

THE BENEFITS OF CUPPING (*HIJAMAH*) TO THE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH POST-VACCINATION

Syaidatun Nazirah Abu Zahrin^{1,2,*}, Mohamad Mohsin Mohamad Said¹, Amirah Izzati Mohd Iskandar Sandakumaran³, Asiah Sofiyah Khan Zubair Khan⁴

¹ Centre for Liberal Studies, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi Selangor, MALAYSIA.

² Institute of Islamic Civilization, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi Selangor, MALAYSIA.

³ Faculty of Science Technology, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 43600 Bangi Selangor, MALAYSIA.

⁴ Pahang Royal Weaving Skills Institute, Kompleks Budaya Pulau Keladi, Kampung Pulau Keladi, 26600 Pekan, Pahang, MALAYSIA.

Abstract

The Muslims have been challenged significantly during the pandemic, both mentally and physically. Staying safe and healthy have been a great concern of all throughout the world. The prophetic ways of life have been fundamental examples in how we could go about in dealing with the disastrous effects of the pandemic, and also the AEFI (Adverse Effect Following Immunizations) that could affect some individuals in various ways. The purpose of this study is to promote the benefits of cupping (*hijamah*) as one of the ways in dealing with the AEFI that may cause blockage in the brain, heart attacks and sudden death. Cupping therapy (CT) is used in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East and is prevalent in Muslim communities where it is a recommended sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad PBUH. Cupping has been studied tremendously and proven to improve one's health conditions related to high blood pressure, diabetes, high cholesterols, knee and joint pains, asthma, acne, migraine, respiratory problems and other medical issues. Cupping is also proven to be able to help improve one's mental and physical health when affected by COVID- 19 or other diseases that increase dramatically during this pandemic. Finally, some challenges and their implications are discussed with recommendations.

Keywords: cupping; AEFI; pandemic; health; vaccination; *sunnah*

Introduction

Mankind all around the world have been affected significantly since pandemic COVID-19 occurred in December 2019. One of the preventions from COVID-19 is by increasing one's immunity through the immunization program promoted by World Health Organization (WHO). This immunization program through few vaccinations' doses for COVID-19 were reported to have various side effects in mild, moderate and severe levels of AEFI (Adverse Effect Following Immunizations) including death

* Corresponding author: syaidatun@ukm.edu.my

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(Polack et al 2020; Md. Martuza et al 2021). The purpose of protection by an immunization program is to protect one's mental and physical health, but the side effects are questionable by the so called "anti vax" because it undeniably led to other health issues as well. Having made compulsory or imposed as a "must" by certain countries such as America, Britain, Singapore, Malaysia and others, citizens have not much choice and led to take the jab (minimum of two doses) in less than one year. News was spreading out that there will more doses in the future.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to highlight the benefits of cupping therapy (CT) that could help maintain one's mental and physical health despite of the challenges faced in relation to COVID- 19 and vaccinations. CT represents a cornerstone of traditional Chinese and Persian medicine, but it has its roots in the history of therapy. Although its exact mechanisms of action have been not fully understood, it is widely used as an alternative or complementary treatment of a broad spectrum of diseases, mainly musculoskeletal pain and muscular tension. Some practitioners use CT to cure dermatoses, but the most common adverse events occur at the skin level.

According to Khalil & AlSanad, (2018), cupping therapy (CT) is used in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East and is prevalent in Muslim communities where it is recommended by the Prophet of Islam. The majority of modern, medical practitioners interested in CT, view it as a medical technique and distance themselves from the mechanisms proposed by traditional medicine. However, modern medicine does not offer a valid explanation for the mechanisms involved in CT. There is growing evidence of CT's effectiveness, specifically in chronic pain management and diseases (Kouser et al, 2021; Rahman, 2016).

This paper is arranged by firstly discussing the statement of problems, secondly on cupping as therapy; thirdly, the benefits of cupping according to Islam; and modern medicines; relationship between mental strength and physical health; lastly implications and recommendations.

Statement of problems

Adverse Events Following Immunization (AEFI) is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO 2019) as any undesirable medical incident that occurs after immunisation and does not necessarily have a causal association with vaccine use. These occurrences may involve one or more unpleasant or unexpected signs, symptoms, or test findings that cause worry among immunisation programme managers, policymakers, and the general public. AEFIs can be common and modest (such as fever, local pain and swelling), severe (such as pain and swelling that extends beyond the adjacent joint or a high-grade fever), or serious (such as a high-grade fever, disability, conditions requiring hospitalisation or leading to death) (MOHFW 2015).

