

Aspect of traditional Medicine in Igbo History: A Study of Traditional Orthopedic Practices in Izzi

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Abstract

This study explores traditional orthopedic in Izzi from earliest times. The region falls within the Igbo ethnic group in southeastern Nigeria. Like many indigenous societies, the Izzi people developed a sophisticated understanding of health and medicine long before colonial influences and Western medical practices. Their indigenous medical practices despite its effectiveness and usefulness, have received neither scholarly research for its documentation nor conscious innovation for it to meet with present healthcare realities particularly in the area of orthopedics. This research analyzes and documents the use of indigenous remedies in the treatment of bone fractures and dislocations. The methodology is qualitative; using primary and secondary sources. The method of analysis is historical, thematic, and chronological. Findings reveal that the indigenous medical system of the Izzi which addressed and still addresses their orthopedic issue was not only practical but deeply interwoven with their cultural and spiritual beliefs. Traditional healers and bone-setters, known as jibya/Jibya obvu mkpa-ekwo and Onye-agba-iphe respectively, played crucial role in the community, using a blend of herbal knowledge, spiritual insight, and ritual practices to not only diagnose and treat ailments but also to address bone fractures and or dislocations. This research highlights the rich heritage of indigenous medical practices in Izzi particularly the knowledge of traditional orthopedic, developed by the people from time immemorial and passed down to present generations through oral history. The importance of preserving this knowledge can never be overemphasized. Understanding these traditional remedies, offers valuable insights into the culturally relevant healthcare practices of the people particularly in the area of traditional orthopedic which have the potential to complement modern orthopedic medical practices

Keywords: Indigenous, Izzi, healthcare, traditional, herbal-medicine.

Introduction: Overview

Traditional medicine has been an integral part of Igbo history, serving as a primary means of healthcare of the people for centuries. Among the Igbo people, one of the most notable aspects of indigenous medical practices is traditional bone-setting or traditional orthopedic care, especially in the Izzi area of Ebonyi State, Nigeria. Historically, traditional medicine in Igbo society, predates modern medical interventions and is deeply rooted in the people's connection to nature

and spirituality. Healers (*dibia*) were considered custodians of knowledge and played crucial roles as herbalists, diviners, and bone-setters. Traditional orthopedic practices were particularly valued because they addressed common injuries from farming, hunting, and warfare, activities central to Igbo livelihood (Obika & Eke 2019).

The Izzi people have a rich tradition of indigenous medical knowledge, with orthopedic practices being one of the specialized areas. Bone-setting in Izzi is passed down through generations, with certain families or lineages recognized for their expertise in this field. Their medical practice is holistic, combining physical manipulation of broken bones with the application of herbal remedies and spiritual invocations for effective healing. Traditional bone-setting practice in Izzi involves manually realigning fractured or dislocated bones and securing them with locally made splints or bamboo sticks. The process is accompanied by the application of herbal poultices that reduce inflammation and promote healing. This holistic approach includes physical rehabilitation and spiritual rituals, as the Izzi people believe that healing is not just physical but also spiritual. Bone-setters are often perceived as divinely gifted, and their skills are highly revered in the community. The practice is not just a medical procedure but is embedded within the cultural and spiritual fabric of Izzi. Traditional healers are believed to invoke ancestral spirits or spiritual forces to ensure successful healing. This spiritual aspect often strengthens the community's faith in the efficacy of traditional medicine, and many people trust bone-setters even more than modern doctors for bone-related injuries.

Despite the global shift towards modern medical practices, traditional bone-setting in Izzi continues to thrive. Many in rural areas prefer traditional methods due to affordability, accessibility, and the personal trust they have in local bone-setters. Some urban dwellers also However, there are notable differences between traditional and modern orthopedic practices. While traditional methods are often effective, they lack the diagnostic tools (such as X-rays) and sanitary conditions present in modern hospitals, which can sometimes lead to complications (Nwankwo, 2014).

