

# Review of: "“Healing is having faith in Allah, the healer, and the medicine”: An exploratory qualitative study of Islamic-based healing practices in Northern Ghana"

Idi Warsah

Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

The paper's introduction provides a detailed account of a healing ritual performed by an Imam in Northern Ghana. However, there are areas where clarity and conciseness could be improved. The depiction of the healing ritual is vivid, but the language could be refined for more straightforward communication. For instance, explaining the significance of Afa's rituals and the conditions imposed on the girl's healing could be more direct.

In terms of organization, the transition between the narrative of the healing ritual and the existing literature on faith healing in Ghana could be smoother. It might benefit from a clearer delineation between the firsthand experience and the broader context of faith-based healing practices. The connection between the personal experience with Afa and the broader context of Islamic-based healing in Northern Ghana is valuable. However, integrating these sections more cohesively would enhance the flow and comprehensibility of the introduction. The questions posed at the end set a good direction for the study, yet they could be further refined to explicitly align with the study's objectives. Providing a more structured and explicit approach to how the study aims to explore Islamic-based healing practices among the Dagomba people would enhance the introduction's focus.

The introduction provides a comprehensive overview of the cultural and religious landscape of Dagbon, focusing primarily on the prevalence of Islamic beliefs and their influence on health practices among the Dagomba people. However, it could benefit from certain improvements to enhance clarity and conciseness. The opening paragraphs lay a strong foundation by detailing Dagbon's geographical, ethnic, and religious composition. However, there's a need to streamline the information provided to avoid redundancy. For instance, the emphasis on the prevalence of Islam among the Dagomba is reiterated throughout the introduction and could be summarized more succinctly.

The introduction presents various sects within Islam among the Dagomba, but the relevance of this information to the study's focus on Islamic healing practices isn't entirely clear. Providing a more direct link between the sects and their specific impacts on health beliefs or healing practices could enhance the section's relevance. The narrative about the transition from indigenous African traditional religion to Islam in Dagbon is informative but could be condensed to focus on its direct implications for health beliefs and practices. Additionally, referencing sources like Abdul-Hamid and Imam extensively might create a sense of reliance solely on these perspectives, which might limit the breadth of the study's viewpoint. While the introduction effectively outlines the Dagomba's philosophical beliefs about health and illness, it could be streamlined to maintain a clear focus on how these beliefs influence Islamic healing practices specifically. There's an

opportunity to clearly connect these beliefs to the upcoming study's objectives and framework.

In terms of method, the method section outlines the study design, participant selection, data collection, and analysis procedures. The choice of a descriptive exploratory qualitative approach isn't explicitly linked to the need for new insights in the relatively unexplored area of Islamic-based healing in Dagbon. Connecting this choice directly to the need to uncover new insights would strengthen the rationale for this research design. The explanation of participant selection criteria is clear, yet the rationale behind excluding the healer who practiced both Islamic and Dagbon traditional healing could be expanded. Discussing potential insights gained from comparing perspectives might justify or contextualize the exclusion.

Details about data collection methods, such as interviews and participant observation, are comprehensive. However, adding more information on the structure of the interview guide or observation protocols would enhance methodological transparency. While mentioning ethical approval, additional details about the informed consent process, especially the oral consent method used for some participants, would strengthen methodological rigor. The description of data analysis, including coding, thematic development, and involvement of both researchers, is detailed and robust. Integrating excerpts or examples from the analysis process could enhance understanding.

Strategies for ensuring data trustworthiness, like iterative interviews and pseudonyms for participant anonymity, are adequately addressed. However, a more explicit discussion on researchers' reflexivity—how their backgrounds and biases might have influenced data collection and analysis—could deepen methodological transparency.

In the results section, the study's insights into Islamic-based healing among the Dagomba community are valuable but have limitations. Notably, the absence of female healers' perspectives limits understanding of gender dynamics in this healing system. Including female insights would offer a more comprehensive view. Additionally, the study's small sample size—comprising six male healers—might not fully represent the diversity of healing practices among the Dagomba. A more extensive and varied sample, possibly including diverse age groups or educational backgrounds, could provide a more holistic understanding. The study could benefit from greater methodological transparency. Detailing the participant selection process and the specific analytical methods used would enhance the study's credibility and replicability. Furthermore, while the inclusion of direct quotes from healers adds richness, balancing these with concise summaries could improve readability without compromising the study's depth.