# General Practices of Culture and Health

**By**
**Mustafa-Shaibu, Maryam Ph. D**
**Department of Sociology and Anthropology**
**University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.**
**,maryam.mustafa-shaibu@uniben.edu**
**&**
**Amen Edith Iilevare Ph.D.**
**Department of Sociology and Anthropology**
**University of Benin, Benin City, Edo State, Nigeria.**
**amen.ilevbare@uniben.edu**
**08068952951**

## Introduction

Culture and health is vast and universal, it affects perceptions of health behaviour, illness(aliment) and death, beliefs on causes of disease, mortality rate, epidemiological evidence on health, approaches to health promotion, how illness and pain are experienced and expressed, where patients seek help, and the types of treatment patients prefer. (Health promotion international 2013) The health institution should understand cultural considerations towards cultural attitudes on gender, as well as perceived needs of those it seeks to serve. Indeed, Lancet Commission (2014) on Culture and Health stated that "the systematic neglect of culture in health and health care is one barrier to the advancement of the highest standard of health worldwide" this implies that the cultural context (nutrition, environment, migration) of each society affect the health productivity and health promotion of the people. (WHO, Regional policy 2017).

Culture and health affects life-style choices, perception and precautions in healthcare and health seeking behavior, hence cultural factors are to be considered in designing health promotion studies. According to WHO regional policy in Europe, cultural determinant affect, their perceptions, daily practices and decision-making on people who may or may not share the same values and priorities. Cultivating the self-awareness knowledge involves recognizing that all forms of knowledge and practice both scientific, medical and social can influence culture. Appropriate, data collection and analysis methods, about what constitutes

evidence is required. According to Dean E. (2011) culture and health is a global priority involving lifestyle practices which cannot be address independently from people's cultural background. Health caring competence includes cultural practice such as prejudice, assumptions and institutional values needs to include more knowledge to develop new ways to health care delivery.

Planned and unplanned migrations, diverse social practices, and emerging disease vectors, familiar illnesses such as communicable and non-communicable has continue to affect individual, household, community, and state in transforming how health and wellbeing are understood. These are forces that increase medical knowledge and how it is valued and applied.(World Health Organization, 2011).

In this, 21st century understanding culture and what it means is crucial to improvement of health, and wellbeing which is why various disciplines of study, now central to our future health and wellbeing. Today, anthropological and medical humanities approaches to health and wellbeing are important to understanding how we analyze issues on health and what makes us healthy. (Health Promotion International, 2013).

Dimensions of the concepts (cultural context, cultural health, natural health, cultural continuity, culture of health, health culture, health behavior, cultural barriers).

**What is culture?**

In anthropologist there are lots of definitions on culture one of it is, Edmund Tylor (1871) definition which states that "culture as the complex whole which includes knowledge, art, moral, custom and any other capabilities acquired by man as a member of the society". (Tylor,1871). In another definition according to Francis commission in culture matters policy, it was recommended that culture is "the shared, overt and covert understandings that constitute conventions and practices, and the ideas, symbols, and concrete artifacts that sustain conventions and practices, and make them meaningful".(A. David Napier, 2013). This definition is useful because Cultural competence is defined as awareness of the cultural factors that influence another's views and attitudes, and an assimilation of that awareness into professional practice.

In 2001, the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization(UNESCO) defined culture as "the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group which encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs" (Levi –Strauss, 2001). This definition highlights the fact that culture comprises not only the physical artefacts around which group identity emerges, but also the conventions that frame our sense of reality. While shared and coherent, culture is not a static set of beliefs and practices, but rather an ever emerging array of collective values, ethics, assumptions and ideals. Other cultures are as dynamic as our own. Cultural context helps enhance the following such as:

It helps us to show people the relative nature of values that makes us universal and healthier. It creates an awareness for compounding influence of diverse but interrelated determinants, such as age, sex, religion, socioeconomic status, level of education to understanding culture as a source of resilience to health issues. Perceptions of physical and psychological wellbeing is substantially across and within societies, cultures often merge and change, human diversity assures lifestyles and beliefs will persist so that value systems remain distinct. Culture centers not only on habits and beliefs but also about perceived wellbeing, moral practices and values. (David Napier, 2013).

**Culture** is a world system adopted by human in different societies to determine their differences and diversification in language, beliefs, music, art and lifestyle, thus this helps them to understand, how to live and how others live two, and what their problem are, culture from once society to another change, so also the behaviour of the people is influenced for development. (Giddens and Duneier 2010). This implies that the concept of culture, includes the creative tools of learn that affect the way of life of the people and practices and knowledge for individual achievement.

