

Lay perceptions of current and future health, the causes of illness, and the nature of recovery : Explaining health and illness in Malaysia

Abstract

This study examined beliefs about the causes and determinants of health, illness, and recovery in an opportunistic sample from Malaysia. In all, 371 women and 350 men completed the Health and Illness Scale, a 124-item scale that examined beliefs about current and future health, and beliefs about the causes of illness and recovery. Each of the four subscales of the Health Illness Scale were factor analysed to reveal the underlying structure. Results showed the emergence of a number of distinct factors in the case of each subscale, of which environmental, life-style, psychological, religious, and fate-related factors were fairly stable across subscales. Results also showed a number of differences in beliefs between religious groups, and that religiosity and sex were the strongest predictors of beliefs across the four subscales. The results are discussed in terms of the available cross-cultural literature on lay beliefs about health. © 2009 The British Psychological Society.