

**Alternative Medicine Methods Applied to Their Children by Mothers with Fear of COVID-19 / COVID-19 Korkusu ile Annelerin Çocuklarına Uyguladıkları Alternatif Tıp Yöntemleri**

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Gönderim tarihi / Received:21.03.2022, Kabul Tarihi /Accepted: 07.05.2022, Yayın Tarihi / Date of Issue: 23.06.2022, .DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.25279/sak.1090870>

Atıf | Reference: YAVAŞ ÇELİK, M.; SUNGUR, M.; KARASU, F. (2022). Alternative Medicine Methods Applied to Their Children by Mothers with Fear of COVID-19. Health Academy :Kastamonu (HAK), 7 (Covid 19 Additional Issue), s.28-37

## Öz

**Amaç:** Bu çalışma, annelerin COVID-19 pandemi sürecinde çocuklarında kullandıkları alternatif tıp yöntemlerini belirlemek ve COVID-19 korkusunun alternatif tıp ile ilişkisini değerlendirmek amacıyla yapılmıştır. **Yöntem:** Tanımlayıcı tipteki araştırma 2020 yılının eylül-ekim aylarında 229 anne ile yürütülmüştür. Veriler sosyodemografik soru formu, kullanılan alternatif tıp yöntemleri formu ve Koronavirüs Korkusu Ölçeği ile toplanmıştır. Pandemi nedeniyle veri toplama araçları online uygulanmıştır. İstatistiksel hesaplamalar için normal dağılım bağımsız gruplarda t testi ve tek yönlü varyans analizi (ANOVA) testleri kullanılmıştır. Araştırma öncesi etik kuruldan, annelerden gerekli izinler alındı. **Bulgular:** COVID-19 nedeniyle annelerin, çocuklarının beslenmesine dikkat ettiği, %11.4'ünün COVID-19'a karşı çocuklarına ilaç verdiği ve sadece %3.5'inin kullandığı ilacın doktor tarafından önerildiği belirlenmiştir. Annelerin %53.7'sinin çocuğunu COVID-19 virüsünden korumak için alternatif tıp yöntemi kullandığı, %46.6'sının en çok kullandığı alternatif tıp yönteminin bitkisel ürünler olduğu ve en çok kullanılan bitkisel ürünün %39.3 olarak ıhlamur olduğu belirlenmiştir. Çocuğunu/çocuklarını COVID-19 virüsünden korumak için alternatif tıp yöntemi kullanan annelerin Koronavirüs Korku Ölçeği puan ortalaması yüksek olarak belirlenmiştir. **Sonuç:** Sonuç olarak, COVID-19 pandemi döneminde annelerin çocuklarını korumak amacıyla alternatif tıp yöntemine başvurdukları ve COVID-19 korkusu ile alternatif tıp yöntemi kullanımı arasında bir ilişki olduğu belirlenmiştir. Koronavirüs korkusu yükseldikçe annelerin, çocukları konusunda endişelerinde artış olduğu ve çocuklarını bu virüsten korumak için onların beslenmesine dikkat ettikleri, alternatif tıp yöntemleri ve ilaç kullandıkları belirlenmiştir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** COVID-19, Alternatif Tıp Yöntemi, Çocuk Hemşireliği.

## Abstract

**Aim:** This study was conducted to determine the alternative medicine methods used by mothers in their children during the COVID-19 pandemic process and to evaluate the relationship between the fear of COVID-19 and alternative medicine method. **Methods:** The descriptive study was conducted with 229 mothers in September and October 2020. The data were collected using a socio-demographic question form and The Fear of COVID-19



Scale. Data collection tools were applied online due to the pandemic. Independent t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were used for statistical calculations. Necessary permissions were obtained from the ethics committee and mothers before the study start. Results: It has been determined that mothers pay attention to the nutrition of their children due to COVID-19, 11.4% of them give medicine to their children against COVID-19, and only 3.5% of them use the medicine recommended by a doctor. It was determined that of mothers, 53.7% used an alternative medicine method to protect their children from the COVID-19 virus, 46.6% of them used herbal products the most, and linden was the most used herbal product with 39.3%. The average score on the Coronavirus Fear Scale of mothers who use alternative medicine methods to protect their child/children from the COVID-19 virus has been determined as high. Conclusion and suggestions: To conclude, it was determined that mothers used alternative medicine methods to protect their children during the COVID-19 pandemic process and there was a relationship between The Fear of COVID-19 Scale and the use of alternative medicine methods. It has been determined that as the fear of coronavirus rises, mothers have increased their concerns about their children and they pay attention to their children's nutrition to protect their children from this virus, and use alternative medicine methods and drugs to protect their children from COVID-19.

