

The main purpose of this report on
“Hikmat: In the Contemporary World”
was to find whether in the light of
advanced medical sciences, is Hikmat still
a preferable choice among masses or not.

Hikmat in the Contemporary World

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Abstract

This paper presents the research and findings of a study conducted in Karachi as part of a report in order to scientifically analyze and understand whether Hikmat, a traditional mode of medical treatment, still remains a preferable choice among masses given the fact that advanced modern medical sciences are more in the limelight and are deemed as a priority for any health treatment. This paper specifically explores how much aware is the general populace with “Hikmat” as a medical discourse as well as their general perception about it. The results of this research presents a factual representation into the contemporary standing of Hikmat among other medical discourses through a qualitative/quantitative lens.

Keywords: Hikmat, Karachi, aware, qualitative/quantitative

Introduction

This report is an analysis and comparison between Hikmat (Hakeemi Treatment) and modern day medicines using first hand primary data. This study is part of a qualitative/quantitative study undertaken in Karachi. Hikmat, a traditional and old way of medical treatment, which used to command admiration amongst its consumers as compared to any other medicinal phenomenon. However, with development many popular modern methods have seen the light of day in the medicinal field, such as Allopathy which have somewhat overshadowed the trade of Hikmat. We aim to see if Hikmat still is a preferable mode for treatment amongst the modern people. While numerous components can be used to judge one’s preference. In order to have a clear and genuine analysis certain parameters were put in place.

The following are some of the major parameters for this study:

1. *Age - is quite important and is largely defined by age groups to make a certain distinction whether Hikmat, an old method of treatment, is known by the elderly or the youth. A good sample might be misleading without this parameter.*
2. *Level of Education - is defined by the stages of academic qualification a participant possesses. This information can possibly prove to break stereotypes of education having a direct relation with a modern mindset.*
3. *The kind of problems - is defined by minor and major medical problems a participant might consult a Hakeem for, indicating the level of trust in Hikmat as a whole.*

Moreover, the hypothesis whether **“Hikmat has any links to Science”** was tested to observe if the participant’s willingness to opt for this treatment is majorly due to this notion. We were limited to specific questions as in to minimize the probability of creating a certain biases amongst the participants. The aim of this research was also to analyze the actual social thought structure of participants residing in a modern city and whether the cultural aspects tend to outweigh

modern thought. Due to a limited number of responses we were not able to conduct an in-depth longitudinal research. We were forced to work on implications and assumptions implied by the data.

Research Conducted

1. *Secondary Research - for the already available data*
2. *Primary Research - for self conducted and updated data*

1. Secondary Research

Before stepping into the ground for data collection, it was necessary to understand the *current standing of Hikmat* through available resources. The use of herbal medicines was originated in the beginning of life of humans. It evolved with time, and changed its form with more variety to be able to treat the increasing diseases. Traditional herbal medicines have a long history, packed with beliefs and experiences of different eras. Hikmat in today's world is still practiced by many people, according to World Health Organization's survey, around **60%** of the world's population depends on traditional medicine while **80%** of the population of developing countries depends on herbal medicines as their daily effective and cheap source. Modern medicines have been derived by discovery of some important drugs (e.g morphine), which was possible because of identification of bioactive parts of medical herbs.

Why herbal medicine is still chosen over modern medicines?

The world has advanced and now people tend to choose the ways which are quicker and can guarantee success. Same way modern medicine is the choice of many people but there are some problems linked to it i.e Modern medicine could not replace the herbal medicines throughout the globe. First and most occurred issue was the rate of incidents of side-effects which is much higher when compared to herbal medicines. The herbal medicines are also readily available in undeveloped and rural areas where modern medicines are not very common. Few important reasons for this unpopularity of modern medicine the rural and under-developed areas are the high cost of modern medicines and the old concept and ideology that does not allow people to move from herbal to traditional medicines. Many people are uncomfortable to change their way of treatment and prefer to stick with their traditional herbal medicines without awareness of the modern medicines.

Problems

Although herbal medicines are cheaper and easy-to-access, but still there are some drawbacks that make use of traditional medicines questionable.

