

Traditional Medicinal Practices And Health Beliefs In Kohala, Haripur District



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Abstract: *The present qualitative study explicates the traditional medicinal practices in culture and health belief in Kohala region of Pakistan, Haripur District. Having engaged ethnographic study of individuals with diversified ages and backgrounds, the researcher considers the continuity of traditional healing methods in the community, roles played by traditional medicine men and the interaction of modern medicine with traditional one. A study has unraveled an entrenched cultural element in the medicinal practices of tribal communities, these being established because to their holistic technique to health problems, available results and lower immensity. Although fully-fledged contemporary medicine can provide substantial relief from acute and urgent illnesses, close-knit traditional medicine systems are still essential in the promotion of health prevention, treatment of the chronic, and the encompassment of the spiritual and emotional components of health. The report brings into focus the need for additional research findings to document, assess and incorporate these practices into the health care framework of Kohala that will assure a patient culturally responsive and comprehensive behavior to health and wellness. Moreover, the study has underlined the fact that research findings are necessary when one is considering the bring of these practices into mainstream health care systems.*

Keywords: Traditional Medicinal Practices, Health Beliefs, Herbal Remedies, Traditional Healers

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

'Kohala' which is situated in the Haripur district of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, Pakistan, is a site that represents diverse cultural knowledge and skills in the study area. Up to the past decades, Kohala has been relying mostly on natural healing as the main kind of health care. These are cultural practices that have been passed through for decades from person to person. The treatment modalities in Kohala that belong to traditional medicinal practices can be classified under a number of categories such as the use of herbs that are prepared using plants that are locally available, spiritual healing that includes certain rituals and prayers, specific

foods, and foods taken according to certain nutritional principles as medicine, and lastly, manual therapy including massage and cupping and setting broken bones.

The fact that traditional medicinal practices are still practiced in Kohala even though there is ready supply of and access to modern medicine indicates the great confidence that community puts in this system that has been tested and proven over time. This reliance is in-effect often due to a number of reasons. First Traditional medicinal healthcare is relatively cheaper and easily accessible than conventional healthcare systems; this extends to the rural and underdeveloped areas. Second, it is based on community-wide beliefs and values on which

these practices are formed and therefore elicit a sense of trust. Thirdly, Traditional medicinal practices are mainly focused on the holistic approach towards the patient whereas most physical symptoms and signs are not comprehensively attended. Fourthly, stories about treated people, and the overall impression that the mechanism actually works, helps to strengthen the community faith in the effectiveness of these therapies.

But the dissemination and conservation of this aboriginal knowledge are threatened by the contemporary push of globalization and urbanization. The higher rate of Western exposure of younger generations to medicines and ways of life poses a threat of losing traditional healing methods. Also, the lack of formal documentation and scientific proofs traditional medicinal practices allows for the potential loss of this intangible cultural heritage ([Pirintsos,2022](#)). Hence, there is a need to undertake a detailed research in order to both record and examine what is currently being done in the region of Kohala in terms of traditional medicinal practices before this important knowledge fades away with time.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The potential research on traditional healing and health perceptions in Kohala has numerous implications for different audiences. In terms of the found literature's implications for the local community, this study can be used to affirm their cultural and intellectual ownership of their identity and resources. Through the profiling and analysis of traditional medicinal practices, the research can also serve a significant role in the documentation and continuation of this knowledge for future generations, particularly in avoiding their decline, by modernization.

From a healthcare perspective, this research can possibly lead to the discovery of traditional remedies that are able to provide additional therapeutic and/or pharmaceutical value with a high degree of safety to be used in conjunction with other healthcare services. Through integrating both forms of medicine into the healthcare system, the study can help create a model that can support culturally sensitive

healthcare for the population of Kohala. Scientific trials of traditional medicinal practices can offer useful information concerning their effectiveness, toxicity, as well as potential models of action that will assist in their adoption into evidence-based medical care ([Asad,2014](#)).

Also, this study may contribute to the larger body of knowledge in ethno pharmacology and drug discovery ([Micozzi,1983](#)). The plethora of flora and fauna found in Kohala and the cultural wisdom related to it might as well result in the discovery of new drugs and approaches of treatment. Last of all, this research can help in spreading awareness regarding the importance of community and environment by encouraging people to adopt products and technology available in their surroundings and the knowledge which they have inherited from their ancestors.

