Research is defined as the creation of new knowledge and/or use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way as to generate new concepts, methodologies and understandings. This could include synthesis and analysis of previous research to the extent that it leads to new and creative outcomes.

Your participation in the study is voluntary, you are not forced to participate in any way, and you are welcome to withdraw from the study at any given point. If you feel that you are uncomfortable with the Interview, you are not obligated to continue. You will be provided with the consent form so that you indicate that you agree to participate in this study.

Outline of the Procedures:

This study will use a qualitative research methodology to examine the use of African spirituality by families living in Ndwedwe community and the healing methodologies they use within African spirituality. There will be two samples adopted in this study. Sample one consists of 12 family members residing in rural Ndwedwe and sample two will be one focus group consisting of 12 traditional leaders/ community elders. Data will be collected through semi-structured interviews to collect the necessary information, until data saturation is reached. The discussions will take approximately 1 hour 30 minutes for the focus group discussion. You are required to share their thoughts and experiences on the research topic. The discussions will be recorded with a tape recorder to gather the necessary information, and they will be handled with confidentiality. Your responsibility as a participant is to be present on time.

The aim of this study is to understand how African spiritual beliefs and practices can be used to strengthen family and community life in rural Ndwedwe.

Objectives

- To inquire about the African religious and spiritual beliefs and practices of families living in Ndwedwe
- To understand how these beliefs and practices act as source of strength and support during adversities.

- To explore how traditional leaders support families who are experiencing challenges in the community.
- To understand what spirituality-based activities can be implemented to reconstruct the Ndwedwe community living space.

The Focus group discussions will be held just for one day from 10:00 am to 12:00. You will be given enough time to take a break and have refreshments.

Inclusion and Exclusion criteria

Sample 2: Inclusion criteria

- Traditional healers/community elders who are currently residing in Ndwedwe, mission area
- Traditional healers who have at least 5 years' experience of the African spirituality practice
- Community elders who have deep understanding of African spirituality
- Community elders over the age of 60 years
- Diversity of all sexual orientations
- Those who give consent

Exclusion criteria

- Traditional healers/community elders who are not residing in Ndwedwe, mission area
- Traditional healers who have less than 5 years' experience of the Africa spirituality practice
- Community elders do not have much understanding about African spirituality
- Community elders less than 60 years of age
- No one will be excluded based on their sexual orientation
- Those who do not give consent

The expected duration of your commitment as a participant is 1 hour 30 minutes for a focus group discussion.

Risks or Discomforts to the Participant:

No risks or discomfort are anticipated during the course of this study. You will not be exposed to any risks or discomfort.

Explain to the participant the reasons he/she may be withdraw from the Study:

You are entitled to withdraw from this study at any time should you wish to do so. If there is non-compliance, illness, adverse reactions, etc this research may be terminated. Should you

feel uncomfortable in any way, you are allowed to withdraw. You can speak to the researcher and state your reasons of withdrawal and be released.

Benefits:

During this study, you will learn various healing methodologies from those who are more knowledgeable and wiser than you are. This study aims to give you knowledge, hope, strength and healing amidst the challenges and adversities you deal with. Groups will be formed during the course of this study, whereby healing practices are done and there are discussions on healing, strength and wisdom. The researcher also hopes to grab the attention of government so that more support is given to the practice of African spirituality and the traditional healers that practice it, so in turn, the well-being of Ndwedwe community is encouraged and developed.

Remuneration:

No remuneration will be awarded to you (i.e no payment)

Costs of the Study

This study will not require you to cover any costs.

Confidentiality:

Your personal identities in this research study will be kept confidential. The researcher will ensure to adhere to best practices in protecting the confidentiality of all your data. In this study your identifying details will be kept anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used during reporting and no identifying details will be published.

Results:

The results will be out on a journal/article so that as a participant you get to see the findings.

