

**A RELIGIO-CULTURAL STUDIES OF BONE-SETTING AND HEALING IN INI
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA, AKWA IBOM STATE, NIGERIA**

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ABSTRACT

The practice of traditional bonesetting (TBS) is a local medical technique that was either invented or adopted in Ibibioland to heal bone fractures or defects. Just like the literature on the practice of TBS and healing in Ibibioland is scanty. Thus, this study aims to analytically elucidate the cultural and religious dimensions in the practice of TBS and healing in Ibibioland. The scope of the study is delimited to the practice of TBS and healing in Ini Local Government Area (LGA) of Akwa Ibom State. This study employs qualitative research methodology while both primary and secondary sources are used to collect data. The collected data are interpreted with the use of historical and descriptive research approaches. Findings reveal that religious beliefs play a significant role in traditional bonesetting and healing practices. Following the functionalist theory, the study asserts that bonesetters and healers fulfill important social roles and responsibilities within the community. In conclusion, the religio-cultural practices of bonesetting and healing in Ini LGA reflect the rich cultural heritage, religious beliefs, and social dynamics. The study is significant to government agencies (Ministry of Health), traditional bonesetters, orthopedic medicine practitioners, researchers, and ethnographers, among others.

Keywords: Traditional Bone-setting (TBS), Healing, Ibibioland, Ini LGA,

Introduction

Before the advent of Western invention and civilization, every African society had stipulated ways of doing things, especially as it related to health. These ways are embedded in the culture and tradition of the people. Just like in every other aspect, there are traditional ways of treating the sick whenever there is the need to do so (Owumi, *et al.* 2013:47). Accordingly, Africans had their unique perception of issues of health, wholeness, illness and death (Ajima & Ubana, 2018:1).

However, culture which is closely related to the African religious system is the determinant of the African worldview about health. According to Ajima & Ubana (2018:1), what Africans believed to be the cause of disease and disharmony, how they approached the promotion of health and harmony, how they experienced and expressed illness pain and disorientation of being, what therapeutic solution they sought and the places they sought this therapy were all determined by their culture of which religion was an integral part. In other words, the African health system, which is integral to her cultural heritage, predated Western medicine. Cultural values cannot be extricated from the being of a traditional African (Udoh, *et al.*, 2024).

As Nana (2018:120) has aptly affirmed, although the whole of Africa has currently been infiltrated by Western culture and systems, the fact remains that African age-old systems persist enduringly. In buttressing this point, Olusakin (2013) opines that despite the colonial influence on Africa, culture still remains an integral part of African life. Thus, the practice of bonesetting and healing in Ibibioland is one of the enduring old systems which predate western civilization that is Western. Lending his voice to the discourse, Agwata (2015:1) opines that bone-setting is a specialist aspect of African traditional medicine and culture, which involves the traditional fixing of fractured bones and dislocated joints. And for Ali *et al.* (2021:1), traditional bone setting has existed from time immemorial in most African communities and has formed part of African culture. Hence, the practice of bonesetting and healing is an integral part of the culture and religion of Ibibiio people. This integration of religion and culture into the practice of bonesetting and healing in Ibibioland is what makes the practice unique. As Idang (2015:97) notes, the culture of a people is what marks them out distinctively from other human societies in the family of humanity. Here, Agwata (2015:17) comes in again to note that traditional bonesetting is a known medical procedure in African cultures.

In Ibibioland, just as it is applicable in the whole of Nigeria and many other developing countries, the treatment of diseases and injuries using traditional and cultural methods remain popular among the populace despite the availability of modern health care services (Onyemaechi, *et al.* 2020:1). In corroboration, Lawal and Musa affirm that traditional bonesetters (TBS) still play a significant role in the primary treatment of fractures in many developing countries (2022:52). In affirmation, Agwata (2015:18) posits that traditional care of diseases and afflictions remain popular despite civilization and the existence of modern health care services. According to him, the traditional bone setters perhaps more than any other group of traditional care-givers enjoy high patronage and confidence from people who cut across the different strata of society including the educated and the rich.