*Keywords: COVID-19, Alternative Medicine Method, Child Nursing*

## **1.Introduction**

Alternative medicine methods (AMM) in Turkey is often used. However, for the correct use of AMM; suggestions of experts in this field should be taken. Serious complications can be encountered in random use and the result can be fatal (Embong et al., 2016). For example, in a case report, it was stated that four babies applied to the emergency department with serious complications such as bruising and vomiting as a result of misuse of bitter apple oil used by mothers for infantile colic in four cases (Gündüz et al., 2016).

Declared as a pandemic by the World Health Organization; COVID-19 disease has become a universal threat and according to current data; it caused the deaths of 6.23 million people (WHO, 2022). The increase in the number of deaths day by day due to the epidemic and the lack of a clear treatment increase concerns in individuals and cause them to direct alternative practices (Sekeroğlu & Gezici, 2020).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, mothers have also started to use alternative methods to protect their children due to the inadequacy of treatment and prevention methods (Babich et al., 2020). However, the use of AMM methods especially in children who are considered to be vulnerable groups is important and it requires expertise (Sibiya et al., 2017). According to the Ministry of Health Directive of the Republic of Turkey, AMM application is limited to the persons specified in this regulation. AMM practices within the scope of the regulation include; massage and yoga can be applied by nurses; Reflexology, music therapy and aromatherapy applications can be applied under the supervision of a doctor (T.C., 2014). In addition, it is reported in the literature that AMM methods to be applied by the determined nurses are similar to nursing practices (Herdman, 2007). Nurses can safely implement and control these practices. However, it is necessary to control and monitor the AMM applications to be made wrong. During the fight against the epidemic, the literature should be supported by increasing the current and scientific studies in which the complementary treatment methods used by parents to protect their children are questioned and their benefits are investigated. Therefore, in this study it is aimed to determine the



AMM's use in children in the COVID-19 pandemic and to investigate the relationship of the fear of COVID-19 with this situation.

### **Question of Research**

1. How are the mothers use AMM methods to protect their children from COVID-19 during the COVID-19 process?

2. Is there a relationship between AMM and the fear of COVID-19?

## **2. Material and Methods**

### **2.1. Type of study**

This research is descriptive research.

### **2.2. Place / Time of study**

A digital questionnaire was created by the researchers to minimize face-to-face interaction due to the pandemic. The digital questionnaire created by using the snowball sampling method was shared on social media platforms (such as Whatsapp, Instagram, Twitter) and the respondents were asked to share it with other people. At the beginning of the questionnaire sent to the participants, there is information about the purpose and content of the study and that participation in the study is voluntary. Identity information of the participants was not recorded in the questionnaire.

### **2.3. Sample of Study**

A special population and sample selection was not made. The sample of the research were mothers who can be reached via social media, who are willing to participate in the study, who use social media and have children between the ages of 0-18. Mothers were reached by snowball sampling method.

### **2.4. Collection of Data**

The study was conducted between September and October 2020 with a total of 229 mothers. The data were collected with the Personal information form and The Fear of COVID-19 Scale.

### **2.5. Data collection tools**

**Personal Information Form:** It consists of a total of 18 questions regarding the socio-demographic of mother and children's characteristics (age, marital status, economic status, family types, education status, number of childre, the age of your child/children, your child's chronic illness), alternative medicine practices(preferred AMM, preferred herbal products...) in the COVID-19 process.

**The Fear of COVID-19 Scale:** The Turkish reliability and validity study of the scale developed by Ahorsu et al. (2020) and was conducted by Bakioğlu, Korkmaz, and Ercan (2020). The scale is a 5-point Likert type (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = undecided, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree). It consists of one dimension and 7 items. The total score obtained from all items of the scale reflects the level of fear of coronavirus experienced by the individual. The scores that can be obtained from the scale range



between 7 and 35. High scores from the scale mean experiencing high levels of coronavirus fear. The Cronbach-Alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.88 (Bakioğlu, Korkmaz & Ercan, 2020). For this study, the Cronbach-Alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated as 0.88.

## **2.6. Evaluation of Data**

SPSS 24.0 (Statistical Package of Social Sciences for Windows) statistical package program was used to analyze the data obtained in the study. Categorical variables used in the analysis are given as number (percentage), while continuous variables are given as mean  $\pm$  standard deviation. Whether the distribution of continuous variables conforms to normal distribution was checked using Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests. It was determined that the data showed normal distribution. Independent t-test and one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) tests were used for statistical calculations. Cronbach-Alpha was calculated for internal consistency. Statistical significance level was taken as  $p < 0.05$ .

