

The Awareness and Knowledge of Alternative Islamic Treatment: A Case Study in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

Technological advances and evolution in medicine have evolved and led humans to find alternative methods of modern medicine. Alternative treatment centers based on either "Islamic Treatment" or traditional ones are becoming more and more popular over time. Alternative treatments of Islam are treatments based on *ruqyah*, aura, inner, and homeopathy. In line with this rapid alternative to Islamic medicine, the Malaysian government supports Traditional and Complementary Medicine (TCM) in connection with any traditional medical practice among the local community except for medical or dental practices registered and recognized under the Malaysian healthcare system. However, to this day, the awareness, exposure and knowledge of alternative Islamic medicine are still in small scale and very limited in society. This issue needs to be taken into account for the importance of exposure and knowledge to the community not only to the Muslim community, but to all Malaysians. As such, this research aims to raise awareness and make research findings a platform to provide comprehensive information to the public. This can change the perception and resolve the community's doubts on alternative Islamic medicine as well as enhance the development of alternative Islamic medicine by offering a 'one-stop-center' hub for the needs of patients in need of alternative treatment. This study will use qualitative approach by interviewing the founder and practitioner of Islamic medicine *Darul Ansar* center and also observation method by observing the practice of medicine or treatment in accordance to Islamic *syariah*. The interview will be using thematic analysis whereby the data will be gathered and analysed.

Keywords: *Alternative Islamic Treatment, Awareness, Knowledge, Islamic Compliance Medicine*

INTRODUCTION

Muslims turn to the Quran and Sunnah for guidance in all areas of life, including health and medical matters. As collected in the Hadith, the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) once said that "Allah did not create a disease for which he did not also create a cure." Muslims are therefore encouraged to explore and use both traditional and modern forms of medicine and to have faith that any cure is a gift from Allah.

In the era of modernization and development of technology on the 21st Century, Muslims in Malaysia are engaging profusely in deviant or *khurafat* evil practices. Sorcery or *sihir* is a black magic or evil ritual practiced by some mean people who wants to take vengeance on someone who despised or causing harm to the prey which in return casting evil sorcery; causing the person to be sick, weak, mental or psychological depressed and eventually can cause fatal if it is not treated properly with alternative Islamic medicine. In fact, these spiritual conditions that are not recognized and proven by medical sciences have to be treated with proper alternative Islamic treatment using *Quranic ruqyah* and reciting *dua* or Quran verses. Herbal food such as black seed, honey, olive oil and dates are good remedies.

In relation to that, there are many traditional or Islamic treatment centres that are grown mushrooming rapidly for over the years claiming that they are the best place or person that can cure mental disorder or spiritual illness. Usually these diseases cannot be diagnosed by scientifically or modern medicines. Thus, here comes the issue, how far it is true or reliable whether these alternative treatment centres really runs to the standard of Islamic practices which is based on the concept of *al-Tibb al-Nabawi*. Something to ponder, are the treatment really keep to the *shari'ah* compliance or totally divert from the correct path, belief or faith from the most gracious and most powerful Allah (s.w.t)

Traditional medicine in Islam is often referred to as Medicine of the Prophet (*al-tibb an-Nabawi*). This reflects to the true Islamic methods that adhere to the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) Muslims often explore the Medicine of the Prophet as an alternative to modern therapies, or as a supplement to modern medical treatment. Before seeking cures for any disease, a Muslim should first believe that all diseases as well as their cures are in Allah's hands and power. Thus, anything that cures is on the will of Allah (s.w.t.). This principle is vital to be embraced as some people fail to understand how afflictions come down upon a person and seek their cures without internalizing this reality.

