

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, the research design and method were discussed. In this chapter an overview of the data analysis method is presented and the research findings are discussed. The focus of the study was to investigate the health seeking behaviours of members of the Africa Gospel church by answering the following research questions:

- *What are the health seeking behaviours of the members of the Africa Gospel Church?*
- *How are the health seeking behaviours of members of the Africa Gospel Church influenced by their beliefs on health, illness and care?*

The research questions have been contextualised by also investigating the general teachings and prescriptions of the Africa Gospel Church, and the lifestyle of its members.

4.2 DATA ANALYSIS STRATEGY

Leininger's data analysis enabler was used as the data analysis strategy for this study (refer to section 3.4.3). Data analysis was carried out in four phases.

4.2.1 Collecting, describing and documenting of raw data

The first phase of Leininger's data analysis enabler, namely collecting, describing and documenting raw data, was fully discussed in sections 3.4.2.4 and 3.4.3.1. Preliminary analysis was done during the process of data collection, by applying the reflection phase of Leininger's Observation-Participation-Reflection Model.

4.2.2 Coding and classification of data

This represents phase 2 of Leininger's data analysis enabler as discussed in section 3.4.3.2. Data coding was done using the QSR NUD*IST power version 4.0 computer programme.

The coding system that the researcher created is portrayed in annexure G and an example of a node report that comprise the coded data is attached as annexure H.

4.2.3 Pattern and contextual analysis

This represents phase 3 of Leininger's data analysis enabler as discussed in section 3.4.3.3. The research findings are discussed per category and code in section 4.3.

4.2.4 Data synthesis

Phase four of Leininger's data analysis enabler (refer to section 3.4.3.4) involved identification of themes that emerged from the research findings. The themes are discussed in section 5.2.

4.3 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The findings are presented below by discussing the characteristics of the Africa Gospel Church, their lifestyle and their responses to illness.

4.3.1 Biographical data

This category contains data pertaining to personal characteristics of the research informants. There were two main types of informants from whom data were collected, namely members of the congregation of the Africa Gospel Church and priests and church elders. The congregants were the key informants and the priests and church elders were the general informants.

The researcher interviewed seven key informants - three were males, and four females. Their mean age was forty- three (43) years. All the key informants were born into the church and remained members throughout their lives. Only one key informant was separated from her husband, the rest were married. Four were in a polygamous marriage and two in a monogamous marriage.

In addition to the key informants, five general informants were interviewed. Three of the general informants were male priests and two were female church elders. Their mean age was fifty-six (56) years. All general informants were in polygamous marriages.

4.3.2 Characteristics of the religion

This category pertains to data related to a system of beliefs in worship of a supernatural power or god.

Teachings

The concept teaching refers to that which is taught for acceptance or belief (Adapted from the Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary 1974:1287). A church's teachings regulate how congregants view and practice their religion.

The informants explained that the teachings of the Church are based on a belief in Jesus, the Almighty, and the importance of keeping the Sabbath. Members of the Church are also taught to live peacefully and to forgive one another.

According to the informants, forgiveness of others is an important principle in the Africa Gospel Church. Getting over one's anger will enable a person to focus on other productive issues rather than create disharmony with others, which may compromise health. As one informant said: "...*You must forgive others, don't hold a grudge. You must get over your anger, don't sleep on it*". This principle contributes to social order and peaceful living.

The informants highlighted other important principle, namely self-control and self-responsibility. Their belief is that, to live healthy lives they must control themselves and not do things because they are not being seen. Individuals who practice self-control are expected to be able to take responsibility for whatever happens in their lives including health and illness and to apply preventive health strategies.

The church teaches that its members must live through prayer. As one informant said: "*Prayer is very important because we live by it*".

4.3.3 Prescriptions

Prescriptions refer to that which is prescribed as a rule (Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary 1974:997) related to religion. Prescriptions are stated in the form of norms and taboos, which regulate behaviour. Various norms and taboos emerged from the data.

Norms

Norms refer to culturally prescribed and accepted behavioural patterns. Informants' responses explicated various norms of the Africa Gospel Church.

