



ISSN: 2230-9926

Available online at <http://www.journalijdr.com>

# IJDR

International Journal of Development Research

Vol. 14, Issue, 06, pp. 65854-65859, June, 2024

<https://doi.org/10.37118/ijdr.28369.06.2024>



CASE STUDY

OPEN ACCESS

## TRADITIONAL HEALING AND MENTAL HEALTH IN NEPAL: A CASE STUDY

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received 06<sup>th</sup> March, 2024

Received in revised form

20<sup>th</sup> April, 2024

Accepted 08<sup>th</sup> May, 2024

Published online 28<sup>th</sup> June, 2024

#### Key Words:

Traditional healing, Traditional healers, Health care consumers, Mental health, Psychological Disorders.

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### ABSTRACT

The traditional healer can be defined as “someone who is recognized by the community in which he/she lives as competent to provide health care by using vegetable, animal and mineral substances and certain other methods based on the social, cultural and religious backgrounds as well as the prevailing knowledge, attitudes and beliefs regarding physical, mental and social well-being and the causation of disease and disability in the community. “When the essence of the body has been captured by some power then the healer tries to release the soul or balance the system and make it function normally. In Nepalese culture, “*Dhami, Jhakri, Vaidhya, Ojha, Janne manche, Jyotish, Mata, Local priest-expert, Mollsi Saheb, Father of the church*” and various experts who belong to their culture used to deal or cure the patients who suffers from illness. This paper is based on the traditional healing practices and its impact in mental health. The study was based on case study where 10 (Traditional healer-5 and client-5) participants were selected as respondent. The finding of the study highlights that most of the people suffering from mental illness prefer to approach, traditional healers first. Majority of the community members, especially people with low socio-economic status, first approach the traditional healers because they were affordable, flexible, cheaper and culturally associated with the people. People who suffer from anxiety, depression, stress, mild-to-moderate mental illness, etc used to visit traditional healers. Traditional healers are a good counselor and used to treat their clients psychologically. They are a good speaker who used to motivate their clients psychologically. They can provide psychosocial intervention which help to relieve distress and improve mild symptoms in common mental disorders such as anxiety and depression. But there are a lot of limitations so they need careful training. Whereas, collaboration between traditional healers and medical professionals will be beneficial to country as both of them are focused with mental health of the people. Today the role of traditional healer tends not to attract the interest of younger generation but it is fact that they contribute greatly to people’s health. So they should be incorporated into contemporary health care provision for the betterment of the people.

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Citation: Prabin Raj Pandey, 2024. “Traditional Healing and Mental health in Nepal: A case study”. *International Journal of Development Research*, 14, (06), 65854-65859.

## INTRODUCTION

Traditional healing practices have emerged together with its culture and tradition. The traditional healer can be defined as “someone who is recognized by the community in which he lives as competent to provide health care by using vegetable, animal and mineral substances and certain other methods based on the social, cultural and religious backgrounds as well as the prevailing knowledge, attitudes and beliefs regarding physical, mental and social well-being and the causation of disease and disability in the community.” Traditional healing has been in existence for many centuries yet many people still seems to not understand how it relates to god and religion or spirituality. Some people seem to believe that traditional healers worship the ancestors and not God. The traditional philosophy of illness in most cases encompasses relations between God, ancestors and the universe. God is above and beyond the ancestors and is called the supreme creator/being and the main pillar of the universe (Thorpe, 1993). This is one aspect that many people who do not subscribe to this belief system fail to understand that the God that the traditional healers worship is the same God that Hindu and other religion groups believe in.