1.3. Research Aim, Questions, and Objectives

1.3.1. Research Aim

This research will aim to understand the traditional medicinal practices and health beliefs in Kohala, Haripur District and how effective they are, their cultural importance, and how they can be used in the future with the potential of integrating these practices with modern health systems.

1.3.2. Research Questions

- What are the essential conceptions of health and perceptions of sickness and recovery among the people?
- How effective are traditional medicinal practices in treating common health conditions?
- How are traditional medicine systems being leveraged to enhance healthcare in the region.

1.3.3. Research Objectives

- To verify and determine the number of ethno medicinal herbs available in Kohala.
- Discover how to prepare and how they are used these medicinal plants by native healers.

- To investigate the perception and the addition of the traditional medicinal practices.
- On the influence of changes in the access to modern health care on the health beliefs of the region.
- To determine the feasibility of integrating the application of Herbal remedies within the medical environment of the current health care facilities.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

It is therefore evident that traditional health practices and beliefs play an important role in the social structure of various communities around the globe(Vuori,1982). These practices take a prominent position in the everyday life of people inhabiting the Transkarakorum region of Kohala in Haripur District, Pakistan. Culture in this area has been traced to have a close relation with their medicinal practices which have been practiced from one generation to another(Carua,2015). Explaining such customs helps analyze the local attitude towards health and the environment and the methods by which the population receives medical knowledge.

The Kohala area where the study took place is made up of mostly mountains with small rural communities scattered throughout and is the stronghold for traditional healers and herbalists. It entails individuals who treat various diseases using herbs, minerals and animal products that are sourced around them.(Buchwald,2000) This is preferred most of the time by the locals as it is easily accessible, cheap and very effective boosting the confidence in the locals on the effectiveness of the traditional treatments over the medical ones (Khan et al. , 2018).

The perspective used to theorize knowledge about traditional medicinal practices in Kohala stem from the use of the medical pluralism model. This concept envelops the realization of multiple medical systems existing and functioning within the same society simultaneously with each other – traditional medicine, complementary medicine and allopathic medicine. People in Kohala toggle between these systems in accordance with their

thoughts and values together with their condition of health concerns(Barsh,1997) . The Health Belief Model adds another dimension of information on why people in the community make health seeking behaviours. This model theorizes that individuals' perceptions of susceptibility to get sick, the seriousness of getting sick, and the values and disadvantages of specific actions are important factors that influence health-related decisions.

However, unlike many other communities that are mostly associated with the materialistic perceptions of the illness, the beliefs of the Kohala include the spiritual and the supernatural as well. Sometimes diseases are referred to sources in the spiritual dimension such as illness stemming from 'evil eye' or 'possession' by 'jinn' that explains the use of both herbs as medicine and spiritual healing practices (Raza et al., 2020). It includes such matters as taking care of the body and the mind, and being alert to the 'connectedness' between these levels of reality as outlined within the current cultural construction of health.

The current practices of traditional medicines in Kohala of Haripur district are based on cultural and historical significance of the place as well as the overall well being of the people with their health and diseases.(Ahmad,2021) There are indications in the historical documents that the ancient people packaged Herbal Medicine and Spiritual healing and that the essence of the preservation of the state of balance of the body, the mind and the soul. The positioning of Kohala hapuu and the historical and cultural development of traditional medicinal practices puts it in a distinct location at the crossroads of ancient travel geography and trade routes and the emergence and proliferation of traditional knowledge and practices.

Historically, Kohala citizens have considered assistive techniques the main aspect of their culture and the community or religion they live in. Elders are honoured and recognized as the holders of spiritual knowledge and are thus important in the application of this cultural inheritance. These healers are usually cultural leaders and they offer counseling not only on health but also on general wellbeing.

([Ramzan,2017](#)) The health beliefs that can be associated with the information on health issues of the people living in the area of Kohala include the assumption that health is a complete well-being of an individual body, mind, and soul. This integral approach is explained by the usage of traditional herbal medicine and nutrition, dieting, physical, spiritual, and psychological methods in treating various diseases and maintaining health. Despite their cultural significance and continued relevance, Traditional medicinal practices in Kohala face numerous challenges in the modern era. Globalization, urbanization, and the dominance of Western biomedicine have led to the marginalization and stigmatization of traditional healing methods. Limited access to healthcare resources, socioeconomic disparities, and environmental degradation further exacerbate these challenges, threatening the sustainability of traditional medicinal practices in the region.