Research-related Injury:

There are no injuries anticipated. You will not be injured as this study does not involve anything clinical. It will only be discussions done; hence it is a qualitative inquiry.

Storage of all electronic and hard copies including tape recordings:

The tape recordings will be kept on the USB and protected by a password. Both the hard copies and tape recordings will be kept safe on a file, which will be safely locked in a cabinet. There will only be one key, the researcher and supervisor are the only people who will have access. The

data will be retained for 5 years, after 5 years it will be disposed of by deleting the recordings and hard copies will be destroyed e.g burnt or shredded.

Persons to contact in the Event of Any Problems or Queries: Supervisor: Prof. Raisuyah Bhagwan Please contact the researcher (0710016885.), my supervisor (0313732197.) or the DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Administrator on 031 373 2375. Complaints can be reported to the Acting Director: Research and Postgraduate Support on researchdirector@dut.ac.za

Appendix E (2)



INCWADI YOLWAZI YEQEMBU LOKUGXILA

Isihloko socwaningo: Inkolelo yesintu noma yangokomoya yabantu abamnyama njengomthombo wokuphilisa nobuhlakani emakhaya eNdwedwe

Umcwaningi/ umcwaningi oyinhloko: Nokwanda Mthethwa

Ophethe/ongumqondisi walolucwaningo: uProfesa R. Bhagwan

Inqikithi yenkolelo yesintu noma yangokomoya yabantu abamnyama kungulokho ukuphulukiswa okumayilana nakho. Inkolelo yesintu noma yangokomoya yabantu abamnyama kunomthelela ekutheni abantu ba cabanga kanjani, bezwa futhi bavikeleke kanjani ukubhekana nezigqinamba zempilo, ukusugula ukuzazi, ukuziphatha nokuthatha izinqumo. Ngakho ke, kubalulekile ukugenelela ngokwenkolelo yesintu nekamoya kuyo imindeni nemiphakathi (Wane and Ilmi 2019: 35; Note and Downing 2019: 10). Lolucwaningo lufuna ulwazi lweqiniso endaweni yaseNdwedwe, emission. Umcwaningi uzobe enabahlanganyeli abawu 12 abazosisiza kulolucwaningo kwinkulumoluhlolo labahlanganyeli abazobe behlanganyela ngamunye. Lawa amalunga emindeni aseNdwedwe. Kuphinde kube abangu 12 abangabahholi benkolelo yesintu noma yomdabu

Umcwaningi uzosebenzisa inkulumoluhlolo ehlelelwe ngaphambilini kanye nenkulumoluhlolo yeqembu lokuhlanganyela ukuze athole ulwazi kubahlanganyel. Kulolucwaningo, umcwaningi ufuna kuthola imiphumela yokuthi umphakathi waseNdwedwe uzisebenzisa kanjani izinkolelo neziqubomgomo zenkolelo yesintu noma ekamoya yabantu abamnyama, ukuze bephulukiseke, bebenobuhlakani namandla. Umcwaningi ufuna nokuphenya ukuthi uluphi usizo noxhaso imindeni eyitholayo kulo mphakathi nakubahholi benkolo yesintu kakhulu mayilana nayo inkolelo yesintu noma yangokomoya yabantu abamnyama.

Ngiyabingelela, ngithembe uphilile

Ngiwufundi ofunda owenza izinqo zeMastazi kumkhakha weChild and Youth care. Ngifunda eDUT (Inyuvesi yobuchwepheshe eThekwini). Ngizokwenza inkulumoluhlolo maduze, ngisacela isizo lwakho ukuze ngithole imininingwane ebanzi kulolucwaningo.

Ngingathanda ukukumema ukuthi uhlanganye nami kulolucwaningo

Luyini ucwaningo: Ucwaningo ukudalwa kolwazi olusha noma usebenzise ulwazi olukhona ngendlela ewubuciko ukwakha umqondo noma izisho ezintsha.

