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Indigenous Knowledge for Curative Purposes: A Review of Medicinal Plants Used In Ekiti State Nigeria

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ABSTRACT
One of the most important part of human existence is health and the challenge we face in this aspect has been enormous. It appears each day brings new discoveries of strange disease or ailment which sometimes defies human understanding. Researchers have tried their utmost to combat this challenge with modern medicines but sometimes, this does not seem to help. Thus, the need for a recourse to indigenous knowledge. The application of indigenous medicine has been discovered to help in health care and the result has been outstanding especially in cases where modern medicine was ineffective. This work is aimed at showing the importance of traditional medicine and how it has been beneficial to human health and general well-being. This study summarizes some medicinal herbs that can be found in Ekiti State, Southwest Nigeria and their uses for cure of diseases.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge, Indigenous knowledge system, Traditional medicine, Traditional cure, Herbal plants, Ekiti, Medicinal plants

INTRODUCTION

Indigenous knowledge (IK) has been very effective over the years and has maintained its relevance even in today's era of fast-paced knowledge generation aided by information and communications technologies (ICT). The value of IK to the people of indigenous communities cannot be overemphasized as it affects everything that has to do with their livelihood and survival. This wide ranging issues border on agriculture, culture, medicine, security, kinship, craft skills and linguistics. Hammersmith (2007) reporting Ermine, harped the development of IK on the complex kinship systems of relationships among people, animals, the earth, the cosmos, and so on of indigenous communities. It is an undeniable fact that the indigenous communities survive in a more sustainable way based on their natural knowledge of themselves and the environment long before the advent of codified and explainable western scientific knowledge. This survival cuts across every aspect of their lives including health and medicine.

In this rapidly developing world, indigenous knowledge has steadily but surely gained recognition for its importance and its value has been reinforced by the works of various scholars. Also, the fact that indigenous knowledge holds a wealth of knowledge and experience that represents a significant resource in the sustainable development of society is slowly dawning (Ngulube 2002). According to the estimation by the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization, there are more than 390 million self-identified indigenous people, living in at least 5,000 groups, speaking some 4,000 languages, in 70 countries around the world. This study shows that the importance of indigenous knowledge to our world cannot be over-emphasized.

LITERATURE REVIEW

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

According to UNESCO (2017), Indigenous Knowledge is defined as the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by scientists with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings. Also called Aboriginal Knowledge, Indigenous knowledge is the unique knowledge confined to a particular culture or society which is also known as local knowledge, folk knowledge, people's knowledge, traditional wisdom or traditional science (Nyota and Mapara, 2008; Altieri 1995).

According to Abioye and Olaniyi (2017), IK involves the skills, experiences and insights of people, applied to maintain or improve their livelihood.The notion that IK is multifaceted and applies to every aspect of life of the local people makes it more or less a corpus or system of knowledge on its own which is separate from the western scientific knowledge system (Ranasinghe, 2008). Adeniyi and Subair (2013) defined Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) as "the collection of interrelated practices peculiar to people in a specific place". Mapara (2009) also defined IKS as "a body of

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knowledge, or bodies of knowledge of the indigenous people of particular geographical areas that they have survived on for a very long time". The IKS include: agriculture, medicine, economy, governance, culture, worship and religion, conservation of natural resources and so on.

Despite the fact that the central focus of knowledge management is sharing what people know (Todd,1999), the management of IK has been largely ignored in Africa, a continent that is richly blessed with a wealth of knowledge in all sorts of practice like medicine, healing, hunting, fishing, agriculture, combat, environmental conservation, etc. With the people's nonchalance towards transmitting IK to the new generation which was heralded by the adoption of Western civilization in regions like Africa, IK is in danger of extinction if proper preservation is not adopted.

Before the advent of civilization, indigenous people worldwide have a basic and rooted knowledge in care giving. Settee (2011) explained that aboriginal people have described IK with words that reflect ancient knowledge for community life, well-being and sharing of values. Collectivity is central to the fundamentals of the indigenous community which is contrary to the concept of individuality that is promoted by the Western culture.