The practice of bonesetting was a local medical technology that was either invented or adopted in Ibibioland to cure or heal bone fractures or defects. For Maruyama *et al.* (2020:1), bone defects is an important unsolved issue in orthopedics and related specialties. Qualitative

research supports the view that road accidents are the leading causes of fracture in Nigeria (Owumi, et al. 2013:54). Elsewhere, Agwata (2015:2) asserted that fractures are caused by the application of stresses which exceed the limits of strength of bone. Violence and motor vehicle accidents are the commonest causes. Fractures which occur in a diseased bone can be said to be pathological.

Despite the availability of modern medicine, over 70% of the rural population in Nigeria still relies on the traditional bonesetting (TBS) for primary fracture care. The TBS appears to have met the needs of our communities for many centuries and existed long before the arrival of orthodox medicine. Each traditional bonesetter believes in the ability of his medications and traditional splints to heal fractures. Traditional bonesetting practices are well patronised by the community, and the indigenous people do not believe in failure of the TBS treatment, inability to get the desired result is blamed on other forces (Onuminya, 2004:652; Olusakin, 2014).

In Ibibioland, the practice of bonesetting and healing is not detached from the religious beliefs of the people. For Idang (2015:97), religion in African societies seems to be the fulcrum around which every activity revolves. In some instances, incantations are made on the affected area as a way of invoking the spirit of the ancestors for divine intervention and healing (Owumi, Taiwo and Olorunnisola, 2013:47). Hence the focus of this study is to critically and analytically adumbrate the place of religion and culture in the practice of traditional bonesetting and healing in Ibibioland with particular reference to the people of Ini Local Government Area of Akwa Ibom State.

Bonesetting and Healing in Ini Local Government Area

Generally, in Africa where Ini happens to be a microcosm of the macrocosm, traditional healing entails a myriad of helpful beliefs and practices that originate within a culture or society which are designed to treat the people of afflictions and infirmities (White, 2015:1). Just as it is conceived in other parts of Africa, in Ini LGA ill health is conceptualized as whatever endangers life or deprives one the comfort of enjoying a better life. Therefore, healing in Ini LGA is the process of restoring an individual's life to its spiritual, social and mental well-being or fullness. It has to do with the harmony of the total human body. Thus, bonesetting in Ini Local Government Area (LGA) involves religious and cultural methods passed down through generations, often involving natural remedies, rituals, massages, and setting bones without surgical intervention. Healing is approached holistically, considering spiritual, physical, and social factors, with community involvement playing a significant role in the recovery process.

Origin and Practice of Bone Setting in Ini Local Government Area

The origin of bonesetting and healing in Ibibioland and Ini LGA cannot be traced in a hurry. The origin of traditional bone setting in Ibibioland dates back to antiquity. The practice is as old as the existence of the Ibibio people. Generally, the practice of bone setting is ancestral in nature and is passed on to the generations (Singh et al, 2013:20). Thus, the origin of bone setting in Ini LGA dates back to antiquity and is deeply rooted in the people's cultural and religious healing practices. Practitioners, often inheritors of knowledge within families or communities, employ techniques passed down through oral tradition and observation. These methods typically involve the use of natural materials, such as herbs and plant extracts, along with manual manipulation to realign bones and promote healing. Community trust and belief in the efficacy of these practices

play a crucial role in their continued use and acceptance. Mr F. Edet (personal communication on February 5, 2024).

E. Eyo (personal communication on 5th February 2025), asserted that the practice of bonesetting in Ini and in Ibibioland dates back to the very time the Ibibio people started engaging in hunting and agricultural related activities including bush clearing, climbing of trees, cutting down of trees, carrying heavy weight on the back, harvesting fruits, among other activities which had the potential of exposing them to hazardous situations. In the process of carrying out some of the above-listed activities, one was said to have accidentally gotten injured or got his bone fractured as a result. This position was further buttressed by F. Edet (personal communication on February 5, 2024) when he said that in order to bring restoration and normalcy to one's health, the ancient Ibibio people devised means for setting and healing the fractured bones.