Today, traditional orthopedic practices in Izzi face challenges from the growing influence of modern medicine and the decline in the transmission of indigenous knowledge. However, traditional bone-setting remains popular, especially in rural areas where access to modern healthcare is limited. As a matter of fact, people in urban areas with bone fracture or dislocation most times seek the services of traditional bone-setters in the rural areas especially when modern orthopedics insist on amputation of the affected part of their body as the only way forward. Efforts to integrate traditional and modern practices, especially through collaboration between bone-setters and medical practitioners, would enhance healthcare delivery in Izzi not only for orthopedic patients but for patients with every other kind of health challenges.

Traditional orthopedic practices in Izzi reflect the broader landscape of traditional medicine in Igbo history, where the body, nature, and spirituality are intricately connected. Despite the

challenges posed by modern medicine, the cultural significance and continued success of bone-setting in Izzi, highlight the resilience of indigenous knowledge of medicine. Further research into these practices and their integration with modern healthcare would no doubt provide valuable insights into the future of health care in Izzi in particular and other Igbo rural communities in general.

Statement of the Problem

In contemporary medical practice, especially in orthopedics, modern scientific approaches have gained prominence globally. However, among the Izzi people of Igbo land, traditional medicine, particularly traditional orthopedic practices, has played a crucial role in the healing and treatment of bone-related injuries for centuries. Despite the growing reliance on Western medicine, many Izzi people still depend on traditional orthopedic methods due to their cultural relevance, accessibility, efficacy and affordability.

This study seeks to examine the historical and cultural significance of traditional orthopedic practices in Izzi. It aims to investigate how these practices have evolved over time, how they have coexisted with modern medical approaches, and the extent to which they remain relevant in contemporary society. The lack of comprehensive scholarly work on this subject leaves a gap in understanding the indigenous knowledge systems of the Izzi people and their potential contributions to health care. The problem this research addresses is the inability to integrate traditional orthopedic practices with modern orthopedic practices coupled with the lack of proper documentation of the methods used by traditional bone-setters in Izzi. It questions how these traditional practices can be preserved, integrated and possibly enhanced within modern healthcare frameworks, ensuring that they are not lost to future generations.

Thus, this study specifically explores:

- i. The historical background and development of traditional orthopedic practices in Izzi.
- ii. The techniques and methods employed by traditional bone-setters.
- iii. The challenges faced by traditional orthopedic practitioners in the modern healthcare landscape.
- iv. The potential of integrating these practices into modern healthcare systems.

Scope of Study

The geographical scope of this study is Igbo land south-east Nigeria with particular interest on the Izzi people of North-eastern Igbo land. It covers a period from earliest times finger the evolution and development of traditional orthopedic health care delivery in Izzi through the advent of western medical practices in the area to present era which; gasps for a fair union or

blend of the two distinct but related healthcare systems viz a viz the traditional and modern orthopedic healthcare systems and their respective health care methods.

Review of Related Literature

There are several scholars and works that have explored traditional healthcare practices in Igbo land, including various aspects of indigenous medicine, healing practices, and cultural health systems. Below are some key authors and works on traditional healthcare practices in Igbo land:

Steensel (2009), documents an overview of the Izzi people's history and several aspects of their customs.

The work by Steensel (2009) among other issues, highlights some major diseases and sickness prevalent in Izzi from earliest times including their possible causes and how they are managed. The author discusses the people's traditional religion and their culture with conclusion that the people's traditional religion and their culture are two sides of a coin. The people's socio-cultural cum religious practices and festivals such as, *nshi*- juju, magic and sorcery, *Otutara*-veneration of ancestors, first and second burial, masquerading, marriage and personal and communal shrines were highlighted. In addition, some superstitious beliefs of the people which influences their daily lives and activities were discussed by the author. Furthermore, the author writes on traditional oath taking. This should not be confused with oath of office but in this case, it is carried out to handover a doubtful bad situation such as secret murder, stealing and *nshi/mgbashi*- magic/sorcery to *ali*- mother earth and *ndu-itche*- ancestors to intervene and bring about justice to the accused or fish out and punish the perpetrator accordingly depending on the gravity of the offence. The author highlights litany of things considered to be *Ebyi* i.e., abominations, sacrilegious and taboos in Izzi. Steensel (2009), makes a clarification between *Edjo-maa*; evil spirits and *Ndu-itche*; ancestral spirits. According to him, it is only those that lived life worthy of emulation on earth, died a good death and were given befitting burial that transcends to the world beyond as ancestors. They are venerated and could be invoked when the need arises whereas, the rest are *Edjo-maa*; evil spirits. *Edjo-maa* are not venerated and should never be invoked.