This principle of collectivity encourages love among members of the community and extended family. Traditional understandings are common knowledge shared by all members of a tribal community. Many of these are learned through phenomenological experience and everyday activities (Bruchac, 2014). One of such knowledge shared is the medical knowledge. Gumbo (2014) explained that IK provides culture-fit problem solving strategies for a diversity of situations, for instance, in primary health care, preventive medicine and veterinary medicine. This is quite common in Africa where traditional herbs play an important role in the medical system.

INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND MEDICINE

It is very difficult to separate indigenous knowledge and medicine as this form part of the survival mechanism of indigenous people over the ages. In fact, medical practice in many parts of the world have emerged from indigenous approaches to healthcare. Although, today, medicine has become more orthodox and evidence-based that traditional knowledge of medicine and its practice often referred to as traditional or alternative medicine have been relegated. Notwithstanding, there have been calls for regulated inclusion of traditional medicine into conventional medical practice for the cure of disease and wellbeing of the people.

Notable traditional medical practices and/or systems are the Chinese acupuncture, Indian Ayurveda and Yoga which have gained global prominence. Locally, there are lots of medical practices employed by Africans to keep the body and mind in state of health and wholeness. It has been reported that indigenous peoples of Africa have developed a number of healthcare systems prominent among which are: indigenous systems of care, family care, indigenous healing and Islamic healing (Adeniyi, 2010).

Indigenous African healing practices stem from ancient, fundamental philosophical and religious beliefs. African traditional medicine is rooted in the culture, family, community, local materials and social practices of the people, lending Africans a holistic view of illness with emphasis on the treatment of the whole person, including body and mind (Encarta, 2009). There is the institution of traditional doctors in many African local communities where issues such as convulsion, fever, epilepsy and many more are treated both spiritually and physically. There are also traditional bone setters that help fix fractured bones with the aid of indigenous knowledge passed down from past generations.

Africans like many other tribes of the world rely on herbs for cure of diseases and prevention of illnesses. In his study of the conservation of ethnomedicinal botanicals in Ekiti state, Kayode (2006) identified the important role of indigenous farmers in the development of any conservation strategy to arrest the extinction of rare medicinal species in the study area. Kayode, whose study showed that most of the botanicals were largely used for the cure of malaria and fever by the local people, identified 71 ethnomedicinal species traditionally used for curative purposes by Ekiti people. His detailed field study also showed the parts of the plants used for that purpose. They are: leaves, barks, fruits, seeds and roots details of which are in the Appendix.

TRADITIONAL MEDICINE

Marobela (2017) quoted WHO'S definition of traditional medicine as the sum total of the knowledge, skills and practices based on the theories, beliefs and experiences indigenous to different cultures

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whether explicable or not, used in the maintenance of health as well as in the prevention, diagnosis, improvement or treatment of physical and mental illness.

Elujobi et al. (2005) explained that traditional medicine that has been practiced from the times of our ancestors has not much significant process in its development due to colonial suppression, foreign religion interference, and absolute lack of patriotism and political will of our governments. But now, the hitherto primitive African socio-cultural heritage is now celebrated and looked up to for meeting a wide range of primary healthcare issues. These scholars went ahead to describe traditional medicine as the simplified, scientific and direct application of plant, animal or mineral materials for healing purposes and which can be investigated, rationalized and explained scientifically.

Studies have shown that 85% of world population uses herbal medicines for prevention and treatment of diseases and demand is increasing in developed and developing countries (Abera, 2014). This has brought the significance of traditional knowledge into focus which can no longer be hidden. Apart from the raw materials that are used in the production of our varieties of food, cosmetics and flavor products, the most important plant products are medicines as well as other pharmaceuticals (Sofowora, 1996). It is estimated that the United States National Cancer Institute (NCI) spends around $120 million each year on Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) related research projects.

