

ATTITUDE OF BHUTANESE PEOPLE ON TRADITIONAL MEDICINE (GSOBA-RIG-PA)

A PRELIMINARY STUDY

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Introduction

Bhutan hosts two forms of traditional medicine: local healing practices and the official traditional medical system known to the nation as gSo-ba Rig-pa. While local healing practices lacks proper documentation, the medical tradition of gSo-ba Rig-pa has been integrated with the nation's system of health care services.

This integration of TM with modern health care system not only adds dimensions to the nation's system of health care but also provides an alternative to the patients in terms of active healthcare decision making.

Given the opportunity to enjoy free medical facilities of both the systems, empirical studies such as this has become imperative for the clear understanding of people's knowledge, attitude and perspectives so that researched evidences of health seeking-patterns can be clearly stated.

1.1 Objectives

- To better understand the knowledge/awareness of Bhutanese people on TM
- To capture the attitudes and perspectives of the people on TM
- To determine the level of trust and/or satisfaction of Bhutanese people on TM
- To document the health-seeking patterns of the Bhutanese patients
- To find out the common diseases treated by TM
- To make TM more known to the people at national as well as international level

2. Methods

The study was designed to make use of both the qualitative as well as quantitative approaches. Therefore, it employed a combination of questionnaire administration and semi-structured 'in-depth' interviews of the informants.

About 200 people living in Thimphu with diverse background in terms of education qualifications, age, sex, marital status, occupation and location of their parent districts were selected randomly and asked to volunteer for this study. Special attention was paid in seeking research participants from diverse background in order to capture differing and diverse views of Bhutanese people on Bhutanese Traditional Medicine.

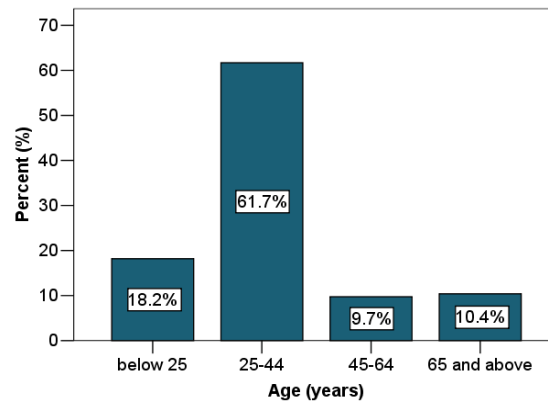
3. Findings

3.1.1 Demography: Gender

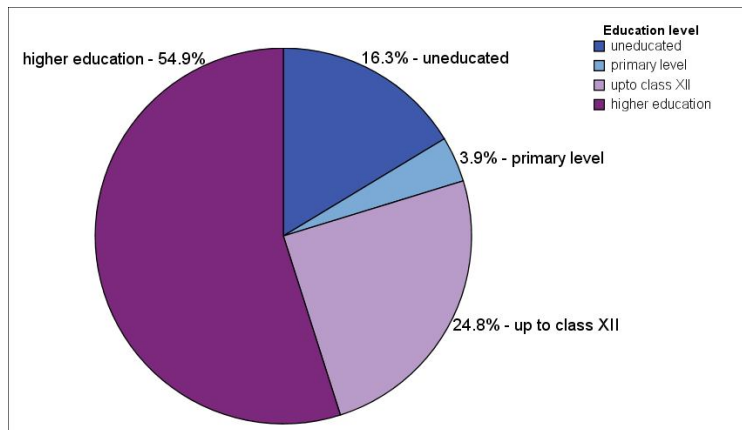
Of the 155 respondents, about 44% were female (N=68) and 55% were males (N=85).

3.1.2 Demography: Age categories

Participants ranged from 18-88 years.



3.1.3 Demography: Education level



3.1.4. Demography: Home Districts

Except Gasa, respondents belonged to all the 20 districts of the country. N = 153