- ***Obeying the church rules***

According to the informants it is important to obey the church rules. Rules are designed to promote health. It is therefore clear that the church norms are regarded to be beneficial to members. The most important rule is to keep the Sabbath.

- ***Marriage***

The church's teachings and prescriptions regulate marriage for the benefit of the church and its congregants. The church teaches that their marriages must be endogamous and congregants are also encouraged to marry in polygamy to ensure that all women can get a husband. The reason given for this is that women outnumber men. An informant said that, *"there should be no one without a partner to look after her"*.

Young women must be virgins at the time of marriage otherwise the Church would not marry them. An informant put it this way: *"Older women inspect the girl for virginity. If she is intact the marriage goes ahead"*.

Polygamy is believed to promote health. An informant explained by saying: "It benefits women because their children circulate in the Church and they don't end up promiscuous with fatherless children."

The male must obtain the consent of those wives already in the home in order to marry again and he must also be a good worshipper in order to be allowed more than one wife. This statement by an informant illustrates the point: *“If his religiosity is questionable, he will not be allowed to marry more than one because this would mean that he cannot manage to properly look after the wives”*. This finding is similar to Magesa’s (1997:138) assertion that a man has a moral responsibility to look after his wives in a polygamous marriage and that he must assess his ability in this regard, otherwise it is unethical for him to marry in polygamy.

A woman is allowed to leave her husband if he breaks the rules of the Church. A female key informant stated that she had gone back to her parent’s home because her husband had started drinking and smoking.

Endogamy benefits the church because members are retained and solidarity is strengthened, as explained by informants. An informant stated: *“There is basically nothing wrong with it (referring to endogamy) ...if you marry in endogamy the right way you promote the church.”*

An informant indicated that polygamy might have negative consequences. The informant stated that sometimes a man may marry in polygamy to copy others who have done so, without considering the consequences, and this would lead to suffering. He said: *“...when it comes to food it is not enough. It means the wife must work extra hard to feed them and this means health may be lacking”*.

- **Fidelity**

Fidelity is expected from all members of the Church. Responses in this regard include: *"...a person must get a wife and settle down and stop looking here and there..."* *"A person who is a real person must depend on his home"*. This was said in reference to sexual activity.

- **Clothing**

All women are expected to wear long white dresses with a headscarf and men shave their heads but keep their facial hair.

Taboos

Taboos are forbidden actions; behaviours or practices which, when violated, often attract negative sanctions (Adapted from Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary 1974:1276). These encompass various aspects of living as described below. Magesa (1997:149) and Staugard (1985:73) state that breach of taboo jeopardises health. An informant highlighted the importance of observing taboos by saying *"We young ones today do not care for ourselves, there are no taboos because everything is westernised, but we are killing ourselves instead, we assimilate everything that comes without knowing its consequences, we don't trust in God who is our custodian"*.

The Africa Gospel Church observes several taboos as indicated below.

- **Worship**

The Church forbids worshipping of ancestors. As stated earlier in 4.3.2.1, its members believe in Jesus the Almighty. Although the Church acknowledges the existence of witchcraft, it forbids its practice.

- **Nutrition**

Informants explained that they are not allowed to eat animals that do not chew the cud or those that have died on their own.

- **Pleasure**

Some taboos obviously promote a healthy lifestyle. It is forbidden to drink alcohol and smoke tobacco. Other taboos are activities that are associated with pleasure like attending parties and discos. An informant explained the reason behind the pleasure taboo by saying, *“people become too happy and they end up touching things that they are not supposed to touch, things that are outside the church, these are things that we are preventing, things that bring illness”*.

Listening to the radio, for reasons other than listening to the news, is taboo. An informant said: *“In our church we do not allow parties according to the church law, even radios are taboo”*. Radios are used for the purpose of listening to the news only, and then they are switched off. Informants explained that because of changing times some people now listen to other programmes on the radio.

