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Alternative Medicine: Issues and Challenges of Islamic Medicine among Students in Malaysia

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Abstract

Alternative Islamic medicine is not a foreign matter in Malaysian community. In fact, it even gets a place and attention in the community regardless of age. In line with that, the government has taken an initiative to transform the service sector such as private healthcare. This has been the agenda stated in the Eleventh Malaysia Plan 2016-2020. The main objective of this study is to identify on the issues and challenges of Islamic medicine as an alternative medicine. The methods used in this study are review of literature, documentation, and observation to collect the relevant information and data. Through this method, it shows that the issues and challenges occur as the students are lacking in terms of exposure towards the knowledge of Islamic medicine, and the influence of surrounding environment which makes them vulnerable to the treatment that looks like Shariah-compliant while the fact that it actually violates the Maqasid Al-Shariah and Islamic law. Students are advised to put an effort to learn a little bit about the basis of Islamic medical knowledge because as humans, we could not run away from being tested with pain. Armed with the basis of proper medical knowledge can prevent students from being influenced by things that can spoil their beliefs and practices.

Keywords: Alternative Medicine, The Eleventh Malaysia Plan, Maqasid Al-Shariah, Islamic Medicine, Beliefs.

Introduction

Any illness that befalls humans must have a cure. This is clearly mentioned in the famous hadith of Rasulullah (pbuh) in Sunan Ibn Majah which means:

"It is not Allah who sends down sickness, unless He also sends down the cure"
(Hadith narrated by Al-Qazwīnī, 1998)

Medical treatment to cure illnesses does not rely solely on allopathy. In fact, there are alternative treatments available for it. Among the areas of medical practice that have been acknowledged by the Ministry of Health Malaysia are Traditional Malay Medicine, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Traditional

Indian Medicine, Homeopathy, Chiropractic, Osteopathy and Islamic Medical Practice (Bahagian Perubatan Tradisional dan Komplementari, 2018). However, the focus of this study is more into the Islamic Medical Practice as an alternative treatment.

Alternative Medicine in Malaysia

Alternative Islamic medical treatment is one of the important treatments for the community in Malaysia. This is due to the fact that majority of Malaysians are Muslim (Malaysia Department of Statistics, 2010)

The alternative treatment centers based on Islamic and traditional medicine are growing rapidly and expanding throughout the country (Mohd Farhan Md Ariffin et al, 2015) . These centers have been a focus for patients with health problems that have no medical treatments available either in clinics or hospitals. In fact, there are patients who are almost completely discouraged by their illness (Ariffin, Ahmad, Samsudin, Ismail, & Rosele, 2013) . Patients are of various level of societies irrespective of religion, race, age and gender. In fact, there are also patients who are students. This situation is acknowledged through a news report on the involvement of youths as Islamic medical practitioners (Utusan Online, 2015) .

In line with the development of Islamic medical treatment, sick people are now inclined to seek this alternative treatment as a way to get themselves cured. The alternative treatment included in the Islamic medical group should be understood by the public or the patients in earnest so that they are not trapped into the treatment that violates the principle of shariah law and beliefs.

The community has been shown the recitation method in Islamic medical treatment which uses a lot of verses from the Holy Quran, related prayers from the hadith of Rasullullah (pbuh), and the prayers upon Rasulullah (pbuh). Even the Holy Quran is the cure for illness, either spiritual or physical illness. Many cases occur to patients who practice a consistent recital of Holy Quran, eventually with Allah's will, has recovered from the illness (Izzat, 2007).

Issues and Challenges of Islamic Medicine

This study is carried out in a higher education institution, which is Port Dickson Polytechnic, Negeri Sembilan. The respondents of this study consist of Diploma students from various courses, ranging from semester one to semester six.

From the observation, students are seen to be more likely to understand that Islamic medical treatment has been focusing on spiritual problems only. Examples are the type of illness caused by jinn possession and spiritual entities whereas the contribution of this Islamic medical treatment is very wide. It does not only focus on spiritual problems, but also physical problems as well. This issue has been acknowledged by other researchers who debated on the perception of the community that still regards Islamic medicine to be related to jinn possession and demons only (Ahmad, Yusuf, & Ariffin, 2014). Students are not exposed to the actual Islamic medical background.

Other than that, the level of knowledge regarding the basis of Islamic medicine among students is also weak. According to Ariffin et al, (2015) efforts to provide knowledge about Islamic medicine should be intensified. This effort is necessary for the students to be knowledgeable and aware of the knowledge of Islamic medicine. This is to safeguard the Maqasid Al-Shariah, which is to preserve the sanctity of religion so that the students do not trick themselves into the things that can destroy their beliefs and threaten their life. Among the examples are consulting bomoh (Malay traditional healers) and wearing amulets. This situation had taken place amongst university students who believed in the words of a bomoh, leading to the abuse case and death of the late Zulfarhan (Isa & Kumarappa, 2017). This case has shocked the country as it happened among university students of high intellectual level. Even until now, the case is still in trial in court.

Generally, students understand that this Islamic medical practitioners are called 'ustaz' for male practitioners and 'ustazah' for female practitioners. Even students and the community can easily address such practitioners with a title that should be given to the religious groups. If this matter is not properly explained, then it is feared that it will bring slander against the 'ustaz' and 'ustazah'. This is due to some of the practitioners who start the treatment with Basmalah, the prayers upon Rasulullah (pbuh), recital of certain verses from the Holy Quran, but afterwards they recite the mantra spells that could not be understood by the patients. They even treat patients with dubious methods such as bathing patients of the opposite gender.

