

## Awareness and Use Perception towards Complementary and Alternative Medicines (CAM) in Saudi Arabia

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### Abstract

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#### Keywords:

Complementary alternative medicine;  
Herbal Medicines;  
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Complementary and Alternative medicines are becoming very popular methods of treatment among the users in the world. As it's have high acceptance to treat many types of ailments which cannot be cured by the modern medicines. In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), this path is also prevailing in the society but due to the lack of awareness, unavailability of professional practitioners and some other factors it is not adopted properly. In the region, very little studies have been carried out to understand the awareness level, its uses and perception towards CAM among the users. The objectives of the study were to provide an in-depth understanding about females' perceptions towards awareness and uses of CAM in the region. For the purpose a survey sample of 120 respondents in Jeddah city at convenience bases were taken during the month of September to November 2016. Data collection with using a structured and close ended questionnaire was carried out. The received data were coded and analysed with appropriate statistical tools. It was investigated that the majority of the respondents were aware about the CAM. Its uses and benefits in certain ailments were highly noticed by them. Moreover they were also positive about the benefits of CAM treatment system..

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## 1. Introduction:

The term complementary alternative medicine (CAM) includes many types of treatments and procedures that are usually not incorporated in conventional medicine. There is a broad range of alternative medicines such as acupuncture, aromatherapy, reiki, massage and so on are seriously considered as a medical form of treatment to help cure health ailments. These alternative medicines are based on irrational belief systems, traditional ethnic systems, spiritual energies, holistic therapy, or/and religion, faith healing, and prayer (Alam M Z, 2008). According to Jones (2016). Complementary and alternative medications are the form of remedies that are also termed as herbal or spiritual healing as duly mentioned by (Kelner and Wellman, 2014).

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) are widely used, both as a supplement to conventional or mainstream healthcare and as part of traditional healthcare systems and practices (Bodeker et al. 2005). Australian data, published in 2007, reported that 69% of the people had used one or more modes of CAM in the previous 12 months. However, the use of CAM varied with age, sex, and a range of other factors (Xue et al. 2007; Alam M Z, 2003). Those with chronic health issues, cancer, and chronic pain, in particular, were found to have made more excellent use of CAM (Sayada et al. 2006). Most of these studies revealed a surprisingly high predominance and an overall positive attitude toward the use of CAM. For example, a survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States showed that 40.0% of adults had used CAM in 12 months (Barnes et al., 2007). A study conducted in Ajman, United Arab Emirates, showed that approximately one-third of these seekers of modern medical care also use CAM, mostly without physician advice (E. Mathue et al., 2013). CAM is used widely for treatment of chronic diseases in many parts of the world. In a study conducted in the Muscat region of Oman, almost half of the patients used CAM therapies for diabetes mellitus, and they had a strong faith in its effectiveness in treating patients (R. M Al Kinda et al., 2011). A study conducted in Malaysia showed that there was a high prevalence of CAM use by the population, particularly the use of herb-based therapies for health issues (Z. M et al., 2009).

The use of herbal remedies is widespread in the Arab world, and Saudi Arabia is no exception to it. Anecdotally, it is considered that herbal products are favourite because of a widespread belief that the preparations are natural and therefore safe.

Another important practice in Saudi Arabia is the increased prevalence of self-medication, along with the concomitant use of herbal and conventional medicines. This is an area of high concern due to its potential for herb interactions (Al Braiki et al., 2008; Al Arifi 2013). One particular study performed in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia showed a 68.0% prevalence of CAM use among the Saudi participants living in the region of Riyadh who showed favourable opinion towards it, relating to it as "natural materials" (Al Faris et al. 2008).

Knowledge and awareness of complementary and alternative medications has significantly increased in the Saudi Arabia region (Jazieh et al., 2012). According to Elolimy and AlBedah (2012), about 90% of the people who participated that a good knowledge about complementary and alternative medications and about 75% people use complementary and alternative medications as primary medications within Saudi Arabia. Rahman et al. (2004) showed that Saudi people tend to use additional and alternative medications as they feel safe when using natural medicines such as using vitamins and mineral supplements. In Saudi Arabia, Tibbu Nabawi or prophetic medicine is broadly accepted and practised by most physicians and the public.

This is indicated in a report by the study of National Center for CAM in Saudi Arabia 2010 (Albedah 2010; Alfaris et al., 2008) who recorded that more than 70% of the public in the Riyadh region had used practices related to prophetic medicine in their lifetime.

