

Healthcare Practices of Rural Malay Women: The Role of Religion and Cultural Context

Shariffah Suraya Syed Jamaludin^{1,a}

¹School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia,

11800 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia

^ashariffah@usm.my

Keywords: healthcare, rural Malay women, culture, religion, beliefs

Abstract. Healthcare is one of the important aspects in human's life that always taken for granted. This study is done on a group of rural Malay women in one of the traditional village in Perak, Malaysia to discover their healthcare practices. It aims to unfold the healthcare practices of rural Malay women and how religion and culture plays a role in influencing such practices. The approach used for this research is through anthropology health studies where participant observation and intensive interviews were done with the Malay women being studied. The study focused on the repetitive and ongoing action of healthcare practices done by these women for a better health which includes daily hygiene routine, doing exercises, massages, prayers, fasting, eating habits and also the taboos and old folk advice in maintaining their health. It evolves from the belief system, norms and values place on the health care practices. The result shows that religion and culture plays an important role in preparing a passage for health care. All the different sorts of health care activities done by the Malay women are deeply influenced by religion and culture. In conclusion, this study proves that the Malay women being studied really appreciate their health. They know that health is something precious and should be given due attention in order to avoid discomfort and inconvenience.