The second belief has to do with "tawakkul" (*tawakal*) in Allah. In other words, when a patient is undergoing an alternative Islamic treatment, the person must give their own self to Allah and have faith with *dua* and prayer as an effort for recovery. The practitioner must treat their patient based on the Quran and Sunnah as a way of practice so that the methods will not be contradicting to the Islamic teaching or deviant (*khurafat*) that can cause big sin against Allah. (s.w.t). We know from the prophet's life that he used the Quran and *dua* to treat all types of illness along with using physical means of healing. The spiritual illnesses are such as evil eye, jinn possession, and black magic which are satanic in nature. It is imperative for the patients to seek the true alternative treatment centres that use proper Islamic practices. The use of medical treatment, therefore, must not contradict to any Islamic guidelines nor should suppress one's belief and trust (*tawakal*) in Allah. The proper way, therefore, is to fully trust Allah the most powerful and merciful, to ask for his help, and to seek medical advices as well.

We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient, who, when disaster strikes them, say, "*Innā lillāhi wainnā ilayhirrājī 'ūn*" (Indeed we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we will return). Those are the ones upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy. And it is those who are the [rightly] guided. (Quran, 2:155-157) A good devote Muslim should always have faith and patient in facing a misfortune as it is a test for the person from being pride, selfish, arrogant or stubbornness.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

There are several research objectives in conducting this research. Basically it is as followed:

1. To provide awareness on the availability of alternative Islamic treatments that act in accordance to Islamic *syariah* compliance which help the patient who suffers mental illness or spiritual illnesses.
2. To provide a platform with comprehensive information and knowledge content as a guide for the Malaysian community to resolve doubts or misrepresentations of alternative Islamic medical practitioners that violate Islamic *syariah* practices.
3. To enhance the development of Islamic medicine by offering a 'One-Stop-Center' hub for the needs of patients suffering from diseases that require alternative Islamic medicine.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The alternative Islamic treatments are an approach or method of treatment supported by Malaysian government to enhance the approach's understanding in finding cure to diseases. Alternative Islam-based medicine refers to alternative treatment approaches through modern treatment institutions such as hospitals, clinics and medical centres (Khadher Ahmad, Fauzi Deraman, Mohd Farhan Md Ariffin, Wan Noor Azila Wan Kamaruzaman, 2015).

Through numerous research conducted locally, few issues had addressed. Stated in study at Selangor, researcher's mentions 'baseline data' regarding Islamic alternative medicine is very limited and from the point of view of alternative medicine practitioners, are known by a number of terms that differ in terms of function and role in medicine (Khadher Ahmad, Fauzi Deraman, Mohd Farhan Md Ariffin, Wan Noor Azila Wan Kamaruzaman, 2015).

Due to this, society is demand for accurate information to lead them toward better way of treatments. Health is one important elements which been a concern in a society today (Mohd Afifuddin Mohamad, n.a.). Delivering of accurate information on the understanding of Islamic alternative treatment and medicine is very important to ensure the cure of the illness or diseases.

This study attempts to look at the awareness, exposure and knowledge of alternative Islamic medicine are still in small scale and very limited in society. This issue needs to take into account for the importance of exposure and knowledge to the community not only to the Muslim community, but also to all Malaysians. As such, this research aims to raise awareness and make research findings a platform to provide comprehensive information to the public through 'One-Stop-Center' hub.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) usage is currently widely growing worldwide, with 80% of the population comes from Africa, Asia and Latin America, who are currently using T&CM annually (WHO, 2002). According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2015), (CAM) or recognized as complementary or alternative medicine, is " a broad set of health care practices that are not part of that country's own tradition or conventional medicine and are not fully integrated into dominant health care system. However, the terms are interchangeably use as traditional medicines in different counties (WHO, 2000).

One of the methods in complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) is Ruqyah Syar'iyah by reciting Quranic verses in the treatment. The term ruqyah specifically refers to finding a cure from genies, spells and other types of sorcery (known as "pukau" and "santau" in the Malay and Muslim community) using verses from the Qur'an or prayer as had been taught by Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h. (Suriati S. 2009-2010). Every religion has their own spiritual healers and their approach would be based on the teachings of their religion. Apart from the bomoh, these people have been given other names, such as shamans, doctors, midwives and etc. Unfortunately, the shamans often associated as the top role in the Malay community back in the olden days, as they are considered as the most trusted source for healing purposes and ask for help (Arba'iyahMohd Noor, 2014).

