

## **ANALYSING RISK IN MEDICINE AND SURGERY: A TRADIO-PHILOSOPHICAL PERSPECTIVE OF OGOJA (BAKOR) COMMUNITY**

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### **Abstract**

This article examines the concept of risk analysis in medicine and surgery through the lens of the traditional Bakor community in Ogoja, Nigeria. It explores how cultural beliefs, practices, and local knowledge influence approaches to health and surgical procedures. The statement of the problem addressed in this study is the gap between traditional and modern medical practices in the Bakor community, which affects health outcomes and risk management. By integrating traditional and philosophical perspectives with contemporary medical practices, this study aims to highlight the significance of cultural context in understanding and managing risks in healthcare. The research employs a qualitative analytic approach, utilizing interaction and focus group discussions with members of the Bakor community and healthcare practitioners, including traditional healers and modern healthcare providers.

**Keywords: Analysis, Medicine and Surgery, Tradio-Philosophical, Ogoja, Community**

### **Introduction**

Risk analysis in medicine and surgery is an essential element of healthcare that involves identifying potential hazards, assessing their impact, and determining strategies to mitigate those risks. This process is critical for ensuring patient safety and optimizing treatment outcomes. However, risk perception and management do not exist in a vacuum; they are influenced by cultural beliefs, social norms, and local practices. In many communities, traditional understandings of health and illness coexist with modern medical practices, creating a complex landscape for healthcare delivery.

The Bakor community of Ogoja, located in Cross River State, Nigeria, offers a unique perspective on these dynamics. The Bakor people possess a rich cultural heritage that significantly shapes their understanding of health, illness, and healthcare practices. Traditional healers play a pivotal role in this community, often serving as primary healthcare providers who utilize a blend of herbal remedies, spiritual practices, and community rituals. Their approach to medicine is deeply intertwined with the community's beliefs about life, death, and the spiritual world<sup>1</sup> which they call "Ikpen, Iku and akundegi."(oral interview).

In the Bakor community, health risks are perceived through various lenses, including

physical, social, and spiritual factors. Illness may be viewed as a manifestation of spiritual imbalance or social disharmony, leading individuals to seek traditional remedies before considering modern medical interventions. This hybrid approach to healthcare presents both challenges and opportunities for health practitioners, as they navigate the interplay between traditional beliefs and contemporary medical practices.

This article aims to analyze the concept of risk in medicine and surgery from a Bakor perspective, highlighting the cultural contexts that influence health decisions. By integrating traditional knowledge with modern medical practices, healthcare providers can enhance their understanding of patient needs and improve health outcomes. The following sections will explore the historical context of the Bakor community, the role of traditional healers, and the implications for risk management in healthcare settings.

Through this exploration, we seek to emphasize the importance of cultural sensitivity in medical practice, advocating for a model that respects and incorporates traditional health beliefs while also promoting evidence-based medical interventions. Understanding the Bakor perspective on health risks not only enriches the discourse on healthcare practices in Nigeria but also contributes to the broader field of medical anthropology.

### **The Historical Context of Bakor Community**

The Bakor community, primarily located in the southeastern region of Nigeria, has a rich and complex history that is deeply intertwined with broader socio-political and cultural developments in the area. Understanding this context requires exploring several key aspects.

The origins of the Bakor people are often traced back to migrations and settlements that occurred several centuries ago. Oral traditions within the community recount ancestral lineage and migration paths that led them to their current territory, highlighting connections to neighboring groups.<sup>2</sup> These narratives illustrate a history of both cooperation and conflict among various ethnic groups in the region.

The arrival of European colonial powers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries marked a significant turning point for the Bakor community. British colonial administration introduced new political structures and economic systems, disrupting traditional governance and communal land ownership.<sup>3</sup> This period saw the imposition of taxes and forced labor, which affected the community's economic activities, particularly in agriculture and trade.