God is the highest regard; worshippers do not speak directly to him. Their prayers and wishes are communicated to him through the medium of the traditional healers. We common people have no any idea about the communication with our ancestors and God, depending on the purpose of the communication and the type of ritual that needs to be performed. The communication between God and traditional healers as would be expected or influenced by the cultural context in which it exists. In Hinduism, the communication between God and the common personality is based on *Dhami, Jhakri, Ojha*, etc. where as in Christians the communication is directly with God or through Jesus Christ. Similarly, in Africa, communication with God is done through the medium of the deceased relatives. The deceased relatives are “means-to-an-end” and not the end in them. In Muslim religion, the communication between God and people are based on the *Molbi Saheb*. At times, communication between the living, the living-dead and God is done through the ritual slaughtering of an animal (Gumede, 1990). The definition of traditional healing varies according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 1976:8), Traditional medicine or healing is “the sum total of all knowledge and practices, whether explicable or not used in diagnosing, preventing or eliminating a physical, mental or social disequilibrium and which rely

exclusively on past experience and observation handed down from generation to generation, verbally or in writing” and “healing practices, approaches, knowledge and beliefs incorporating plant, animal and mineral based medicines, spiritual therapies, manual techniques and exercise, applied singular or in combination, to treat, diagnose and prevent illness with herbs to spiritual treatment (United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS-UNAIDS, 2006). The services of traditional healers go far beyond the uses of herbs for physical illness. It is doubtful whether modern psychological and psychiatric services would have been appropriate to treat the ill people, but traditional healing was highly involved by rendering culturally relevant psychological services that includes communications with the ancestors (Honwana, 1997). Similarly, traditional healers were found to be invaluable in past civil war, social reconstruction and community rebuilding in Mozambique, particularly in the rural areas (Honwana, 1997). Some evidence suggests that traditional healers can provide an effective psychological intervention. Their interventions might help to relieve distress and improve mild symptoms in common mental disorders, such as: depression and anxiety.

Traditional healing aims to restore harmony and balance within the individual through a symbiosis of the body, mind and spirit. Through this process, traditional healing offers a holistic conceptualization of wellness and well-being, both within the individual and his/her environment. The Nepalese see illness as external to the body which disturbs the normal balance creating a host of sicknesses. The person suffering does not know for sure what the ailment is all about and how soon it could be done away with because the sickness has come from an external source through external agents. It is believed that the essence of the body has been captured by some power causing disease, destruction and often death. It is the healer who will try to release the soul or balance the system and make it function normally. In the context of Nepalese culture, *Dhami*, *Jhakri*, *Vaidya*, *Ojha*, *Janne*, *Jyotish*, *ayurvedic*, local priest-experts and simple users of herbs and powder are the experts to deal or cure the patients. The traditional healers use to balance the influence of the unseen with the seen world to maintain the order.

### Objectives of the Study

- The main objective of the study is to know about the traditional healing practices and its impact in mental health.
- To know the clients and healers views about the causes of illness.
- To explore the clients of traditional healers and the reasons they visit them.

## LITERATURE REVIEWS

Traditional healing practice is an important and integral part of health care systems in almost all countries of the world. According to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2013), it is estimated that about 80% of the ailing population in developing countries including Bangladesh depends on traditional healing for their primary healthcare (PHC) needs. According to the Fifth Plan Document (1992), India has more than half a million traditional healers. A gross estimate suggests that more than 90% of the Indian population uses these traditional healing services at some point in time. According to the article, traditional healing systems of medical treatment have assumed a unique position in the healthcare of people living in remote areas of the country. , traditional healing practice is holistic and aims at the overall well-being of the person. It takes the body, self and society within a framework of dynamic equilibrium. Similarly, the study highlights that majority of the community members, especially people of low socio economic status, first approached the traditional healers with their medical problems only after failure of such treatment did they move to qualified physicians for modern treatment. United States, Australia, France, Canada, China, India, Chile, Colombia and Africa are the industrialized countries who regularly use some form of traditional, complementary and alternative

medicines. The study identified both religious healing practices, where religious healing practices includes “*Kalami*”, “*Bhandari*” and spiritual healing. Similarly, non-religious healing practices included sorcery, “*Kabiraji*”, and home medicine. The study highlights that the extent of services showed no decline with the advancement of modern medical sciences rather it has increased with the passage of time (Md. Imdadul Haque, A.B.M. Alauddin Chowdhary and Md. Golam Dostogir Harun, 2018). A study Healer and healing practices of mental illness in India: The role of Proposed eclectic healing model by Biswal (2017) highlights that mental illness is health condition involving changes in thinking, emotion, or behavior which is associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social work, family activities or daily life. The study highlights two important but opposite models of mental illness i.e. the medical model and non-medical model. The authors pointed that belief is a powerful tool or mechanism that highly affects the health care system.

