

The Role of Cultural Representations in Choosing the Traditional Therapeutic Practices in Mostaganem (An Anthropological Study of the Disease Sciatica)

دور التمثلات الثقافية في اختيار الممارسة العلاجية التقليدية بمنطقة مستغانم
(دراسة أنثروبولوجية لمرض عرق النسا)

Mohammed El Amine Behtita* محمد الأمين بحطيطه aminebehtita@yahoo.fr	Anthropology	Département of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Oran 02 Mohamed Ben Ahmed, Algeria
Sahraoui Benhalima صحراوي بن حليلة benhalima_sahraoui@yahoo.fr	Sociology	University Abdelhamid Ibn Badis Mostaganem, Algeria
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Abstract (English): The study at hand sheds light on an important aspect of the traditional therapeutic practices by searching for the motives that make the patient resort to traditional treatment despite the availability of formal medical treatment. The methodology adopted is an anthropological approach, where in order to achieve the objectives of the study, the researcher used observation, interview and photography as data collection tools. The study was conducted on the research population of the region of Mostaganem, consisting of eleven traditional healers and twenty-three patients.

Keywords: traditional therapy; formal medical treatment; sciatica; therapeutic practice; cultural perceptions.

ملخص باللغة العربية: الدراسة تسلط الضوء على الممارسات العلاجية التقليدية من خلال البحث عن الدوافع التي تجعل المريض يلجأ إلى العلاج التقليدي على الرغم من وجود العلاج الطبي الرسمي، وذلك من خلال دراسة ميدانية حول أسباب و دوافع لجوء مجتمع البحث بمنطقة مستغانم للممارسات العلاجية التقليدية لعلاج عرق النسا بدلا من الممارسات العلاجية الطبية الرسمية. وقد أجريت الدراسة على مجتمع البحث من سكان المنطقة؛ و قد أظهرت الدراسة أن أسباب لجوء مجتمع البحث إلى الممارسة العلاجية التقليدية لعرق النسا هو عجز بعض الأطباء من تخفيف الآلام و علاج المرض كلية ولفقدان الأمل في الطب الرسمي حينما يتعلق العلاج بنوعية وخطورة المرض.

كلمات مفتاحية: التمثلات؛ العلاج التقليدي؛ الممارسة العلاجية التقليدية؛ العلاج الطبي الرسمي؛ عرق النسا؛ المرض.

* Corresponding author: aminebehtita@yahoo.fr.

1. Introduction

Health and disease problems are among the social problems that threaten the goals of society seeking to reduce disease infections and spread a level of health awareness in order to find the adaptation of societies to the rapid reality in different areas of life, However, the reality of the prevailing cultural values in modern societies greatly affected the healthy social system. The advertising culture, for example, was not limited to various fields, including industrial, such as smoking, alcohol, decorations, cars, foods, and others, which caused the emergence of different types of pathogens. For simple and chronic complex health problems.

This research adopts an anthropological research framework which seeks to contribute to the enrichment of field research by preserving the heritage of Algeria, represented by the Mostaganem region.

2. The general problem of study and sub-problems:

Traditional treatments are generally characterized by two characters, the first of which is natural (such as medicinal herbs, ironing, cupping, perspiration and sciatica) and the second one is of a absent nature (writing veils and visiting the shrines of good saints), all traditional methods inherited from ancient times, this phenomenon led us to research the field of traditional treatments spread through knowledge of its components and mechanisms and causes of its continuation and spread despite the developments of modern medicine day by day, and despite its development, although it has not been able to displace the development of modern medicine. The traditional popular in his way, because it depends on the nature of the social and economic changes that occur in society and the beliefs of the healers about the methods they use in seeking healing, including their use of one of the therapeutic methods of the therapeutic practice of sciatica, and what is problematic here: what are the most important representations of the traditional therapeutic practice of this disease in the Area of Mostaganem?

Then, how has this treatment been able to sustain and spread despite the development of modern treatment methods?

Therefore, we will try to study this issue based on the fundamental problem that revolves around the motives that guide the research community in Mostaganem region to resort to the traditional therapeutic practice of sciatica despite the development of modern medicine?

From this problem, the following sub-questions arise:

- A. Has the patient's preconception had an impact on the choice of traditional therapeutic practice?
- B. Does the patient's perception of hopelessness in modern medicine have a reason to choose traditional therapeutic practice?