It is not allowed to buy even a non-alcoholic drink at a bar because one may fail to control oneself in the process. The informant said: *“A child in the church is not allowed anywhere near a bar, no matter what, not even to buy a drink, not even a drink, they cannot buy it in a bar.”*

- **Relationships**

Promiscuity is a taboo within the Africa Gospel Church. Extra marital affairs are not allowed. Women must wait for their husbands and likewise men also for their wives. When one informant talked about behaviours that promote health he said that people would be healthy, *“if they don’t drink, smoke and they are not promiscuous”*.

- **Health care**

Staugard (1985:73) states that some faith healing churches are hostile towards the *dingaka* (traditional healer), and doctors from the professional health care system. This is supported by the findings of the present research.

According to the informants they are not allowed to seek health care from hospitals. In the words of one informant: *“As for measles, the church says don’t go to hospital”*.

Informants stated that they are not allowed to consult traditional doctors.

The Africa Gospel Church does not allow its members to take traditional or western medicine. Similarly, members of the Church are not allowed to use contraceptives or condoms. One informant on talking about this taboo said: *“...we are not to touch anything medicinal”*.

- **Dress**

A prescribed form of dress must be followed. Wearing trousers (by women), and wearing dreads is forbidden. These are considered to be worldly things that are passing.

- ***Other***

Stealing was also mentioned as a taboo within the Church.

4.3.4 Lifestyle of the members of the Church

This category presents data pertaining to the ways of living (Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary 1974:1254) of members of the Africa Gospel Church. These are grouped into religious and social practices.

4.3.4.1 *Religious practices*

Religious practices refer to habitual activities (Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary 1974:990) related to religion.

Members of the Africa Gospel Church keep the Sabbath, which starts on a Friday and lasts up to Saturday evening. The main activity is to pray. This is done through daily Morning Prayer at 6.00 am and Evening Prayer at 5.00 pm. Members pray for themselves, for others, and for the sick. They pray for their daily needs to be met, and for a long and good life. They pray for food, for protection during travel, protection from evil spirits like demons, and to be cleansed if they have received professional care. They also thank God for their blessings.

4.3.4.2 *Social practices*

Social practices are the habitual social actions that are influenced by religious prescriptions. These practices relate to economic activities and other activities of daily living.

Economic activities

The informants indicated that they are self-employed. They manufacture items that they sell. These items include basins, bathtubs, and buckets that they create from zinc sheets. Other items include cupboards, tables, and chairs. Women make clothing and pillows, and also sell vegetables, which they grow in their own gardens. It is customary to find these wares displayed in front of their gates at their homes. During data collection the researcher found that one general male informant was not at home on two occasions. He was said to have gone to tend to his cattle just outside the city. It is therefore apparent that cattle may also be a source of income.

Activities of daily living

Besides the economic activities, female informants also stated that they attend to household chores like cooking and cleaning, and bathing children. Where there are young girls they do the cooking. In a polygamous home, the women help each other with the chores. These findings are supported by Magesa's (1997:136) belief that, polygamy promotes kinship and solidarity in a society.

Formal education

The responses obtained indicated that informants are suspicious of the educational system in their country. They explained that education is not important to the church members. Informants stated that teachers corrupt their children by teaching them about condoms. One informant said in reference to education on reproductive health: *"It teaches anything and calls things by their names. This is what we want to prevent, if you teach a child that money buys sweets, next time they see it they want to buy. So we don't want children to be exposed to some things"*.

Selecting a partner

Marriages are arranged. Informants talked about the process of acquiring a wife within the church. They stated that the men are not allowed to take initiative and propose women for marriage; rather their families do this for them. A young man may identify a girl and report the matter to his parents. The young man may or may not inform the girl of his intentions. As stated earlier in 4.3.2.2, the girl must be a virgin at marriage. If his parents are happy with her moral standing and that of her family they will ask for her hand from her parents. A key female informant said: *“When I’m grown up, as a girl, they find a husband for me. I cannot refuse. If the parents agree then gifts are given to my family and I can be married in church”*. One male general informant explained it this way: *“If we believe the family is religious we give them the girl. Men do not propose to our children”*. If, however, the parents select the bride for the male, he must agree to their choice.