Considering a country like India, blind beliefs and beliefs in the supernatural power of mental illnesses are major chunk of the population, especially in rural and tribal areas comprising lower caste and lower-class population. Every culture has developed its own supporting system (e.g. knowledge, beliefs, technique, attitudes, customs, rituals and symbols) for any kind of diseases or illness. According to the study, some motivational factors that determine the choices for healing practices are strong belief of the decision maker in faith healing, easy approachability, social stigma associated with psychiatric consultation, the belief about the causation of mental illness, lack of awareness among common public and deficiency in existing mental health services. Similarly in case of mental illness, 75% of the patients take recourse to folk or religious healing before restoring to psychiatric services, 60% patients were met by the folk practitioners and home remedies, 20% depended on indigenous medical care from the qualified practitioners (Rama Krishna Biswal, Chittaranjan Subudhi and Sanjay Kumar Acharya, 2017). Campion and Bhugra (1997) found that 25% of the patients consulted healers in their own homes, 25% consulted them at temple site and the rest went for consultation in the traditional healers’ house. Andrew Drury (2020) mentioned that cultural beliefs about witchcraft and ancestral spirits are widespread in Malawi and other parts of Africa. These beliefs impact on health-seeking behaviors of individuals. Mental disorder in Malawi, similar to other parts of Africa, is often believed to be attributable to culturally accepted ideas and beliefs about divinity, witchcraft, medicine, disease and the influence of ancestral spirit and social misconduct (Steinford, 2009).

Similarly, this study also highlights that the traditional healers are often the first, and sometimes only, service provider consulted for a board range of health problems, including mental illness. Tomita (2015) found a weighted mean of 48.1% of individuals first consulted traditional and religious healers in their pathway to care, whereas Nyirenda (2002) found that 43% of inpatients at Qyeen Elizabeth Central Hospital (QECH), a tertiary hospital in Blantyre, had prior consultation with a traditional healer, although this sample was not limited to those with mental illness. The study highlighted that to improve health, people will often seek multiple sources and traditional healers are one of the alternative. The reasons for visiting traditional healers can have various explanatory models. According to Crumlish et al (2007), spiritual and religious beliefs influences perceptions of mental illness in Malawi, with bewitchment being the traditional explanation for mental illness, leading to traditional healers frequently being consulted. Similarly, a large proportion of patients attributed to mental illness to spiritual causes with believing God’s punishment (Crabb, Stewart and Kokota, 2012). According to the study, a Kuala Lumpur sample found only 7.41% of patients reported beneficial effects from traditional treatments (Phang, Marhani and Salina, 2010). In urban Kenya 95.1% of respondents stated that they were satisfied with the traditional healers’ services (Mbwayo, Ndeti, Mutiso and Khasakhala, 2013). According to Nortje, Oladeji, Gureje and Seedat (2016), traditional healers can provide effective psychosocial interventions, facilitating social engagement and improving coping strategies. They concluded that their interventions

might help to relieve distress and improve mild symptoms in depression and anxiety, but found little evidence to suggest that they can change the course of severe mental illness such as bipolar and psychotic disorders. Similarly, the study also highlighted about the cost of visiting the traditional healers. Labhardt, Scheiss, Mango and Langewitz (2009) found traditional healers prices to be higher because of the risks associated with it. Patterson Bakari (1997) found higher costs that government run hospitals. However, other authors have argued lower cost and easier to reach (Cook and Zumla, 2008). Traditional healing practices in rural Nepal have emerged together with its culture and tradition. Nepalese society believes nature to be their mother. When natural calamities struck, they interpret them as God's anger. Similarly, when people become sick, they believe it as curse or the punishment of the people sins. The article also explains about the witch or "Bokshi".

