

**HEALTH BELIEFS AND PRACTICES OF THE TALAANDIG
OF SONGCO, LANTAPAN, BUKIDNON**

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ABSTRACT

This study provides a description of the cognitive orientation of the Talaandig in Bukidnon on what constitutes good health and illness, their preventive measures and healing practices. Perceptions are differentiated based on gender, age and medical systems. Ethnographic techniques were used in the conduct of qualitative research in the study area, specifically utilizing key informant interviews and participant observation. A total of twenty (20) Talaandig were interviewed, including their local chieftain, 4 local healers and 15 Talaandig men and women of different age groups. Data were thematically analyzed based on various perceptions on health beliefs on good health and illness, preventive health practices and curative health practices.

Beliefs and practices of Talaandig women and men, young and old, with regard to health and illness are a mixture of traditional and modern medical systems. Theoretically, these beliefs and practices are in line with both personalistic and naturalistic medical systems based on Foster and Anderson's framework (1978). While the Talaandig believes in the existence of seven spirits within the body of an individual that provides balance and therefore good health, they also believe that good food, nutrition and the environment contribute to one's well-being. In terms of health practices, rituals play a pervasive role whether in preventive or healing practices, and as such, these are performed over the entire life cycle of the individual, not only at the onset of illness. However, performance of rituals is already complemented with the use of herbal medicines as well as over-the-counter drugs. Consultations with traditional healers are also complemented with consultations with medical doctors.

Differences in gender and age in the Talaandig community do not translate to a disparity in perceptions as regards health beliefs and practices. Across gender and age groups, research participants expressed dualistic health beliefs and practices, and are involved in ritual performance as well as other traditional and modern practices, although at varying levels.

In sum, although the Talaandig has maintained its traditional health beliefs and practices, it has also been open to utilizing modern health beliefs and practices to maintain good health and avoid illness. Thus, it can be said that personalistic and naturalistic medical systems are not necessarily in a dichotomy with each other, but rather could complement each other within one culture.

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