One of the excellent medical markets growing at a massive rate by allopathic treatments today is complementary and alternative medications as indicated by (Synovitz and Larson, 2013). A lot of the last 15 years, there has been a steady rise with regard to global marketing ratio for complementary medicines (Greene, 2016). The CAM industry continues to be profitable as the worldwide annual market for these products approaches US\$ 60 billion (United Nation Report, 2000). Recent statistics have revealed that the sales growth of these medications has risen from \$5 billion per annum to \$7 billion per annum magnanimously (Synovitz and Larson, 2013). It has been estimated that over 68 percent of the global population are into one or other form of complementary medication (Cahill, 2017). Saudi Arabia is considered to be one of the fastest growing markets for complementary and alternative remedies and has gained a good ranking on the global marketing platform for these medications (Al-Rowais, 2002). As per Holmes and Cherniak (2017), indeed,

rising knowledge about complementary and alternative medicine will help Saudi Arabia lead the global markets shortly (Parker, 2016).

In line with this trend, the present work aimed at studying awareness, perception, and general attitudes of respondents towards CAM with related to herbal medicines particularly in Saudi Arabia.

## 2. Research Method:

For the study, a close-ended questionnaire from 120 participants was used to capture the data from the respondents that purchased, used herbal medicines and herbal dietary supplements. The survey was done based on convenience sampling method in Jeddah Saudi Arabia in 2016. The questionnaire involved four parts: the socio-demographic characteristics of the buyer, the origin of advice for the advantage of the obtained herbal products, the consumer's attitude towards the safety, of awareness, the effectiveness of herbal remedies and herbal dietary supplements and their combination with conventional treatments, and assessment of the purchased herbal products. The data from each of the recovered questionnaire were coded and entered into Excel, and statistical analysis, JAS and SISA software were used. Moreover, results were summarised using with descriptive statistics as appropriate.

## 3. Results and Analysis:

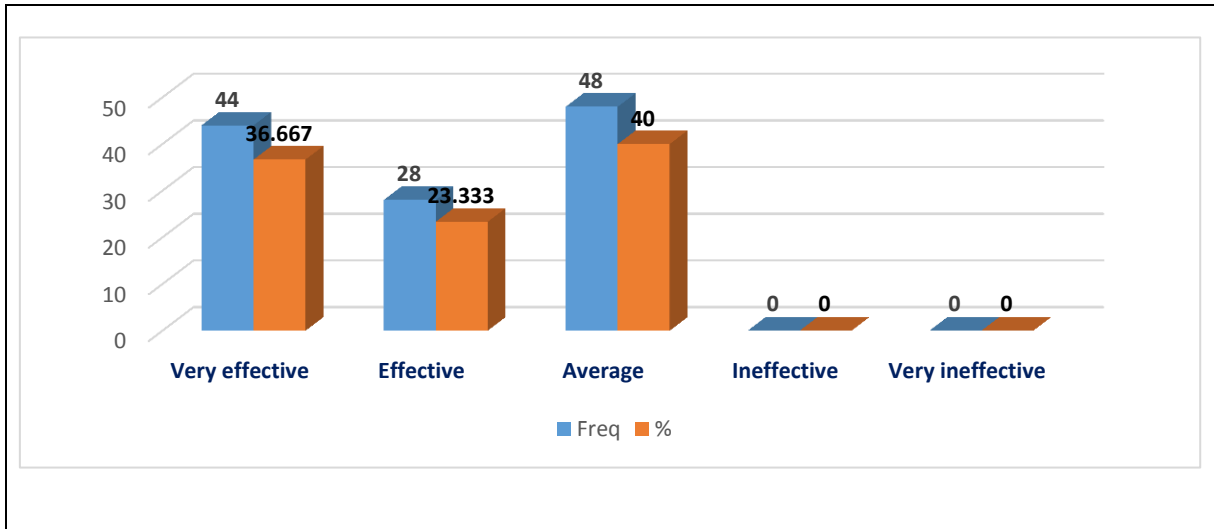
	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>Below 20</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>63.333</b>
	<b>20-30</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>26.667</b>
	<b>30-40</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6.667</b>
	<b>40-50</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3.333</b>
	<b>50 and Above</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>23.333</b>
	<b>Female</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>76.667</b>
<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>Uneducated</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>6.667</b>