In Nepalese society, witches are supposed to keep ghosts with her and order it to enter a person's body, at first, causing minor illness, progressing towards severe condition and finally death. To get rid of it "Dhami" and "Jhakri" i.e. traditional healers are introduced who act as mediator and suck spirit from sick person's body. The practice of traditional healers in Nepal is gradually decreasing due to modern health facilities. But in most parts of the rural areas, people still visit traditional healers due to cultural beliefs and they are psychological convinced that if they are treated by the traditional healers they get well soon. The study points that educated people now believe that traditional healers treat the sick people psychologically. One of the important works of traditional healer is they help to make the person psychologically strong. They do not have any qualification. They could be either literate or illiterate. However, people trust them and visit them due to cultural practice and their service is cheaper as well as they are available when needed. Traditional healing is a part of culture, so it is special in Nepal (Richa Baniya, 2014). Mental illness is commonly linked with a higher disability and burden of disease than many physical illnesses. But despite that fact, it is general observation that a majority of patients with mental disorder never seek professional help. In general, mental illness is seen as related to life stresses, social or family conflicts and evil spirits and the concept of biological causes of mental illness is rare even among the educated. Therefore, the patients with mental illness often either visit or are taken to faith healers by the relatives. According to the study, the patients with various kinds of mental disorders were referred by traditional faith healers. There were patients suffering from neurotic disorders, psychotic disorders, mood disorders, seizure, substance use disorder, intellectual disability, etc. seeking the treatment from traditional faith healers. Among the cases referred, predominantly were female and neurotic cases and most of them were educated (Thapa D.K, Lamichhane N, and Subedi S., 2018).

**Statement of the Problem:** Health is one the most important indicator to measure the development of the nation but in our country most of the people in the rural areas are living without minimum health care facilities. The national health policy has declared about the health facilities and established health post in each Ward and there is one District hospital in each District but the health care facilities is not functioning properly due to budget, equipment's, and manpower (Regmi, 2000). Due to lack of these facilities there are many isolated group and communities where human life has subsisted on the land with no outside help. Beliefs and knowledge covering a variety of aspects of the human life have been passed down from generation to generation in these communities and group. Shamanic and traditional beliefs and practices still exist in the world today and are quite prevalent in low and middle income countries. From Amazon rainforest shamans in Peru to religious healers in Kathmandu to African herbalists, traditional healing practices and beliefs weave into the fabric of a country's culture. These beliefs and traditions are ingrained in communities and are an important aspect of their health-seeking behaviors, culture and collective psychology (Jones, 2016). If we can rise above the common stigmas that accompany traditional practices ("witchcraft," "quack medicines," etc.), we can then learn about these systems of healing and how they work. This cross-cultural learning can facilitate an incredible amount of new knowledge,

leading to new treatments for illnesses and a greater collaboration between traditional healers and mental health professionals.

**Significance of the Study:** Traditional healing is a health care that has developed over many generations within a community or a group of people. The healing process engages the individual's innate ability to repair damage and recover function. Repair means to fix or mend and to recover is to return to a previous state (Oxford College Dictionary, 2007). Healing involves repair and recovery in all aspect of the physical, psychic and spiritual person. In other words, healing is concerned with wholeness for the total person (Carlson and Shield, 1989). The perceived effectiveness of traditional and faith healing in the treatment of mental illness: a systematic review of qualitative studies done by Watt et. al (2018) highlighted that stakeholders perceived traditional and/or faith healing to be effective in treating mental illness, especially when used in combination with biomedical treatment. Similarly, people will continue to seek treatment from traditional and/or faith healers for mental illness if they perceive it to be effective regardless of alternative biomedical evidence. In Nepal, the patients with various kinds of mental disorders were referred by traditional faith healers. There were patients suffering from neurotic disorders, psychotic disorder, intellectual disability, etc. seeking the treatment from traditional faith healers. Among the cases referred, predominantly were female and neurotic cases and most of them were educated (Thapa, Lamichhane and Subedi, 2018). According to Prem K. Khatry (2011), soul is the central power of the body and when some external attacks on the body the soul becomes weaker and unable to function normally in the absence of strong soul. In these cases, traditional healers help their clients with the help of supreme power. In today's context, people hold different perception regarding health care services. Those people who hold the perception about traditional healing often considered as superstitious. This type of behavior seems as irrespective so, they need to understand and believe traditional healing as well as incorporating it into the health care system. This study would strengthen the goal of health care system in Nepal. The findings generated through this study would be beneficial because it highlights the knowledge of traditional healing methods and its diagnostic techniques. The knowledge generated through this study would add to the existing knowledge of mental health and its relation to traditional healing. Similarly, the findings of this study would also be beneficial to hospitals and health care systems to establish incorporate relationship between traditional healing and formal health care system.

