

HERBAL PLANTS

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Relevance: The global demand for herbal medicine is continuously increasing, posing an extinction risk to medicinal plants. Uganda is one of the ten countries most at risk of losing herbal medicine and Traditional Medicinal Knowledge (TMK). This could be ascribed to a lack of documentation, as well as a variety of other unclear obstacles. This study documented plant species utilized to cure human ailments in the Butaleja district of Eastern Uganda, as well as the TMK associated with each. The strategies for preserving medicinal plants were also investigated. The rationale was to promote the preservation of ethnopharmacological knowledge.

Methods:

Data were obtained via semi-structured questionnaires, as well as guided field walks and observations. To determine the value of medicinal plants, quantitative indices such as use categories and informant consensus factors were used.

Results:

In total, 133 species from 34 families and 125 genera were discovered. Fabaceae (65%) and Solanaceae (29%) were the most common families. The most common parts utilized in therapeutic preparations were leaves (80%) and roots (15%), which were primarily supplied orally as decoctions (34.6%) and infusions (16%). The most prevalent ailments treated were cough (7.74%), gastric ulcers (7.42%), and malaria (4.52%). The informant consensus factor was high (≥ 0.8) across all disease categories, showing a shared understanding of treatments. Only 73% of respondents made an attempt to preserve therapeutic plants. The most prevalent conservation method was to preserve forests with spiritually valuable species (100%), whereas compliance with government requirements was the rarest (4.5%). Overall, efforts to prevent the extinction of therapeutic plants and TMK were ineffective.

Conclusion and recommendations:

There was a tremendous reliance on a diverse range of medicinal plant species and TMK for healthcare and money generation. The potential for medicinal plant biodiversity loss was obvious due to habitat devastation. Traditional cultural norms must be included in conservation plans, as well as laboratory-based efficacy testing for the identified species, in order to promote conservative use of validated herbal medicines and TMK in rural settings.

References

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