Ukuhlanganyela kwakho kulolucwaningo kuyisinqumo ekungesakho. Awuphoqelekile futhi awucindezelekile ukuthi usenze. Uvumelekile ukuyeka ukuhlanganyela kulolucwaningo uma ungasazizwa ukhululekile. Ungayeka noma inini.

uHlelo lwezinqubo: uyacelwa ngokuzithoba ukuba ubambe iqhaza kwinkulumoluhlolo. Indawo umcwaningi azoyikhetha yobe ihambisana nawe, iphephile futhi ngeke ikudinge ukuthi ukhiphe imali. Izinkulumoluhlolo zizothathelwa endaweni eyimfihlo, engenawo umsindo futhi ekhululekile. Inkulumoluhlolo zizokhondwa okuchaza ukuthi amagama azobe engashiwo. Lezixoxo zizothatha ihora nemizuzu engu 30 kulenkulumoluhlolo yeqembu lokugxila.

Izinjongo zocwaningo

- Ukuphenya mayilana nezinkolelo nequbomgomo yenkolelo yesintu noma yangokomoya yabamnyama kwimindeni ehlala eNdwedwe
- Ukuqonda ukuthi izinkolelo nemiqubomgomo zilingisa kanjani njengomthombo wamandla noxhaso kwimindeni exakekile
- Ukubhekisisa ukuthi iluphi uxhaso nokusikeleka izinyanga/izangoma/nabaprofethi abakulomphakathi abakupha imindeni ebhekene nezigqinamba
- Ukuqonda ukuthi okwimigomo yenkolo yesintu noma ekamoya engasugulwa ukulungisa kabusha inhlalompilo yomphakathi nemindeni yaseNdwedwe

Izixoxo zeqembu lokugxila lungase luphele ngalo usuku olulodwa. Isikhathi 10:00 kuya 12:00. Njengabantu ababandakanye kulezixoxo nizobe nizobe senithola into yokuphuza nekhefu.

Imibandela yokufakwa nokukhishwa

Sampula 2: Imibandela yokufakwa

- Abahholi benkolelo yesintu nabantu abadala basemphakathi okumanje bahlala eNdwedwe
- Abahholi benkolelo yesintu abasebekulo mkhakha ngeshumi leminyaka benza imigomo yenkolelo yesintu noma inkolelo yomoya yabantu abamnyama
- Abadala bomphakathi abajulubuchopho ngenkolelo yesintu noma inkolelo yamoyo
- Abadala bomphakathi abangaphezulu kweminyaka engu 60.
- Ukuhlukana bobulile buvumelekile
- Laba abanikeze imvumo

Imibandela yabadlungwayo

- Abahholi benkolelo yesintu nabantu abadala basemphakathi okumanje abahlali eNdwedwe
- Abahholi benkolelo yesintu abasabasha benza imigomo yenkolelo yesintu noma inkolelo yomoya yabantu abamnyama
- Abadala bomphakathi abangazi lutho ngenkolelo yesintu noma inkolelo yamoyo
- Abadala bomphakathi abangaphansi kweminyaka engu 60.
- Akekho ozocwaswa ngobobulile bakhe
- Laba abanganikezanga imvumo

Izingozi noma ukuphazamiseka komhlanganyeli: Azikho izingozi empilweni yakho noma okunye ubungozi ngezikhathi zezixoxo.

Izinzuzo: Ayikho inzuzo ebhekene nawe njengomhlanganyeli okulexoxo.

Isizathu/ ukuthi kungani umhlanganyeli angase akhishwe esifundweni: uma kwenzeka ufuna ukuhoxa ngeke kube nemiphumela emibi ngokuba ukubamba iqhaza kungokuzithandela.

Iholo: Alikho iholo elizotholakala ngoba ukubamba iqhaza kungokuzithandela.

Izindleko zocwaningo: Azikho izindleko ozothweswa zona ngalolucwaningo

Okuyimfihlo: igama lizobe liyimfihlo kuzosebenziswa ikhodi endaweni yegama lakho.