A faith healer is a person that provide unorthodox healing to people who seeks for his help, which includes various of physical and psychological problems associated with evil eye, magic and jinn possession (Tariq Al-Habeeb, 2003). While looking into another perspective, Khadijah, Suriati, Shalisah, and Mohamed (2017) depicted Muslim faith healers as pious individuals who practise Islamic spiritual healing as a treatment method. Nevertheless, there are differences between Islamic spiritual healing and folk healing, where it involves the use of prayers from the Qur'an for treatment, whereas the latter commonly deviates from Islamic teachings and is dependent upon other sources of healing rather than Allah Himself (Syed, 2008).

However, recent study found that, Muslim faith analogous to traditional Malay healer or shamans (Ahmad, Deraman, Md. Ariffin, & Kamaruzzaman, 2015). Syed (2008) contends that regard as Muslim faith healers akin to Malay traditional healers or shamans is an inaccurate understanding, as shaman practices are commonly contradictory to Islamic teachings, as they use the help of jinn. For Muslims, they are forbidden to duplicate and enjoin Allah because this is one of the major categories of sin. As stated in a book entitled Islamic Medicine to Resist Evil Creatures, if we believe that any creature can be of great benefit and harm then this is known as 'jalli or shirk. (*khurafat*) Therefore, one who excludes God will lose his faith and his repentance will not be forgiven (Sharhan Shafie &Fakhrul Ridzha Abd Rahman, 2010). Among the Malay community in Malaysia, the term ruqyah is rarely used. However, the term spell, incantation and curse are more known than ruqyah in traditional Malay treatment by shamans. Incantations are also divided into several different types and can be classified based on their different purposes. It is just one of the methods used in spells and sorcery. (Haron Daud, 2001; Harun Mat Piah, 1989; Maryati, 1993). Jin and Satan are two different terms but have similarities that this group cannot see. For Muslims these two terms have the difference that the devil is the Jin group and the Azazil group is the leader of all evil because of their arrogance when they are asked to bow down to the Prophet Adam RA created from the ground while their group is created from fire (Abdul Majid Hasan, 2013).

In general, while previous studies have found associations between CAM use and gender, education, income level and health status as well as ethnicity, the extent and direction of such associations especially awareness about other CAM such as Islamic Alternative Treatment have not consistently established across these studies (Khader et.al, 2014; Abdel-Khalek AM, 2014; Bishop and LeWith, 2010). Based on the observation, it shows that a portion of society still having shallow understanding of about Islamic Alternative treatment in general. The need to create awareness and to reduce stigmatisation about the misunderstanding of faith healers is needed. Thus, this study aims to provide awareness on the availability of alternative Islamic treatments that act in accordance to Islamic *syariah* compliance which help the patient who suffers mental illness or spiritual illnesses.

Alternative and Traditional Treatment that Contradicts to the Islamic or *Syariah* Practices

In treating victims and patients, creature disturbances need to be removed by skilled and knowledgeable experts in this area. There are three types of specialists and medical practitioners who specialize in practicing traditional or alternative treatments such as bomoh and Islamic medical practitioners. Some of those who still practice the wrong way, the shamans who still cooperate in Jin's service are called magicians. There are eight ways for someone to bring Jin into the role of shirk (*khurafat*) and bring dishonor (Sharhan Safie, 2011).

There are 10 features of Islamic medical practitioners that have been outlined in the book of Islamic Medical Practice Guidelines (2011). Among them are "the recitation of the Qur'an should be clear, sincere, do not do things that may lead to shirk (*khurafat*), vice, crime and the payment received is the cost of treatment and does not burden the patient," (pp. 6-7).

According to data released by the Traditional and Complementary Medicine Division of the Ministry of Health Malaysia, as of May 2011, a total of 17, 006 traditional medical practitioners have registered as practitioners through the e-practitioner site. However, what happens in reality is that there are several practitioners who are not registered legally, yet commit immoral practices on their patients.