4.3.5 Health, illness and care

This category refers to explanations about health and illness and causes of illness.

4.3.5.1 *Explanatory model*

Explanatory models are those beliefs that people hold about the nature of health, and illness and its causes.

Explanations about the nature of health

The informants conceptualised health in physical terms. According to the informants, a person is healthy when there is nothing bothering him or her physically. He or she is energetic and is fit, fresh and relaxed in appearance.

A healthy person is disease-free and free of symptoms such as pain. The informants also stated that a healthy person is not bedridden. Informants said: *“A healthy person you can see, the flesh is relaxed, and they do not look miserable”*. *“When a person is healthy there is nothing that bothers them in the body”*. *“When a person is sick they get tired easily, they are miserable and quiet and are not the same as everyday”*. *“As I am, I like joking and fooling around, when I am sick I may be miserable and quiet, then I may tell people that I have a headache”*. An informant explained that one must follow a healthy diet in order to remain healthy.

Informants also conceptualised health in spiritual and psychological terms. An informant indicated that a healthy person is spiritually relaxed. Good health is considered a sign that one is leading a religious life. Informants also said that, to ensure good health, one has to be religious, follow the church rules, and have self-respect. One must also exercise self-control. The informants had this to say: *“A religious person lives a healthy life, he does not get sick often”*. *“Since I am healthy it tells me that the religious life that I am leading is the right one”*.

Informants conceptualised health in social terms. According to informants, a healthy person is able to do things for himself or herself and is able to interact normally with others. Informants said: *“A person without disease is normal in everything he does and in his interactions and in his works”*. *“A person who is healthy is sociable”*.

It is therefore apparent that health is viewed in terms of body, mind and spirit, and also in social terms.

Explanations about the nature of illness

According to the informants there are two types of illness, normal and abnormal. A normal illness comes from God and easily responds to treatment and prayers. A person is the cause of abnormal illness through his own actions or omissions. For instance, illness that is caused by promiscuity is not considered normal because a person will have brought it upon himself or herself. It is also illness due to the effects of witchcraft. Illnesses that do not readily respond to traditional remedies are regarded to be abnormal. The same applies to illness that result from a person who wishes to do another person harm. A priest or prophet is able to distinguish between a normal and an abnormal illness. Informants explained it this way: *"Sometimes you get a headache and you take Compral for it, or your leg is painful and you rub it but it does not get better even with prayers. Then we say it is not an illness from God but may be caused by witchcraft or an evil spirit. If it does not go away then it is not normal". "You cannot tell when the illness starts that it is normal (from God). Only when you have tried everything and there is no improvement then you can say that it is not normal. Only a prophet can tell from the beginning that it is normal or not because he can see". "God made us so that sometimes we get sick but someone can make you sick because they want to harm you or retard your progress, this is not a normal sickness".*

The works by Mashaba (1995:593-596); Selelo-Kupe (1993:1) and Chavunduka's research cited in Cavender (1991:363) shed more light on this issue by indicating that illness caused by witchcraft is unnatural. Abnormal illness is therefore also attributed to witchcraft. This is in correspondence with the findings of this research.

Explanations about causes of illness.

The informants conceptualised illness according to the supernatural and equilibrium perspectives.

- ***Supernatural explanations***

In the above section it is apparent that informants conceptualised the cause of illness due to God's intervention. This can occur as a result of not following prescriptions or breaching taboos stated by the Church. Informants said in this regard: *"If you don't follow the regulations a lot of things happen to you". "If you break the rules that's when disease comes in"*. Informants also explained that illness is caused by an individual's failure to pray.

Informants said that demons and bad spirits could cause illness. Some illnesses are caused by demonic possession and are treated through prayer. One informant explained that: *"...some are demons of envy; you can kill a person because of them"*. This statement may indicate that a person can kill another person by sending or activating a demon or bad spirit to do that person harm.