- *As the time is progressing, there is no proper quality control check over these medicines and lack of tested data to prove the authenticity of the medicine is missing for almost every kind of herbal medicine.*
- *One of the other **blackbox** of herbal remedies is that people are unaware of the composition of these medicines as there is no proper list of ingredients of these herbal medicines.*
- *These herbal medicines are not tested in extreme cases for example for ladies that are pregnant, one does not know if the herbal medicine is suitable in these situations or not.*

2. Primary Research

Methodology

Research methodologies involve **quantitative** and **qualitative** methods to reach the claim made in the hypothesis; this research used both methods to analyze the statistics of the varying patterns of Hikmat practice in the contemporary world. This report indulges in the journey towards finding the reasons to why **Hikmat** is widely practiced and often weighed greater over other methods of medical treatment.

1. IN DEPTH INTERVIEWS:

The research involved in depth interviews with several people which allowed us to engage ourselves in discussions with the participants to learn how relieved they are from consulting Hakeems while their experience has not been satisfactory with allopathic doctors. It was apparent that they clearly prefer Hikmat as their prime consultant for medical reasons and this has probably been a routine in their family. While some were content with Hakeem, others told stories of bad experiences; a life was lost by a medicine given to the patient by a Hakeem. Presence of more than one group member was ensured during interviews for reliability. The interviews were generally unstructured hence, allowing us to build up on the participants' answers.

2. FIELD SURVEY:

Seeing the contrast between opinions of the participants, we were intrigued to learn how the mass responds. We began with a field survey by visiting a Hakeem in nearby locality and interviewed a Hikmat practitioner to learn fascinating facts about Hikmat.

On Feb 22nd, 2018, we visited **Hakeem Talha Sadiq** situated in *Gulshan 13-D, Karachi* and initiated a discussion with the Hakeem and the visitors to enhance our understanding about Hikmat. This interview was semi-structured as we initiated with a guideline and began the conversation, allowing room for more questions to be asked. This interview was recorded in the audio form and major points were noted down whilst the interview was being conducted. A summary of the learnings from the interview are discussed below.

“Angrezi ilaaj surgery mei aagay, lekin dawayon mei fail” - Talha Sadiq

Hikmat does not cater emergency problems as there are no immediate solutions to the problems and hence, surgical treatment cannot be provided. The medicines in treatment are considered to be like meals and thus, even fruits can be a source to heal in Hikmat. Moreover, most medicines derived from herbs in the methods of treatment are available worldwide and not restricted to a particular *Dawa Khana*. Some medicines have been

in use for a long time however, research by Hakeems continues to find better and more ways of cure. As Hikmat does not perform medical tests (*e.g. blood tests, x-rays*) like a doctor, we were interested in knowing how the identification of a disease is done by a single visit to a Hakeem. To this enquiry, we were told that old ways involved testing the pulse of the patient. However, that method has faded as the city people have ruined the pulse due to their lifestyle. Although, the same test will give results on villagers who have a better and controlled lifestyle. Nowadays, Hakeem test the color of the eye, the appearance of the tongue and interview the patient to identify the problem.

Furthermore, as we saw degrees displayed on the wall, we wanted to know how can someone be a Hakeem. He responded to this by telling us about the schools that specifically educate the students about the methods of Hikmat. Hikmat is said to treat life-taking diseases if Hakeems are aware of the correct validity of herbs which they are generally not provided with. Hakeem sahib narrated to us about patients coming to them with thick files of medical records generated by frequent visits to the hospital. However, as they couldn't be treated by doctors, they resorted to Hikmat.

Hikmat is a slow and gradual treatment by using herbs and several people continue to consult Hakeems after being benefited by the herbal prescription. Whilst few of us interviewed the Hakeem, few of us interviewed the visitors who were thankful to the Hakeem and highly praised the relieving medicines.