If this matter is not being controlled and understood in depth, then the religious groups will be looked down by the community. According to Din, the title 'ustaz' and 'ustazah' have a very high position in the community (Din, 2015). These people are usually the source of references to the community, and when they do things that are contrary to religious norms, then the community will lose their trust in them.

Research Framework

This study will be further developed by looking at the scope of student involvement in alternative medicine. The focus of this study is on Islamic medicine. The research framework is built through the reading of the researcher from journal articles, Holy book and related books.

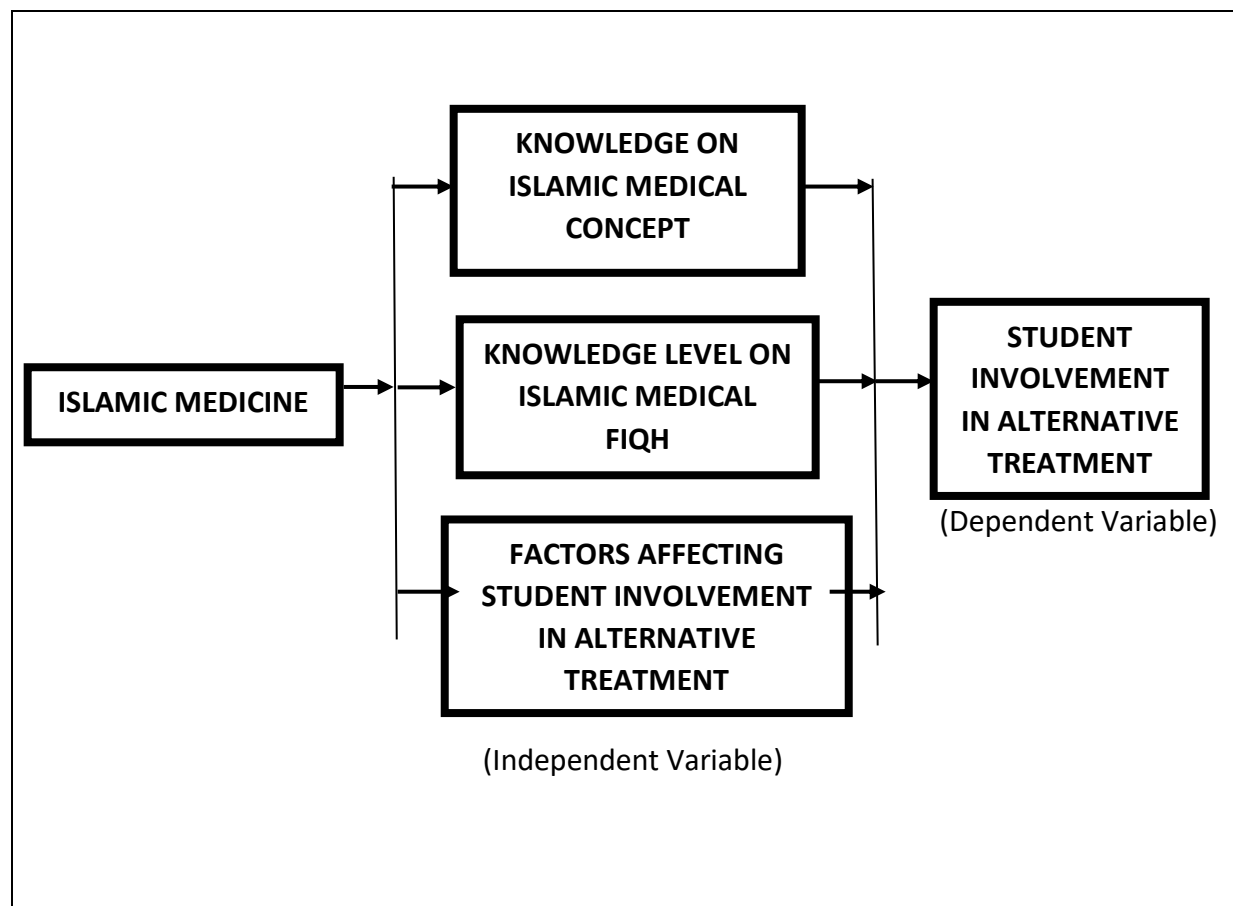
5. Research Method

This study is conducted through several research methods as follows:

5.1 Review of Literature

This method is used by the researcher to look at research needs. In addition, researchers need to look into the data from the past research in order to formulate the concept of study and to accommodate existing gaps. This matter has also been acknowledged by Ahmad in his journal article,

who mentioned a very urgent need for research on Islamic medicine (Ahmad, Deraman, Ariffin, & Kamaruzaman, 2015).



Documentation Method

The information in this study is also obtained from religious books, journal articles, newspapers, Holy book and other references that has contributed towards the variety of information and the research data.

Observation

The researcher has used this method to get a picture of the phenomenon and reality that occurs specifically among the students in particular and in the community at large. Through this method, the researcher is able to identify current issues that occur among students. Observation is done on all diploma students of various courses from semester one to semester six.

Conclusion

Based on the issue that has occurred, students are advised to study the fundamentals of Islamic medicine so that they are not trapped into non shariah-compliant treatment. Other than that,

students are encouraged to understand the true nature of Islamic medicine. There are Islamic medical associations offering Islamic medical courses. This is a step towards awakening the community and providing space for all to learn the basis of Islamic medicine in a precise and organized way. Besides that, this course would also be able to give the general public an idea regarding the true concept of Islamic medicine so as not to cause confusion among the community regarding the alternative Islamic medical treatment. Students are encouraged to study it from the right associations that have been acknowledged by the accredited agencies such as Ministry of Health Malaysia or government agencies such as Department of Islamic Development Malaysia. For example, studying Islamic medical knowledge at Medical Association, Medical and Islamic Welfare Malaysia.

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