C. Does the patient's perception of the inability of some doctors to alleviate the pain of the disease a reason for choosing traditional therapeutic practice?

Thus, the researcher came up with three hypotheses to study the research.

3- The Representations of Disease in Algerian Society

The disease has many meanings in Algerian society, including:

3.1. Sickness and sacred religious meaning: where the individual in muslim society resorts to religious interpretation and divine will, it is his belief, adopting the prophet's, peace be upon him, saying: "Allah has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it". (Sahih El-Boukhari - Abu Hurairah) Disease is considered to be from Allah and therefore the individual is afflicted with it, and yet it does not mean that he should take the reasons based on his interpretation on religious texts such as the Qur'an, such as the saying of the almighty Allah: "*And We send down of the Qur'an that which is healing and mercy for the believers, but it does not increase the wrongdoers except in loss.*" (Surat Al-Israa, verse 82) and hadith as the saying of the Prophet, peace be upon him: "*Make use of medical treatment, for Allah has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it, with the exception of one disease, namely death and aging.*" (It was included by Ahmad in his Musnad on the authority of Ibn Masoud) Accordingly, the general phrases recite: "Healing is in the hand of Allah." "The doctor cures but Allah heals".

3.2- Disease as Punishment (Mekaoui, Ali, 2007, p. 26):

It is believed that many societies, especially those that adopt virtue and purity as a symbol such as Algeria, for example Ojibwa represents a high value, and its violation is threatened by the disease as they belief. Therefore, Algerian society is not far from other societies that explain that some individuals get sick because of their Religious violations, the Prophet (peace be upon him) said: "*Immorality never appears among a people to such an extent that they commit it openly, but plagues and diseases that were never known among the predecessors will spread among them.*" (Ibn Majah, Sunan Ibn Maja, 1954, part 1, p. 1333).

3.3. Disease and magical meaning: In Arab societies, some diseases are due to the magical cause, although the Qur'anic text shows that the magician is not cultivated in his creation: "*Surely what they have worked out is only the plotting of a sorcerer; and the sorcerer will not prosper where he comes up.*" (Surat Ta-Ha – Verse 69) However, some individuals attribute the disease to magical reasons, and therefore they perceive Ruqya as a kind of treatment for it, adopting the saying of Allah Almighty: "And we are sending down, of the Qur'an, that which is cure and a mercy to the believers" (Surat Al-Israa, verse, 82). In addition, Cupping is used at some of the Ruqya practitioners to nullify the effect of magic, as it is done by (Matreb and Metrem)

3-4 Sickness and the meaning of atonement for sins: disease is not always a punishment, but some see that sickness is a method of erasing committed sins.

Representations in the Algerian society represented through the Mostaganemian community are a set of perceptions of health, disease and methods of treatment by presenting perceptions and ideas that are present and present in the mind of the individual, that there is a traditional treatment that can be practiced by the traditional therapist, and therefore he is able to explain And forming a specific concept about the condition of the body, health and disease through the therapeutic practice of sciatica.

4- Factors affecting the choice of traditional curative practice:

One of the factors affecting the representations of the individual is the culture of the group, as it has a great impact in giving the individual a set of criteria and values in building his personality, which makes him carry perceptions about all aspects of life, and among other things related to defining the concepts of health and disease and visualizing appropriate prevention and treatment methods, among its functions among sociologists (Farouk, Ahmed Mostafa, Mervat, El-Eshrawy Othman, 2011, p. 233) it provides the individual with the meanings of things and events so that he can always draw from them his basic concepts, so that he can determine what is natural and unnatural and what is logical and illogical, or what is ethical and immoral, to be provided in the end with values and goals, and if it defines the individual with different positions, it specifies for him the patterns of behavior to be followed in each situation, and perhaps the most important of this is his adoption of methods of treatment that he finds clear to him from Certain diseases, taking a suitable therapist, whether in the traditional or medical treatment

Therefore, culture has a great influence in defining the concepts of health and disease and the different methods of treatment. International bodies and organizations are very interested in studying everything related to human activities in an effort to provide different services and improve the status and conditions of individuals. For example, UNICEF was interested in strengthening and financing the use of various programs, including the RAP ***** program, as an entry point to improve the effectiveness of health programs. It was applied in Egypt, where work began in October 1988, and all data were completed in the third week of December of the same year. And it presented a cultural map that includes some beliefs and behaviors of some local communities, and some health care providers, to help improve the viability of these programs (Al-Jawhari, Muhammad, Shukri, Alia, and others, 2007, p. 186).