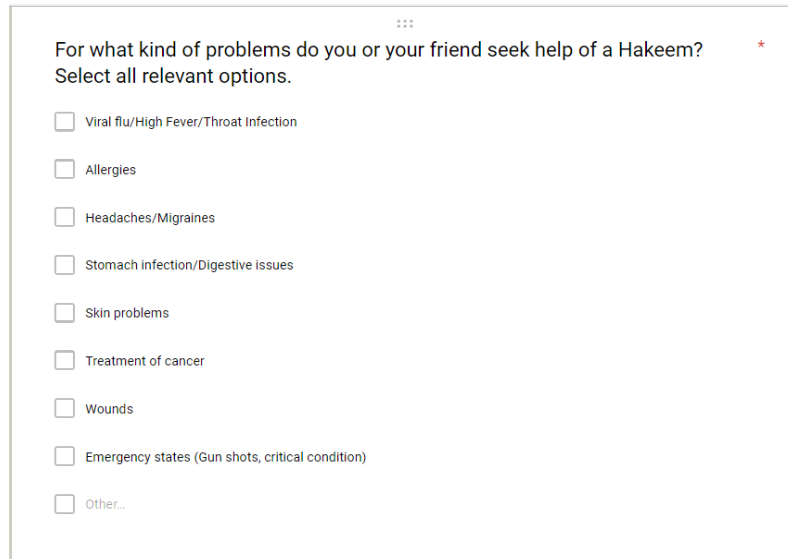
3. QUESTIONNAIRE:

To take the research forward, we switched to quantitative research and designed a questionnaire that included questions for people who would prefer Hikmat and those who wouldn't and circulated it amongst in the masses. We formed categories for the division of the respondents of the questionnaire.

The main categories were:

- **1. Gender**
- **2. Educational Background**
- **3. Age group**
- **4. If the person ever engaged with hakeem or not?**

The questionnaire gave us an opportunity to prompt the people with open- ended and close-ended questions for a better understanding of the research. People were asked to choose scenarios where they would prefer Hikmat over other means of treatment as shown in Fig 1 below.

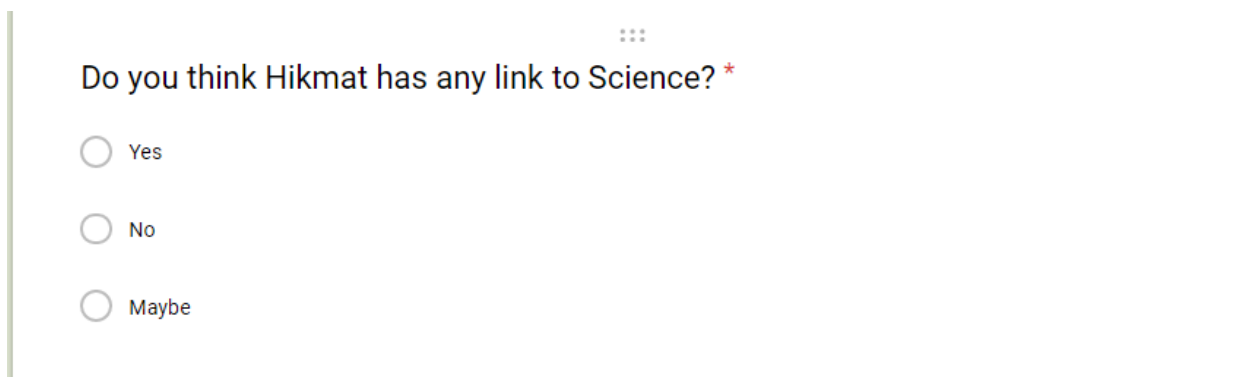


For what kind of problems do you or your friend seek help of a Hakeem? *
Select all relevant options.

- ☐ Viral flu/High Fever/Throat Infection
- ☐ Allergies
- ☐ Headaches/Migraines
- ☐ Stomach infection/Digestive issues
- ☐ Skin problems
- ☐ Treatment of cancer
- ☐ Wounds
- ☐ Emergency states (Gun shots, critical condition)
- ☐ Other...

Figure 1: Part of our questionnaire

They were asked to give their opinion about the relation of Science and Hikmat (Fig 2). Moreover, the questionnaire allowed the participants to remain anonymous and tell us about their experience with the Hakeem by answering a series of questions. We received a very good response and collected data from 130 people.



Do you think Hikmat has any link to Science? *

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Maybe

Figure 2: Another part of questionnaire

Results

All the data show below was gathered through questionnaires designed and circulated by us throughout the university and even outside. 130 responses were recorded by this survey sample conducted in Karachi

We divided our respondents using 4 criteria as stated in methodology section.