In his journal article Nwankwo (2014), accounts for the relevance and resilience of folk medicine among the Igbo people of Southeast Nigeria. The work investigates the level of preference of folk medicine in Igbo society, and examines some medical folklores of the Igbo society. The author identifies that folk medicine has been an important part of the Igbo culture and history for centuries. It represents the knowledge and practices developed by the Igbo community to address their health needs and maintain wellbeing. This knowledge according to the author has been passed down through generations, and it incorporates plant, animal, and mineral-based medicine, spiritual therapies, manual techniques, and exercises. The Igbo folk medicine system also takes into account the community's social, cultural, and religious beliefs, as well as their environment,

in the treatment of illnesses. It recognizes that health is a holistic concept that encompasses not just physical but also mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of a person's life.

Obika and Eke (2019), in their research article, argues that from time immemorial, the Igbo has been using folk medicine which combines faith healing, herbs and minerals. The authors of the aforementioned research argue that, folk medicine has been an indispensable aspect of healthcare practices in Igbo culture; and that it has been used for generations with positive outcomes; including longer life span for the elders. The authors acknowledges that there are criticisms leveled against folk medicine, including concerns about potential harm to vital organs such as the liver; but notes that, similar side-effects can occur with orthodox drugs. They suggest that in some cases, folk medicine may be the only solution when Western medicine is incapable of addressing a particular health issue.

Okonkwo (2012), examines the traditional healing systems in Enugu-Ezike, Edem-ani, and Owerre-ezeoba, which are communities renowned for their traditional medical practices. His research focuses on how diseases are diagnosed, the processes involved in herb procurement, processing, and administering drugs to patients, and the different types of leaves or roots and specific diseases or illnesses they treat. The author affirms that the use of traditional healing remedies for ailments has always been part of human culture. The criticism which according to the research is hinged on the assumption that traditional healers rely almost exclusively on magic, witchcraft and necromancy by questioning the relationship between African medicaments, its practices and diseases. The traditional healing systems have also been criticized on the ground that practitioners are illiterates who do not understand the anatomy of the human being. The drugs and herbs administered do not pass through laboratory processes and so may still contain some harmful elements, which can cause more harm than good in the body system. The paper further insists that the practitioners do not adhere to the rule of hygiene and administration of herbal drugs may not be on the right dosages because they do not have the technology to determine drug dosage.

Obidigbo (2021), focuses on the traditional medical practices of the Igbo people, including herbal medicine, spiritual healing, and the role of traditional healers in Igbo society from earliest times. While, Emeagwali (2016), even though not exclusively focused on healthcare but; this work explores the broader framework of indigenous knowledge systems in Africa, including the Igbo, and highlights traditional healthcare practices as part of the indigenous knowledge. Onwuejeogwu (2021), provides an anthropological view on the role of traditional medicine in Igbo society, including the social, cultural, and religious dimensions of healing practices.

Going further on the issue Nwoye (2022), explores the intersection of traditional and modern healthcare in Igbo society, with a focus on indigenous healing practices and how they relate to contemporary medicine. The work attempts a nexus between the traditional healing methods and modern western medical practices by outlining the challenges and prospects of a possible union

between the two healthcare systems in Igbo land. In the same vein, Ekeopara & Ugoha (2017), examines the potential of integrating Igbo traditional medicine into Nigeria's formal healthcare system, while highlighting specific practices used by traditional healers in selected Igbo communities.

Lawal & Musa (2022), discusses the indigenous orthopedic practices, especially the methods used by bone-setters in various Igbo communities, with a case study on bone-related healthcare.

Ogugua (2015), focuses on the use of herbal medicine among the Igbo people, examining specific plants, their medicinal properties, and the cultural significance of herbal healing in the community.