## **2.7. Ethical Aspect of the Research Ethics**

Ethics committee permission was obtained to conduct the study (Kilis 7 Aralık University, decision number: 2020/27). The aim of the research was written in the web-based form and the voluntary basis was taken. All mothers participating in the study are at the age of 18 and above and are mature enough to make their own decisions. This study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki Principles.

## **2.8. Limitations of the Study**

The study has a few limitations. One of them data could not be collected face to face due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, sample determination could not be made. Another is to have a device that supports the program to participate in this study and fill out the questionnaire. Those who do not have such a device were excluded from the study. In addition, internet requirements and the ability to fill in the questionnaire are needed. Those who did not have the internet or the ability to fill in the questionnaire were excluded from the study.

## **3. Results**

The average age of the mothers included in the study is  $36.89 \pm 9.45$ . of the mothers 36.7% are in the age group  $\geq 41$ , 92.1% are married, 59.4% have income equal to expenses, 51.1% are  $\leq$  high school graduates, 54.6% have 1-2 children, 39.7% are 6-10 years old 5.7% of their children had chronic diseases (Table 1).



**Table 1. The socio-demographic characteristics of the mothers and the distribution of some characteristics about their child / children (n=229)**

Characteristics		N	%
Age	18-30	70	30.6
	31-40	75	32.8
	≥ 41 and above	84	36.6
Marital status	Married	211	92.1
	Single	18	7.9
Economic Status	Income less than expenses	61	26.6
	Income equal to expenses	136	59.4
	Expenses higher than income	32	14.0
Family types	Elementary family	195	85.2
	Extended family	34	14.8
Educational status	≤ High school	117	51.1
	≥ associate degree	112	48.9
Number of children	1-2 children	125	54.6
	3-4 children	57	24.9
	≥ 5 children	47	20.5
The age of your child / children *	< 1 age	47	20.5
	1-5 age	76	33.2
	6-10 age	91	39.7
	≥ 11 age	120	52.4
Your child's chronic illness **	Yes	13	5.7
	No	216	94.3
Total		229	100.0

\* Those with more than one child, more than one option is marked. \*\* Asthma (6), bronchitis (5), diabetes (2).

It was determined that, of mothers, 89.5% had information about COVID-19, 65.1% stated that the elderly were the most affected by COVID-19, 87.3% have also affected children, 72.5% concerned about the future of their children due to COVID-19, 82.5% of had attention to the nutrition of their children due to COVID-19, 11.4% gave drugs to their children against COVID-19 and only 3.5% used the drug recommended by doctor, 53.7% used the alternative medicine method to protect their children against the virus (53.7%), the most used alternative medicine method of 46.6% was herbal products and the most used herbal product was linden(39.3%)(Table 2).

**Table 2. Alternative medicine methods used by mothers to protect their children from COVID-19 virus and distribution of some characteristics related to COVID-19 (n=229)**

		n	%
Information status about COVID-19	Yes	205	89.5
	No	24	10.5
Who affects COVID-19 the most	Health personnel	57	24.9
	Elders	149	65.1
	With chronic disease	20	8.7
	Children	3	1.3
The status of COVID-19's affecting children	Yes	200	87.3
	No	29	12.7
Worrying about your child's future due to the COVID-19 pandemic	Yes	166	72.5
	No	23	10.0
	Partly	40	17.5
Paying attention to your child's diet due to the COVID-19	Yes	189	82.5



<b>pandemic</b>	No	40	17.5
<b>Your child's medication status against the risk of getting COVID-19</b>	Yes	26	11.4
	No	203	88.6
<b>Did the doctor recommend the medications used against the risk of your child getting COVID-19 virus?*</b>	Yes	8	3.5
	No	18	7.9
	those who do not use drugs	203	88.6
<b>Using any alternative medicine method to protect your child from the COVID-19 virus</b>	Yes	123	53.7
	No	106	46.3
<b>Preferred alternative medicine methods **</b>	Herbal products	107	46.6
	Regular nutrition ***	102	44.5
	Rest	54	23.6
	Sport	44	19.3
	Breathing exercises	24	10.5
	Praying / going to a religious person	8	3.5
	Salt lamp	4	1.7
<b>Preferred herbal products **</b>	Linden	90	39.3
	Sage / lemon black tea	80	34.9
	Carob	32	14.0
	Black seed	25	10.9
	Thyme oil	23	10.0
	Black Radish / honey	19	7.9
	Blackberry	12	5.2
	Mallow blossom	10	4.4
	Medicine vapor containing eucalyptus oil / menthol	7	3.1
	Sumac	3	1.3
	Ginger / honey	3	1.3
Peganum seed	2	0.9	

\* Only those who used drugs against the risk of their child getting COVID-19 virus were taken. \*\* More than one option has been marked. \*\*\* Consuming foods such as citrus, garlic, echinacea, yoghurt and kefir, sage, water, pomegranate, hazelnut, walnut, almond, spinach, fish.