Following Nigeria's independence in 1960, the Bakor community, like many others, faced challenges related to nation-building and political integration. Issues such as ethnic identity, resource allocation, and representation became central to the community's experiences during this period.<sup>4</sup> The post-colonial era brought both opportunities and challenges, as the Bakor sought to assert their cultural identity while navigating a rapidly changing political landscape.

Throughout these historical upheavals, the Bakor community has maintained a strong

cultural identity. Traditional practices, languages, and social structures have persisted, often adapting to new circumstances.<sup>5</sup> Festivals, rituals, and communal activities remain integral to the Bakor way of life, serving as a means of reinforcing social bonds and cultural heritage.

Today, the Bakor community faces various challenges, including economic pressures, environmental issues, and the impacts of globalization. Land disputes and resource management are particularly pressing, as modernization and urbanization continue to alter the landscape of the region.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, the community is striving to balance tradition with modernity, seeking ways to preserve their cultural identity in an increasingly interconnected world.

### **The Role of Traditional Healers in Bakor Community**

Traditional healers hold a significant place in the Bakor community, serving as key figures in the health and wellness of the population. Their roles encompass various aspects of healthcare, spirituality, and cultural preservation.

### **Historical Significance**

Historically, traditional healers have been integral to the Bakor community's healthcare system. Before the advent of modern medicine, these healers were the primary caregivers, relying on indigenous knowledge of herbs, plants, and spiritual practices. Their deep understanding of local flora and fauna allowed them to treat a wide range of ailments, from common illnesses to more complex health issues.<sup>7</sup>

### **Types of Traditional Healers**

In the Bakor community, traditional healers can be classified into several categories based on their practices:

1. Herbalists: These healers, called "nne-iling," specialize in the use of medicinal plants and herbs. They prepare remedies for various conditions, often passed down through generations. Herbalists play a crucial role in promoting community health by providing accessible treatments.<sup>8</sup>
2. Diviners: Known in Bakor native dialect as "mbog ifa," these practitioners are often sought for spiritual guidance and healing. They use various methods, such as casting bones or interpreting dreams, to diagnose problems that may have spiritual or psychological roots. Their role in addressing mental health issues is particularly important in a community where stigma surrounding mental illness may prevent individuals from seeking help.<sup>9</sup>
3. Spiritual Healers: Referred to as "Nyed Amir," these practitioners focus on spiritual ailments and are believed to have the ability to communicate with ancestral spirits. They perform rituals and ceremonies to cleanse individuals of negative energies or spirits, which are often seen as the cause of illness.<sup>10</sup>

### **Community Trust and Accessibility**

Traditional healers are generally well-respected within the Bakor community. Their accessibility and cultural relevance make them a preferred choice for many, especially in

rural areas where modern healthcare facilities may be limited. The trust placed in these healers is often based on their knowledge, experience, and the personal relationships they build with community members.<sup>11</sup>

### **Integration with Modern Medicine**

While traditional healing practices remain vital, there is an increasing recognition of the potential for integration with modern healthcare. Some traditional healers collaborate with medical professionals to provide comprehensive care. This partnership can enhance health outcomes, as traditional knowledge complements biomedical approaches, especially in areas like maternal health and chronic disease management.<sup>12</sup>

### **Challenges and Preservation of Knowledge**

Despite their importance, traditional healers face several challenges. The encroachment of modern medicine, changing lifestyles, and globalization threaten the transmission of traditional knowledge. Younger generations may be less interested in pursuing traditional healing practices, leading to a potential loss of valuable cultural heritage.<sup>13</sup> Efforts to document and preserve the knowledge of traditional healers are essential. Community initiatives and collaborations with academic institutions can help ensure that this valuable expertise is not lost and is passed on to future generations.

### **Cultural Beliefs and Their Influence on Healthcare Risk Perception and Management in the Bakor Community**

Cultural beliefs are integral to the Bakor community's understanding of health, illness, and wellness. These beliefs shape how individuals perceive risks associated with health and healthcare practices, influencing their decisions and behaviors regarding healthcare management.