Gabriel (2022), explores the continuity of indigenous healing systems among the Igbo, focusing on how traditional practices have adapted to or resisted changes brought about by Western medicine overtime. Iroegbu (2010), investigates the traditional management of mental illness within Igbo communities, offering insights into the therapeutic methods used by traditional healers.

Even though none of the above literature addresses the subject of this particular research in its entirety but it provides the requisite background knowledge on the cosmology underpinning Igbo traditional medicine. It provides relevant information on Igbo traditional medicine which not only is useful in the development of this present research but; which further straightens the understanding of how traditional healthcare practices have evolved; their relevance in Igbo society at large and in Izzi in particular and; as well as shades adequate light on the ongoing dialogue between indigenous and modern healthcare systems in Izzi.

Sources and Methodology

This research is carried out using primary and secondary sources. Primary source utilized is oral interview granted by selected individuals of certain level of knowledge on the subject matter within the geographical scope of this study. Secondary sources utilized include; books, book chapters, thesis and journal articles relevant to the research topic under scrutiny. The methodology adopted for this research is qualitative method using; chronological, thematic and content analysis to discuss case studies in the origin and evolutionary trends in Izzi traditional orthopedic health care practices.

Traditional Orthopedic Practices in Izzi: Origin and Evolution

Bone fractures and dislocations were common health issues, likely due to the physical nature of daily activities of man such as farming, hunting, and warfare. The Izzi people developed sophisticated methods of bone-setting, relying on traditional knowledge passed down through

generations. Indigenous bone-setters used herbal poultices, splints made from natural materials, and specific massage techniques to realign and heal broken bones (Steensel, 2009). This practice was not only a medical intervention but also a respected art form, highlighting the deep understanding of anatomy and healing among the people of Izzi.

The origin of traditional orthopedic practices in Izzi is largely tied to the people's indigenous knowledge system and reliance on natural healing methods. Long before the advent of Western medicine, the Izzi people, like other Igbo communities, developed unique healthcare practices based on their environment, spiritual beliefs, and communal experiences. The people have a profound knowledge of herbs, roots, and plants, which they use in treating various ailments, including bone-related injuries. The understanding of medicinal plants and their application in healing was often regarded as sacred knowledge, inherited within certain families or clans. In fact, the people believe that this knowledge was neither taught nor learnt but was passed down to them by *Eze-maa*, King of the Spirit World to a particular *okpa-ipfu*, sub-kindred lineage in Izzi called *Unwu-obvudu*. According to their oral tradition, it is only these sub-kindred that are gifted with the skill of bone-setting in all Izzi communities. A Bone-stretcher in Izzi explains that bone-setting in Izzi is hereditary and occurs in particular sub-kindred. There are two kindreds that make up Izzi namely: The *Igbojima* and *Unwuera* kindreds which are known as *Izhida* and *Amaeke* respectively in Ishieke clan of Izzi. Both kindreds have their respective sub-kindreds. There are particular kindred where bone-setter must resonate from. They are the *Unwu-Obvudu*; sub-kindred from the *Igbojima/Izhida* kindred in Izzi (Steensel, 2009).

Consequently, the practice of traditional orthopedics was intertwined with spiritual beliefs. Bone-related injuries were sometimes believed to have spiritual causes, such as ancestral displeasure or witchcraft. Traditional healers would not only treat the physical injury but also perform rituals or sacrifices to appease the spirits and ensure proper healing. It is believed that failure to appease the spirit responsible for a particular bone related issue before the physical effort to align the affected bone(s) to its proper position would lead to death or permanent disability for the patient.

As stated earlier, bone-setting as a profession in Izzi is not for whoever wishes or desires to be one as it is neither taught nor learnt by the practitioners. They are chosen by *Eze maa* in a random order of succession from any family, sex or age but specifically from within the *unwu-obvudu* sub-kindred. This practitioner who specialized in orthopedic treatments called *Onye agba-okpu*, bone-setter, is skilled in diagnosing fractures, aligning bones, and using splints and bandages made from natural materials from bamboo, sticks, leaves, and bark. These techniques, while simple, were and are still effective for treating injuries in Izzi rural areas where access to modern healthcare was limited. The traditional bone-setters also receives the patronage of people with bone related issues from urban areas because of the belief that bone related issue which modern orthopedics would opt for amputation as solution can be treated by traditional

orthopedics using their physical and spiritual expertise to rearrange and set the affected bone back to its original position.