Since the COVID-19 vaccination programmes are still recent, major clinical development programmes are intended to investigate the benefits of vaccines, with the

major goal of pivotal studies being to demonstrate efficacy. Safety evaluation is usually a secondary goal, and pivotal studies were not designed to provide statistical analysis of specific AEFIs (Chandler 2020). Therefore, the study cases of AEFIs on COVID-19 vaccines beneficiaries are still lacking.

According to Jeskowiak et al (2021), data in Poland confirm a low vaccination reported post-vaccination reactions to the Sanitary Inspection despite high frequency occurred. People in the health sector know about the ways and need to report vaccine reactions, while those outside the sector do not. It is important to remind people in the National Vaccination Program about the need to report vaccine reactions, and to inform people from the next groups of the National Vaccination Program about possible ways of reporting side effects.

However, there have been a few reported cases of surging blood cholesterol level after patients took on the COVID-19 vaccination. Liu et al. (2021) confirmed the elevated blood cholesterol level after the first inoculation. Study by Tang et al. (2021) found that abnormalities on blood cholesterol levels can indirectly increase the susceptibility of patients to the COVID-19 virus and increase risk of death due to the virus. Tang et al. (2021) next advised the continuation of cholesterol-lowering treatment for COVID-19 patients. CT has been proven to lower down cholesterol level. On the hand, Rahman (2016) proved that CT lower down the blood pressure.

Even though there are great interest in cupping, CT is not taken seriously by most Muslims, despite of its good effect for health (Hasina & Hariyani, 2021) and the establishment of the Traditional and Complementary medicines practices division in Malaysia (Mohamad & Betania, 2021). When modern medical practitioners became interested in cupping therapy, they separated it from the essential elements of traditional cupping such as prayer and regarded it simply as a technique. Neglect of these essential elements of cupping therapy may lead to false cupping treatment methods as well as not providing the healing effect it should have.

The study made by Hasina & Hariyani (2021) was to determine the effect of cupping therapy on lowering total blood cholesterol levels. The study conducted on 35 cholesterol patients in the cupping clinic. The test subject was divided into two groups, namely the intervention group who received treatment in the form of cupping therapy and the control group were not given treatment. The results showed that the average cholesterol level in the intervention group 241 and in the control group 243 with P value = 0.782 means there is no difference in the average cholesterol level in the intervention group and control group before given cupping therapy intervention. After cupping therapy, the average cholesterol level in the intervention group was 188 and in the control group 273 with P value = 0.000, there was a difference in the average cholesterol level in the intervention group and the control group after the cupping therapy intervention. Cupping therapy significantly with P value = 0.000 which means that cupping therapy has an effect on lowering total blood cholesterol levels. For that

reason, cupping therapy could become one of the choices to mediate AEFI's symptom due to the vaccination and even for recovering patient of COVID-19.

Cupping as therapy

Cupping therapy to treat various ailments has been used in the Chinese state for thousands of years. Cupping therapy is administered by creating negative pressure in a cup-like container to make inhalations to the desired point on the patient's skin to create hyperaemia that can have a healing effect on certain diseases. Cupping therapy was then used more widely when about 300 years ago it was used clinically for the treatment of internal ailments experienced by humans. The development of cupping therapy subsequently increased as various types of cupping were developed including bamboo cupping, glass cupping, ceramic cupping, metal cupping, air extraction cupping and vacuum cupping. New advances in technology and materials have been integrated with cupping therapy and its use now revolves around a variety of different treatments and applications. According to much research, the quality and quantity of controlled trials on cupping therapy appear to have improved over the past 50 years in China, and the majority of studies show potential benefits on pain conditions (Pinzon-Perez, 2013). Many studies have been conducted that show that cupping therapy can treat neck, waist, knee joint pain, acne, itchy skin, senility, fever, migraine, and cough effectively (Wang et.al, 2021). Studies also show that cupping therapy can also help cure non-chronic asthma (Lei Guo et.al, 2021) and lipid control in the body (Suhaily et al, 2017).