## METHODOLOGY

Mental health condition is one of the most important parts in human life but in Nepal most of the rural areas health condition is not so good. Bara District is also one of the rural areas where people haven't got good treatment related to mental health condition. The research was conducted in the Kalaiya Sub-Metropolitan, Bara District, Nepal and it focused on the mental health condition of local people, their traditional practices and medical option. A qualitative data analysis was being done because the questionnaire will be based on semi-structured pattern. The questionnaire will be based on open-ended and close-ended nature. The case study was carried among healers and their patients. The main purposes of conducting case studies were to support the information collected from other sources. The case study gave emphasis on healers and their patient's perception, behavioral health practices, the effect of various factors for example social and cultural habits and adaptation of any specific treatment methods. Besides collecting data with the help of scheduled questions, the observation on unscheduled questions became very much helpful together information. Observation has been carried out to collect the relevant data for the study.

## RESULT AND FINDINGS

On the basis of this study the lay/common people see illness as negative power which disturbs the normal balance creating a host of

sickness. It is believed that if you do any wrong things then your body will be captured by negative powers which may results in mental problems and other kinds of physical illness. Those people who believe in ghost, possession, negative power and so on often visit traditional healers to cure their illness. It is believed that negative power can be only cured by traditional healers but not by other professionals. Following are some themes which are the findings of this study:

### Objective 1: Traditional healing practices and its impact in mental health

1. **Traditional Healing is a Supernatural Power:** Many people assume that traditional healing is a supernatural power which is given by God. God selects some people whose soul is pure and provides them some supernatural power. Some people get supernatural power by attaining *siddhi*, *tantra mantra bidhya*, *puja*, *bali*, and so on. According to healer, supernatural power is beyond scientific understanding which is only gained by faith and prayer. Still there are many common people who have a great impact in this area. They used to see traditional healer as a God messenger and believe that traditional healers have positive power so they can do anything as well as they can treat any problem with the help of their magic/supernatural effort.
2. **Traditional healing can treat any problem:** According to traditional healer, traditional healing can treat any problem of human being. There are many people who visited to them with mental health problems. People with depression, anxiety, stress related problem, eating disorder, autism and many more other disorders use to visit traditional healers. Similarly, people of physical problem also used to visit to traditional healers. According to healer's infertility case, jaundice case, diabetes case, cancer, etc also used to visit traditional healers for their cure. It seems that in this modern day still people used to visit traditional healers with their problems which are one of the great challenges to this modern technology and mental health professionals.
3. **Spiritual Counselor:** Traditional healers are a good spiritual counselor. The difference between mental health counselor and spiritual counselor is about active listener and active speaker. Mental health counselor are active listener where as traditional healers are active speakers. Traditional healers use to speak about importance of religion and spirituality in humans life. Spiritual counseling is one of the important techniques in traditional healing because it is related with religion, God, traditional practice and so on. Spiritual counseling support people to find meaning of their life whereas it is also related with people's belief, values, and life purpose. Spiritual counseling helps people to be touched with their own thinking, feeling, perception, awareness, and action. Spirituality enhances mental and psychological wellbeing by bringing meaning to your life.