The practice of traditional orthopedics in Izzi has evolved over time, adapting to social, cultural, and environmental changes within the community. For instance, over centuries, the methods used by traditional bone-setters in Izzi have been refined through experiential learning. The bone-setters have adopted the use of bandages and the administration of pain relief tablets such as paracetamol and Panadol to ease pain usually experienced by their patient after each massage of affected bone. They also administered anti-biotic tablets through the assistance of patent medicine sellers so as to prevent possible infection of open wounds that in some cases came side by side with the bone injury as the case may be. Overtime, their methods became more sophisticated, with a better understanding of not only how to manipulate bones and treat fractures but also how to ease the pains associated with the physical handling and manipulation of the bones back to their original positions. They also learnt the importance of keeping the open wounds that sometimes come with bone injuries clean and free from being infected by engaging the services of patent medicine sellers within their community to prescribe and administer required doses of antibiotics tablets for their patient.

The use of natural splints, such as bamboo, sticks, and vines, was and is integral to the practice. These materials are used to immobilize broken bones and allow for natural healing. Additionally, herbal remedies in addition to modern medicine as mentioned above were applied topically to reduce swelling, pain, and inflammation, promoting faster recovery. Specific herbs known only to the bone-setter were and is used to prevent infections or speed up the healing of wounds and fractures. This has come to be complemented by the use of antibiotics usually recommended and not by the bone-setter but by the patent medicine seller invited to play a role in the healing process.

Despite the introduction of modern medicine, traditional orthopedic practices remained relevant in Izzi. This is partly because they are affordable, accessible, and trusted by the people compared to modern orthopedic services which they view as amputation centers and not the other way round. Many people continue to seek traditional bone-setters not only the rural dwellers but also the urban dwellers despite available of modern orthopedic services in the area. This is because of the growing assumption that modern orthopedics, hastily amputates bone patients without exhausting every available option to set, especially; fractured bones to normal. The cultural respect for these practitioners, combined with their success in treating injuries, has helped to preserve their practices.

Bone-fracture/Bone-dislocation (*Agbaji-okpu/Iphe-eswehu*)

Bone fracture and bone dislocation are distinct but related injuries that can occur in the musculoskeletal system. Bone Fracture refers to a break or crack in a bone. Fractures can vary in severity; from hairline cracks to complete breaks that cause the bone to fragment. Fractures can

occur due to trauma, such as a fall or impact, or due to conditions that weaken the bone, such as osteoporosis (Musa & Lawal, 2022). Symptoms of a fracture may include pain, swelling, bruising, deformity, and difficulty moving the affected area while bone dislocation occurs when the bones that form a joint are forced out of their normal position. This can happen due to trauma, such as a fall or a blow to the joint, or due to certain medical conditions that affect the stability of the joints. Dislocations commonly occur in joints such as the shoulder, elbow, fingers, hip, knee, and ankle. Symptoms of a dislocation include severe pain, swelling, deformity, and loss of mobility in the affected joint (Ottenberg, 2005).

Traditional bone-setting, also known as traditional orthopedics has been used in Izzi for centuries to treat bone fractures, dislocations, and related musculoskeletal injuries.³ In many rural areas of Nigeria particularly in Izzi, where access to modern medical facilities is limited, traditional bone-setting remains an essential and widely accepted form of healthcare. Even in the face of modern medical facilities, traditional orthopedics enjoy considerable patronage from both rural and urban dwellers alike. It is considered widely by the people of Izzi as being more efficient in addressing critical or very delicate bone fractures or dislocations than modern orthopedics which would opt for amputation (Steensel, 2009). In traditional Izzi bone-setting, the healers and practitioners, are skilled individuals who are naturally endowed with knowledge of treating bone and joint injuries through hereditary means, years of apprenticeship, and practical experience. They are accorded great respect and trust within their communities as it is believed that they are specially ordained from their mother's womb by their ancestors or their gods to treat bone fractures, dislocations and musculoskeletal injuries.