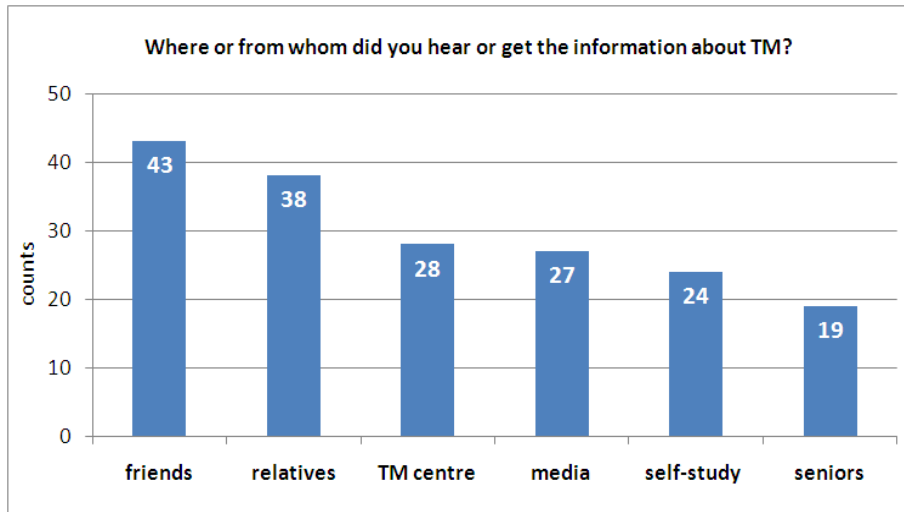
Districts	Percent
Thimphu	11.1
Paro	9.8
Trashigang	9.8
Pemagatsel	9.2
W/phodrang	7.2
Mongar	7.2
Punakha	5.9
Bumthang	5.2
Lhuntse	5.2
Trongsa	4.6
Zhemgang	4.6
SJongkhar	4.6
TYangtse	3.3
Sarpang	2.6
Samtse	2.6
Dagana	2.6
Chukha	2.6
Tsirang	1.3
Haa	0.7
Total	100.0

3.2 People's knowledge about Traditional Medicine (TM)

The data revealed that almost all the respondents (nearly 99%) heard about TM. When asked to define their understanding of TM, these were some of the theme responses: Respondent's definition of TM

- *TM is herbal treatment*
- *TM is the system of medicine made by our own people/locally made*
- *Medicines are prepared traditionally*
- *TM cures people who are sick*
- *It is derived from Tibetan and Chinese medicine*

3.3 Sources of information



3.4 Health seeking pattern of Bhutanese people

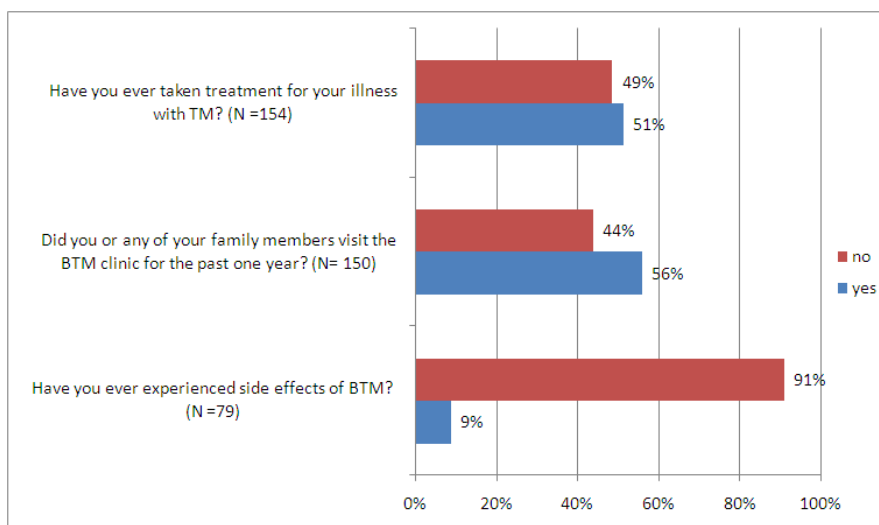
The study attempted to find out what percentage of Bhutanese people seeks TM and why they do so. To address the issue, attention was focused on four critical questions:

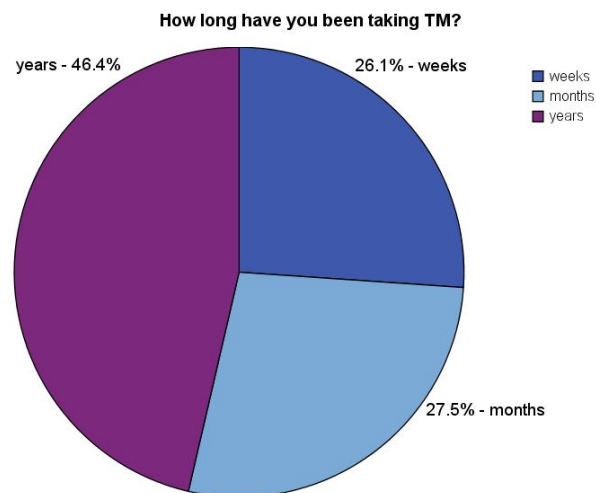
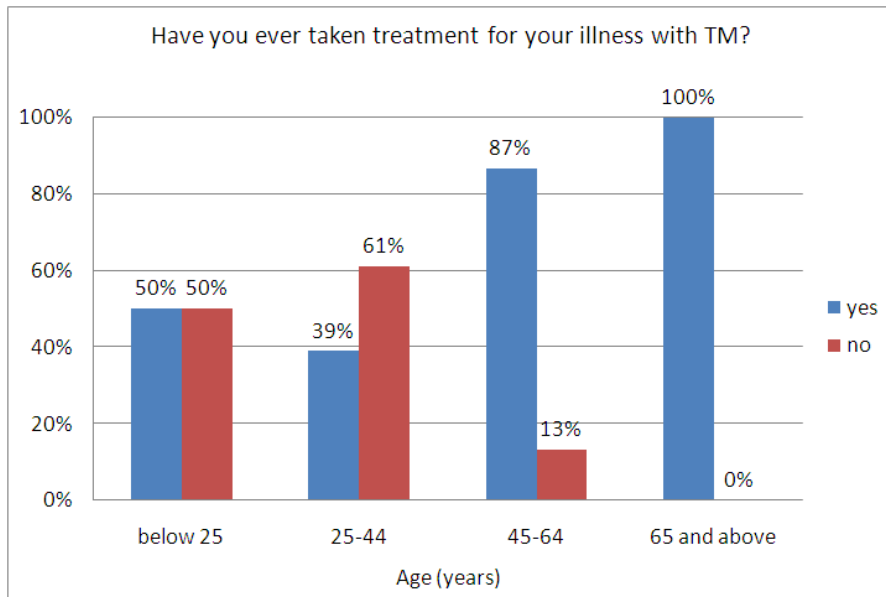
3.4.1 Have you ever taken treatment for your illness with TM? If yes, for how long?

3.4.2 Did you or any of your family members visit TM centre in the past one year?

3.4.3 Have you ever experienced the side-effects of TM? If yes, what were the side-effects?

3.4.4 Why do you choose to visit TM centre instead of modern medicine?

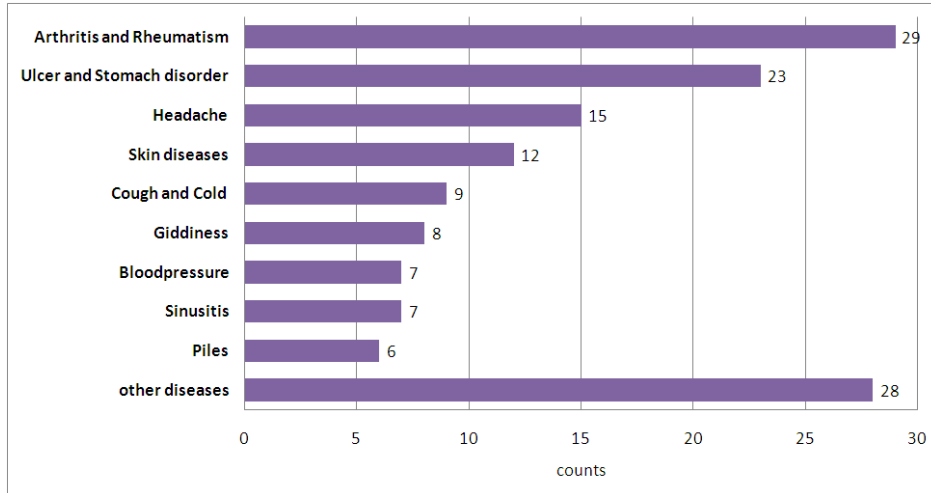




3.4.4 Why do you choose to visit TM centre instead of modern medicine?

- *TM is herbal and has no side effects*
- *TM is effective for the treatment of many diseases*
- *TM is sought as an alternative treatment*
- *TM is traditional and based on Buddhism*
- *Friends/ relatives said that TM is very effective.*

Diseases treated by TM



Do you use other drugs to treat your illness other than TM?