1. Gender:

Questionnaire asked about the gender of the respondent, the response was compulsory but respondent was given a choice of “**Prefer not to say**”, for the people not comfortable enough to share their gender. From total of 130 responses - 56 males, 73 females and 1 unidentified gender as shown in Fig 3(a) and (b).

Category	Count
Female Count	73
Male Count	56
Prefer not to say Count	1
Grand Count	130

Figure 3(a): Distribution of answers to our question

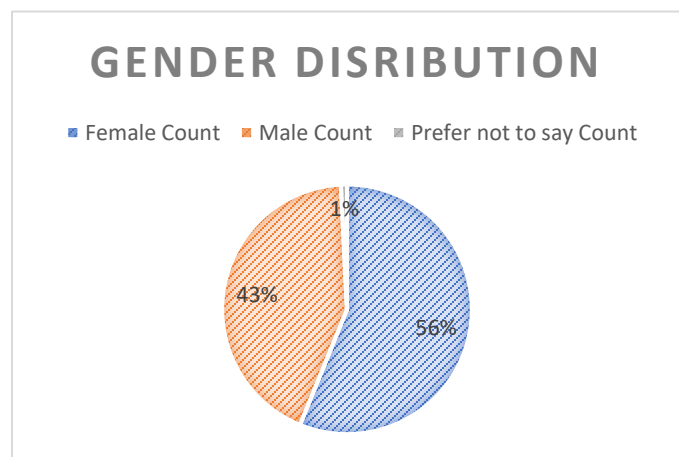


Figure 3(b): Pie chart for gender distribution

2. Age:

Apart of gender distribution, we used age to distribute our respondents into a different category. The sample consisted mostly of people amongst the age group of 18-25 amounting to 75.4% while the other age groups respectively comprised of 14.6% (25-35), 5.4% (above 35) and 4.6% (below 18) as shown in Fig 4(a) and (b).

Category	Count
18 - 25 Count	98
25 - 35 Count	19
35 above Count	6
Below 18 Count	7
Grand Count	130

Figure 4(a): Distribution of answers to our question

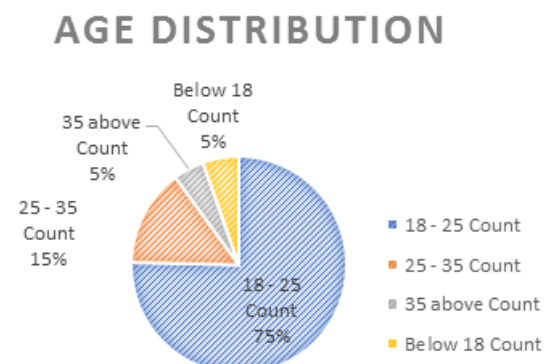


Figure 4(b): Pie Chart for age distribution

3. Level of Education:

Respondents were also asked about their level of education, giving three common options with an open option. But this question was not made compulsory to avoid any forge answers. The majority of the participants had received a minimum of undergrad education (57.4%) as the data describes below (Fig 5(a) and (b)).

Level of Education	Count
College Count	20
M.A Count	2
Post-graduate Count	32
School Count	1
Under-graduate Count	74
No answer	1
Grand Count	130