The Acquisition of Bonesetting Skill in Ini Local Government Area

There are no documents to provide information on how the first set of Ini people and by extension Ibibio people devised the art of bonesetting and fared in their practices. Oral tradition claims that some Ini bonesetters who were proficient in the art went to seek for skills from their contemporaries neighbouring communities. Some were said to have perfected their practices through special processes such as revelation in the dream (Mr. C. Okokon, personal communication on February 12, 2024). Elsewhere, Eze et al (2022:5) aver that, practitioners of the craft jealously guard it as a family secret. Training is by oral transmission and is passed from one generation to another, as part of the ancestral heritage of the people. The practitioner's greatest act of preservation is teaching one of his sons or daughters some techniques, concluded by Eze *et al.* (2025). The training is passed from one generation to another through skills and experience acquired as part of an ancestral heritage. The training is not formal and not structured. There is no certification and anyone can actually claim to be a practitioner particularly in the big cities (Dada, et al. 2011:263). Thus, traditional bonesetting in Ini LGA is a family practice in just as it is in other developing cultures where they flourish. F. Edet, (personal communication on February 5, 2024), noted that through apprenticeship, it is possible for certain outsiders who show keen interest at an early age and are sometimes "ordained by the gods" *obot emana*, to learn the intricacies of the profession. Additionally, there may be informal training sessions or gatherings where practitioners share insights and refine their skills collectively. Records are kept orally and instructions are transmitted through verbal interaction and observation (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019:89). Overall, the acquisition of bone setting skills in Ini LGA is a combination of practical experience, mentorship, and cultural immersion. Mr. C. Okokon (personal conversation on 12 February 12, 2024).

Diagnosis of Bone Fracture in Ini Local Government Area

According to O. Essien (personal communication on 14th January, 2024), the diagnosis of fracture in Ini LGA of Ibibioland, is based on physical assessment and experience of the traditional bonesetter. Pain, swelling, tenderness, limb shortening or deformity, presence of a gap between broken fragments, abnormal movement and loss of function of a limb following trauma are recognized as physical signs of fracture (Onuminya, 2004:654). Generally, traditional bone

setters (TBS) diagnose or use their palms and fingers to feel and access the type and extent of damage to broken bones without X-ray (Nwokeke et al, 2019:41).

On the basis of physical assessment, the traditional bonesetter describes a fracture as open or closed, displaced or undisplaced, single or multiple in relation to the part of the limb involved. They appreciate the danger associated with open fractures, but some of them claim that they have knowledge of herbs that can be used to heal the wound. Most TBSs attempt to treat the wound with herbs, and some employ the services of a nurse to manage the wound for them (Onuminya, 2004:654). The diagnostic procedures include enquiries into the cause of the injury, touching and feeling with the fingers to ascertain the nature and severity of the fracture. (Ali, *et al.* 2020:4).

Sometimes, the diagnosis of bone fractures in Ini LGA typically involves a combination of traditional and modern methods, depending on the preferences and resources available to the individual seeking treatment. Traditional bonesetters in Ini LGA often rely on their experience, knowledge of anatomy, and observation skills to diagnose bone fractures. They may palpate the injured area, assess for deformities or misalignment, and inquire about the circumstances of the injury. According to C. Okokon, (personal communication on 12th February, 2024), traditional healers may also use cultural or spiritual methods, such as divination or consultation with ancestral spirits, to aid in diagnosis. D. Mfonido, a medical doctor, noted during a personal conversation on January 23, 2024, that in some cases, there may be collaboration between traditional bonesetters and modern healthcare providers for the diagnosis of bone fractures. Patients may initially seek the expertise of a traditional healer for assessment, and if necessary, they may be referred to a medical facility for further evaluation and treatment.

Traditional Techniques of Bone Realignment in Ini LGA

According to Nwokeke et al (2019:42), the treatment procedure in traditional bone setting involves the use of splints made of wood, bamboo or rattan cane, which are usually bandaged around the fracture to immobilize the site, while herbal dressings and hot fomentations are also applied. Herbal cream application, native bamboo splinting, frequent pulling and massaging with or without scarification are applied and repeated at irregular intervals until the fracture heals; treatment is carried out while the patient is either sitting or lying down on a mat.

Mr. G. Udoh (personal communication on February 13, 2024), reported that, in Ini LGA, traditional techniques of bone realignment, practiced by traditional bonesetters, often involve manual manipulation and traction methods. These traditional techniques of bone realignment in Ini LGA are often passed down through generations and may vary in their specific application depending on the experience and expertise of the individual bonesetter. According to focused Group Discussion and Participant Observation, the following are some of the traditional techniques commonly used for bone realignment in Ini LGA:

1. **Manual Manipulation:** Traditional bonesetters use their hands to gently manipulate the fractured bone back into its proper alignment. This may involve applying pressure and gradually maneuvering the bone into the correct position. The bonesetter may use their

thumbs, fingers, or palms to exert controlled force on the bone, taking care to avoid further injury or discomfort to the patient.