EKITI PEOPLE OF NIGERIA

Ekiti people are dwellers and citizens of Ekiti State, southwest of Nigeria. Ekiti State is an upland zone, about 250 miles above sea level oncoordinates 7.7190° N latitude and 5.3110° E longitude (Geographical Names, 2020; "Ekiti State," 2020). Ekiti State, though mountainous, falls in the rain forest belt of Nigeria with extensive layers of trees, tree crops like cocoa, cashew, kola nut, and timbers of diverse species. According to Johnson, a foremost historian and Anglican clergy, Ekiti "is an extensive province and well watered, including several tribes and families right on to the border of the Niger, eastward. They hold themselves quite distinct from the Ijesas, especially in political affairs" (Johnson, 2010). In his poem titled "Ekitikete", Adegbilero-Iwari (2020) described Ekiti as a nation with one culture. Ekiti State is thus a homogenous state of people that speak the same dialect of the Yoruba language, Ekiti, albeit with dialects reflective of the location of the towns or cluster of towns (Ekiti State Government, n.d). The Ekiti is a dialect of the Yoruba language spoken by the Ekitis. Some of the distinctive cultural practices of the Ekitis include festivals, taboos, rites, traditional beliefs and medicine.

MEDICINAL PLANTS IN EKITI STATE AND THEIR USES

Despite the availability of hospitals in Ekiti State, the indigenes still practice the use of indigenous traditional medicine and there are many traditional healers as well. Wild herbs which could be general or specific have been identified as key sources of traditional African medicine in dealing with various health conditions (Adeniyi, 2010; Kaniki and Mphahlele, 2002). African potato also known as yellow stem or Leraka has been found to be a useful tuber for building immunity and controlling high blood pressure much as Bitter aloe has been found to serve as body cleanser from toxins and free radicals (Kaniki and Mphahlele, 2002).

Adeniyi also reported how a popular herbal concoction called Agbo has been used for a variety of ailments ranging from malaria, diarrhea, typhoid, cold and fever to other forms of sicknesses. Agbo, which can be used for general or specific health condition, is derived from combinations of herbs-leaves, roots, barks of trees and water. Adaku Onyenucheya in the Guardians of April 15, 2020 reported how the Governor of Oyo State, southwest Nigeria, Seyi Makinde, advocated for the use of 'local solutions' for the treatment of the novel COVID-19. This he said was as a result of his experience being a survivor of the dreaded disease. Scholars have identified the therapeutic potentials of plant extracts and their contributions to breakthroughs in pharmacology and the development of modern pharmacotherapeutics in Africa and the world over (Iwu et al., 1999; Nwaogu et al., 2007).

Aliyu et al., (2008) reported the plants used in the treatment of infectious diseases in Nigeria. They include: Acacia albida, Anchomanes difformis, Boscia senegalensis, Ficus ingens, Moringa oleifera, Vernomia bluemoides, Phyllanthus amarus and so on. The Neem plant (Azardirachta indica) has been reported for the cure of both human diseases and protection of agricultural crops (Adedipe, Okunneye and Ayinde, 2005; Fadina and Ogunyemi, 2002). Adeniyi (2010) reported how squeezed extracts from the leaf of a wild plant, locally called 'Akintola' in Ekiti has been used to stop blood from a fresh

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wound/cut or as first aid treatment. He further reported the use of tobacco leaf and 'igi podoromi' for the curing of wounds.

More specifically to Ekiti, Kayode (2006) tabulated ethnomedicinal species available in the state. Some of the plants and what they are used are: Azadirachta indica for Malaria, Piles, Syphilis, Roundworms, Antiseptic; Cola acuminate and Cola nitida as stimulants and treatment of diarrhea, Glyphaea brevis for the treatment of Gonorrhea, Diarrhea, Fever, Dressing; Citrus sineensis for Malaria, Fever, Dysentery, Headache, Vermifuge; Lophira alata for Malaria, Cough, Jaundice, Gastrointestinal disorders. The rest are as presented by kayoed (2006) in the table in the Appendix.

In their study of antidiabetic plants used by traditional healers in Ekiti, Akharaiyiet al. (2017) reported some twenty three plants used by herbalists. Some of them include: Anthocleista djalonensis, Vernonia amygdalina, Ocimum gratissimum, Momordica charantia. On how they are used, they reported that the healers either concoct and decoct fresh parts of the plants such as leaves, roots, barks in warm water or even dry and grind them into powdery form for use during emergency.