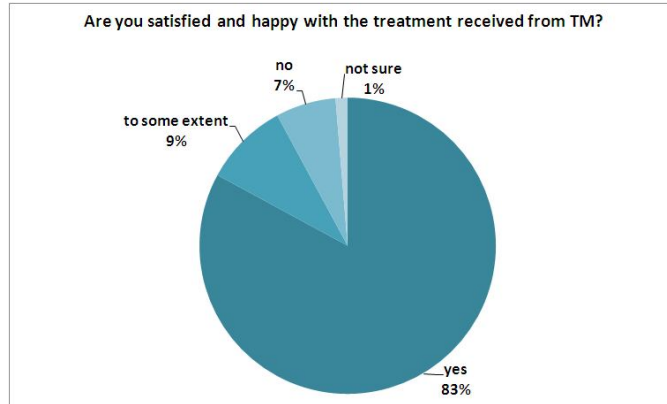
	Frequency	Percent
yes	84	60.9
No	54	39.1
Total	138	100.0

Most commonly used drugs

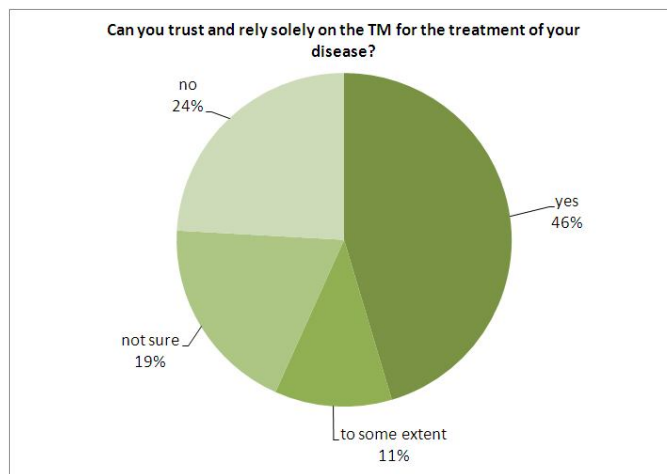
Most use pain killers such as; Paracetamol, Bruffen, aspirin, crosin, sinarest, stomache, etc. In addition they also use other drugs such as dygiene, ranitidine, cough mixtures and antibiotics.

3.6 People's attitude and perception on TM

3.6.1 Satisfaction



3.6.2 Trust



Reasons for not being able to trust and rely solely on TM:

- *TM cannot cure all the diseases*
- *Lack of adequate facilities for TM*
- *Modern medicines are better equipped for emergencies and surgeries*
- *Treatment is time consuming with TM*
- *TM is not research based*

3.6.3 Scope

With the development of health facilities for modern medicine, should the TM services be stopped, continued or further improved?

N=146

1.4% thinks it should be stopped

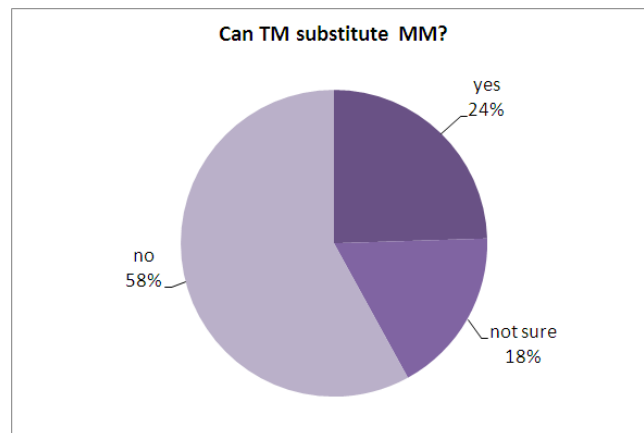
98.6% (34.2+64.4) continued and further improved

Reasons

- *TM and MM are equally important as each cure the diseases which are not cured by the other*
- *Many people have faith in TM and prefer to seek treatment from it*
- *TM is our cultural heritage and needs preservation and further promotion*
- *The inclusion of TM health care provides alternative choice to the patients*
- *TM is herbal and has no side-effects*

3.6.4 Can TM substitute MM?

N =143



Reasons for NO

- *TM needs to be more developed with advanced medical facilities*
- *Some diseases cannot be cured by TM*
- *Many people are highly dependent on MM*
- *MM provides faster cure*
- *Diagnosis of diseases is better with MM*

3.6.5 People's views and comments on TM

- *TM needs further development*
- *TM is effective for the treatment of diseases*
- *Need to create awareness among the people*
- *TM services need to be expanded for better healthcare coverage*
- *Research and development needs to be enhanced*
- *Medicines can be made consumer friendly*

4. Conclusion

- Bhutanese people's knowledge on their TM (gSo-ba Rig-pa) is good.
- A significant number of Bhutanese people seek their TM

- Treatment is sought by all ages, young and old
- People's attitude towards TM is positive
- People are of the opinion that TM be further developed and expanded.