MINISTRY OF HEALTH MALAYSIA

TECHNICAL REPORT

PUBLIC AWARENESS AND PERCEPTION TOWARDS TRADITIONAL AND COMPLEMENTARY MEDICINE IN MALAYSIA: A TELEPHONE SURVEY

Institute for Health Behavioural Research (IHBR)
National Institutes of Health
Ministry of Health, Malaysia
Setia Alam, Selangor

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It is our hope that these findings will help program leaders and policy makers to have a better understanding, ideas and perspective in handling and managing various issues surrounding the practice of Traditional and Complementary Medicine in Malaysia.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Traditional medicine is the culmination of all knowledge, abilities, and procedures derived from theories, beliefs, and experiences unique to various cultures, whether understandable or not, and applied to health preservation as well as the prevention, diagnosis, improvement, or treatment of diseases of the body and mind. In Malaysia, traditional and complementary medicine (T&CM) is defined as a form of healthrelatedpractice designed to prevent, treat, and/or manage illness and/ or preserve the mental and physical wellbeing of individuals; and include such practices as traditional Malay medicine, traditional Chinese medicine, traditional Indian medicine, homeopathy, chiropractic, osteopathy and Islamic Medical Practice.

The objectives of this study were to assess public awareness of the existence of; as well as, public perceptions on the role of T&CM services in Malaysia. Data wascollected from August 22 to October 3, 2022, via a telephone call survey using the Computer Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) method involving respondents aged 18 years old and above. The structured questionnaires were divided into three sections: i) sociodemographic questions; ii) measures of public knowledge on the existence of T&CM services in Malaysia; and iii) perceptions of public on the role of T&CM services in Malaysia T&CM. 3825 (41.04%) of the 9320 phone numbers called were active, and 1804 (47.16%) of those phone numbers called were answered. However, only 463 (25.67%) agreed to be respondents; out of which, only 395 (85.31%) completed the questionnaire completely.

216 (54.68%) of the respondents admitted to having experience in using T&CM services. 142 (65.7%) claimed that they used T&CM services to maintain or improve their health and wellness, 127 (58.8%) claimed that it was for the purpose of rehabilitation, 57 (26.4%) claimed that it was for disease cure, and 17 (7.9%) claimed that it was for disease prevention.

26.3% of respondents have High level of awareness of the existence of T&CM services in Malaysia, 37.5% have Moderate level of awareness while 36.2% have Low level of awareness. Most i.e. 384 (97.2%) of respondents have Positive perception of the role of T&CM services and only 11 (2.8%) of respondents have Negative perception.

Based on the findings of the study, it is our considered views that T&CM may, in the future, be cultivated in a constructive and proactive manner to assure the quality, safety of practises, and even have structural education programmes for example:

(i) Certain by-laws, policy, rules and regulations can be introduced to make it a compulsory requirement for all T&CM practitioners and service providers to include the contact details of the Ministry of Health (MOH)'s T&CM Division hotline on the name card or signages of business premises of T&CM practitioners/service providers, to raise public awareness of the channels that can be used to file a report or lodge a complaint in the event of possible malpractice.

(ii) A proper database of trusted T&CM practitioners and service providers registered with MOH's T&CM Division can be established and shared with the public via official MOH websites, apps like MySejahtera, or even on social media so that the public can refer, seek information and consider before they decide to subscribe to or choose the kind of T&CM services that they are looking for.

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