

**How to Cite:**

Bessas, B., Belhemari, B., & Benaissa, L. (2024). Healthy behavior between traditional and modern medicine: A field study on a sample of patients in the city of Laghouat, Algeria. *International Journal of Health Sciences*, 8(S1), 94–103. <https://doi.org/10.53730/ijhs.v8nS1.14718>

## **Healthy behavior between traditional and modern medicine: A field study on a sample of patients in the city of Laghouat, Algeria**

**Belkhir Bessas**

Laboratory of Social Empowerment and Sustainable Development in the Desert Environment, University of Laghouat, Algeria

Email: [b.bessas@lagh-univ.dz](mailto:b.bessas@lagh-univ.dz)

**Bachir Belhemari**

Laboratory of Social Empowerment and Sustainable Development in the Desert Environment, University Center -Aflou-, Algeria

Email: [b.belhemari@cu-aflou.edu.dz](mailto:b.belhemari@cu-aflou.edu.dz)

**Lazhari Benaissa**

Laboratory of Social Empowerment and Sustainable Development in the Desert Environment, University of Laghouat, Algeria

Email: [l.benaissa@lagh-univ.dz](mailto:l.benaissa@lagh-univ.dz)

**Abstract**---In our time, the scope for healthy behavior has expanded due to the rich heritage and inheritance of traditional medicine, which reaches into spirituality and what is not perceptible to the sensitivity on the one hand, On the other hand, there is modern contemporary medicine that relies on advanced machines and detectors, complex chemical preparations, microscopic stem cells, and serums whose future outcomes are unknown. With this enormous expansion, social reality indicates many dissonances and contradictions between them, as the matter worsened with the absence of a hyphen that attempts to unite them, especially with regard to the moral and social dimension of the disease and its organic and vital dimension, and if healthy behavior is based on beliefs and perceptions that aspire to many health and physical benefits in the first place, then it is supposed to be more framing and directing them at the present time, as all this progress is being made. However, social reality emphasizes the increasing severity of health alienation and the emergence of irrational health behaviors. On this basis, we pose the following fundamental question: What are the frameworks that govern health behavior in light of this absence of compatibility between traditional and modern medicine on the one hand, and on the other hand in light of this rift and lack of integration between them?

**Keywords**---health, healthy behavior, traditional medicine, modern medicine.

## **Introduction**

Health is an important and necessary requirement for the survival of individuals and societies, as it is impossible to imagine societies without diseases, just as there is no normal human being who does not fluctuate between states of health and disease, as societies have known from time immemorial many diseases that coexisted with them, and even had philosophies and Visions, perceptions, judgments, and wise healers to process them. It also has a vast scientific heritage that was passed down from father to grandfather, extending back into history, where it was known for its diversity and multiplicity, even going beyond nature and spirituality. From then until now, societies have been trying to develop their medical capabilities until modern medicine has been achieved, which relies on experiments, analysis, and advanced devices.

Each society has its view and concept of health because the natural secretion of society begins to be within the culture of this society and the natural and social environment of society, after all, in any environment in which the causes of diseases are found, we begin to find treatments for these diseases. (Manaa Amar, p. 312).

Under customs and belief, they do not benefit from it, for example, Hindus do not benefit from cow's milk and meat, even though it has very great benefits, because of the fat and proteins it provides that benefit the human body. Beliefs have a strong commanding power influencing the lives of individuals in various aspects of life. If we take the aspect of health and illness, we find that beliefs influence creating individuals' representations of health and illness, methods of diagnosis, and methods of treatment. Some widespread beliefs in our society still have a strong influence, including the evil eye causing illnesses that may lead to death in individuals, and there is the belief in witchcraft that causes lethargy and lack of effort to move and work, and the individual who is deluded into believing that he is bewitched often remains withdrawn and isolated, and he suffers from anxiety and frustration, even if his physical strength is healthy and strong, and he may live for years under the influence of this narcotic belief until he dies (Rehab Mokhtar, 2014, p. 179).

In the midst of this, health behavior remains in front of wide areas, and is lost, especially if the specific areas of health behavior conflict and dissonance between the beliefs and perceptions of traditional medicine and those related to modern medicine, and in light of the absence of the value, cultural and social dimension. From this we ask the following questions:

- Does the social bond of sociability and sensitivity have an effect on the type of medication used?
- Do beliefs and perceptions of disease factors have an impact on the pattern of diet followed?
- Does the degree of sociability of drugs and drugs and their future prognosis have an impact on therapeutic tools?