Due to lack of monitor and strict enforcement or regulations imposed by the authorities, the alternative Islamic practitioners and traditional is free to carry out treatment in the name of Islamic treatment center. Religious backgrounds and practitioners' personalities have also influenced the society. Some even wear the titles of Islamic or pretending to be pious people such as *Ustaz, kiyai, tabib* or any name that is Islamic even though the method used is clearly contradicts with the teachings of Islam. Some of them will take advantages on the female patients and degrade the image of alternative Islamic treatment. These are not only confusing the community, bringing doubts on the function of alternative Islamic treatment but also contradicts to the right Islamic practices and failed to comply with the *syariah* compliances. This certainly not only create huge worries but also affect the society's trust in choosing the right alternative Islamic treatment that really follow the Islamic practices and aligned with *syariah* in Malaysia.

Proper Multimedia Platform or Data base for Alternative Islamic Medical Treatment

Stated in study at Selangor, researcher's mentions 'baseline data' regarding Islamic alternative medicine is very limited and from the point of view of alternative medicine practitioners, are known by a number of terms that differ in terms of function and role in medicine (Khadher Ahmad, Fauzi Deraman, Mohd Farhan Md Ariffin, Wan Noor Azila Wan Kamaruzaman, 2015).

Generations now have a wide selection of communication technologies called multimedia platforms. It is more sophisticated with a vast network of social media chains without restriction (Cees, 2013). From the point of view of scholars such as Colin Cherry (1985), the process of communication occurs when an attempt to create a social unit of an individual using language or symbols, has a set of rules and systems in place for various activities. This system has its own goals and objectives. The same idea was shared by Connie (2016). Connie argues that today's global society is becoming smarter and smarter with the Technology of the Internet. All information can be exchanged, downloaded or uploaded, collected, collected and disseminated in a fast and easy manner. Through this smart platform, alternative Islamic practitioners are able to move faster to ensure that the public has the right information. This should prevent any misrepresentation of any information based on the true teachings of Islam. Multimedia displays with sophisticated visuals, audio, fast link systems, and compact symbols of the latest technology systems can draw more and more local and international people to experience their use. It is very important that this effort should be received and supported by all parties in particular in Malaysia.

Kietzmann and colleagues (2011), see that the more critical aspects of 'Communication Development' can be divided into 'Development' as well as 'Communication'. Communication here refers to the process of communicating using different types of media in the context of its development. It also involves the sharing of information and the experience of accelerating the acquisition of goals that you want to achieve. Technology development is viewed from the physical aspects of technology through software and systematic hardware. People in Malaysia especially Muslims miss out on the challenges of this experience towards a more sophisticated and up-to-date lifestyle change.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach that involves library research and field studies (inventories, observation and interviews). Case study was used in this research. According to Yin (2009), case study would be a suitable method to be employed in a real case. Furthermore, the usage of case study has great contributions in the field of medicine, psychiatry, social work and psychology. Thus, this research fulfils the stated criteria.

This study also will adopt an interactionist approach which will be used to explore the views from the founder of *Darul Ansar* center and the practitioner of alternative Islamic treatment. This study will adopt a pragmatic, exploratory qualitative design. Data will be collected (February 2020 – June 2020) using direct observational methods and interviews. The rationale for using the interview methods is to enable the researcher to find out what is on their mind, what they think and how they feel about something. Prior to this fieldwork, the researcher will be sent out the consent letter via email and WhatsApp in order to get the permission to conduct the interview. In the letter, the participants were informed that they may choose not to participate without any consequences.

A semi-structured interview guide will be developed to collect the data. The interview guide will comprise of three sections, and each section will be specific to the category of the participants. The first section is about demographic. The second section is about alternative Islamic treatments and the third section is about creating awareness of alternative Islamic treatments. In addition, written informed consent will be taken from the participants. The interview duration will be approximately 30–40 minutes.