Witchcraft was also acknowledged to exist. Informants stated that witches might put an object into the body resulting in illness. The informants stated that this could be treated through prayer. An informant explained how witches could interfere with labour: *"... they collect your urine and tie it so that you cannot deliver"*.

- ***Explanations related to physical (internal and external) or social equilibrium***

Illness can be caused by a state of social disequilibrium, namely due to impaired social structures or relations. Informants linked cultural change with regard to the practice of polygamy, with promiscuity and eventually sexually transmitted diseases. In their words: *“Diseases are worsening because polygamy is discouraged. Young women cannot get married because there are not enough men”. “If I am everywhere (referring to sexual activity), then I will get the virus”*. The fact that women are no longer virgins at marriage was also cited as a cause of illness. In the words of an informant: *“These days if a person is of loose morals they get diseases”*.

Lack of social harmony with others causes illness. One informant said: *“Sometimes a person may hate you and poison your food or send things (zombies) to make you sick or to make you mad”*.

According to informants, impaired physical equilibrium may also cause illness. Nutritional patterns can disrupt the body’s functioning and cause disharmony in the body. An informant said: *“Other things that can cause illness are eating things that don’t agree with you, such as eating for the sake of eating”*. Informants also attributed illness to smoking and drinking habits. In the words of an informant: *“Drinking alcohol and smoking tobacco can make you sick”*.

4.3.5.2 Practices relating to health, illness and care

This category contains data relating to activities surrounding health and illness.

Prevention of illness

Informants explained that their health is strengthened by their belief in God and that illness is prevented mainly through prayer and obeying church rules. Prayers are also held to protect a newborn from disease and injury. Informants stated that if you pray you cannot contract a serious illness. Prayer also helps to make sure that if illness does occur then it will be mild. When one informant was asked about prevention of illness he stated: *“There is nothing except prayer and following regulations”*.

Diagnosing illness

Illness is diagnosed by means of spiritual divination, subjective observation and objective observation.

- ***Spiritual divination***

A prophet can diagnose illness through spiritual divination. Informants stated that prophets could diagnose a person's illness through the spiritual dimension. He acts as an intermediary between humans and the supernatural. In the words of general informants: *“With us when you attend a prayer session, the spirit tells us what is wrong with you”*. *“Our hospital is the spirit, it is our blood test, instead of the person telling you that they are sick”*.

It appears as if it is not necessary for the sick person to explain the nature of his illness to the prophet, as the prophet has the ability to make a diagnosis independently of the sick person's explanations. A key informant explained this as follows: *“You don't relate your*

problem to the prophet but he will tell you what you are feeling, relating your symptoms “.

A general informant said: *“When a person is sick we see through the spirit”.*

In cases of adultery, the prophet is able to examine the errant person spiritually and tell whether he or she has been infected through the adulterous experience.

This method of diagnosis is similar to that described by Staugard (1985:74) who stated that *Ba Profiti* prophesises by looking at the Bible and is able to diagnose illness this way.

- ***Subjective observation***

Illness is also diagnosed by allowing the sick person to verbalise his experience. General informants said in this regard: *“The person who is sick must tell us”. “You have to tell us that you are sick. Most of the time if they don’t tell you, you will not know that they are sick”.*

- ***Objective observation***

Illness can be diagnosed through objective observation or physical examination, and by looking at a person’s interactions. Objective observation entails observing an individual’s social interactions. A general informant said: *“We look at people’s health by examining their interactions at home, at work and with outsiders”.* During pregnancy, the older women do a physical examination to see that the baby is positioned properly. They do this by palpating the abdomen.

Institutions where health care is rendered

Health care is rendered at the sick person’s home, the priest’s home or at a health care institution. Health care services for the sick are provided in the patient’s home. Informants

stated that family members within the home care for the sick. Elderly women also care for pregnant women at home. Priests are informed about a sick person. They visit the sick at home and pray for him or her. An informant stated: *"I am cared for by those at home and the priests too"*. Another explained that she nursed a family member at home who eventually died.