## **1- Sociological approaches to the duality of health and illness and the issue of health behavior**

In order to understand the objectives of the research and its intellectual perceptions that we want to highlight to the reader, it is necessary to give an overview of the scientific heritage, as we attempt in this presentation to present a historical chronology of the sociology of health and illness that is inherent in a value, cultural, and social system that is almost inseparable from the vital biological dimension, that is, it was treated with different philosophies between societies, and even different behaviors and behaviors among members of the same society. If medical sociology highlights the trends and values of society towards popular and official medicine, and how to invest them in strengthening official medicine in the face of popular medicine, then medical anthropology helps us complete the features of the picture affecting health and disease by focusing on cultural elements such as customs, beliefs, and popular proverbs and prevailing rituals, and their role in health and illness.” (Ali Elmakawi, undated, p. 48)

Ibn Khaldun showed us that the incidence of these diseases is more among the people of urban areas and cities, due to their fertile livelihood and the abundance of their food, and their limited confinement to one type of food, and their lack of time to eat it -which is the urban areas- due to the abundance and diversity of foods there. One of the causes of diseases that affect the body in modern times is mixing some spices and fruits with food to increase taste and flavor. So that they are not limited to one type, we may count several types of cooking in one day, up to forty types of plants and animals, so the food has a strange mood and may be strange to the body and its parts. While diseases are less common among the Bedouin people because their food is often limited, due to the lack of grains, and their food is simple and far from mixing. They also practice sports, unlike urban people, due to a lot of movement, so they run with horses or practice hunting... thus digestion is improved, and food is not added to food in the stomach, so their moods are healthier and farther away from diseases, and their need for medicine is reduced. (Baghdadi Khayra, 2020, p. 61).

As for M. Mauss (1872-1950), he investigated how society affects physical practices. It appears from Mauss's analysis that the body is linked to the prevailing social culture, which directs the body's movements. Parsons focused most of his research on studying illness as a social behavior and analyzing its relationship to social values. From this standpoint, Parsons posed the following questions:

- Why do some individuals with the same symptoms behave differently? Why do some of them declare the disease while others do not?
- Why do some people go to the doctor and others do not? Parsons answers that the relationship between the individual and his illness is an image of the relationship that links the individual to social standards.

According to Fredson, the history of medicine shows us that current medical ideas about disease are not the same as those in medicine yesterday. Medical knowledge, according to him, is a construction of disease as a condition and a social situation whose source is deviation. The doctor plays a social role in modifying the patient's behavior by giving him a new position in the social

structure. (Baghdadi Khayra, 2020, 66 .)The project that Herzlich initiated for herself is directed towards revealing this social dimension and symbol within society, through a set of major questions, related to:

- What are the criteria by which health and illness are socially determined?
- What is the causal conception of health and disease? And the nature of the pathological phenomenon within society?
- What is the relationship between health, illness and social values?
- What is the impact of health and illness on social participation?
- What is the relationship between health, illness and death?

It is clear from Herzlich's analysis that the researcher in health and illness must focus his attention on the symbolism of the disease in the patient or society, because understanding this symbolism leads the researcher to understand the social interpretations of the disease, and the image of the disease in the patient's disease experience, and therefore it focuses on the social construction of the disease in The mentality of the person carrying the disease and those around him, so the disease has a social and cultural background, as it is linked to the prevailing culture pattern (Baghdadi Khayra, 2020, p. 74).

Rivers made his addition with a study entitled "Medicine, Magic, and Religion", in which he drew attention to the fact that primitive medical systems are social systems, and that primitive medical practices must be viewed as logical in light of prevailing causal beliefs; In Rivers' view, "primitive medicine" is divided into three variables (magic, religion, and nature). The cause of illness is attributed to a magical action, supernatural forces, or a natural process. On the one hand, he showed that "primitive medicine" is based on a system of beliefs, which are coherent and logical, and on the other hand, he showed that these medical beliefs and practices are an integral part of the local culture. (Samira Ben Safi, 2018 p. 934).

## **2- Defining the concepts of the study**

The process of defining the concepts related to the study contributes to many roles, the most important of which is clarifying the purpose or general perception of it, especially the procedural concepts, which carefully define the meaning and purpose for the researcher, and also clarify its general framework for the reader. The following are the most important concepts of our study:

### **2-1 Health**

Blaxter (1990) defined health as the absence of disease. Individuals consider themselves healthy if they do not feel any physical symptoms, and their visits to the doctor are rare (Sabah Mahdi Ramis, Mohamed Amer Djamil, 2023, p. 22). As Durkheim sees, disease accompanies a person in varying degrees, and that the meaning of health is for a person to be in a state of the least possible amount of diseases, and that a person free of diseases does not exist, and that there are signs of illness that appear on a person, but in reality they are a sign of Health, if it disappears and it appears as if a person is healthy, then in reality he is sick. "(Najlaa Atef Khalil, 2006, p. 30); There are three levels of health:

- **Psychological health:** It is that a person is at peace with himself and is able to reconcile his desires and goals with material and social realities, as whoever is unable to live in peace with himself cannot be described as enjoying health.
- **Social health:** It is the ability of a person to form acceptable social relationships with people and to have an appropriate income to achieve a healthy life and healthy food.
- **Mental health:** It is a person's mental ability that is appropriate to the age stage he is going through, and it means the safety of the individual's various mental processes, such as remembering and thinking. (Ben Arous Hayat, p. 77)
- **Procedural definition:** It means psychological, social and mental safety and health, which is achieved and maintained through healthy behaviors recommended by specialists.

## 2-2 Healthy behaviour

A person's behavior is the twin of his thoughts, and by modifying his thoughts, his behavior is modified, and treating a person is nothing but a cure for his thoughts, judgments, and perceptions. This is precisely the starting point of the cognitive trend that culture consists of logical rules that are based on ideas, through which the rules of behavior can be reached, not the behavior itself; Common concepts about disease, which were and still are an area of research in some medical anthropological works that are concerned with the cognitive trend, are an integral part of human interactions and activities that contribute effectively to meeting daily needs. (Ghada Ezzat Hussein, 2019, p. 104).

Healthy behavior is the totality of behaviors issued by individuals for the purpose of preventing diseases, epidemics, and viruses by adopting healthy habits and practices that are consistent with health guidelines (Sabah Mahdi Ramis, Mohamed Amer Djamil, 2023, p. 21.), meaning a set of actions that we engage in intentionally to achieve good health, or to maintain it or to improve it, in addition to the actions that we perform to protect ourselves from diseases, it is the behavior that leads to a (positively-negative) impact on the health of the individual (Hana Shuweikh, Health Psychology, 2012, p. 24)

It is a comprehensive concept for patterns of behavior and attitudes based on health and illness, and on the use of medical services, and it is concerned with analyzing the potential impact of human health-related behavior patterns at the individual and collective levels, the social foundations of diseases and their overcoming, and health. It is also concerned with the following aspects of healthy behavior: developing and maintaining health; Prevention and treatment of diseases; Identifying dangerous types of behavior. (Aakla Suleiman, 2021, p. 217).

**Procedural definition:** It represents those actions intended to prevent and treat diseases, which stem from ideas and beliefs about health, as well as methods of treatment and experimentation, and their source may be traditional values or newly discovered.

### 2-3 Traditional Medicine

Traditional or popular medicine is defined as: “Part of the cultural values and knowledge that, since ancient times, formed a therapeutic medical system built on traditional forms of beliefs, behaviors, and practices, whose goal is to resist disease in the pursuit of recovery”. (Saida Shein, 2015, p. 147)

Traditional medicine means all traditional ideas that rely on treating disease in traditional ways that are far from the formal treatment known as modern medicine. In this regard, folk medicine is: “all traditional ideas and viewpoints about disease and treatment, and all related behaviors and practices related to disease prevention and treatment, regardless of the modern medical system” (Fatima Messani, 2018, p. 160).

In this regard, medical science is considered a liberal profession, and treatment with the Holy Qur’an has become widespread in modern medicine circles, as it has been scientifically proven that bowing and prostrating during prayer is related to stimulating blood circulation and affects behavior (Abd Elbaki Ghafour, No. 11, p. 268). This was also confirmed by Jean Claude Guyot in his book “What Medicine? For What Society? The crisis of medicine in itself is a crisis of society, because the sociological truth is not far from the medical truth, as both are complementary to the other, so if society does not pay attention to the health programs issued by the state, this will lead to the spread of more diseases” (Saida Shein, 2015, p. 94)

**Procedural definition:** It is all inherited experiences and all social experiences extracted to deal with and treat diseases.

### 3-4- Modern medicine

According to Chaaban Khalaf-Allah in his book “Stem Cell Therapy” (A Revolution in Modern Medicine), modern medicine is complex microscopic medicine and relies on the use of stem cells that are distinguished by their ability to the renew, as well as, chemical preparations, drugs, and serums (they can strengthen the body and weaken health at the same time), and the medicalization of life is the generalization of medical treatment to include all of life, and it is the process through which matters related to life, such as weight, smoking, or sexual practices, are transformed into An issue that is addressed by medical experts...as a form of social control, which consists of placing patients under the supervision of medical experts (Anthony Giddens, Philip Sutton 2018, p. 258).