2. **Traction:** Traction techniques involve pulling or stretching the injured limb to realign the fractured bone. This can be achieved manually by the bonesetter, who may apply gradual traction to the limb while stabilizing the surrounding tissues. Alternatively, devices such as ropes, cloth strips, or bamboo splints may be used to provide traction and assist in the realignment process.
3. **Herbal Compresses:** Some traditional bonesetters in Ini LGA may use herbal compresses or poultices applied to the injured area to help relax muscles, reduce swelling, and facilitate bone realignment. These compresses may contain herbs with anti-inflammatory or analgesic properties to aid in the healing process.
4. **Massage:** Massage techniques are employed to loosen tight muscles and improve blood circulation around the injured area, making it easier to realign the fractured bone. The bonesetter may use gentle kneading, stroking, or friction techniques to promote relaxation and mobility in the affected limb.
5. **Immobilization:** After realigning the fractured bone, traditional bonesetters typically immobilize the injured limb using splints, bandages, or other supportive devices to maintain proper alignment and prevent further injury during the healing process.

The different religious and cultural methods of bonesetting and healing employed by traditional bonesetters in Ibibioland (specifically, in Ini LGA) include but are not limited to the following:

1. **Use of Oil and Medical Herbs as Traditional Remedies for Pain Relief:** The use of oil and traditional herbal remedies play an important role in bonesetting in Ini LGA and other African cultures since it forms part of primary health care for treatment of various medical conditions, including wounds (Gulumian, et al. 2018:1). In traditional bonesetting in Ini LGA

(Local Government Area), M. Ekpenyong, (personal communication on January 23, 2024), reported that, herbs and oils are often utilized for their perceived medicinal properties. These substances may be applied topically or ingested orally as part of the treatment process to promote healing, reduce inflammation, and alleviate pain associated with bone injuries.

2. **Heat Therapy for Pain Relief:** Heat therapy also known as thermotherapy or thermal therapy – is the transfer of heat or thermal energy in and out of the human body especially at the joints, using towels, ice packs, wax, hot/warm water, steam, etc within a given temperature range. The objective is the expansion of blood capillaries and increased blood flow to the affected area for healing. The principle is the application of the heat or cold to change the cutaneous, intraarticular or core temperature of soft tissues to improve symptoms of certain conditions (Igwilllo & Clifford, 2020:87). Heat therapy, as reported by M. Ekpenyong (personal communication on January 23, 2024), is commonly employed in traditional bonesetting practices in Ini LGA for pain relief and promoting healing. This therapy involves the application of heat, often through hot packs, warm compresses, or heated herbs/oils, to the affected area. The heat helps to increase blood flow, relax muscles, and reduce stiffness, thereby easing pain and discomfort associated with bone injuries.
3. **Laying the bone-fractured patient to relax on a bamboo bench:** B. Silvanus (January 23, 2024: personal communication) notes that laying the bone-fractured patient to relax on a bamboo bench is a traditional practice in bonesetting in Ini LGA. The bamboo bench provides a firm yet flexible surface for the patient to rest, allowing the body to be supported while also enabling easy access to the injured area for treatment. Additionally, the natural properties of bamboo may be believed to have therapeutic benefits in promoting relaxation and healing.

4. **Use of splints and bamboo stick:** Use of splints and bamboo stick or rattan cane or palm leaf axis with cotton thread or old cloth. This is wrapped tightly on the injured part and left in place for the first 2-3 days before intermittent release and possible treatment with herbs and massage. This release of the splint is however not uniformly practiced (Dada, et al, 2011:263). Splints and bamboo sticks are commonly used in traditional bonesetting practices in Ini LGA to immobilize and support fractured or injured bones. Splints are typically made from materials such as wood, bamboo, or even metal, and are used to hold the injured limb in place while it heals. Bamboo sticks may be incorporated into splints or used separately to provide additional support and stability to the injured area. These traditional methods aim to prevent further damage to the injured bone and surrounding tissues while promoting proper alignment and healing. This was reported by O. Essien, on January 14, 2024, during a personal communication.
5. **Massage and manual traction of the affected bone:** In massage therapy, a massage therapist rubs and kneads the soft tissues of your body. The soft tissues include muscle, connective tissue, tendons, ligaments and skin. The massage therapist varies the amount of pressure and movement (*Mayo Clinic Staff, 2023*). This may be done exclusively or in conjunction with the use of traditional splints and herb application. Fractures that fail to heal with the routine treatment of splinting and massaging may be given further traditional treatment by way of scarifications, sacrifices and incantations (Dada, et al. 2011:263). Massage and manual traction are integral components of traditional bonesetting in Ini LGA. G. Udoh (February 13, 2024: personal communication) opined that massage is often used to help relax muscles, improve blood circulation, and reduce inflammation around the injured area. It can also help alleviate pain and discomfort associated with the bone injury. Manual