### Objective 2: Clients and healers views about the causes of illness.

1. **Negative Power (*Kala Shakti*):** Negative power can negatively affect our mental and physical health but we know negative power is immeasurable. Negative power stops us from positive thinking and positive feeling. Those people who are guided by negative powers experienced angry, sad, discomfort, frustration, insomnia, low mood, and distress. According to participants (clients and healers) negative energy is not good for physical and mental health so people should follow the proper guideline which is created by God. Similarly, they views illness in three different perspectives i.e. Physical, Mental, and Spiritual. According to participants, physical illness is caused due to physical factors (*Saririk Birami*), mental illness can be caused due to mental factor (*Dimak*) and spiritual illness can be caused due to ancestor's anger, God anger, *Bokshi*, *Bhut Pret*, *Bayu*, *Jadu Tona*, *Tantra Mantra*, *Tuna Muna*, etc. But they also highlight that mental and physical problems can be the result of negative power. Negative power is very danger which directly affects the human being. According to traditional healer there are no any other techniques

to deal with negative power so those people who are guided by negative energy used to visit them and seek help.

2. **Ancestors anger (*Pitri Dosh*):** According to participants (clients and traditional healers) ancestral anger can be one of the sources of illness. When people don't follow their ancestral guideline then their ancestor may become angry and punish them by negative power which may lead them physical, mental or spiritual illness. So, people should visit their ancestors place/graves and offer them some food or fruits what they like and worship them so they become happy and makes our life and home happy.
3. **God anger (*Bhagwan ko Rish*):** Traditional healers expressed that people sometimes used to upset and make anger to God. God hardly express his/her anger because God is classified as slow to anger. But sometimes people use to do those things which are against to nature and God. For that reason sometimes God become anger and punish for our sins.
4. ***Bokshi*:** A *bokshi* is a person who has knowledge of *tantra mantra* and witchcraft. According to healers *bokshi* used to keep *jadui sakti* and *masan* (dead body energy) and with that energy they used to play with negative energy. When they like and don't like any person then they used to make them ill with their negative power. They used to allege their supernatural power/magic to control human being and make them do whatever they like.
5. ***Bhut Pret*:** According to traditional healers, unnatural death creates *bhut pret*. Every individual who comes to this external world have their natural age but those who are failed to live their natural age and died due to accident, suicide, murder and so on their *Aatma* remains in this world and they use to catch others body and makes that person physically and mentally weak. The *Aatma* creates negativity to that person to fulfill their needs/demand.
6. ***Bayu*:** *Bayu* is negative power which creates fever and abdominal pain in human being.
7. ***Jadu Tona/Tantra Mantra/Tuna Muna*:** Simply black magic refers to *jadu tona/tantra mantra/ tuna muna*. This black magic is very powerful energy which creates physical and mental illness among an individual. This is also known as a *Kala Jadu* or *Kala Bidhya* in local language. A person who knows this skill they are known as powerful with negative personality. According to healers and clients, black magic is not good because there are many people use are mentally ill due to black magic.
8. ***Karma*:** According to study *Karma* is also one of the important part of person which plays an important role in mental health. *Karma* is directly related with *Purva Janma ko Paap*. Healers claimed that sometime our mental illness is also directly linked with our *KarmaFal*.
9. ***Bhagya ko Fal (Ill Fate)*:** Mental illness is also directly related with ill fate. Every people have their own *bhagya* according to healers. We all are surviving our life because of our *bhagya*. Our *bhagya* guide our life so no one can do anything whatever they like as according to their choice. So, we all are paying good and bad as according to our *bhagya*.

### Objective 3: To explore the clients of traditional healers and the reasons they visit them.

1. **Easily Available:** The participants claim that healers are easily available in their village so they firstly visit the traditional healers. There are no any other sources like hospitals or other mental health professionals who help them to relief their problem so for them the only one is traditional healers who help them to cure them with their problem.
2. **Low Cost:** Traditional healers are cheaper than doctors. They use to treat their client in very low cost. There is no any fixed charge for their clients so this is also the reason people use to visit traditional healers.
3. **Spirituality (*Dharmik*):** Those people who are spiritual in nature also use to visit traditional healers. According to clients spirituality is positive power so spiritual people firstly visit

traditional healers with their problem. According to people negative power cannot be treated by doctors. Only healers can treat negative power with their traditional knowledge and skills.