Ukulimala okuhlobene nocwaningo: Akukho ukulimala okulindelekile kulolucwaningo, yonke into ezobe inokuphepha.

Ukubekwa kokuqoshiwe emaphephe/emanhukwini nasemakhompuyetheni:

Izingxoxo zizoqoshwa nge peni nange phepha, ngenxa yeskhathi ezinye zizoqoshwa ngekhompiyutha ngezinhloso zokuhlaziywa. Imininingwane izobe igcinwe kahle ebhukwini nakhona kwi khompiyutha evikelwe nge password futhi namazwi a recodiwe sizowafaka kwi usb senzele inkulumo ingalahleki futhi ivikeleke. Leminingwane sizoyiphephisa iyaziwe

abantu engenabo kanye nomphathi wami futhi nale mininingwane esbhukwini sizoyivalela kahle ekhabethweni elino khiye o wodwa futhi ozohlala kithi esenza lolucwaningo. Yonke lemininingwane kanye nezinkulumo sizozigcina iminyaka emihlanu kuphela mase siyaqiniseka ukuthi sikucekela phansi konke. Ekupheleni kocwaningo, sizoqiniseka ukuthi alikho igama elizophuma futhi zonke izinto ezisisize senza lelucwaningo ngeke zishiwo ngamagama ngisho nezindawo.

Abantu ongaxhumana nabo uma kungenzeka ukuba unenkinga noma unemibuzo: (iosiza ukuqondisa mphenyi oyinhloko uProfesa Raisuyah Bhagwan) Ngicela uxhumane nomphenyi (inombolo 0710016885) Osizana nomphenyi (iNombolobo 0313732197) noma sikhungo socwango (Research Ethics Administrator) ku 031 373 2375. Izinkinga zingabikelwa uMphathi (Director): uxhaso locwaningo lungatholakala: researchdirector@dut.ac.za

Appendix F (1)



CONSENT

Full Title of the Study: African Spirituality as a source of strength and wisdom in rural Ndwedwe

Names of Researcher/s: Nokwanda Mthethwa

Statement of Agreement to Participate in the Research Study:

- I hereby confirm that I have been informed by the researcher, Nokwanda
about the nature, conduct, benefits and risks of this study - Research Ethics Clearance
Number: 192/23
- I have also received, read and understood the above written information (Participant Letter of Information) regarding the study.
- I am aware that the results of the study, including personal details regarding my sex, age, date of birth, initials and diagnosis will be anonymously processed into a study report.
- In view of the requirements of research, I agree that the data collected during this study can be processed in a computerized system by the researcher.
- I may, at any stage, without prejudice, withdraw my consent and participation in the study.
- I have had sufficient opportunity to ask questions and (of my own free will) declare myself prepared to participate in the study.
- I understand that significant new findings developed during the course of this research which may relate to my participation will be made available to me.

_____	_____	_____	_____
Full Name of Participant Thumbprint	Date	Time	Signature / Right

I, Nokwanda herewith confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature, conduct and risks of the above study.

Nokwanda Nozipho Mthethwa

Full Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Full Name of Witness (If applicable)

Date

Signature

Full Name of Legal Guardian (If applicable) Date

Signatur

Appendix F (2)



IMVUME

Isihloko socwango: Inkolelo yesintu noma yangokomoya yabantu abamnyama njengomthombo wokuphilisa nobuhlakani emakhaya aseNdwedwe