traction involves gently pulling or stretching the injured limb or joint to realign the fractured bones or dislocated joints. This manual manipulation is performed with care and expertise to ensure proper alignment and to facilitate the healing process.

6. **Employment of orthodox medical Practices:** Mr. O. Essien (personal communication on January 14, 2024), admitted that in some cases, traditional bonesetters in Ini LGA may incorporate elements of orthodox medical practices into their treatments. This integration can vary depending on the individual bonesetter's knowledge, experience, and available resources. Examples of orthodox medical practices that may be employed include the use of sterile instruments, wound cleaning and dressing techniques, and referral to medical professionals for complex cases or complications. While traditional bonesetters often rely on indigenous knowledge and techniques, they may also recognize the value of modern medical interventions and collaborate with healthcare professionals when necessary to ensure the best possible outcomes for their patients.
7. **Use of Amulets (Talisman) for Spiritual Protection and Healing:** Amulets and talismans are simply physical objects that are believed to have powers to cause good things to happen and also have the power to lead to healing. They are also known as Lucky charms, protective totems (Darr-Hope, 2024). According to Owusu-Ansah (2012:477), the use of amulets is one of the common means by which African societies has addressed illness. Through the agency of amulets, the spiritual causes of sickness are appealed to, or confronted, to let go of afflictions (Johnathan, et al. 2024). In traditional bonesetting practices in Ini LGA, the use of amulets or talismans for spiritual protection and healing is not uncommon. These amulets are believed to possess spiritual powers that can ward off evil spirits, promote healing, and provide protection to the patient during the treatment process. The specific types of amulets

used and their perceived effects can vary widely depending on cultural beliefs and traditions passed down through generations. However, they are often worn or placed near the patient during treatment to imbue them with spiritual strength and assistance alongside the physical care provided by the bonesetter (Mr. M. Victor, personal communication on January 25, 2024).

8. **Application of Poultice:** According to O. Essien (personal communication on 14th January), in traditional bonesetting practices in Ini LGA, poultices are often used as a natural remedy to complement the treatment of bone injuries and promote healing. These poultices can be made from locally available herbs, plants, or other materials with medicinal properties. The poultice is typically prepared by crushing or grinding the chosen ingredients into a soft, moist paste. It is then applied directly to the affected area of the body, such as a fractured bone or a sprained joint, and covered with a clean cloth or bandage. The medicinal properties of the poultice ingredients are believed to penetrate the skin and provide relief from pain, reduce inflammation, and facilitate the healing process. Poultices may also be used to draw out toxins or promote circulation to the injured area. The specific ingredients used in poultices and their application methods may vary depending on local traditions, the availability of resources, and the expertise of the traditional healer. However, poultices are commonly employed as a natural and accessible form of treatment in traditional bonesetting practices in Ini LGA.

Rituals for Bone Healing and Restoration

According to Ekanem & Essien (2022:405), “ritual is at the center of many religions” and it is an agent of transformation. In traditional bonesetting in Ini LGA, rituals for bone healing and restoration are often deeply rooted in cultural and spiritual beliefs. These rituals, according to M. Ekpenyong (personal communication on 23rd January, 2024), may vary among different communities and traditional healers, but they generally involve practices aimed at promoting healing, restoring balance, and providing spiritual support to the patient. These rituals serve not

only to address the physical injury but also to address the spiritual and emotional aspects of healing, promoting holistic well-being for the patient.