In research, for some variables (Worrying about the future of your child / children due to the COVID-19 pandemic, paying attention to the nutrition of your child / children due to the COVID-19 pandemic, using drugs against the risk of getting the COVID-19 virus of your child / children, using alternative medicine methods to protect children / children from the COVID-19 virus) a statistically significant difference was found between the mean scores of The Fear of COVID-19 Scale ( $p < 0.05$ ). It was determined that the mean score of all mothers for The Fear of COVID-19 Scale was  $20.50 \pm 6.31$  (Table 3).

**Table 3. Comparison of some characteristics and Mean Scores of The Fear of COVID-19 Scale**

		The Fear of COVID-19 Scale	
		$\bar{X} \pm SD$	Significance
<b>Information status about COVID-19</b>	Yes	20.53±6.33	t=0.206
	No	20.25±6.25	p=0.837
<b>The status of COVID-19's affecting children</b>	Yes	20.59±6.32	t=0.552
	No	10.89±6.28	p=0.581
<b>Worrying about your child's future due to the COVID-19 pandemic</b>	Yes	21.37±6.30	F=6.193 <b>p=0.002</b>
	No	17.73±5.71	
	Partly	18.40±5.86	
<b>Paying attention to your child's diet due to the COVID-19 pandemic</b>	Yes	21.61±6.28	t=2.351
	No	19.95±6.46	<b>p=0.042</b>



<b>Your child's medication status against the risk of getting COVID-19</b>	Yes	26.15±5.97	t=5.110
	No	19.77±5.99	<b>p=0.001</b>
<b>Did the doctor recommend the medications used against the risk of your child getting COVID-19 virus? *</b>	Yes	25.25±8.06	t=0.507
	No	26.55±5.00	p=0.617
<b>Using any alternative medicine method to protect your child from the COVID-19 virus</b>	Yes	21.29±6.20	t=2.056
	No	19.58±6.34	<b>p=0.041</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>Min:7</b>	<b>20.50±6.31</b>	<b>Max: 35</b>

\* Only those who used drugs against the risk of their child catching the COVID-19 virus were taken. t=t test for independent groups, F=ANOVA test.

#### 4. Discussion

AMM, which is frequently used in our country, has been a healing method for protection from COVID-19 and treatment of COVID-19. The lack of a clear treatment method for COVID-19, which caused a serious epidemic, and the lack of safe results in vaccine studies supported this situation (Embong et al., 2020; Snape & Viner, 2020). In addition, there are publications in the literature showing that traditional Chinese medicine has been tried in the treatment of COVID-19 (Ren et al., 2020; Zhou et al., 2020). However, misuse of AMM, which is known to cause serious complications in children, is quite common. Therefore, in this study, it was aimed to determine the AMM's used in children in the COVID-19 pandemic and to investigate the relationship of the fear of COVID-19 with this situation.

The COVID-19 epidemic, which has also taken over our country, causing panic, fear and anxiety (Doğan & Düzgel, 2020). The lack of a clear treatment method for COVID-19 (Wu et al., 2020) has pushed individuals to a search and AMM has become a beacon of hope for individuals (Sekeroğlu & Gezici, 2020). Hope has a healing power. Therefore, individuals seek to find a cure for COVID-19 disease with AMM (Babich et al., 2020). In the study results, it was determined that mothers (53.7%) used AMM to protect their children from the COVID-19 virus. It has also been reported that traditional treatment methods are widely used in bronchial asthma, epilepsy, and upper respiratory system diseases (Bozkaya et al., 2008). In this direction, It seems quite logical to use AMM in the treatment of COVID-19. However, it should not be forgotten that the use of AMM is an application that requires expertise.