	<b>Elementary</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>10</b>
	<b>Intermediate</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>13.333</b>
	<b>High School</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>16.667</b>
	<b>Bachelor and above</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>53.333</b>
<b>Total Number of Respondents</b>		<b>120</b>	<b>100</b>

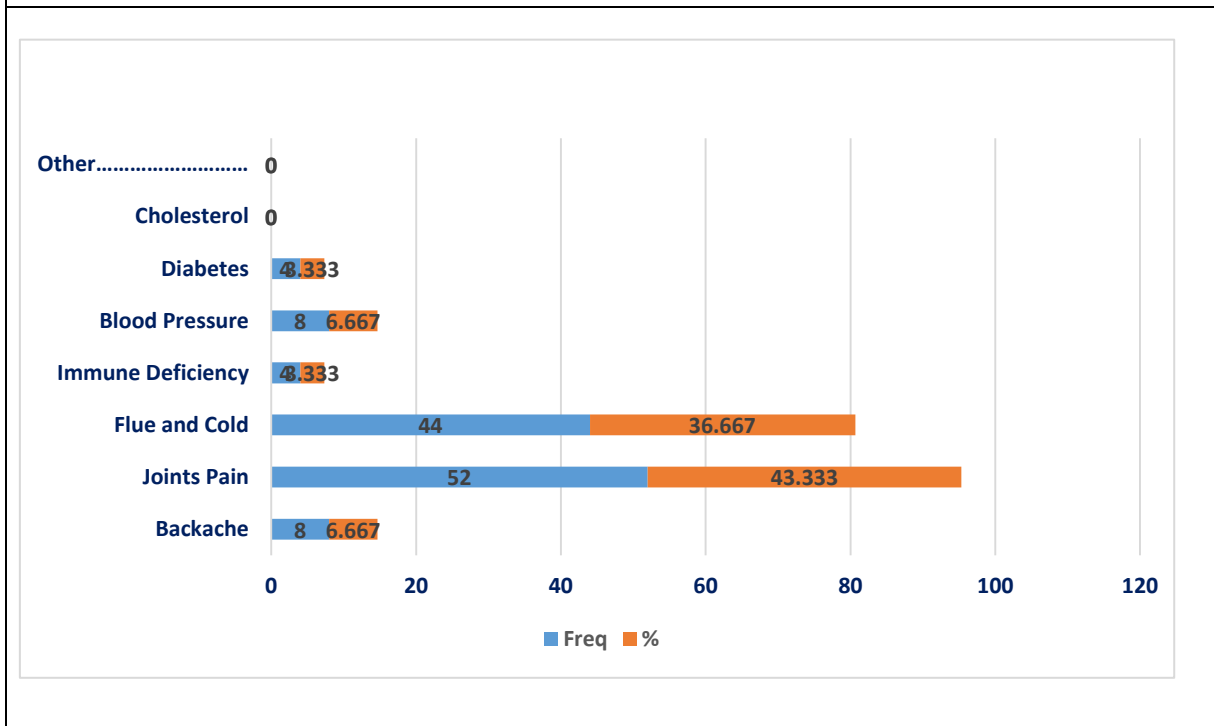
**Table 2: Respondent's opinion regarding the alternative therapy treatment adopted by his family members**

<b>Answer</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Sum%</b>
<b>Yes</b>	40	33.333	33.333
<b>No</b>	80	66.667	100
<b>Categories 2 , Mean: 1.66667, SD: 0.47338</b>		<b>120 cases</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Figure 1: Respondents Opinion, Regarding The Effectiveness Of The CAM/ Alternative Medicine:**