According to Focused Group Discussion and views from people in Ini LGA, the following are some of the common rituals involved in bone healing and restoration may include:

1. **Prayer and Invocation:** Incantations, prayers, pouring of libation, divinations and other traditional means are sometimes applied in treating bone fractures traditionally (Nwokeke et al, 2019:42). Traditional healers may recite prayers or invoke spiritual beings to seek assistance in the healing process and to bless the patient with strength and protection.
2. **Offering of Sacrifices:** Offerings such as food, herbs, or symbolic items may be presented to spirits or deities as a gesture of gratitude and to request their aid in the healing of the patient.
3. **Herbal Baths or Cleansing:** The patient may be bathed with water infused with healing herbs or undergo a cleansing ritual to purify the body and remove negative energies.
4. **Symbolic Gestures:** Traditional symbols or gestures may be used to signify the alignment and restoration of the fractured bone, reinforcing the belief in the healing power of the ritual.
5. **Community Support:** Family members and community members may gather to provide emotional support, prayers, and encouragement to the patient, fostering a sense of belonging and solidarity during the healing process.

Invocation of Traditional Spirits for Guidance and Assistance During Bone Setting

Healing in African culture is an inextricable component of African spirituality and traditional way of living (Olusakin, 2022). Ibibio people are deeply rooted in their spiritual beliefs and methods of traditional healing and therefore have an unwavering faith in healing through a traditional healer. Family and community members seek help from traditional healers who give home-grown medication such as herbs or ointments to calm a person and relieve a person who is experiencing physical or emotional pain. The use of animal bones, indigenous herbs and their elevated spiritual status has earned traditional healers' great reverence and they are seen as equivalent to the Supreme Being. Hence, when faced with trauma, anxiety and depression, individuals and families turn first to traditional healers for help to transcend their difficulties (Singh & Bhagwan, 2020:409).

In traditional bonesetting practices in Ini LGA, the invocation of traditional spirits for guidance and assistance is sometimes incorporated into the healing process. Traditional healers

may call upon ancestral spirits, nature spirits, or other spiritual entities believed to have healing powers and wisdom. The invocation is often performed through prayers, chants, or rituals aimed at establishing a connection with the spiritual realm and seeking assistance in diagnosing and treating bone injury. The belief is that these spirits possess knowledge of herbal remedies, healing techniques, and metaphysical insights that can aid in the healing process (Akpan, Ekanem and Oko, 2023:137). By invoking their presence and seeking their guidance, traditional bonesetters may enhance their ability to effectively treat the patient and facilitate the restoration of balance and harmony within the body (M. Ekpenyong, January 23, 2024: personal communication).

It's important to note that these practices are deeply rooted in cultural and spiritual beliefs and vary widely among different communities and traditional healers. They serve to provide not only physical healing but also spiritual support and emotional comfort to the patient and their loved ones during the process of bone-setting and recovery.

Challenges facing Traditional Bonesetting Practice in Ini LGA

In Ini LGA, traditional bonesetting and healing practices face various challenges and controversies. According to Focused group discussion and researcher's participant observation, the following are some of the many challenges and controversies of bonesetting in Ini LGA, Ibibioland:

1. **Lack of Regulation:** Traditional bonesetting is often practiced without formal regulation or oversight, leading to concerns about the competencies of practitioners. This can result in inconsistent treatment outcomes and potential risks to patients.
2. **Accessibility to Modern Healthcare:** Despite the prevalence of traditional bonesetting, access to modern healthcare services may be limited in some areas of Ini LGA. This can lead to delays in seeking medical treatment for complex fractures or complications, as patients may initially opt for traditional methods.
3. **Integration with Modern Medicine:** There is often a tension between traditional bonesetting practices and modern medical approaches. Some healthcare professionals view traditional bonesetting as outdated or ineffective, while traditional healers may perceive modern medicine as intrusive or dismissive of cultural beliefs (Ekanem, 2002).
4. **Safety Concerns:** Improper bone setting techniques or lack of hygienic practices may lead to complications such as infections, delayed healing, or further injury. Additionally, the use of

unsterilized instruments or questionable substances in treatment can pose health risks to patients.