Furthermore, Famojuro and Elufuoye (2020) reported that medicinal plants have been reported to be the useful source of several drugs including those for the management of cancer. However, the use of plant/herbal extract differs from culture to culture. They said that some types of cancers have been successfully managed by traditional medical practitioners. The scholars further identified the following medicinal plants in the management of cancer by the indigenous healers of some local government areas in Ekiti State: Allium cepa, Aframomum melegueta, Antiaris Africana, Elaeis guineensis, Khaya grandifolia, Citrus aurantifolia, Nauclea lactifolia, Nymphaea lotus, Piper guineense, Parquetina nigrescens, Petiveria alliacea and so on.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The importance of IK cannot be overemphasized when it comes to the cure of diseases and the general wellbeing of the people of indigenous communities. Plants of medicinal and pharmaceautical values have been used over the years for maintenance of health and cure of diseases.Over seventy herbal species have been identified in Ekiti State, Nigeria with varying degree of abundance. The local people have used them for the cure of diseases such as malaria, fever, diarrhea, diabetics, pile, fibroid and many more. While some of the plants have been subjected to the risk of becoming endangered due to farming activities and deforestation, the involvement of indigenous farmers in the conservation of these species have been recommended.

In conclusion, we recommend that more conservative strategies be put in place by local authorities and the state government leveraging on indigenous practices. We also recommend the sustainable use of the plants and education of young generation on the values of the indigenous knowledge practices of their people. ICT can be leveraged to better manage indigenous knowledge of the people of Ekiti for preservation and perpetual access.

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Appendix: Identified botanicals used ethnomedicinally in Ekiti State, Nigeria by Kayode (2006).

Family	Species	Local (Ekiti) name	Part(s) used*	Major source**	Abundance	Folk medicinal uses
Ameranthaceae	Alterantherarepens	Dagunro	RT, BK, LV	FOR	Rare	Rheumatism
	Amaranthusspinosus	Tete-elegun	RT, ST, LV	FM	Abundan	Diarrhea, Dysentery, Gonorrhea
	Celosia argentea	Sokoyoto	LV	FM	Abundant	Diarrhea
Anacardiaceae	Anacardiumoccidentale	Kaasu	LV, BK	FM, HHA	Abundant	Malaria, Asthma, Leprosy
	Mangiferaindica	Mangoro	ST, LV, BK	FM, HHA	Very abundant	Malaria, Diarrhea, Diabetics
Annonaceae	Enantiachlorantha	Oso pupa	RT	FOR	Rare	Malaria, Jaundice, Antipyretic
Apocynaceae	Alstoniaboonei	Ahun	ST, BK	FOR	Rare	Malaria, Rheumatism
	Raufolfiavomitoria	Ira	RT, ST, LV	FOR	Occasional	Fever, Dysentery, Diarrhea
Asclepiadaceae	Calotropisprocera	Bomubomu	RT, LV	FM	Abundant	Eczema, Leprosy, Elephantiasis, Asthma, Cough, Rheumatism
Bombaceae	Adansoniadigitata	Ooshe	LV, BK, RT	FOR	Rare	Malaria, Dysentery, Diarrhea, Asthma
	Ceibapentandra	Egigun	LV, BK	FOR	Rare	Fever, Asthma, Headache, Diabetes
Boranginaceae	Cordiamelenii	Omo	BK	FOR	Rare	Fever, Cough, Stomachache
Bromeliaceae	Annascomosus	Ope-oyinbo	FR	FM	Abundant	Stomach problems
Cannaceae	Canna indica	Ido	LV	FOR	Rare	Malaria
Caricaceae	Carica papaya	Ibepe	LV	FM, HHA	Abundant	Malaria, Diabetics, Stomach disorder
Combrataceae	Terminaliaivorensis	Idigbo	ST	FOR	Rare	Stomach ache
	Terminaliasuperba	Afara	RT, ST	FOR	Rare	Laxative
Compositae	Chromolaenaodorata	Akintola	LV	FM, HHA	Very abundant	Malaria
	Vernoniaamygdalina	Ewuro	LV	FM, HHA	Abundant	Hypertension
Convolvulaceae	Ipomoea batatas	Kunkunduku	LV, RT	FM	Occasional	Asthma