Traditional Bone-setters in Izzi, use various techniques to manipulate bones and joints back into their correct positions. These techniques may involve massage, traction, pressure, and immobilization using splints, leaves, or other locally available materials. In addition to physical manipulation, traditional bone-setters use herbal remedies or poultices to aid in the healing process and reduce swelling or pain. Traditional bone-setters in Izzi are very few. This places a lot of burden on the bone physicians as each physician provides bone-setting services to numerous villages. Traditional bone-setting practices in Izzi are intertwined with cultural and spiritual beliefs. The Bone-setter may in some cases perform rituals, incantations or use traditional charms during the treatment process, believing that it enhances healing and wards off evil spirits or bad luck capable of hampering or delaying the healing process of a patient.

Traditional Bone-Setting (*Agbakwa-Okpu*) in Izzi

Traditional bone-setting as already stated, occupies center stage in Izzi traditional healthcare practices. It was and is one of the most crucial aspects of the traditional healthcare practices of the people from earliest times. Traditional orthopedics also known as traditional bone-stretchers usually are not *jibya*. They were people specially gifted with the knowledge of bone-stretching

from birth. Unlike western medical orthopedics, traditional orthopedics does not undergo any form of training to qualify to be in the profession. The skill is believed by the people to be hereditary. It is passed on from parent to one of the offspring. There can never be two traditional bone-stretchers operating simultaneously from the same family in Izzi because they existed to serve the health need of people with regards to various bone challenges and not for profit making. The gift of bone-stretching was only passed on to another after the death of the one who possessed the talent.

A patient with a bone fracture or dislocation in Izzi would be taken to a traditional bone-stretcher by family or friends to the bone physician's home which doubles as a hospital where the bone patients are treated. Aside from the patient receiving treatment from the bone physician, an adult friend or family member will be there to take care of other needs of the patient until he/she is discharged from staying in the physician's home. It is worth noting that some bone patients especially dislocation or fracture of any part of the hand, may not require the patient to stay over in the physician's house while receiving treatment but would always go home and come back for treatment except if the patient came from a very far place. Treatment is usually given twice a day; i.e., in the early morning hours between 7 am-10 am and the late evening hours between 5pm-7pm irrespective of the severity of the case.

A minor dislocation or a patient who has almost recovered receives treatment once a day or once in two days as the bone physician deems fit. The bone therapist would, first of all, call on the ancestors in the form of incantations and prayers. This was followed by an examination of the patient by the bone therapist to determine whether the affected bone or bones suffered fracture or dislocation. The therapist would touch palm oil on his or her fingers which served as lubricant and then proceed to carefully and gently massage the affected bone areas tracing the area to determine whether it was a single fracture, multiple fracture, or a dislocation. Having determined the nature of the bone disorder, a gradual but daily process of massaging begins. The affected area is worked on with fingers and the affected bones be it broken or dislocated were rearranged and put back in their normal positions. This process could take a day, a week or months depending on the nature of the case being treated. After this, bits of wooden material were weaved together around the affected area by the Bone-specialist to assist in keeping the rearranged bones together until they healed properly.

It is worthy to note that traditional orthopedics in Izzi does not need an x-ray to perform their work and, in most cases, does not administer analgesic to patients before the bone massage (Ottenberg, 2005). This does not in any way reduce the efficiency of their treatment. According to oral interview granted by Augustina Nwamgbo Nwebonyi, a Traditional Bone-setter in Izzi:

... Once I touch the affected area of a patient with bone disorder be it fracture or dislocation, I will know. The spirit of my late father and forefathers whom I inherited the medicine from would guide

my hand to detect and arrange the bones with ease. There is no part of the human body with dislocation or any kind of fracture that is beyond my treatment.