In this study, it was determined that the most used alternative medicine method by mothers was herbal products (46.6%) and the most used herbal product was linden (39.3%). It is reported that frequently used traditional AMM's are also tried in the treatment of COVID-19. Furthermore, it has been stated that products which were obtained from plants such as linden type having traditional use in Turkey (Cistus spp.), some thyme species (Origanum, Thymus and Thymbra), licorice (Glycyrrhiza glabra L.) and olive leaf (Olea europea L.) may have potential to be used as natural therapeutics of herbal origin in the fight against coronavirus infections. (Şekeroğlu & Gezici, 2020; Babich et al., 2020). Mothers always want to make the best choice for their children. Many AMM's are released as "miracle cure", "special product", "magic invention". Alternative treatment methods are natural and therefore they are considered harmless. The fact that many alternative forms of treatment are easily sold everywhere and mothers can easily access such products also reinforce their views.

It was determined that most of the mothers (89.5%) had information about COVID-19, COVID-19 is a disease that affects the elderly most (65.1%) and most of them (87.3%) answered the question whether it affects children as 'yes'. In addition, nowadays, when



accessing information is very easy, with the help of social media and other mass media, it is seen that frequent and regular information about COVID-19 is implemented (O'Brien et al., 2020; Ransing et al., 2020; Rosenberg et al. , 2020). The results of this study also support this situation.

According to other results in the study; it was determined that most of the mothers were worried about the future of their children due to COVID-19 and paid attention to the nutrition of their children due to COVID-19, 26 mothers gave medicine to their children against COVID-19 and only 8 of these mothers stated that they used the drug with the recommendation of a doctor. Unfortunately, the mothers performed the additional treatment methods they used without expert opinion. This result showed us that this situation should be handled in detail.

In addition, all these data showed that mothers are worried about their children and seek protection from COVID-19. Studies have also reported that the COVID-19 epidemic affects individuals both physiologically and psychologically negatively (Torales et al., 2020) and that parents express their concerns about the health of their children in the COVID-19 pandemic (Yavaş Çelik, 2021).

The average score of the Coronavirus Fear Scale of mothers who are worried about the future of their child / children due to the COVID-19 pandemic, paying attention to their nutrition, giving medicine to their children against the risk of getting the COVID-19 virus, and using AMM to protect their child / children from the COVID-19 virus, have been determined as high. In addition, the total score of the mothers on The Fear of COVID-19 Scale is  $20.50 \pm 6.31$ . Considering that the maximum score to be obtained from this scale is 35 (Ahoursu et al., 2020; Bakioğlu et al., 2020), it can be said that mothers are in serious fear. These results showed us that as the fear of coronavirus increased, mothers increased their concerns about their children and paid attention to the nutrition of their children to protect their children from this virus, and used Alternative medicine method and drugs to protect their children from COVID-19.

## 5. Conclusions

With COVID-19, people started a big and complicated life. She/he fought hard to survive. They didn't have much things to fight. That's why they started using AMM. The use of AMM is quite common in Turkey. However, the use of AMM in children, which requires much more sensitive application, adversely affects children's health when used unconsciously. Nurses who work very hard due to the pandemic should not skip this issue. Pediatric nurses, who are adequately equipped, can inform parents about AMM with telehealth services and prevent possible harm to children. In our country, the unconscious use of AMM continues. It is necessary to prevent this situation and to investigate the level of this situation. In this study, of mothers 82.5% had attention to the nutrition of their children due to COVID-19, 11.4% gave drugs to their children against COVID-19 and only 3.5% used the drug recommended by doctor, 53.7% of them used the alternative medicine method to protect their children against the virus (53.7%), the most used alternative medicine method of 46.6% was herbal products and the most used herbal product was linden 39.3%. Also, it was determined that mothers who used AMM in the COVID-19 pandemic had a high average score on The Fear of COVID-19 Scale, applied to AMM to protect their children from COVID-19, and used herbal products the most as AMM. For this reason, it is recommended that the nursing group, who is competent in AMM, take an active role in



taking measures to protect child health by considering this issue in detail. It is also thought that providing informative trainings about the use of AMM will be beneficial.

### **Declarations:**

This article was not produced from the thesis study. It was not presented as a verbal / poster presentation at any meeting. Declaration of Competing Interest: Authors declare no competing interests. Source of Funding: There are no funders for this study. Acknowledgments: Patient consent was obtained from the participants in this study. Ethical Considerations: Ethical approval was granted by Kilis / Aralık University Research Ethics Committee (Ethics committee number: 2020/27). Yazar Katkıları: Tasarım: MYÇ, MS, FK Veri Toplama veya İşleme: MYÇ, MS, FK Analiz/yorum: MYÇ, MS, FK Literatür taraması: MYÇ, MS, FK Yazı yazan MYÇ, Eleştirel İnceleme: MYÇ.

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