Modern medicine refers to the medical field that uses modern and advanced technologies and knowledge to diagnose and treat diseases. Modern medicine relies on medical sciences such as molecular biology, genetics, prediction, medical information technology, robotics, artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and many other technological developments .Modern medicine focuses on research and innovation to develop new medical tools and technologies that contribute to improving the quality of health care and treating diseases, and as an example of these modern technologies: medical imaging with enhanced computed tomography (CT scan); magnetic resonance imaging (MRI); genetic medicine; Stem

cell therapy; robotic surgery; precision medicine; Molecular and genetic analyzes of diseases.

- **Procedural definition:** It is all scientific discoveries and innovations in the development of medical tools and techniques, whose goal is to raise the quality of health care, in ways different from traditional medicine.

### **3- Methodological procedures for the study**

#### **3-1 The method used**

We used the descriptive and analytical method in order to describe and analyze the phenomenon to be studied as it is in reality and to interrogate it. This was done by collecting information and facts, tabulating and classifying them, in addition to analyzing and interpreting them to link their dimensions and indicators to each other.

#### **3-2 Tools for collecting information**

**Observation and interview form:** We used simple and in-depth observation to collect information from the field, where we came into contact with respondents who carried out behaviors that were against their health, or assumed the role of a doctor, such as purchasing medications from pharmacies without consulting him, and without a prescription; As for the standardized interview form technique, we interviewed the elements of the research sample, which are patients, in order to question them about their health behaviors between what is traditional and what is modern.

#### **3-3 Fields of study**

- **Spatial field:** We conducted a field study in the city of Laghouat.

- **Human domain:** sample unit: sick people, while the sample size is 65;

**As for its type:** it is a purposive sample, so we chose a sample appropriate to the research objectives.

- **Temporal field:** We conducted field research in the period extending from February 2, 2023, until October of the same year, and during this period we witnessed visits to the school in question, where we made observations of healthy behaviors between what is traditional and inherited, and what is scientifically discovered.

### **4- Presentation, analysis and interpretation of field data**

4-1 The social bond (sociability and sensitivity) of the patient and its relationship to the type of medication used.

-It was found through field research that 52.85% of patients resort to modern medicine, where 70% of patients do not find contact, sociability, or sensitivity at all from the nurse, and this is matched by only 10% of those who find contact, sociability, or sensitivity to the patient from the nurse.

The results also show that 24.85% of patients resort to spiritual medicine, supported by 60% of patients who find contact, sociability, or sensitivity from the

nurse, they are matched by only 10% of those who do not experience contact, sociability, or sensitivity from the nurse.

### **Sociological analysis**

Health behavior related to the type of medication used has a large and close relationship with the degree of sociability, contact, and sensitivity to the patient, and this is what Parsons wanted to highlight through special treatment and kindness to him. The Holy Qur'an preceded him in that, as Islamic law encourages the morale of the patient and his awareness of his place and importance within the social structure, especially the direct relationship between the patient and the nurse, as it is considered an obstacle to modern medicine, which makes healthy behavior rebel against it in favor of traditional medicine or spiritual medicine, which many patients turn to it, especially women. What makes the person more and more reassured is talking to the patient about what happened and what will happen to him in the future, and telling him about the outcome of his illness from which he will recover in the future, this is what we call psychological comfort or social reassurance, and moral uplift, which is undoubtedly an important reason for recovery.

### **4-2 Beliefs and perceptions of disease factors and their relationship to the diet followed**

- It was found through field research that 42.85% of patients protect themselves with supplications, Quranic fortification, and prophetic herbs, supported by 69.23% who believe that the factors of diseases are the evil eye, envy, and witchcraft, and this is matched by only 09.37% who believe that the factors of diseases are Infection, viruses, pollution and malnutrition.

The results also show that 38.55% of patients follow a diet related to exercise, supported by 71.87% who believe that disease factors are infections, viruses, pollution, and malnutrition, and are matched by only 08.33% who believe that disease factors are fate and Genetic matters that have nothing to do with humans.

### **Sociological analysis**

Healthy behavior related to the diet followed has a close relationship with perceptions of disease factors, and the value-based, cultural, and social dimension has enough to drive healthy behavior through those beliefs and judgments about many diseases, as the value-based and cultural beliefs that are taken from The evil eye, envy, and witchcraft are the causes of diseases that make healthy behavior restricted and drawn towards prophetic medicine, rukyah, Qur'anic protection, prophetic herbs, and the practice of cupping on a regular and traditional basis, and it can even extend to spiritual medicine and quackery. Sound health culture and health awareness also have a significant impact on mental perceptions of the causes of diseases resulting from malnutrition, infection and pollution, which makes healthy behavior restricted and attracted towards diet and keenness to exercise.