**Health:** Heath is a broad concept that deals with the entirety of man or individual existing in a society. The health system of any society is often affected by cultural factors, social factors, and environmental factors in the society.

According to Tristram Engelhard, Jr. Health cannot be defined with one homogenous concept or independent definition rather it is ambiguous. It independent definition rather it is ambiguous. It suggests the notion of satisfactory lifestyle, which include adoption of good adaptation. It involves continues strives but it can never be fully achieved. However, health from the general perspectives means the total wellbeing of an individual (old English dictionary) Health is the total absence of sickness in the body.

**Culture and Health:** Culture as the total way of life is dynamic is the health of the individuals in the society; it changes due to socio-cultural factors in the society. Culture and health is a pattern of ideas, customs influence on which constantly evolving. Culture and Health are broad issue that deal with human behaviours, beliefs system and the societal influence on the people. It influences design on lifestyles, character development and attitude, knowledge, of human in the society culture is part of human existence so is the health of every human in the society. Cultures on health influences perceptions of health, illness and death, beliefs about causes of diseases, strategies to promoting health how pain and ill ness are experienced and expressed, where and types of patients prefer in seeking help (Maureen 2018). The older generations predominantly belong to the old culture while the younger generations are often affects in between the old and new culture and try to balance the different culture variation.

Cultural competence is one of the means of communication between the caregivers and the patients to remove barriers to health care services. Cultural competence includes an overall public health policy and cultural determinant of health behavior to better understand and compare prevalent cases and solutions (lancet commission, 2014)

Culture of Health can also be called health culture is broadly defined as one in which good health and well-being flourish across geographic, demographic, and social sectors; fostering healthy equitable communities guides public and private decision making; and everyone has the opportunity to make choices that lead to healthy lifestyles.

The exact definition of a Culture of Health can look very different to different people. A national Culture of Health must embrace a wide variety of beliefs, customs, and values. Ultimately it will be as diverse and multifaceted as the population it serves. (evidenceforaction,com)

In Nigeria cultural continuity, influences on family dynamics including gender roles patterns of support among family members have influenced the perception of the level of control that individual have in preventing and controlling disease (Maureen 2018). This aspect can be view among the older (Aged) generation and the young generation where their families are made to decide the type of health care and service provider to use. Cultural continuity which involves the collective or individuals ideologies or views as regards health treatment, diagnoses and causes of illness (Erionosho 2005). Others effect of culture on health, the breast feeding method which promotes health of the women and child, this often last for 3 years, this aspect have been influenced due to social change.

Children spacing culturally was achieved, due to prolonged breast feeding and sexual abstinence, the practice of female genital mutilation, the practice of early marriage, and the widowhood rites. All these have contributed positively and negatively to the health of individuals and collectively to the societies.

**Culture, health and illness**

The medical anthropology professionals focus in this area because it helps to study the cultural background and explain illness, according to their believe the types and methods of treatment.(Katrina Schreiber,2015), cultural behavior affects human health, culture as system which include shared knowledge, belief, various practices from different group and individuals. The medical anthropology are interested in knowing the behavior of individual's unique cultural experience.(public health volume 2020)

Natural health is one unique practice that affects the roles of the patient. It is an art of science and practice of disease, diagnosis and treatment, and the prevention through natural remedies. It focus on the daily diet of people, stress, sleep habits and lifestyle of the people. Natural health is otherwise known as alternative medicine. Health or traditional health care (School of Health. June 2020). It often

empowers the individual to be responsible for their health and healing using the preventive measures. It simply and often times inexpensive.

**The associations of health culture, health behavior and cultural barriers.**
Each health care profession has a different culture which includes values, beliefs, attitudes, customs and behaviours. Professional cultures evolved as the different professions developed, reflecting historic factors, as well as social class and gender issues. Educational experiences and the socialization process that occur during the training of each health professional reinforce the common values, problem-solving approaches and language/jargon of each profession. Increasing specialization has lead to even further immersion of the learners into the knowledge and culture of their own professional group. These professional cultures contribute to the challenges of effective interprofessional teamwork. Insight into the educational, systemic and personal factors which contribute to the culture of the professions can help guide the development of innovative educational methodologies to improve interprofessional collaborative practice.

