



A Scoping Review of Traditional and Biomedical Healthcare Integration in Guinea-Bissau: An Empirical Analysis,

Fatumata Djalo^{1,2}, Carlos Sanca³, Amilcar Mendes²

¹ Department of Public Health, AECAR - Higher School of Commerce, Administration and International Relations

² AECAR - Higher School of Commerce, Administration and International Relations

³ Lusíada University of Guinea-Bissau

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Correspondence: fdjalo@yahoo.com

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Author notes

Fatumata Djalo is affiliated with Department of Public Health, AECAR - Higher School of Commerce, Administration and International Relations and focuses on Medicine research in Africa.

Carlos Sanca is affiliated with Lusíada University of Guinea-Bissau and focuses on Medicine research in Africa.

Amilcar Mendes is affiliated with AECAR - Higher School of Commerce, Administration and International Relations and focuses on Medicine research in Africa.

Abstract

Guinea-Bissau has a pluralistic healthcare landscape where traditional and biomedical systems operate, often in parallel. Understanding their interaction is important for effective health policy, particularly in maternal and reproductive health. This scoping review aimed to map and synthesise the available empirical evidence on the integration of traditional and biomedical healthcare in Guinea-Bissau. Its objectives were to identify key themes, documented practices, and gaps in the literature. A scoping review was conducted following established frameworks. Systematic searches were performed in multiple electronic databases. Included studies were empirical, encompassing qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods research. Data were charted and analysed thematically. The analysis identified several dominant themes. A key finding was the widespread concurrent use of both systems, with many women using traditional birth attendants alongside antenatal clinic services. Tensions were documented, often concerning perceptions of conflicting aetiologies and treatments. Facilitators included strong community trust in traditional practitioners. Integration in Guinea-Bissau is a complex, context-dependent practice characterised more by informal co-existence and referral than by formal, structured collaboration. The literature indicates potential for synergistic relationships but highlights persistent systemic and epistemological challenges. Future research should employ longitudinal and participatory study designs. Policy initiatives must be grounded in local realities, focusing on fostering respectful dialogue, providing training, and defining clear, safe referral mechanisms between practitioners. Programmes should be co-developed with traditional healthcare providers. Traditional medicine, healthcare integration, maternal health, Guinea-Bissau, pluralistic health systems, traditional birth attendants This review provides a consolidated empirical analysis of integration in Guinea-Bissau, offering a structured evidence base to inform future research and culturally sensitive health policy development.

Keywords: *health systems integration, traditional medicine, biomedical healthcare, Guinea-Bissau, pluralistic healthcare, empirical analysis, sub-Saharan Africa*



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