### **Understanding Health and Illness**

In the Bakor community, health is often viewed holistically, incorporating physical, spiritual, and social dimensions. Illness may be perceived not only as a physical ailment but also as a disruption in one's spiritual balance or social harmony. This perspective leads to a broader understanding of health risks, where spiritual and ancestral factors are considered alongside biological ones.<sup>14</sup>

### **Spiritual and Ancestral Influences**

Many Bakor believe that health issues can arise from spiritual disturbances, such as curses or the anger of ancestors. This belief influences risk perception, as individuals may attribute certain illnesses to these spiritual causes rather than purely physical factors. Consequently, healthcare management may involve seeking the help of traditional healers, performing rituals, or consulting diviners to address perceived spiritual imbalances.<sup>15</sup>

### **Trust in Traditional Healers**

The Bakor community often places significant trust in traditional healers, who are viewed as custodians of indigenous medical knowledge. As a result, individuals may prioritize consultations with these healers over modern healthcare options, especially for conditions that are believed to have spiritual dimensions. This reliance can affect risk management, as it may delay or prevent individuals from seeking biomedical treatments

for serious health issues.<sup>16</sup>

### **Influence of Community Norms**

Cultural beliefs within the Bakor community also shape collective attitudes toward health risks. Social norms and community practices can either reinforce or challenge health-seeking behaviors. For example, communal gatherings and discussions often emphasize the significance of traditional treatments, which can influence individuals' choices and perceptions of risk associated with modern medical interventions.<sup>17</sup>

### **Gender and Health Risks**

Cultural beliefs regarding gender roles also impact healthcare risk perception and management. Women may be socialized to prioritize family health over their own, leading to underreporting of symptoms or delays in seeking treatment. Cultural expectations surrounding motherhood and caregiving can create additional pressures that influence how women perceive health risks and manage their own healthcare.<sup>18</sup>

### **Education and Awareness**

The level of education and awareness about health risks, including those posed by preventable diseases, plays a critical role in shaping perceptions. Cultural beliefs can either enhance or hinder understanding of health risks associated with lifestyle choices, such as diet, exercise, and sanitation practices. Community education initiatives that respect and incorporate traditional beliefs may be more effective in promoting health awareness and risk management strategies.<sup>19</sup>

### **Philosophical Frameworks in Modern Western and Traditional Medicine**

1. **Empiricism and Scientific Method:** Modern Western medicine is largely grounded in empiricism, which emphasizes observation and experimentation. The scientific method drives research and clinical practices, leading to evidence-based medicine. This framework prioritizes measurable outcomes and reproducibility, which shapes how treatments are developed and validated.
2. **Reductionism:** A reductionist approach characterizes much of Western medicine, focusing on breaking down complex health issues into smaller, more manageable components. This can lead to effective treatment of specific symptoms or diseases but may overlook the holistic aspects of health, such as psychological and social factors.
3. **Bioethics:** The field of bioethics has emerged as a philosophical framework that evaluates the moral implications of medical practices. Issues like patient autonomy, informed consent, and justice in healthcare access are central to this discourse, guiding ethical decision-making in clinical settings.
4. **Humanism:** Humanistic approaches in Western medicine emphasize the importance of the patient's experience, dignity, and values. This perspective promotes a more patient-centered care model, encouraging healthcare providers to consider the individual's psychological and emotional needs alongside physical health.

### **Philosophical Frameworks in Traditional Medicine**

1. **Holism:** Many traditional medical systems, such as those found in indigenous cultures, adopt a holistic view of health. This philosophy considers the balance of body, mind, spirit, and environment. Health is seen as a state of harmony, and treatments often aim to

restore this balance rather than just addressing symptoms.