**lmportance of Culture and Health**
Enhance the ideologies of promoting health status of individuals. Culture and health is best understood from different cultural content. Culture cannot be separated because each represents different aspect of the society. The ethnic groups are identified by their culture and its influence on the health of the people (Erionosho 2005).

In our contemporary societies culture and health has been evolving along side with technologies and communication in the global world. Individual now decide what kind of cultural practices to adopt that suit their lifestyles and daily routines. This social change have often affected the health of individuals, i.e. families and home adjust to only 6 months of breast feeding and family planning method leading to early cancer among women and reaction as the case may be.

Cultural health problems from child marriage that affect the reproductive organs of young women. The treatment of health and illness has much focus on the religious than the traditional and orthodox practices Erionosho (2005). However several fields of study have been working on this but the health sociology have

applied several ways in studying the culture and health of the people which is relevant to the society which are the observational/participatory method with qualitative research, focus group method and epidemiology. In other word knowledge of these areas will help to study the causes, classification of groups, nature and history of disease, planning and organise health care programmes to further strength the health of the people.

**Theory**

The health belief model will be used for explaining, due to the health, culture and wellbeing of the people in the society. Health belief model have long be used to examine sociocultural factors that might affect the health of the victims. According to Rosenstock, Stretcher and Becker,1974), health belief model is about health behavior of people which can affect health promotion strategies. The model include the following

a) Perceived susceptibility to illness: this means that there are possibilities of been prone to a disease due to socio demographic characteristic, Environmental factors and other means like migration.
b) Perceived severity of illness: Serious illness, the behaviour displayed towards it will determine the process of healing for the patient. It can also be a threat to a prolong ailment among individuals which might be chronic due to not responding to early treatment and awareness of the problem, because of cultural belief.
c) Perceived benefits. This implies necessary actions taken at the right time to avoid susceptibility. i.e immunization process of children from ages 0-6 years. Actions towards the prevention of further implications to the health of the children will make the mothers to complete the different process required for health promotion of their children.
d) Perceived barriers to that behavior, problem of affordibity, accessibility and availability.

This model had been studied critically in different ways, because culture affects lifestyle, choices, perception of health care and health seeking behavior

Diffusion Health Innovation Model: This is another related theory that seeks to examine health innovations through different ways such as through communication, especially various medium of communication. The diffusion

theory also covers another area which is in adoption. This in health have great impact on various practices adopted both in orthodox medicine and in the alternative medicine, the adoption methods are adopted from different societies in other to promote a universal health standard. Different organisations support and promote different strategies that promote a healthy culture such as World Health Organisation (WHO), UNISEF, UNESCO especially in pandemic situations. Where the spread of disease is unpredictable.

Health belief diffusion model: This model is most applicable because it helps to broaden our knowledge on the culture of people in different societies and their perception about their health and socio- demographic status. As social change occurs from time to time the belief system of the people in cultural context (migration, nutrition and environment) affect their health. The model focuses on multiple processes and determinants of adoption which help to understand or explain the maintenance of behavior change. Many health behaviors or health practice requires permanent or long-term changes. One example is the story of condom use, the practice of frequent hand wash and high personal hygiene in the outbreak of Ebola in 2015/16and the pandemic of Corona-Virus in 2019/2020.

**Conclusion**

Culture and health care concepts that intertwined because both affect the totality of man in the society. Culture as it evolves with ideology also affect health practices of individuals in the society. Difference cultural variation have different perception and practices concerning health. This has built cultural continuity among people in different societies. The western culture have over the years developed technologies which benefits the global world in the health aspect of individuals.

The modern society woman or people learn different aspect of health issues and systems in other to respond accordingly. Presently there are more awareness and practices on the social media that help the people to understand ethnic cultural health.

Further areas of consideration are national cultural health are health programmes in the country map out to promote the health of individuals these might be for a particular period of time, for instance, programmes on prolonged feeding on

babies and its health benefits on both mother and child, ethnical cultural health is also includes prolong breast feeding for natural child spacing, another is prolong cooking of food to prevent contamination. Cultural health continuity ideas about beliefs on the treatment of diseases such as bone fracture and other related bone problems. Traditional care system for women and children that is traditional birth delivery.

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Hana al Banny,Tal Jarus,Lyn Jengbloed.Maya Yazigi Elizabeth Dean(2013): Health Promotion International, Vol 29,No3 ,The Author(2003) Published By Oxford University Press. All Right Reserved. Email: hana.al bannay@gmail.com or hannoi.sweet@gmail.com

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