### **4-3 The degree of sociability of medications and drugs to their future prognosis, and their relationship to therapeutic tools and methods**

It was found through field research that 48.57% of patients use herbal preparations and drugs, supported by 73.68% of those who are comfortable and certain of their future prognosis, compared to only 15% who believe that they are harmful and do not know their future prognosis and repercussions. The results also show that 44.28% of patients use chemical preparations and medications, supported by 75% of those who do not realize their fate and future repercussions, and that their benefit is immediate and not future, compared to only 15.78% of those who trust these drugs and chemical solutions; The results also show that 07.14% of patients use rukyah and self-protection, and they never see any negative repercussions or unfortunate consequences in the future.

#### **Sociological analysis**

Health behavior related to the tools used and therapeutic methods have a close relationship and is strongly influenced by the sociability of medicines and drugs and the reliability of their future fate, which explains the majority of patients' inclination to herbal preparations and drugs because the value and cultural dimension carries in the social imagination a stereotypical and beautiful image (if it does not help to heal, it will not harm), and it can never and under no circumstances cause future damage, whatever its kind, and at the same time fear perpetuates all fear of those chemical preparations and serums whose future fate is feared. In addition to some social rulings that hinder modern medicine and which we cannot mention, we point to some of them, such as the social ruling: "Ask an experimenter and do not ask a doctor," which is in fact an abbreviation of the nursing cycle and diagnostic stages, as the patient goes directly to buy medicines from the pharmacy without Consultation with a doctor; Or those social rulings that hold that these chemical preparations are made from substances forbidden by Islamic law, Or that we do not have modern medicine, nor even the necessary tools for it, under the pretext that members of the bourgeois classes have left for treatment outside the country, and that they do not explain to the doctor what he does or what he wants and does not explain the disease and its process, or that it is a waste of time and expensive of money, and this is all due to the Many times because of the lack of acceptance of the disease, and the inability to confront it, and here we are faced with a wide door to health awareness and the re-polarization of the value and cultural dimension in the interest of modern medicine.

#### **Conclusion**

The wide field that confronts healthy behavior in our time, between what is traditional, repeated, and acquired, and what is modern, new and discovered, has been bifurcated into four branches:

- Healthy behavior that is compatible with traditional medicine and modern medicine together, and vice versa.
- And behavior that is compatible with traditional depression and not compatible with modern medicine, and the opposite is also true this time, and all of this would undermine or increase the severity of health alienation

and place it before a dark blur. As researchers in sociology, our goal is to monitor and follow up on social behavior, through the meanings and value-based, social, and cultural symbols it carries, as they are what drive and justify it.

Based on this study as well, we propose solutions to these behavioral conflicts based on this value, cultural, and social dimension that was ignored and absent by doctors, as they were preoccupied with laboratory analyses and organic experiments and completely forgot about it, while they did not realize that it was never absent in human times, but rather it was the first actor and the first launch of methods of treatment and prevention, and this is what traditional medicine gave preference to modern medicine about healthy behaviors.

### References

- Aakla Suleiman. (2021). The athlete's lifestyle, the guide to integrated preparation and quality performance, Dar Al-Academyon, Iraq.
- Ali Elmakkawi: Medical Sociology - A Theoretical Introduction, Egypt, undated.
- Baghdadi Khaira. (2020). Health and illness in Algerian society - between traditional and modern practice, Democratic Center, Germany, 1st edition.
- Ben Arous Hayat: Medical anthropology and its role in issues of health and illness, Social Studies, No. 13.
- Ghada Ezzat Hussein. (2019). Theoretical trends in medical anthropology, Journal of the Faculty of Arts, Beni Suef University.
- Hana Shuwaikh. (2012). Health Psychology, Anglo-Egyptian Library, Egypt.
- Kim melman, J., & Federico, C. (2017). Consider drug efficacy before first in human trials.
- Najlaa Atef Khalil. (2006). In Medical Sociology - The Culture of Health and Illness, Anglo-Egyptian Library, Egypt.
- Saida Shein. (2015). Social Perceptions of Traditional Medicine, doctoral thesis, University of Biskra.
- Samira Ben Safi. (2018). The duality of health and illness from an anthropological perspective, Journal of the Researcher in Human and Social Sciences, Issue 35, University of Ouargla.
- Topol, E. J. (2012). The creative destruction of medicine: how the digital revolution will create better health care. Basic Books.