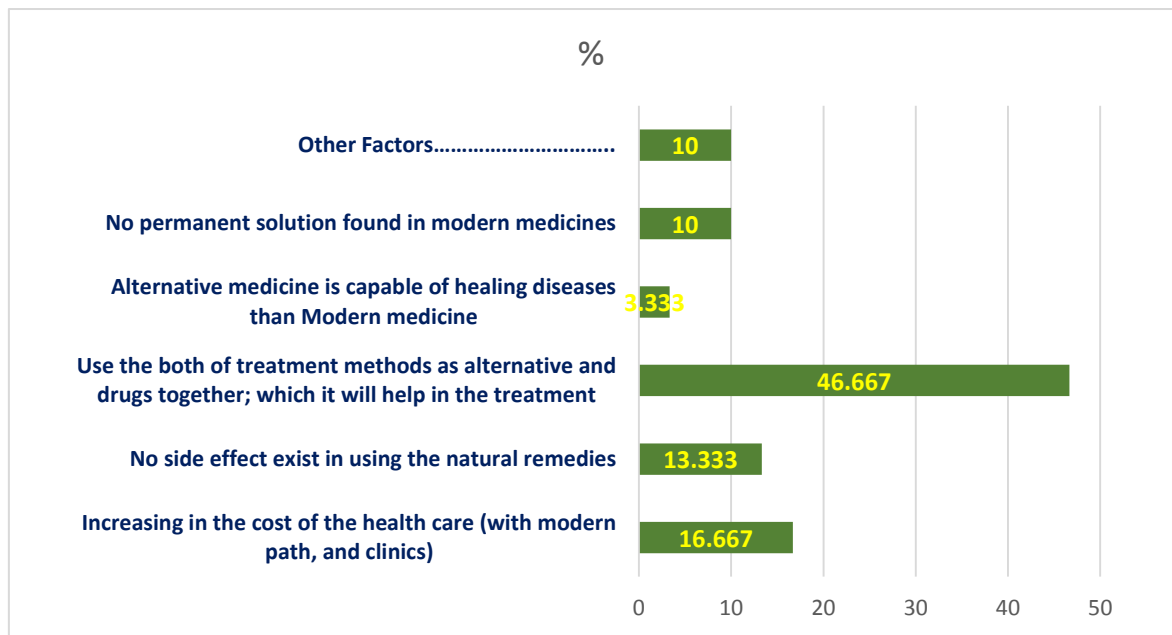


**Figure 2: Opinion Regarding The Effectiveness Of (Cam) Treatment With Ailments**

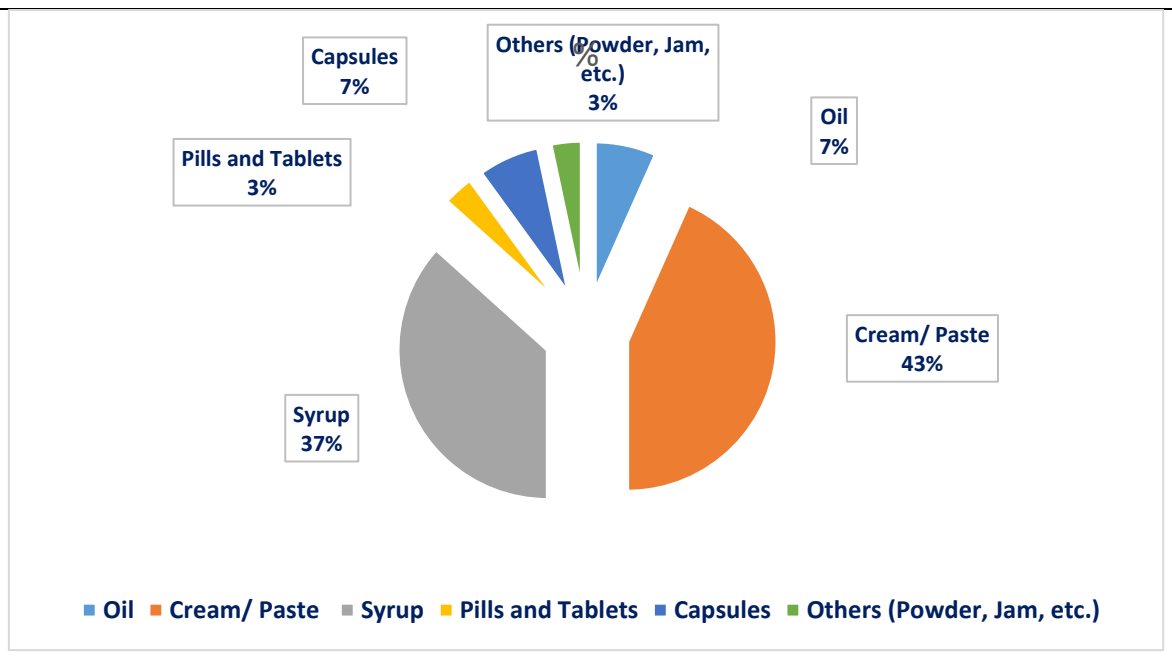


**Figure 3: Opinion Regarding The Preference Of This (CAM) Treatment As Compare**

**To Modern Treatment**



**Figure 4: Preferable form of Alternative Medicine Product**



**Result Discussion:**

Regarding the age of the participant’s majority, belong to less than 30 years of age that is 90% of the sample population. The rest 7% were between 30-40 years followed by the 40-

