

# 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"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this very interesting manuscript. I really enjoyed reading it!

The abstract refers – I normally read the abstract last to see if it is in line with the main text, but I was so keen to read what you have done, that I read it first! Then I started wondering if “medical” in terms of practices of the faith healers is the correct word? For instance - Islamic principles of faith and the Dagomba health beliefs determine these healers’ medical therapy and healing practices. There is also mention of the healers’ medical perspectives

and their medical system? Is it not a health care system? What kind of medicine do they practice? Traditional medicine? I think this should be clarified from scratch as in the Western world medicine seems to mean allopathic medicine and being a medical practitioner.

The introduction refers. You talk about jinn possession – but please remember not all the readers would know what this means. Please clarify in brackets. The reader does not want to wonder that this is and find it later on after you introduced the young woman. Would you please reshuffle the information? Then, what is “ablution?” Remember you write for an international community who does not necessarily know what the Islamic rituals are. You also say the Afa recited certain Chapters from the Quran – but what does it mean for me as a reader? Does the Chapters talk about something specific? And why those passages? Was it a healing or treatment process? The source I consulted explained treatment as the use of medical care – so it seems like a healing process. All these terminologies make writing of your paper complex! BUT you did such good work that all should be clear!

Can you please add teacher and prayer leader behind malams and imams respectively? Also a synonym for pastor? Please also see the comments in the annotated PDF document. The paragraph starting the rituals – I am not sure how Pentecostal churches fit in? This is not part of your study. Please take the four lines out.

The research problem is clear, the research questions well formulated and the significance of the study described.

In summary – I find the introduction not well structured and logically flowing. You need to write about the key concepts; please use an inductive approach. Make sure you use the correct terms and stick to it! As said lastly – maybe you should write about a traditional healer – that would also help for the confusion with the terminologies.

Then, the setting should be next as this is what you said in the last sentence of the introduction section. (I will take that out if I am you – it is the normal scientific research process and does not have to be mentioned in an article).

What you have as a setting (The Dagomba ...) is not suitable as a setting for an article. You need to cut and rework so that it fits in with an article. Please see what another study using the same design and methods include in the setting. Depending on the design, you need to have an underpinning theory – but not at part of the setting!

Design and methods (first design and then methods). Here it is said the study was exploratory and descriptive but in the abstract you spoke about ethnographic and in the title about qualitative exploratory. Sort this out please as it influences whether or not you need a theory (not for qualitative descriptive) and the data analyses method – should fit in with the design.

Please explain why you did not obtain ethical clearance from the Ghanaian authorities. This is not standard practice! SO, you used in depth interviews as data collection method. But what about the instrument? What about collecting general information first? Interview schedule? Remember another researcher needs to be able to duplicate the study. If we don't know what you asked or explored as topics, this would not be possible. Also, the reader cannot judge if the instrument would allow you to answer the research questions if it is missing. The data collection has a section of results – please take it out. Starts with During the face to face...

You talked about narrative and thematic analysis – but the design is not clear and you can only use a data analyses method that supports the design. So, whether this is OK, I don't know. I am not sure what you mean with themes were built around? Which data analyses method allowed you to do this and how was it done? Predetermined? Also, you have themes in the data analyses, but there is also subthemes in the results section. How did you get to that and why does some themes have no subthemes? What allowed you to use ethnographic field notes? I don't think it fits in with your design.

Please introduce the themes and subthemes before you describe them. A table is very useful.

The results are interesting – but beware of interpreting the findings at the end of the theme. You can only summarize. The discussion well written. Well done!

Then, the research questions are:

(1) How is Islamic healing practiced among the Dagomba? Answered – well done!

(2) How does the Dagomba culture and health beliefs influence Islamic-based healing? Answered well done!

Lastly - there are too many terms used for the same thing. Also, traditional healers do not practice medicine, use traditional medicine and do not give medical treatments and therapies. To curb this confusion, please write in the introduction who and what a traditional healer is. Also, there are too many inconsistencies in terms of the design and methods and the terminologies used. According to the title, you used a qualitative descriptive design, but this changes various times.

Lastly (again). This is a very interesting paper!