5. **Preservation of Traditional Knowledge:** With the influence of modernization and globalization, there is a risk of traditional bonesetting practices being lost or diluted over time. Efforts to preserve and transmit indigenous knowledge to future generations are crucial for maintaining cultural heritage and ensuring the continuity of effective healing practices.
6. **Complications:** Generally, the complications from traditional medicine include: severe itching, swollen legs, severe headache, constant vomiting. However, the complications that mostly arise from traditional bone setting include: infected open fractures, limb-length discrepancy, fracture with compartment syndrome, brachial plexus injury, gangrene of the affected limbs, posterior and anterior dislocations, delayed union, nonunion, mal-union, contractures, chronic osteomyelitis, mismanaged fractures, advanced bone tumors, ischemic limbs from tight tourniquet splints, limb shortening, irreducibility, paralysis, stiffness/ankylosis, osteoarthritis, sepsis and even death from tetanus and septicaemia (Nwokeke et al, 2019:42). The fear of these complications poses a great threat to traditional bonesetting in Ini LGA.

However, despite documented complications, criticisms and antagonism from orthodox medical practitioners, the practice and patronage of traditional bone setters (TBS) is extensive in Ini LGA, Ibibioland and in developing cultures. In addition, patronage of TBS has been increasing irrespective of age, education, gender, and economic status of bone fracture patients because the practice is believed to be rooted in the culture of the people.

Conclusion

Through the examination of religio-cultural practices of bonesetting and healing in Ini Local Government Area (LGA) of Ibibioland, it becomes evident that these practices are deeply rooted in the cultural fabric of the community and are influenced by religious beliefs, traditional customs, and social norms. The practice of bonesetting and healing has a long-standing history in Ibibioland, with roots tracing back to traditional healing methods passed down through generations. These practices have evolved over time, adapting to changes in societal dynamics,

healthcare systems, and religious influences. More so, religious beliefs play a significant role in bonesetting and healing practices, with many practitioners incorporating spiritual rituals, prayers, and invocations into their treatment methods. The belief in divine intervention and supernatural forces shapes the way bonesetters and healers approach diagnosis, treatment, and patient care. Thus, Bonesetters and healers fulfill important social roles and responsibilities within the community, serving as healthcare providers, spiritual advisors, and cultural custodians. They play a crucial role in addressing the healthcare needs of the population, particularly in rural areas where access to modern medical facilities may be limited.

Despite the successes of bonesetting and healing practices in Ini LGA, the practitioners face challenges such as stigma, regulation, and competition from modern healthcare systems. In conclusion, the religio-cultural practices of bonesetting and healing in Ini LGA reflect the rich cultural heritage, religious beliefs, and social dynamics of Ibibioland. By recognizing the importance of traditional knowledge, fostering collaboration between traditional healers and modern healthcare providers, and addressing challenges through supportive policies and interventions, the community can ensure the preservation and continued efficacy of these valuable healing traditions for generations to come.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Collaboration and communication should be encouraged between traditional bonesetters and modern healthcare practitioners to ensure comprehensive healthcare delivery.
- ii. Documentation and preservation of traditional bonesetting and healing practices should be advocated in order to maintain cultural heritage and ensure their sustainability.
- iii. General regulations and standards in bonesetting and healing practices should be implemented to ensure the safety and efficacy of traditional healing practices, including training and certification for bonesetters.
- iv. Community education and awareness programs within the community should be provided in order to promote understanding of traditional healing practices and their potential benefits and risks.
- v. Traditional clinical centres for fracture treatment, and acquisition of bonesetting and healing skills should be established at least in each LGA in Ibibioland in order to enhance accessibility.

vi. Further research into the efficacy and safety of traditional bonesetting techniques, including clinical trials and comparative studies with modern medical interventions should be encouraged and supported.

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Primary Sources

Name	Age	Occupation	Place of Interview	Date
M. Ekpenyong	45	Teacher	Ikpe Ikot Nkon, Ini LGA	January 23, 2024
O. Essien,	61	Bonesetter & Farmer	Ikot Ukpomg, Ini LGA	January 14, 2024
M. Victor	55	Civil Servant	Ikot Udo Asan, Ini LGA	January 25, 2024
G. Udoh,	67	Bonesetter & Trader	Nkana Ikpe, Ini LGA	February 13, 2024
D. Mfonido	59	Medical Doctor	Ikot Ikpe, Ini LGA	January 23, 2024
C. Okokon	75	Community Chief / Farmer	Nkana Ikpe, Ini LGA	February 12, 2024
F. Edet	48	Bonesetter	Ooro Ikpe, Ini LGA	February 5, 2014
E. Eyo	54	Bonesetter	Ikot Ikpe, Ini LGA	January 23, 2025