The relationship between spirituality, religion, and medicine as a healing system has been recognized since ancient times. However, in highly developed countries, religion and medicine have been separated and seen as two healing systems. Yet this is not the case in many developing countries, where religion can influence medical interventions. In Muslim society, cupping therapy, also known as "hijamah", is one of the very popular medical approaches. Its popularity is likely because it is categorized as one of the prophetic medicines in which the Prophet Muhammad himself is said to have once practiced it. Apart from that Rasulullah PBUH once stated that hijamah is the best among the medicines available. In Nabawi medicine, Muslims do not need to look for scholarly explanations or evidence of the effectiveness or the mechanism of the treatment itself because it is considered credible as a result of it being applied by prophet Muhammad PBUH himself. This is mentioned in the hadith reported by Bukhari RA, "Whoever performing cupping on the 17th, 19th or 21st day (of the Islamic lunar month), then it is a cure for every disease" (Sunan Abu Dawud Hadith No: 3861).

The Benefits of Cupping According to Islam

According to the ruler of Brunei Darussalam, one of the most prestigious Muslim countries, the viruses that caused COVID-19 were the armies of Allah Taa'la and we should bow humbly to Allah and seek His mercy and forgiveness because begging for Allah's kindness and mercy is important instead of adopting an arrogant approach to fight and wage war against the pandemic (Abdul Aziz, 2021). Therefore, besides

gaining Allah's bounty and mercy in facing the pandemic, adhering to the teaching of Islam, and applying the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad PBUH is one of the ways to find cure to AEFI cases or the COVID-19 itself. Jamari (2016) discovered that there so many benefits of cupping, namely in curing the patients with high blood pressure, falling hair/baldness, infertility and elephant leg. According to his observation in a cupping centre in Malaysia, he discovered that following the Prophet Muhammad PBUH lead to better health and well-being.

Ismail and Asnawi (2021) studies the concept of scientific commentary (*al-sharḥ al-ilmī*), which recently gained considerable significance, especially in dealing with ḥadīths of al-Ṭibb al-Nabawī (Prophetic medicine) and understanding them. In the beginning, the study defines the concept of scientific commentary, shedding light on its history in terms of its emergence, context, scholars and their arguments. Later, the study identifies and discusses the following theoretical and practical issues of scientific commentary in selected ḥadīths of Prophetic medicine. The historical, descriptive, and analytical methods are utilised in the entire study. The finding of this study indicates that there have been numerous commentaries that adopt the scientific approach in dealing with the subject of Prophetic medicine.

According to El Sayed et al. (2014) excretory treatment modalities that excrete pathological substances outside human body deserve more research attention as this may potentiate the therapeutic effects of pharmacological treatments. Wet cupping therapy (WCT) is a prophetic medicine according to the Arabic medical literature where it is reported to treat many diseases differing in etiology and pathogenesis. Al-hijamah may be referred to as bloodletting cupping therapy or blood cupping therapy in medical studies and reports from the Arabic countries. Both Chinese dry cupping therapy and WCT are partial steps of Al-hijamah. Scientific and medical bases of Al-hijamah were recently reported in the evidence-based Taibah mechanism (Taibah theory) where Al-hijamah is the only excretory treatment that clears blood, lymph and intercellular fluids from causative pathological substance (CPS).

The Benefits of Cupping in Modern Medicine

Ullah et al (2007) had investigated the effect of CT at a patho- physiological level for anterior knee pain and its impact on quality of life and well-being. This is an experimental survey utilising clinical trial and a questionnaire. A three-week-follow-up was conducted to determine longer term carryover of treatment effects utilising both objective and subjective assessment. This method enables the researcher to examine how much the independent variable causes participants to change (Dane, 1990). Result shows that there was statistically significance difference between the level of pain, wellbeing and range of motion for patients with anterior knee pain pre and post Cupping ($P < 0.05$). The efficacy of the treatment of CT for Anterior Knee Pain, wellbeing and range of motion has been researched and results reveal improvements in participants as a result of CT.

El Sayed et al (2014) highlighted that cupping or *Al-hijamah* benefits from the histological structure of the skin in performing a percutaneous pressure-dependent and size-dependent non-specific blood filtration and excretion of causative pathological substances (CPS) through the fenestrated skin capillaries upon application of negative pressure suction using sucking cups. *Al-hijamah* benefits also from the production of endogenous nitric oxide (vasodilator, antineoplastic and antimicrobial agent). *Al-hijamah* exerts many other health benefits, such as enhancement of immunity and pharmacological potentiation. *Al-hijamah* was reported to clear blood significantly from serum triglycerides, total cholesterol, LDL- cholesterol, ferritin (circulating iron stores), uric acid, autoantibodies, cytokine receptors and others. Those therapeutic benefits may treat some diseases, namely hyperlipidaemia, hypertension, atherosclerosis, coronary heart diseases, gout, musculoskeletal pain conditions, hepatitis and iron overload conditions which lead to thalassemia. Therapeutic benefits of *Al-hijamah* are mainly related to the amount of excreted CPS. *Al-hijamah* may carry some advantages better than acupuncture and other types of cupping therapy in treating a large number of diseases differing in etiology and pathogenesis.