Figure 5(a): Distribution of answers to our question

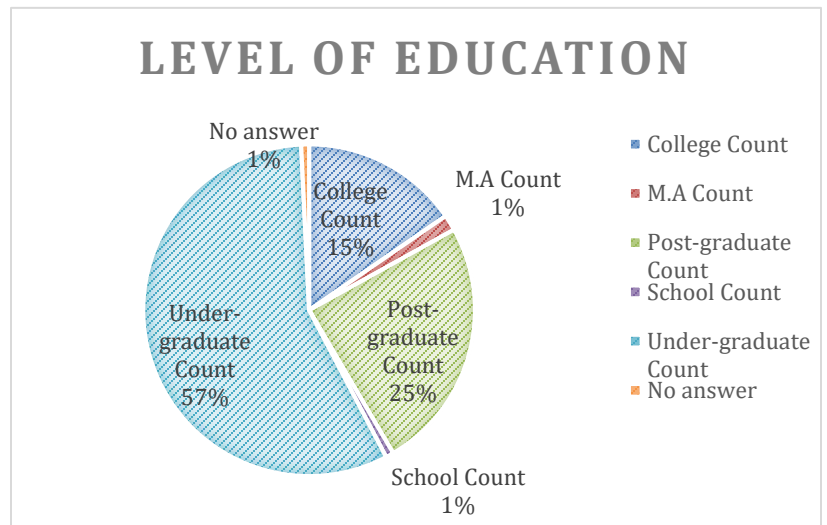


Figure 5(b): Pie Chart of level of education

4. Engagement with Hakeem:

The last criteria to classify the proceeding answers was to check if the respondent has ever been in contact with any hakeem through direct or indirect means. This would help us judge if the proceeding answers were given on the basis of assumption or personal experience. There was a close tie, to the question if the participants had ever engaged with Hikmat, with 51.5% responding with a “Yes” while the remaining 48.5% responded with a “No” .

Ever engaged with Hakeem?	Count
No Count	67
Yes Count	63
Grand Count	130

Figure 6(a): Distribution of answers to our question

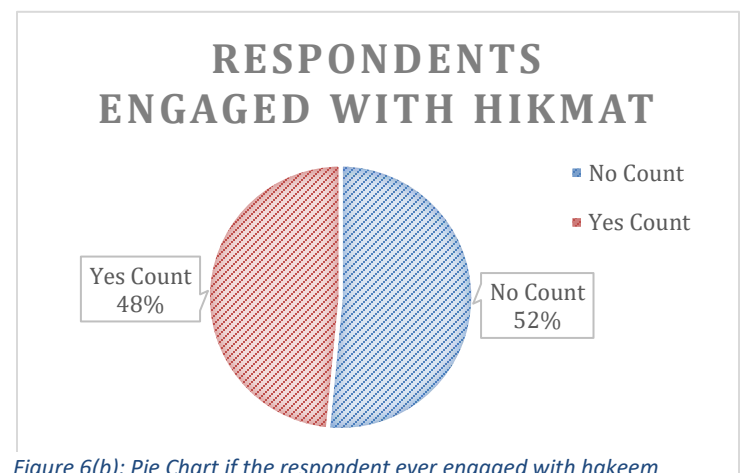


Figure 6(b): Pie Chart if the respondent ever engaged with hakeem or not.

After categorizing responds using the above 4 criteria, further questions were asked to prove our hypothesis. It is necessary to note, that in the survey from amongst the variety of options for the kinds of medical problems people have seemed to seek the help of a Hakeem mostly are minor problems like allergies, skin-problems and Stomach infections (*Allergies & Skin problems*) which comprises around **95.2%** of the sample. On the contrary, people have tended to not opt for Hikmat for major issues like cancer, bone fracture, and asthma to mention a few. When the participants were asked whether what would be the medical problems where they would seek a help of a Hakeem, a similar trend was observed as to the first question. The majority responded with skin problems, migraine/headache, Stomach infection, allergies and flu. There was an inverse trend observed with the major medical problems where people were more comfortable with opting for other medical discourses rather than Hikmat.