4. **Traditional Medicine:** Traditional healer also provides traditional medicine which is natural and good for health. Similarly traditional medicine is also very cheap than medical medicine.
5. **Referral:** Sometimes those people who had already visited the traditional healers with their problem and were satisfied with the healers then they use to refer their relatives or friends to traditional healers. So referral is also one of the main sources to visit traditional healers by the client.

## DISCUSSION

Traditional healing is one of the important cultural practices which are widely used in treatment, diagnosis, prevention, cure and management of many health problems. According to literatures traditional healing are easily assessable, affordable, available and acceptable by rural areas people. Traditional healers use traditional methods to treat their clients because the illness which is caused by the evil spirits can be only cured by the traditional healers. Traditional healers do not want to lose their credibility so they have acquired traditional medical knowledge, skill, practices and techniques from their ancestors, colleagues, self-study, traditional teachers, training, etc. Journal of social psychiatry (2015), study shows that most of the patients suffering from mental illness prefer to approach faith healers first, which may delay entry to psychiatric care and thereby negatively impact the prognosis of bipolar disorder in Egypt. According to Rama Krishna Biswal, Chittaranjan Subudhi, and Sanjay Kumar Acharya (2017), mental illness are health conditions involving changes in thinking, emotion or behavior which is associated with distress or problem. People with mental illness and their family have strong belief in the supernatural power and this strong belief forces them to consult with the traditional healers. Similarly, Ayurveda also serves mental illness in the name of "Unmada". Due to diet, disrespect to God, mental shock due to emotions and faulty bodily activity are the main causes of "unmada".

According to Akol, Karen and Ingunn (2018), mental health services are important for primary health care. In Uganda, there are few psychiatric facilities than the global average so up to 60% of patients attend traditional healers who have moderate to severe mental illness. Similarly, according to Richa Baniya (2014), traditional healing emerges together with its culture and tradition. In Nepalese rural society the cause of mental illness is based on natural calamities and God's anger. They believe in "bokshi" (witch) who supposed to keep ghost with them and order it to enter in person's body which create minor illness. The article, perception of traditional healing for mental illness in rural Gujarat (2014), explains a long history about traditional healing in India. According to the study, many people felt that traditional healing can be beneficial and believed that people should visit to a healer for their problem. According to the article, effectiveness of traditional healers in treating mental disorders: a systematic review (2016), traditional healers can provide an effective psychosocial intervention and their interventions might help to relieve distress and improve mild symptoms in common mental disorders such as depression and anxiety.

## CONCLUSION

Traditional healers are a primary source of health care in rural areas. They play an important role in health care, as they not only treat illness but also provide a more holistic approach to health care than most mainstream health care professionals. Traditional healing is the oldest form of structured method of treatment that is based on underlying philosophy and set of principles what it is practiced. Culture, traditional practices and social norms of different societies have been found to have great impact on health care systems and people understanding of health and illness. In Nepal, before the

arrival of medical professionals, healers from different cultural groups used to practice different healing system for the purpose of restoring and protecting the health of people. In present context, several traditional healers may pass away without handling their knowledge and skill to the future generation. The knowledge of these healing techniques is slowly disappearing due to modern medicine practitioners. Still there are some traditional healers in rural society who practice their jobs and somehow they are successful in treating people. Some of the literature highlights that they use to treat sick people psychologically. Traditional healers are a good counselor as well as an active speaker who can motivate their clients psychologically. There are various reasons for belief in traditional healing system. One reason can be health professionals may be insensitive to the views of patients regarding traditional healers. Similarly, traditional healers are affordable, cheaper and more accessible than doctors. Traditional healers offer information, counseling and treatment to patients and their families by understanding the patient's broader environment. In rural areas traditional healers are the first source for sick people. But there are a lot of limitations of traditional healing practices and they need careful training to correctly identify the mental illness. They must refer their patients who are mentally ill to a doctor or hospital for securing the future of their patients. In return, medical professionals can learn the therapeutic, spiritual or other indications for referring their patients to traditional healers if the intervention is not initially effective.

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