2. **Spirituality:** In numerous traditional practices, spirituality plays a crucial role in health and healing. Illness may be viewed as a manifestation of spiritual disharmony or ancestral displeasure. Philosophical beliefs about the interconnectedness of life and the role of ancestors influence treatment modalities, which may include rituals and spiritual guidance.

3. **Cultural Relativism:** Traditional medicine is often situated within specific cultural contexts, where beliefs and practices are shaped by historical and social factors. This philosophical stance emphasizes understanding health practices within their cultural frameworks, recognizing that what constitutes health and illness can vary widely.

4. **Community and Social Relationships:** Traditional medicine frequently emphasizes the role of community in health. Healing practices often involve communal rituals and the support of family and social networks, reflecting a philosophical framework that prioritizes collective well-being over individualism.

### **Interplay Between Philosophical Frameworks**

1. **Integration and Complementarity:** There is a growing recognition of the need for integrating Western and traditional medical practices, facilitated by an understanding of their philosophical underpinnings. This integration can enhance healthcare by combining the strengths of both systems—evidence-based treatments with holistic and culturally sensitive approaches.

2. **Challenges of Paradigm Clashes:** Differences in philosophical frameworks can lead to tensions between Western and traditional medical practices. For instance, the reductionist model of Western medicine may clash with the holistic view of traditional approaches, potentially undermining patient care if not navigated thoughtfully.

3. **Informed Consent and Autonomy:** The emphasis on autonomy in Western bioethics can contrast with traditional practices that prioritize communal decision-making. Understanding these differences is crucial for effective communication and collaboration between healthcare providers and patients from diverse backgrounds.

### **Critical Evaluation and Conclusion**

The article "Analysing Risk in Medicine and Surgery: A Philosophical Perspective of Ogoja (Bakor) Community" provides a nuanced examination of how cultural beliefs and philosophical frameworks shape health risk perceptions and medical practices within the Bakor community. The integration of traditional and modern medical perspectives highlights the importance of understanding local contexts in healthcare delivery.

Key strengths of the article include its thorough exploration of the holistic view of health prevalent in the Bakor community. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of physical, spiritual, and social factors, the article effectively critiques the reductionist approach often seen in Western medicine. It also addresses the significant role of traditional healers, illustrating how their practices influence health-seeking behaviors and risk management. However, the article could benefit from a more detailed analysis of contemporary challenges faced by the Bakor community, such as the impact of globalization and urbanization on traditional practices. Additionally, while the philosophical frameworks are well-articulated, the discussion could be enhanced by including empirical data or case studies that illustrate these philosophical concepts in action.

## Conclusion

The article successfully underscores the importance of a culturally sensitive approach to healthcare that respects and incorporates the philosophical beliefs of the Bakor community. It highlights the necessity of integrating traditional practices with modern medicine to improve health outcomes while preserving cultural identity.

## Recommendations

1. **Empirical Research:** Future studies should incorporate quantitative and qualitative data to provide a clearer picture of health outcomes within the Bakor community. This could include surveys or interviews that capture the experiences of community members regarding health risks and treatment modalities.

2. **Policy Integration:** Healthcare policies should be developed to facilitate the integration of traditional healing practices with modern medical systems. Collaborations between traditional healers and healthcare professionals could enhance patient care and improve access to healthcare services.

3. **Cultural Competency Trainings:** Healthcare providers working in the Ogoja region should undergo training in cultural competency to better understand and respect the beliefs and practices of the Bakor community. This could help bridge the gap between traditional and modern medical approaches.

4. **Community Engagement:** Initiatives aimed at educating the Bakor community about modern medical practices should be culturally sensitive and involve local leaders and traditional healers. This engagement can foster trust and encourage more individuals to seek appropriate medical care when needed.

By implementing these recommendations, healthcare systems can better address the unique needs of the Bakor community, ultimately leading to improved health outcomes and a more holistic approach to medicine and surgery.

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