The sick can also be cared for at the priest's home if they have been referred from far away. Informants said: *"The priests care for the sick. They (the sick) are taken to the priest's home. There are people called 'abathandazeli' (intercessors). The spirit (meaning a prophet) can choose who should pray for a person. At times the sick is referred to a priest far away"*. Aldridge (2000:144) has also described the process of intercession as being used to relieve suffering during illness.

An informant stated that she has seen people being healed in church. It is therefore clear that health care is also rendered at the church.

The sick can also seek health care from health care facilities after obtaining permission from the priest. Doing so without permission is not allowed. The sick person must however attend a special prayer session at church after visiting health care facilities. The purpose of the special prayer session is to perform a cleansing ritual because church members must seek forgiveness for having broken a church rule. An informant explained: *"If necessary we are allowed to go to hospital for treatment and then we come and pray"*. Informants said that they go to hospital for specific problems like fractures, eye problems, dental problems, serious injuries and unusual sores. Pregnant women do not seek antenatal care, as explained by an informant: *"During pregnancy she does not go for check up"*. If a woman experiences difficult labour she is permitted to go to hospital.

Newly born babies are taken to the hospital for the sole purpose of getting a card to be used for the child's birth registration. In the words of an informant: *"We go to the clinic to get a card only to show where and when the baby was born so that we obtain papers for him or her."* One informant explained that the Church teaches them that measles should not be treated in hospital. An informant gave testimony of her daughter having gone to hospital and being diagnosed with tuberculosis, which was treated, and now she is well. The daughter sat next to her when the researcher arrived to do the interview. It is therefore clear that this informant understood the benefits of making use of professional health care services.

Care practices

Various care practices came to light during data collection. Various principles underlie the care practices. The informants stated that the sick must be loved and comforted, and must be advised to pray.

Caretakers care for the sick by helping them with their activities for daily living. An informant explained: *"At home they (women) cook for them (the sick) and the priests also pray"*. The sick person's nutritional needs are provided for in the form of light meals. It seems that everyone in the home acts as a care provider. With regard to hygiene, the caretakers ensure that that men bath a male, and women bath a female patient.

The priest or prophet cares for the sick by praying and by performing interventions to remove the causing factor. A special prayer session is held to pray for the sick. This special prayer session is called *i groundi* (the ground). In the words of informants: *"Priests also lay hands on the sick during prayer."* *"A prophet can pray for them (the sick) and remove whatever is eating that person. He is shown in a vision what it is that the witch*

may have put in and they remove the thing.” “If there is a foreign body (put there by witches), he will remove it in front of people”.

The prophets or priests can also prescribe an intercessor. This is how the process was described: *“We go to the priests and the prophets, they tell me who should pray for me and they tell me what my problem is, its cause and what to do about it. I follow instructions and get well”.*

In addition to prayer and prescribing an intercessor, priests perform surgical interventions. According to informants, they remove foreign bodies (inserted in the body by witches). Once the foreign bodies are removed, then the person will heal. According to the explanations about the young woman (mentioned earlier) who was treated for tuberculosis, the priest removed a live worm from her throat before she went to hospital. An informant described this care practice as follows: *“He (the prophet) is shown in a vision what it is that a witch may have put in and then he removes the thing. This young man (referring to someone who had left the room when the interview started) does wonders. He removes teeth from people’s feet and snakes too; he can remove them and turn them into beads”.* The priest also incises abscesses and exorcises demons. He examines a sore to see if it has an opening before incising it. If there is no opening then he gives the person permission to go to hospital.

During delivery, elderly women examine the mother to ascertain for themselves of the position of the baby. They massage the mother during the delivery process, deliver the baby and cut the cord. After birth they bath the baby. The mother and baby are allowed to stay indoors for a week and after that they can come out and go wherever they want to.

4.4 SUMMARY

In this chapter the research findings were presented. The teachings and prescriptions of the Africa Gospel Church were presented. The lifestyle of the members of the church was discussed by describing the religious, social and economic practices of its members. The beliefs and practices on health, illness and care were outlined. In the next chapter the general themes that emerged from the findings are discussed.