# Africanising social work approaches:

EXPLORATION OF THE ROLE OF AFRICAN SPIRITUALITY IN THE STRENGTH BASE APPROACH DEALING WITH MENTAL ILLNESS AMONG BLACK AFRICANS.

BY

MOLALA T, SEANEGO S& MAKWELA G

# Topic overview

- This paper argues for the exploration of African spirituality in the strength based perspective dealing mental illness, one of the major health and social problems, among Black Africans

- perceptions towards African spirituality and spirituality as strength

- Furthermore it discusses research projects on the positive relationship between spirituality and mental health to support its arguments for the exploration of African spirituality in the strength based perspective

# African spirituality

- African spirituality is holistic and it impacts on the whole of life. It is not considered as an individual affair, because it is expressed in all levels of society, socially, economically, politically as well as among people – hence it contributes in the building of a nation. (Masango, 2007) .

- In short, African spirituality has to do with the concept of nation building and the integrity of creation. In that life, everyone is involved in rebuilding, spirituality in the lives of others – ancestors are also involved in this process.

# Socio economic effects of mental health

- The World Health Organisation estimates that mental health and neurological disorders are the leading causes of ill-health and disability, but there is an appealing lack of interest from government and NGOs.

- (Crick Lund, 2012) assert that mental illness has a major economic impact, through the effect of disability and stigma on earnings, or that people in lower income groups are at increased risk of mental illness. The indirect costs of severe depression and anxiety disorders stand in stark contrast with the direct costs of treatment in South Africa, as illustrated by annual government spending on mental health services, amounting to an estimated $59 million for adults.

# CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR INDEGINISING SOCIAL WORK

- The education of Social Work practitioners and practices continue to marginalize Indigenous knowledges and cultures.

- To provide effective services, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Social Work students need to be better prepared to work with Indigenous peoples, families, and communities.

- Social Work students need to be provided the knowledge, skills and values that will support and enhance their ability to work in partnership with Indigenous peoples

# CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR INDEGINISING SOCIAL WORK

- The paper argued for the inclusion of African spirituality in the strength based perspective dealing with mental illness among Black Africans.

- Findings of studies on spirituality and mental health were discussed in pursuit of substantiating its assertion. To this end, there has been findings suggesting the positive role that spirituality plays among clients with mental illness.

- From the discussions above, the paper conceptualised the role African spirituality can have as a strength dealing with mental illness among Black Africans.

- The paper also sought ameliorate the disjuncture between social work intervention and Black Africans which is expressed by the fact that the latter do not find resonance with the former with regard to non-material assistance because it does not embrace their values.

- In addition, the paper recommends scientific research on the role of African spirituality in the strength base perspective may have a positive impact on Black Africans as it has found in the various studies.

# Spirituality and mental illness

- There is a complex interplay between mental health and spirituality, so one cannot hold a simplistic perspective that labels spirituality as either "good" or "bad" for health (Giancarlo & Lucchetti, 2014).

- For example, a recent Brazilian study of 168 outpatients with bipolar disorder found that religion was reported as important in the participants' lives (84%), and that intrinsic religiosity (i.e., religion as an end in itself and central to the person's life) and positive religious coping (e.g., seeking support from a religious community, searching for religious meaning in life and stressors, collaborative partnership with God) were strongly associated with lower depressive symptoms and better quality of life. Anecdotal, quantitative and qualitative evidence all point to a positive (although often modest) relationship between spirituality and mental health in relation to a number of mental health problems.

# Spirituality and mental illness

- For many clients coping with mental illness, spirituality often plays a central role in the recovery process (Hodge, 2004). Clinicians have been found to underestimate the importance of spirituality among clients with severe mental illness (SMI), yet many clients may have a more effective recovery if their spiritual needs are met in treatment

# Spirituality and mental illness

- Controversy still exists on whether or not to integrate spirituality into the care of persons struggling with mental illness, primarily due to concerns about harmful side effects from supporting religious involvement

# Spirituality as a strength

- According to (Winship , 2017), a community of believers supports Church Members, individuals who are church members report greater levels of support in their lives, and in some areas (such as African-American youth and high school completion) are far more successful in dealing with life issues than non-church-goers.

- Research is increasingly showing the value of faith, prayer, and other spiritual practices on one's physical and mental health. In the areas of addiction, cancer, other physical ailments, and mental health, there is convincing evidence that spiritual and religious practices are an invaluable resource for many people who are suffering

# Spirituality as a strength

- The sense of community and unity is a critical concept in African cosmology. Bae (2008) points out that this relatedness extends to unity and harmony with God.

- Life is therefore only meaningful if it is participative and part of this vital unity. This unity does not only consist of living members but extends to the ancestors and God.

- This union is believed to bond everyone living and dead vertically and horizontally with God and each other. This notion of belonging to a community is a prerequisite for the individual identity.

- The individual is believed to exist not only for himself/ herself but for the community. In the traditional religious context a person's actions from birth to death serve to bind him or her as a communal being to everyone around him/her

# conclusion

- Traditional healers hold an esteemed and powerful position in southern African societies. Their role is that of physician, counsellor, psychiatrist and priest (Mufamadi & Sodi, 2010).

- People visit a traditional healer for problems ranging from social dilemmas to major medical illnesses. They (traditional healers) therefore, have a role to play in building the health system in South Africa.

- In a country where the needs are great and the resources inadequate, traditional healers can play an important and valuable role in helping communities to improve their health and quality of life

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# Thank you