She further states that the duration it takes a patient to heal, depends on the type or nature of the bone fracture/dislocation and concludes that no matter how critical a case might be, it was not beyond her treatment and healing through the grace of her ancestors and God. In her words:

This is my fifty years of being a Traditional bone-setter. There is no part of the human body with bone issue that is beyond my treatment and there is nothing like amputation in my philosophy irrespective of how bad a case is; my ancestors and God forbids amputation and does not let anyone brought here go back the way they have come. Some were brought here on wheel chairs, some on stretcher bed but all walked back home completely healed. This boy here named Chinonso was brought here with jaw dislocation and multiple leg bone fractures from hospital; The doctor said they will cut his leg but as you can see, his jaw is fine now and he can stand on his own now. Within a couple of weeks, he will walk without support. They (ancestors and God) set the bones through me. I simply follow their guide. No matter how long a case may last but their healing is certain.

Impact of Traditional Orthopedics in Izzi

Traditional orthopedic practices in Izzi have had a significant impact on the healthcare system and the socio-cultural fabric of the people. These practices, which have evolved over generations, continue to play a crucial role in the treatment of bone-related injuries, offering accessible and culturally relevant healthcare. The impact of these practices can be analyzed from different perspectives, including healthcare access, cultural preservation, economic influence, and the integration with modern medicine.

Healthcare Access and Affordability: Traditional orthopedic practices in Izzi provide an accessible and affordable alternative to modern medical care, particularly in rural areas where hospitals and clinics may be scarce or financially inaccessible. In rural communities of Izzi, modern healthcare facilities are often far from reach. Traditional bone-setters offer localized care that is easier for people to access, reducing travel time and costs associated with visiting hospitals. The cost of traditional orthopedic care is usually lower than that of modern healthcare services. Many Izzi people turn to traditional bone-setters because they can provide effective treatment at a fraction of the cost of modern medical procedures. This makes traditional orthopedic practices a vital component of healthcare for the greater majority of the population who incidentally are low-income earners.

Preservation of Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Heritage: The practice of traditional orthopedics in Izzi is not just a medical practice but also a cultural heritage that has been passed down through generations. Traditional orthopedic practitioners are highly respected in the Izzi community. Their practices are deeply embedded in local customs, rituals, and beliefs, particularly in relation to healing and spirituality. By continuing these practices, the community preserves its indigenous knowledge and maintains a connection to its ancestral roots. In the same vein, the knowledge of traditional orthopedics on from generation to generations has helped to preserve and sustain the cultural identity of the Izzi people, ensuring that their medical traditions are not obliterated.

Economic and Social Influence: Traditional orthopedic practitioners, or bone-setters, often play an important socio-economic role in Izzi, affecting both the livelihood of practitioners and the community's health economy. Bone-setters in Izzi often earn their living by providing orthopedic services. Their role in the community offers them a steady source of income, especially in areas where modern healthcare jobs may be limited. This has economic benefits not only for the practitioners but also for their families. Traditional orthopedic practices help reduce the economic burden of healthcare on the broader community. By offering effective treatment for fractures and dislocations at a lower cost, these practices alleviate the financial strain on families who might otherwise be unable to afford modern healthcare services.

Complementarity and Integration with Modern Medicine: Over the years, there has become growing recognition of the value of traditional orthopedics in Izzi, leading to discussions about how it could be integrated with modern medical practices. Many people in Izzi seek out traditional orthopedic treatments alongside modern healthcare. For example, patients with fractures may first visit a traditional bone-setter for initial care before seeking further treatment or validation from modern healthcare practitioners, vice versa. This dual approach highlights the complementary nature of traditional and modern medicine (Nwankwo, 2014).

Some medical professionals have begun to recognize the practical knowledge of traditional bone-setters and advocate for the integration of their skills into the formal healthcare system. This integration could involve training traditional practitioners in modern techniques and sanitation practices while preserving their indigenous methods, allowing for a more holistic healthcare system.