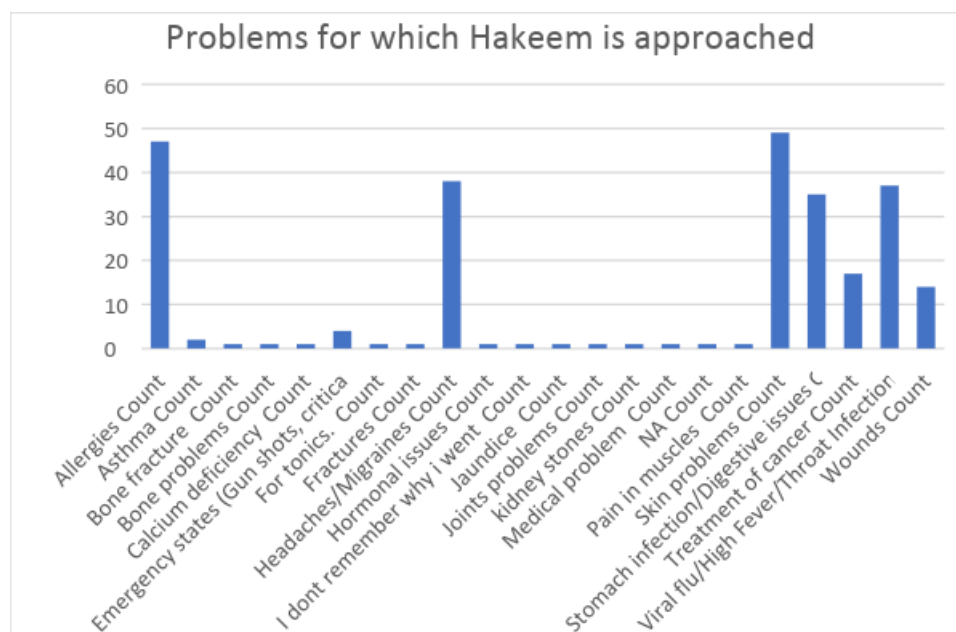


Figure 7(b): Count of diseases count

There were mixed responses regarding how long does it take a Hakeem to diagnose a problem. 20 participants replied **“immediately”**, further 20 more participants answered **“one visit”** thus majorly dominating the sample, while the remaining 22 participants opted for less popular options. Moreover, about half of the participants didn’t remembered how many days on average did it took them to recover using Hikmat.

Results of the survey have shown that **41.3%** of the participants were diagnosed incorrectly sometimes when they visited a Hakeem, while **12.7%** said a wrong diagnosis happened only once with them and the remaining **46%** said this was never the case. These statistics are clearly of importance as it clearly indicates the effectiveness of Hikmat in the medical realm. Besides the general view of

Hikmat being a traditional mode of treatment, one out of every two participants believed that Hikmat is linked with science, 27% were unsure and the remaining 14.3% clearly negated this notion.

To the question whether what do they think Hikmat is about, there were a variety of responses recorded. To sum it up, *many thought it as a form of herbal treatment that is natural. Few responses linked it with spirituality and religious mode of treatment and some of them had no idea about Hikmat altogether.* The reasons that turned out to be prevalent behind the participant's unwillingness to consult a Hakeem mostly were due to the lack of trust in this trade and moreover they never felt the need for it under the abundance of allopathic medicine.

Problems	Count
Allergies Count	47
Asthma Count	2
Bone fracture Count	1
Bone problems Count	1
Calcium deficiency Count	1
Emergency states (Gun shots, critical condition) Count	4
For tonics. Count	1
Fractures Count	1
Headaches/Migraines Count	38
Hormonal issues Count	1
I dont remember why i went Count	1
Jaundice Count	1
Joints problems Count	1
kidney stones Count	1
Medical problem Count	1
NA Count	1
Pain in muscles Count	1
Skin problems Count	49
Stomach infection/Digestive issues Count	35
Treatment of cancer Count	17
Viral flu/High Fever/Throat Infection Count	37
Wounds Count	14
Grand Count	256

Figure 7(b): Table showing count of each disease

Conclusion

After blending all the responses gathered and field visits conducted, we think it is safe for us to state that *Hikmat is still alive*. Definitely not on the scale, like it used be, but still, almost half **(48%)** of our audience has visited a Hakeem at some point in their lives. However, considering the stats from our surveys and conversation with the Hakeem during our field visit, we've come to a conclusion that those people who visit Hakeems, they are majorly looking for treatments for minute/general problems such as skin problems, allergies, viral and flu etc. There is, however, a small number of people, who visit hakeems for cancer treatment, wounds & cuts as well. From our audience, **46% people** never felt that they were diagnosed incorrectly, however **41.5%** felt that they were diagnosed incorrectly at times, which speaks of why, people are losing their faith on Hikmat. Another vital point to conclude our research is a statement by the Hakeem Tariq himself, when he said, "*Modern day medicine se foran elaj kya ja sakta hai, hikmat waqt leta ha. Agar apko foran theek hona hai tou ap doctor ke pas jain, aur agar apko jaldi nahi hai tou, hakeem ke pas ain*". Considering our contemporary world, time is considered as the most crucial thing. Missing out on classes can result in failing, missing on work, can cause salary cut and what not. Hence, quick effectiveness of modern day medicine and the technology to perform surgeries can be seen as the vital reason behind the backlash of Hikmat's patients.

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