However, there are also opportunities for revitalizing and promoting traditional medicine in Kohala. Community-based initiatives, cultural preservation efforts, and collaborations between traditional healers and modern healthcare practitioners can play a crucial role in ensuring the continuity and integration of traditional medicinal practices into the healthcare landscape. The growing interest in complementary and alternative medicine globally, coupled with increasing recognition of the value of indigenous knowledge, provides a favorable context for such efforts.

The documentation and study of these traditional practices are crucial for several reasons. Firstly, they offer an opportunity to preserve indigenous knowledge that is at risk of disappearing due to modernization and the encroachment of global medical practices ([Ramcharan,2005](#)). Secondly, they provide a potential source of new medicinal compounds and therapeutic techniques that could benefit global health. Lastly, understanding these practices fosters respect and appreciation for the cultural heritage of the Kohala community and supports the integration of traditional and modern medical systems.

In this study, we explore the various traditional

medicinal practices and health beliefs prevalent in Kohala, examining their historical roots, current applications, and the community's perception of health and illness. By doing so, we aim to contribute to the broader understanding of traditional medicine in rural Pakistani contexts and highlight its significance in contemporary health discourse.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The selected research approach for this study will be qualitative as it will enable a deeper understanding of the mechanisms and processes behind the use of traditional medicine and maintenance of health and well-being in the Kohala area of Haripur District. This way of presenting it ensures that there is further insight into the cultural background of these practices as well as the social lives and personal experiences of the people involved.

3.1. Sampling Technique

Convenience sampling will be used to sample participants who have a lot of knowledge and exposure to Kohala's traditional medicine and health beliefs. This may include traditional healers, herbalist, community Elders and individuals who are by own accord engaging in practice of traditional medicinal. This number will be based on the point of saturation, where no new information is obtained from data collection regarding the topic.

3.2. Data Collection

Both qualitative and quantitative data will be recorded through interviews, focus group discussions and participant observation. Focus group discussions will be held with participants and the aim is to collect information from individual participants on their personal experience, understanding and attitudes to practices of traditional medicine. The former will be in form of focus group discussions where the participants will be divided into small groups to allow easy discussion of the topic. Participant observation will entail the researcher being part of the community in which he or she will conduct the research and document the practices of traditional medicine in the home environment.

3.3. Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis will entail thematic analysis, which will be used to identify recurring patterns, themes, and meanings from the collected data. Spent using interview and focus group discussion transcripts will be properly coded and organized to look for themes. The analysis will also be done in the light of cultural environment and social factors that have an impact on the traditional medicinal practices and the beliefs about health in the Kohala community.

3.4. Sample Size

According to the research plan 11 interviews will be conducted. Data saturation will be used to decide the sample size which means that data collection will continue for a given period of time until no new information or themes appear. The actual sample size will be determined by the amount of detailed information gathered on the selected sample.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues will constitute the core part of the research ethics during the research work. Participants' written informed consent will be collected from all participants after explaining to them the nature and importance of the study. pseudonyms will be used for participants to maintain confidentiality. The participant will be able to show cultural humility and respect for the host country throughout the program. The research will be a strictly ethical research and will be subjected to ethical consideration and ethical clearance from the ethical research committee.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings in this study show a complex and long-lasting practice of medicinal trade carried for generations in Kohala. It has been reported that people from different age groups and both genders applied the traditional medicine for particular purposes like common illnesses and wounds or chronic illnesses like arthritis and diabetes. Herbal medication, including neem, turmeric, ginger, aloe vera and garlic were described in this study. Moreover, the

supportive role of rituals and spirituality to traditional health belief was emphasized.

The main element that I came across is the faith and readiness to comply with the traditional healers. The physically sick people do not just seek them for the physical connection but they also seek the spiritual and emotional guidance which is an important indicator of the community's general welfare. This trust is therefore often based on past generations of experiences and personal observations on effectiveness of traditional medicines by many.

Also, the implementation of traditional and modern medical practices has challenges like, negativity and doubt, unscientific evidence, and methodology. To address these issues, future studies should investigate the safety and efficacy of traditional medicines using scientific methods, stimulate communication and collaboration between traditional and conventional healthcare professionals, and promote the integration of traditional and conventional health care models that are appropriate to the local culture.