50 (3%) respectively. Around 92% of them were female and only 28% of the respondents were male. Of the participants, 53.33% had bachelor's degree while only 13.33% had intermediate 10 % had elementary and 8% of the respondents were stated that they are uneducated (See Table- 1). Participants of this study expressed their views regarding the adoption of alternative medicines in his family in this respect majority 67% indicated that their family did not adopt ever to this therapy however, 33% were positive that their family have adopted alternative therapy (CAM/ Herbal Medicines) for the treatment. This is at least good sign of awareness and trust regarding the alternative therapy in the region (See Table 2).

The study was to understand consumer perception of CAM products in Saudi Arabia with particular reference to herbal medicines. The research study was carried out using three overall objectives. The attributes suggested by the respondent to use herbal products are prepared from the natural ingredient, free from the side effect, fit for health and non-chemical. Most of the respondents mentioned herbal products are made from natural element so; they faced no side effect (Kumar &Janagam, 2011). From the figure 1, it is indicated that perception regarding the alternative medicines for the treatment is very positive as is observed that majority hundred percent people feel that alternative medications are beneficial for the treatment of ailments. The attitudes towards herbal products (measured on a five-point Likert scale) respondent agreed with most of the statement. it was indicating that respondent hold a positive attitude towards herbal products. Regarding the effectiveness of alternative treatment with ailments, it was observed that respondents agreed on that this treatment is beneficial for joints pain (43.33%) followed by flue and cold 36.67 %, backache and blood pressure 8% both and diabetes as well as immune deficiency treatment were 3. 33%. (Figure 2).

The reason for the choosing and selection of CAM / herbal treatment as compared to modern medicines, the majority claim that they were using some time both of the therapy. That helps to quick response on the cure of ailments followed by claiming that allopath treatment costly (16.5%), no side effect existing in natural treatment (13.33%) and no permanent solution with modern medicines and other factors were the cause to select this treatment (See Figure 3). Majority of respondents declared that the paste/ cream form of the herbaceous product (43% ) were preferable followed by Syrup (37%), Capsules and oil



represent equally (7%), and Tablets and another form (3%) were preferred each respectively (Figure 4).

#### **4. Conclusion:**

In the study majority were below the 30 years of age as this study was conducted with convenience methods of sampling. Moreover, majority of them belongs to the Bachelor degree and the highest majority of the respondents were female. Regarding the adoption of alternative medicines within the family member's majority indicates that their family did not adopt ever to this therapy however, there were positive feedback that one third of the respondents' family member were engaged and used/ adopted alternative therapy (CAM/ Herbal Medicines) for the treatment. This is at least good signal of awareness and trust regarding the alternative therapy in the region. Despite the high provision of herbal remedies through community pharmacies in Saudi Arabia, majority respondents believe that herbal products were a useful therapeutic option and a considerable proportion of people thought they natural and safe in use. The attitude of the respondents towards herbal/ nutritional supplements and alternative medicines are confident with a high percentage, being of the opinion that they are useful, natural and safe. There are a high level and very positive perception regarding the alternative medicines for the treatment of the respondents. Regarding the effectiveness of alternative treatment for ailments, it is perceived that this treatment is beneficial for joints pain followed by flu and cold, backache and blood pressure both and diabetes. The majority pretend that they use some time both of the therapy because that helps to quick response on the cure of ailments followed by claiming that allopath treatment costly, no side effect existing in natural treatment and no permanent solution with modern medicines and other factors are the cause to select this treatment. The paste/ cream form of the herbal product is highly preferable followed by Syrup, Capsules and oil represent respectively. It is therefore, recommended from this study that since such a high proportion of the populace use CAM, that at the local, state and national levels government should find acceptable ways of incorporating their use in the region. The hospital should focus to open the department of CAM-related to specific problems that are highly perceived useful and highly acceptable by the respondents. The supplier should centre to prepare the natural product form in paste/ cream form, Syrup, Capsules and oil as per the suitable ailments and age bases. Besides respondents need to be better informed about herbal products, which are seeking

alternative remedies for chronic health problems and especially those using both treatment for cure.

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