Efficacy and Trust in Traditional Bone-Setters: The perceived effectiveness of traditional orthopedic practices in Izzi has built a strong sense of trust within the community. Traditional bone-setters in Izzi are known for their success in treating bone injuries, particularly simple fractures and dislocations. They have developed techniques, such as the use of herbal medicines and splinting, which have proven effective over time. Their ability to treat patients successfully fosters a sense of trust and loyalty among the people. Consequently, many community members continue to rely on traditional orthopedic practitioners due to their hands-on experience and the immediacy of their services. In some cases, traditional bone-setters are preferred over modern

doctors for their practical skills, intuitive understanding of the body, and use of natural remedies that align with the people's beliefs (Okonkwo, 2012).

While traditional orthopedic practices in Izzi have had positive impact in many areas, they also face challenges and criticisms, particularly from the perspective of modern medical standards.

Lack of Formal Medical Training: One criticism of traditional orthopedic practices particularly in Izzi, is the lack of formal medical training among practitioners. This sometimes leads to complications, such as improperly set bones or infections, especially in complex fractures that require advanced medical interventions.

Potential Health Risks: In some cases, reliance on traditional methods without access to modern healthcare can lead to delayed treatment for serious injuries, exacerbating conditions that might have been more effectively treated with modern medical interventions.

Skepticism from Modern Healthcare: Traditional orthopedic practices often face skepticism from modern medical professionals who question the scientific basis of the methods used. This has led to a tension between traditional healers and modern medical practitioners, despite efforts at bridging the gap. Therefore, there is every need to co-opt traditional bone-setting practices into modern orthopedic medicine in Izzi for efficient and safer traditional bone-setting practices among other health practices of the people.

Summary

This study examines the historical and cultural significance of traditional orthopedic practices among the Izzi people in Igbo land. Traditional medicine, particularly bone-setting, has been central to healthcare in Izzi for generations. The research explores the origin and evolution of these practices, which are rooted in indigenous knowledge, herbal medicine, and spiritual beliefs.

Despite the advent of modern medical practices, traditional bone-setters continue to provide accessible and affordable healthcare, especially in rural areas where hospitals are scarce. The study highlights the effectiveness of these traditional methods, such as the use of natural splints and herbal remedies, while acknowledging the challenges posed by the lack of formal medical training.

It also discusses the cultural importance of these practices in preserving indigenous knowledge and their potential for integration into modern healthcare systems. Overall, the study emphasizes the relevance of traditional orthopedic practices in Izzi and calls for the recognition and preservation of these methods in the face of modern medical advancements.

Conclusion

Traditional orthopedic practices in Izzi have had a profound impact on healthcare access, cultural preservation, and the socio-economic landscape of the people. They offer an accessible, affordable, and culturally significant form of healthcare, particularly for those in rural or

economically disadvantaged areas. Despite facing challenges from the growing influence of modern medicine, traditional orthopedic practitioners remain trusted figures in Izzi traditional healthcare system, and their methods continue to complement and coexist with contemporary healthcare practices. The potential for integrating these practices into formal healthcare systems offers an opportunity for preserving the people's valuable knowledge of indigenous medicine while improving health outcomes in the area.

Recommendations

This research recommends the following measures in other to protect, preserve and promote traditional orthopedics in Izzi while embracing the integration of modern orthopedic services in the area for more efficient and effective healthcare system.

Preservation of Knowledge: Conscious efforts should be made to document and preserve the traditional orthopedic practices of the Izzi people. This could be done through research, recording oral histories, and publishing detailed accounts of the techniques used by bone-setters.

Training and Integration: Traditional bone-setters should receive basic medical training to improve hygiene and safety standards. Integrating their knowledge with modern healthcare could enhance treatment outcomes and reduce complications.

Collaboration with Modern Medicine: There should be collaboration between traditional practitioners and modern healthcare providers. This partnership can foster mutual respect and allow patients to benefit from both systems.

Public Awareness: There should be increased awareness campaign about the benefits of traditional orthopedic practices within and outside the Izzi communities towards ensuring that these valuable methods are not overlooked or lost due to the rise of modern medicine.

Government Support: Local and state governments should provide support for traditional orthopedic practitioners by recognizing their role in community healthcare and creating policies that protect and promote traditional medicine.

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