This study will also adopt direct observation. Participant observation is emphasized as one of the key strategies for collecting qualitative data. In other texts, the practice of ethnographic research and field research are central. There are many variations on the most important elements within the qualitative spectrum, but there is one very central theme that they all share, and that is the importance of meaning (Kamarul Azmi Jasmi, 2012). Direct observation method will be used by observing the flow of treatment in *Darul Ansar* center by seeing the practice of medicine or methods in treating their patient whether it acts in accordance to Islamic *syariah*. In other words, the information will be collected while doing the observation of the treatment process. It is also an observation of discovering and understanding the behavior, traits or setting of the *Darul Ansar* center as one of Alternative Islamic treatment practitioner practicing the correct procedures in accordance to Islamic *syariah*. Thus, it helps to diminish any doubts in ensuring that it does not misled in treating and recovering the patient who suffers from spiritual or mental illnesses.

Participants

A purposive sample of 13 practitioners of alternative Islamic treatment will be participated in the study, including Ustaz Muhammad Rajab Akmal Abdul Halim, the founder of *Darul Ansar* center. The participants will be range from 25 to 60 years old and they had been practicing as psychologists for between 10 months and 18 years.

Data Analysis

The data analysis will be initiated by transcribing the interview audio recordings. The researcher will review the transcriptions of all audio recordings for accuracy by comparing the texts with the audio recording. This process also allowed the researcher to develop familiarity with the data.

Afterwards, thematic analysis will be used to analyse the data gathered for this study. It is one of cluster methods that focus on identifying patterned meaning across a dataset. This is a sophisticated qualitative tool that according to Nowell et al. (2017) helps conducting research in a precise, consistent and exhaustive manner through recording, systematising, and disclosing the methods of analysis and the study results with enough detail to enable the reader to determine the credibility and validity of the process.

The researchers use thematic analysis as a means to gain insight and knowledge from data gathered. Thematic analysis is a method to identify, analyse and report themes of data (Boyatzis, 1998). This study uses inductive thematic analysis in which the themes identified are closely related to the data itself (Patton, 1990) in which the data coding process can be expanded according to the research questions. The six-phase thematic analysis recommended by Ryan and Bernard (2000) will be followed to interpret each set of data. Hence, the six-phase thematic analysis process includes the familiarising with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

Ethics Statement

Priors to the interviews, all participants will be given a research information sheet and consent form. The consent forms will be collected and store in a file. In the interview transcripts, participants' personal identifiable information will be removed from the transcripts to protect participants' confidentiality.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that it is very important for all Muslim to be aware, patient in facing any calamity, trial in life by acting more cautiously and wise in seeking the proper Islamic treatment that really complies with the requirement of *syariah* practices. Every Muslim should always have faith, belief in their heart and mind remembering Allah's power and blessing is always there not only in helping people who suffers from any disaster or diseases but also keen on devoting themselves to Allah (s.w.t)

As a matter of fact, the victims are experiencing physical problems which damage the immune system, cause paralysis and death. Moreover, victims and patients are mentally challenged when they have to deal with impossible and spiritual things that are not so powerful. The reception of the public also does not all accept their situation as they are not in the position or situation of the victim. However, for those who have the understanding, knowledge and experiences, understand the situation and may advice the patient to seek for the right alternative Islamic treatment in recovering their spiritual illnesses.

Muslim who divert from the correct path (*Khurafat*) is sinful for seeking cure or bad remedies by going to the wrong place of alternative treatment that offers medication that contradicts with the *syariah* compliance or against Islamic practices. People who are suffering spiritual or mental illness should always perform prayer and have their *dua* by reciting *Quran* by giving their own self to Allah and have faith and trust (*tawakal*) in seeking for help and blessings from Allah (s.w.t) as an attempt for recovery.

Hence, by offering a 'One-Stop-Center' or hub for the needs of patients suffering from illnesses that require alternative Islamic medicine not only to develop information or knowledge on alternative Islamic treatment but also to enhance awareness on the availability of the correct alternative Islamic centres in Malaysia. This research also strengthen the efforts in supporting the movement of alternative Islamic practitioners by providing guidance in resolving community's doubts and stop the misleading or malpractices of the irresponsible groups that failed to act accordance with the right Islamic treatments.

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