From the foregoing, we note that the current Algerian society is linked to its culture and the traditions and customs it holds, as it contributes to the manufacture of representations of health and disease among the individual and society, and thus contributes to determining knowledge of

methods of prevention and treatment of diseases, according to what cultural and religious elements carry from religion and beliefs.

5 - Field study:

First: Methodological procedures: This study was conducted on the research community of residents of the Mostaganem region consisting of eleven traditional healers and 23 twenty-three patients, spanning 13 months from July 2018 to July 2019.

Second: The methodological approach: The nature of the anthropological study relied on the descriptive approach by dealing with one of the traditional therapeutic practices as it is in the Mostaganemian reality represented in the treatment of sciatica as a model, using observation, interview and photography for the scientific collection of quantitative and qualitative data and analyzing it in order to reach the results.

Third, the results of the field study: The study dealt with the role of cultural representations in choosing the traditional therapeutic practice in Mostaganem through an anthropological study of sciatica as a model and yielded the following results:

(H) = Healer - (P) = condition and intended by the patient

6.1 Characteristics of the research population

Distribution of the research community of healers according to their specialty:

specialty	Repetition	Percentage %
The cupper (Hajjam) doctor	02	18.18%
Herbalist cupper (Hajjam)	02	18.18%
herbalist practitioner	02	18.18%
Upscale cupper (Hajjam)	03	27.27 %
practitioner cupping only	02	18.18 %
Total	11	100 %

Table 1:

Table No. (1) represents the competence of the eleven healers who were interviewed by two doctors with a rate of 18.18%, two herbalists practicing with cupping by 18.18%, two herbalists practicing for the herd by 18.18%, and three cohorts practicing cupping by 27.27%, and only two volumes with a rate of 18.18 % while the educational levels of the rest of the other therapists vary, among them three of them 03 did not exceed the intermediate stage, and the rest are university students.

6-2- According to the methods of knowledge of the research community, those who treat the efficacy of traditional remedial practice

How do you know the effectiveness of the therapeutic practice?	Cupper Doctor	Herbalist practitioner's	Cupper Herbalist	Cupper Raqi	Cupper	Total	%
Ask the patient after return	11					11	100%
Medical and laboratory tests	02	00	02	01	01	06	54.55
Immediately after the traditional therapeutic practice session	11					11	100%

Table No. (04m)

Table (4 pm) shows the healers' knowledge of the efficacy of the traditional therapeutic practice, as all of them ask the patient before and after the traditional remedial practice to know the extent of their efficacy and their recovery. And with this, 54.55% of the respondents use medical analyses to know the extent of innocence and progress towards healing, as the patients express their psychological relief through some indications and symptoms indicating agility, lack migraines, other organ ache or ease of movement.

The Healer (Matt Nash) says that one of the expatriate patients in France was visiting Algeria during his stay in Mostaganem where he was suffering from severe pain. Thus, through a diagnostic session it was found that the patient was under a massive use of medications and test, however he still suffers from pain, so the healer suggested cupping, which the patient did not know existed, After the cupping process was over, the patient was able to raise his arm, which he has difficulty in lifting it before, saying: "*Je me sens un peu très bien*" – "I feel a bit better' which made the healer invites him to a second treatment session.

6-3- Distribution of the research population of patients according to their perceptions about the reasons and motives for the increase over the traditional therapeutic practice for sciatica (in the case of those who see an increase):

In your perception, and based on your experience, how do you explain the choice of the patients of the traditional therapeutic practice of sciatica as a method of treatment? What are the reasons behind the increasing treatment of this method?	Repetition	Percent
The lower cost of traditional treatment practice compared to the cost of medical treatment.	23	100
The simplicity of traditional remedial practice procedures	23	100
The conviction of the efficacy of traditional therapeutic practice as a result of the therapeutic experience	23	100
Lack of confidence in formal medical treatment	17	73.91
Some doctors were unable to relieve pain or treat disease	15	65.22
The religious conviction of traditional healing practice as a result of religious belief being a prophetic remedy	08	34.78
New treatment experience	05	21.74

Table (03)

Table (03) shows the interpretation of patients from the research community according to their perceptions about the causes, motives and the increase in the traditional therapeutic practice, where they explain the motives of resorting to it for many reasons that can be summarized in the following reasons:

As for the first reason, the research population shows that sceptical people are increasingly towards the traditional sciatica treatment and primarily by 100% to 03 indicators, which are: The low costs of traditional treatment practice compared to the costs of medical treatment, as they see it as simple in its methods, costs and procedures, it also does not require a large space to practice it. As for formal medicine, despite its freeness in Algeria, treatment is very expensive for the state budget, let alone treatment in the private sector. This corresponds to the study of Farouk Ahmed Mustafa and Mervat El-Eshmawy Othman from Alexandria University of Anthropology, where they assert that: "One of the reasons for the success of traditional therapy is the high cost of modern treatment, even though treatment is free compared to traditional treatment that costs less".

The second indicator is the simplicity of traditional therapeutic practice procedures is that they secure, during practice, the language that is understood which is far away from the language of

scientific terms in the formal medicine that the patient does not understand, but rather addressed according to the cultural, social context that the patient carries. The cultural dimension in the context of the healer's relationship with the patient is very important for both of them, good communication and mutual understanding are essential for a good care, this is what the traditional healer of sciatica provides.

And the third indicator is the conviction of the efficacy of the traditional therapeutic practice as a result of the therapeutic experience, as the patients experienced a similar recovery, as it is a therapeutic method that includes treatment, recreation, and respiration, and on this basis the demand for it increases. One of the characteristics of traditional therapeutic is that they make the treatment of the patient with the patient himself, not with the affected organ, as he gives a lot of his time to hear his complaint, which makes him feel comfortable. The patient requests the therapist to stop the disease and pain through the treatment, and this is what this practice believes in their perception, as he seeks Therapists to improve the relationship with the patient in order to understand and understand the history of his illness, not only is the medical dimension, especially for the medical therapist, but there are social and psychological dimensions in the nature of the relationship between man and others.

The second reason is the lack of confidence in the official medical treatment, especially in the complicated case or that requires surgical intervention for sciatica, as patients see that chemotherapy has failed to treat some diseases despite its progress, and that it has side effects as they see in surgery for sciatica fear of paralysis.

The third reason is the inability of some doctors to mitigate pain or treat the disease, as patients attribute the ineffectiveness of medications as a result of their repeated return to the official doctor on the one hand and to their inability to recover on the other hand.

The fourth reason: religious conviction as a result of religious belief, as 08 patients attributed 34.78% that the reasons for the increasing number of the healers on the traditional therapeutic practice of sciatica is because it is prophetic treatment. As a matter of fact, patient's culture in the popular imagination specifies for him the concepts of illness, health and the type of therapeutic practice, so it pushes him to use it even if he has no medical knowledge of it.

The fifth reason: 05 participants from the research population, with a rate of 21.74%, see the traditional therapeutic practice for sciatica as an experiment if it does not help it does not harm, the patient seeks to mitigate the pain and constant sessions fighting the disease, and searches for everything that has hope, even if the hope is simple.

7. Recommendations of the study:

A- The necessity of opening laboratories with different specializations for preserving the folklore in order to develop an anthropological map for the most important areas where traditional therapeutic practices are widespread.

B- Activating the anthropological field of studies, especially those related to traditional therapeutic practices.

C- The necessity of involving the formal medical system in anthropological medical research in order to raise the level of the prevalence of patients' reluctance to use formal medicine.

W- Inviting researchers to preserve and classify the local folklore.

C- A call to codify traditional remedial practices in order to benefit from the experimental balance.

8- Conclusion

The study concluded that an important aspect of the legacy of traditional therapeutic practices by searching for that motives that push the patients to try traditional therapeutic despite the existence of the formal medical treatment, and that is through a field study on the reasons and motives of a research population in Mostaganem region on the traditional therapeutic practices for treating sciatica instead of the official medical treatment practices. In this respect, the cultural representations of the patients played, in their relationship with the traditional therapist, a crucial role in reaching a therapeutic practice which is acceptable to them and contributes to the initiation of treatment and continuity in it. It is necessary to deal with them (healer/patient), good communication and mutual understanding for the sake of ensuring a good treatment. Hence, the patient's culture imposed on the therapist therapeutic models to preserve the patient's identity and affiliation, and in which he finds that comfort and psychological and physical balance. The therapist relies on this element to confirm this assumption. Maintains patient culture through traditional curative practice.

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