Mehta & Dhapte (2015) asserted that since ancient times, complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) have played an important role in human health and welfare. Many therapeutic approaches in healthcare outside the realm of conventional medicine persist in various parts of the world. There is considerable scientific and commercial potential in CAM, which needs to be explored precisely. Cupping therapy as one of the CAM, is practiced across the world. This therapy is believed to act by correcting imbalances in the internal bio field, such as by restoring the flow of “Qi”. Cupping involves applying a heated cup to generate a partial vacuum that mobilizes the blood flow and promotes effective healing.

Wang et al (2021) argued that cupping therapy has been accepted worldwide, and many studies have been conducted to reveal its curative effects and mechanisms. To comprehensively evaluate the effect of CT, database including China Network Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI), Chinese Scientific Journal Database VIP, Wan Fang Database, Chinese Biomedicine (CBM), PubMed and Web of Science were searched from 2009–2019. Wang et al (2021) summarized the meta-analyses, randomized controlled trials, clinical trials and the mechanisms studies of cupping therapy in the previous 10 years, to provide a reference for the clinical applications and studies.

Isma (2017) argued that controlling high blood sugar levels is the best way that can be done to avoid complications of diabetes mellitus. There are various ways to control blood sugar levels, including pharmacological and non-pharmacological therapies. Pharmacological therapies are considered to have adverse side effects such as kidney and liver damage when used over a long period of time. While non-pharmacological therapies are considered to have fewer side effects and more economical such as cupping therapy. This study aims to determine the effectiveness of cupping therapy on

changes in blood glucose levels in adults aged 26-45 years in Indonesia. This study used Non-Random Sampling technique with total sample of 30 people. The results of the Paired Sample T-test statistical test obtained that the average change in blood glucose levels from measurements before and after cupping therapy was 14.2 mg/dl with a P-value of 0.0001 ($P < 0.05$), so the H_a hypothesis was accepted. Which means that there is the effectiveness of cupping therapy on changes in blood glucose levels before and after treatment in one observation.

Relationship Between Mental Strength and Physical Health

According to Essiti & Guzel (2021), individuals travel locally and globally in order to find alternative treatments which are less-toxic and more beneficial to their health and wellness. CT is based on the principle that different sized cups create a vacuum effect on the skin and increase the blood flow. Thus, while increasing the amount of oxygen and blood in the tissues, the excretion of toxins and carbon dioxide through the lymph is accelerated. Despite the popularity of western system of medicine, CT started to attract great attention in Turkey as a traditional and complementary medicine system to improve the quality of people's life. It is also a source of attraction for wellness and health tourism. In this context, the present study by Essiti & Guzel (2021) aims to examine the effectiveness of CT on health-seeking travellers in the sample of visitors who have had cupping therapy at least once in their life. The findings of the study indicated that the participants who visited the thermal facilities to have CT considered as an alternative and complementary treatment method without side effects. The participants also indicated that CT made them feel good and healthy. From this point of view, it can be said that CT positively affects individuals' perception of physical and psychological health and increases people's health and general quality of life. Based on the study results, with the reason of cupping therapy has very common knowledge and demand within Turkey, it can also be said that CT is a different way of increasing the variety of wellness and health tourism.

Hajek & König (2021) asserted to date, only a few studies have investigated the association between personality and functional impairment. Therefore, our purpose was to add to this knowledge. Methods: Data from wave 7 of the Survey of Health, Ageing and Retirement in Europe (SHARE) were used (70 028 individuals in the analytical sample). Personality was measured using the 10-item Big Five Inventory (BFI-10). Functional impairment was quantified using activities of daily living (ADL) and instrumental activities of daily living (IADL) indices. Multiple linear regressions were conducted. Results: Regressions showed that an increased likelihood of limitations in ADL was associated with higher extraversion, higher agreeableness, lower conscientiousness, higher neuroticism, and higher openness to experience. Similarly, an increased likelihood of limitations in IADL was associated with higher agreeableness, lower conscientiousness, higher neuroticism, and higher openness to experience (only with one IADL index). As a conclusion, this knowledge of associations between personality and functional limitations may help in determining

individuals at risk for increased functional impairment (e.g., individuals with low conscientiousness or high neuroticism).

