



Towards a Sustainable Medical Praxis: A Theoretical Framework for Integrating Traditional and Biomedical Systems in Zambia

Chanda Mwale¹

¹ Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI)

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Correspondence: cmwale@hotmail.com

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Author notes

Chanda Mwale is affiliated with Zambia Agricultural Research Institute (ZARI) and focuses on Medicine research in Africa.

Abstract

The dual use of traditional and biomedical healthcare systems in Zambia is common, yet integration remains fragmented. This situation is often characterised by mutual distrust and an absence of formal collaboration, hindering the development of a cohesive and sustainable health system. This article aims to develop a theoretical framework for the sustainable integration of traditional and biomedical systems in Zambia. Its objectives are to analyse the historical and socio-cultural foundations of both systems, identify principles for equitable collaboration, and propose a model for a synergistic, patient-centred healthcare paradigm. The framework is developed through a critical synthesis of existing literature, policy documents, and conceptual models from medical anthropology, health systems research, and sustainability studies. A constructivist approach to model building is employed, drawing on documented practices and established theoretical constructs. Key insights: The framework argues that successful integration requires epistemological parity, acknowledging both systems as valid bodies of knowledge. It identifies the establishment of formal referral pathways and shared practitioner training as essential, moving beyond simple co-location. Community governance structures are highlighted as a critical component for long-term sustainability. The proposed theoretical framework provides a structured and principled approach to integration, prioritising sustainability, mutual respect, and improved health outcomes. It shifts the discourse from questioning legitimacy to addressing the practicalities of structured collaboration. Future research should pilot the framework's components in specific clinical contexts. Policymakers should utilise the framework to draft national integration guidelines that formalise practitioner roles, communication protocols, and shared ethical standards. theoretical framework, traditional medicine, biomedical systems, integration, sustainability, Zambia, healthcare delivery This article provides an original theoretical framework for integrating traditional and biomedical healthcare systems in Zambia, focusing on sustainable and equitable collaboration.

Keywords: *Health systems integration, Traditional medicine, Medical pluralism, Southern Africa, Sustainable healthcare, Theoretical framework, Zambia*



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