Igama lomcwani: Nokwanda Mthethwa

Isitatimende sesivumelwano soku bambiqhaza kucwango

- Nginyaqinisekisa ukuthi ngazisiwe umcwani nguNokwanda ngesimo, ukuziphatha, inzuzo nengozi yocwango
- Ngitholile, ngafunda, ngaqonda, izincwadi ezibalwe ngaphezulu (incwadi yolwazi ngeqhaza engizolibamba) ezimayelana nocwango
- Ngiyazi ukuthi imiphumela engizoyithola kucwango ekubala imininingwane emayelana nobulili, iminyaka, usuku lokuzalwa, iziqalo, nokuxilongwa kuzoba imfihlo umangabe sekushiwo umbiko wocwango.
- Uma sibuka izidingo zocwango siyavumelana nokuthi ulwazi esilitholayo umasenza ucwango sizoliqhuba ngendlela yekhompuyutha yo mcwani
- Kungenzeka kwesinye isigaba ngaphandle kokubandlulula ngikhiphe imvume yami bese ngibamba iqhaza kucwango.
- Sengithole isikhathi esanele sokubuza imbuzo esuka ngaphakathi kumina ngiyazibophezela ukuthi ngizobamba iqhaza kucwango.
- Nginyaqonda ukuthi imiphumela ebalulekile ingaqhamuka ngisenza ucwango ingaba nomthelela ekubambeni kwami iqhaza.

**Igama eliphelele lomhlanganyeliUsuku
Isigxivizo sesithupha**

Iskhathi

Isiginesha

Mina, Nokwanda ngiyaqinisekisa ukuthi umhlanganyeli simazisile ngokuphelele ngemvelo, ukuphatheka nezingozi ezingaba kulolucwaningo

Nokwanda Nozipho Mthethwa
Igama eliphelele lomcwaningi

Appendix G: Ethical clearance



Institutional Research Ethics Committee
Research and Postgraduate Support Directorate
2nd Floor, Berwyn Court
Gate 1, Steve Biko Campus
Durban University of Technology
P O Box 1334, Durban, South Africa, 4001
Tel: 031 373 2375
Email: lavishad@dut.ac.za
http://www.dut.ac.za/research/institutional_research_ethics
www.dut.ac.za

29 November 2023

Ms N N Mthethwa
P O Box 10617
Sakhisizwe High School
Stanger
4450

Dear Ms Mthethwa

African spirituality as a source of wisdom and strength in rural Ndwedwe
Ethics Clearance Number: IREC 192/23

The DUT-Institutional Research Ethics Committee acknowledges receipt of your notification regarding the piloting of your data collection tool.

Kindly ensure that participants used for the pilot study are not part of the main study.

In addition, the DUT-IREC acknowledges receipt of your gatekeeper permission letter.

Please note that **FULL APPROVAL** is granted to your research proposal. You may proceed with data collection.

Any adverse events [serious or minor] which occur in connection with this study and/or which may alter its ethical consideration must be reported to the DUT-IREC according to the DUT-IREC SOP's.

Please note that any deviations from the approved proposal require the approval of the DUT-IREC as outlined in the DUT-IREC SOP's.

It is compulsory for a student or researcher to apply for recertification on an annual basis. The failure to do so will result in withdrawal of ethics clearance. It is the responsibility of the researcher and the supervisor to apply for recertification.

Please note that you are required to submit a Notification of Completion of Study form together with an abstract to the DUT-IREC office on completion of your study.

Yours Sincerely

Prof J K Adam
Chairperson: DUT-IREC

Appendix H: Turnitin Report

NN Mthethwa (21829677)- Final di... ?

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Appendix I: Formal Certificate from the editor

MS PREM COOPOO

 **PC Proofreading**

+27 83 645 7466
pcoopoo@gmail.com

EDITING AND PROOFREADING SERVICES

BA Social Work, BA Honours (Psychology), M Med.Sc Social Work (UKZN, South Africa);
Certificate in Strategic Quality Planning (Kangan Batman Tafe, Australia).

4 December 2024

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

This confirms that I edited the Master's degree dissertation of Ms Nokwanda Mthethwa, a registered student at the Durban University of Technology, KwaZulu-Natal.

I provided her with an edited version with tracked changes and a clean copy.

Sincerely,

Prem Coopoo

Prem Coopoo