Osman & Baharuddin (2020) mentioned various research have been conducted related to cupping from Islam's point of view. Developed countries such as the United States, United Kingdom and Australia have had various guidelines in terms of legal aspects of traditional medicine. However, there is still no comprehensive study on the Shariah and civil legal aspects of cupping treatment. This library literary research refers to the legal aspects of cupping practice from a Shariah and legal perspective. This highlight analyzes the important literature related to the study of the determination of cupping liability in cupping treatment. The results of the study found that there are gaps in the determination of liability and the creation of such guidelines will protect cupping service providers in the event of any accident. It is important that the interests of all parties, providers and recipients of cupping services can be safeguarded, both from a Shariah and legal perspective. One should also observe other aspects of Shariah involved in cupping such as preservation of the customers' awrah, segregation between ladies and men, room designs so as to protect one's dignity and health.

Aboushanad & AlSanad (2018) asserted that cupping therapy is an ancient traditional and complementary medicine practice. Recently, there is growing evidence of its potential benefits in the treatment of pain related diseases. The study gives an overview of cupping therapy practice. Furthermore, they also suggest a new classification of cupping therapy sets, a new classification of cupping therapy adverse events, and an updated classification of cupping therapy types.

Implications & Recommendations

This study has implications for Islamic medical figures, practitioners, physicians and therapists who practice the cupping method so as not to leave out important elements in cupping such as prayer, *dhikr* (the remembrance of Allah) and certain verses of Qur'an (spiritual aspects) so that cupping is truly effective in curing diseases. The same goes for modern medical practitioners to include the spiritual aspects so that it could determine the effectiveness of cupping therapy.

Oakman et al (2020) argued that the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has resulted in changes to the working arrangements of millions of employees who are now based at home and may continue to work at home, in some capacity, for the foreseeable future. Decisions on how to promote employees' health whilst work from home (WFH) need to be based on the best available evidence to optimise worker outcomes. The aim of this rapid review was to review the impact of WFH on individual workers' mental and physical health, and determine any gender difference, to develop recommendations for employers and employees to optimise workers' health. Ten health outcomes of WFH were reported: pain, self-reported health, safety, well-being, stress, depression, fatigue, quality of life, strain and happiness. The impact on health outcomes was strongly influenced by the degree of organisational support available to employees, colleague support, social connectedness (outside of work), and levels of work to family conflict.

Overall, women were less likely to experience improved health outcomes when WFH. Therefore, this paper would suggest that relating mental health and cupping could increase one's health conditions and the ability to adapt changes in working arrangements and stressful events.

Practicing *sunnah* is the best way to deal with health problems since the time of Rasulullah PBUH. Apart from cupping, Muslims are encouraged to chew *habbatus sauda*, consume honey, olive oil and some sunnah foods and drinks to maintain health and to build their immunity in facing the COVID-19. Physical health will help to improve mental health, and vice versa. By practicing the sunnah, one will have happier heart and peace of mind. The application of Sunnah is a civilizational process to ensure the well-being of the person, family, society and the Ummah. The importance of sunnah is mentioned in many hadith, such as: "This black cumin is healing for all diseases except As-Sam.' Aisha said, 'What is As-Sam?' He said, 'Death" (Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith number 5687). In another hadith which is narrated by Ibn 'Abbas, the Prophet PBUH said: "Healing is in three things: A gulp of honey, cupping, and branding with fire (cauterizing). But I forbid my followers to use (cauterization) branding with fire" (Sahih al-Bukhari, hadith number 5680).

Conclusion

Based on the studies that have been done on cupping, it is found that many benefits are obtained to help deal with diseases caused by pre-existing conditions or possibly caused by vaccinations. This study recommends that individuals who are affected either because of AEFI or because of COVID-19 infection, perform cupping immediately after taking the vaccine or after recovering from COVID-19. This proposal is to ensure the survival of the individuals affected during this pandemic.

Although cupping is said to originate from ancient empires, but it can be considered as a source of Islamic medical treasures as the Prophet Muhammad PBUH has advised his followers to use cupping to treat various diseases. This study investigated the benefits of using cupping on mental and physical health after vaccination. Overall, this review of the literature has successfully shown that cupping does indeed have the potential to help reduce the negative effect resulting from immunization. Through this study, cupping was found to bring benefits from religious and medical point of view. Further studies should be conducted using real patients to see the effects more clearly.

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