In conclusion, this study helps to demystify the complexity of traditional medical systems and health ideologies in Kohala. It shows the interconnection of its people with a rich cultural background and that health was, and is, more than the absence of diseases and incorporated the spiritual aspect of healing. The outcomes contribute to the necessity for future research and collaboration with other stakeholders to ensure the diversity of knowledge on health and disease is not lost; to clarify its place and possible application in conventional healthcare; and to promote the health of the population.

5. CONCLUSION

In the conclusion, the study analyzes the position that the psyche and cultural beliefs have a reputation which remains unchanged as polar ice never thaws. Looking at the broad diffusion of these practices even in our community, the aspects that surprise me are the fact that it has been practiced for such a long time, and also extremely high faith our community has in its healers. It does not mean that TMPs are favored only due to the shortcoming of the far-away

medical system but also because it can be seen from a cultural context, where wild, herbal and spiritual treatment systems are desired.

The choice of clearance for the path of the combination of the traditional and modern medicine is still hard given the hurdles which the progress on this direction meets, but the idea of the situation which is the new position provides the space for the tentative optimism is still hopeful. Studies in future should develop a scientific assessment concerning the specific remedies done in that traditional way regarding effectiveness and safety. Likewise, previous knowledge about the healers should be maintained, and alternative healthcare delivery methodology should be appropriate that embrace respecting the traditions and blending same with modern approaches.

Luckily, it saves not only the rich cultural heritage of that region but also shows us an innovative way of how the health care system can be reformed and how it may lead to effective effects that people can relate to and be cared for. Discovered medicinal herbs by the curative letters plus the integration of traditional medical beliefs can be a giant support to the holistic health of the local people to advance the well-being that is mainly based on the equity.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following suggestions on how to enhance traditional medicinal practices through modern medicine are based on survey and interview responses.

- **Documentation and Preservation of Traditional Knowledge:** Develop a cooperative research and documentation approach to documenting the knowledge and practices of the traditional healers of Kohala. This could involve establishing a repository of the medicinal plants, recording the treatment procedures and other relevant information as well as keeping historical records and cultural aspects relating to the traditional medicine.
- **Scientific Evaluation of Traditional Medicinal Practices:** Design and undertake sound scientific research to evaluate the

activity and safety of as well as the mode of action of selected TMRs as mentioned in this study. This would mean bringing the traditional healers on board as well as the modern healthcare providers as well as the researchers in the relevant field for instance pharmacology graduates, botanists, anthropologists and so forth.

- **Integration of Traditional and Modern Medicine:** Design and develop integrative healthcare models that encompass the elements of both conventional and alternative therapies. This could include education of healthcare providers in traditional healing, development of integrated clinics offering both allopathic and traditional care and media and cultural efforts designed to educate the public and reduce stigmatization of traditional practitioners.
- **Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Struggles should be pushed to bring together the traditional healers, the formal health workers and researchers, and the policy makers from across the different backgrounds. This can provide the leeway through which knowledge and cultural sensitive best practices and resource can be shared or pooled to arrive at the most effective healthcare intervention mechanisms.
- **Education and Awareness:** Develop and carry out educational activities that will be aimed at the population in general, and especially children and young people, making them aware of the danger associated with traditional medicinal practices. This could include workshops, seminars, school curricula that focus on introducing the cultural importance, the pros and cons of using traditional medicine.
- **Community Engagement:** There is also a need for the community to be engaged in the entire process from research to implementation. This may include asking them about the priority areas for conducting research; their participation in the development of the teaching aids; and the

participation in the design and construction of the local center for health and well-being wherein services in conventional and alternative medicine shall be rendered.

- **Public Health Promotion:** Regular social programs should be initiated in order to introduce people to right concept of traditional medicine and may be even to attempt to 'de-nie-modify' the concept in case this concept is perceived negative harmfully. It can make people conscious about the cultural belief about the traditional remedies which they people can avail easily and why they are effective and why people should consume them.

It will also help to sustain and protect the culture of Kohala and promote the wellbeing of the community above all by implementing the health care system and providing well-equipped medical grounds that could be understandable and acceptable in the whole wide world.

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