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Cucurbitaceae	Momodicacharantia	Ejirin-wewe	LV	FOR, FM, HHA	Abundant	Vermifuge, Jaundice
Euphorbiaceae	Acalyphachiliate	Ewon-bonni	LV	FOR	Rare	Asthma, Rheumatism, Bronchitis
	Jatropacurcas	Lapalapa	LV, ST, RT, SD	FM, HHA	Occasional	Ringworm, Eczema, Ulcer
	Jatropagossypifolia	Lapalapa-pupa	ST-Latex	FM, HHA	Occasional	Ringworm
Gramineae	Bambusa vulgaris	Oparun	LV	FOR, FM, HHA	Abundant	Gonorrhea, Worm expeller
Gutiferae	Allanblackia floribunda	Orogbo-erin	LV, BK	FOR	Rare	Malaria, Dysentery
	Garcinia kola	Orogbo	BK, SD	FOR	Occasional	Fever, Cough, Hepatitis, Headache
Hyperricaceae	Harunganamadagascariensis	Elepo	BK	FOR	Rare	Fever, Cough, Cold, Dysentery, Jaundice
Labiatae	Ocimumbasilicum	Efinrin-wewe	LV, ST, FR	FM, HHA	Abundant	Head ache, Cough, Gonorrhea
	Ocimumgratissimum	Efinrin-ajase	LV	FM, HHA	Abundant	Fever, Cold, Cough, Diarrhea
Leguminosae	Cajnuscajan	Otili	LV, SD	FM	Abundant	Smallpox, Chicken pox
	Desmodiumgangetium	Emimo	LV, RT	FM, FOR	Frequent	Fever, Asthma, Dysentery, Diarrhea
	Parkiabiglobosa	Iru	ST, LV, FR	FM	Frequent	Malaria, Fever
	Pterocarpuserinaceus	Apepe	LV, ST	FOR	Rare	Dysentery, Diarrhea
	Pterocarpusosun	Osun	LV, ST	FOR	Rare	Skin diseases
Liliaceae	Allumcepa	Alubasa	FR, SD, LV	FM	Abundant	Stimulant, Cough
Lythraceae	Lawsoniainermis	Laali	LV	FM, FOR	Rare	Jaundice, Gonorrhea
Malvaceae	Hibiscus sabdariffa	Isapa	LV	FM	Frequent	Cough
	Sidaacuta	Iseketu	LV	FM, HHA	Frequent	Malaria, Ulcer, Fever
Meliaceae	Azadirachtaindica	Dongoyaro	LV, BK	HHA, FM	Frequent	Malaria, Piles, Syphilis, Roundworms, Antiseptic

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	Carapaprocera	Urere	BK, SD, LV	FOR	Rare	Ringworm, Boils, Dressing, Rheumatism
	Entadrophragmacylindricum	Igebu	BK	FOR	Rare	Fever, Cough, Black tongue
	Kyayasenegalensis	Oganwo	ST, RT	FOR	Rare	Malaria, Jaundice
	Lovoatrichilioides	Koko-igbo	ST, BK	FOR	Rare	Cough, Yellow fever
Moraceae	Antiarisafricana	Oro	ST, BK	FOR, FM	Occasional	Rheumatism
	Ficuscapensis	Opoto	LV, ST, RT	FOR	Occasional	Dysentery, Leprosy, Epilepsy
	Meliciaexcelsa	Iroko	RT, BK	FOR	Rare	Rheumatism
Myrtaceae	Psidiumguajava	Guafa	LV	FM, HHA	Frequent	Malaria, Cough, Urinary diseases, Stomach ache
Myriticaceae	Pycnanthusangolensis	Akomu	LV, ST, RT	FOR	Rare	Anthelmintic
Nyctaginaceae	Boerhaoviadiffusa	Eti-elela	RT, ST, LV	FOR, FM	Abundant	Asthma, Gonorrhea
Ochnaceae	Lophiraalata	Ekki	LV, BK, RT, SD	FOR	Rare	Malaria, Cough, Jaundice, Gastrointestinal disorders
Palmae	Cocosnucifera	Agbon	RT, BK, FT	FM, HHA	Frequent	Bronchitis, Dysentery
	Elaeisguineensis	Ope	RT	FM	Abundant	Malaria
Papilionaceae	Baphianitida	Igi-osun	RT, BK	FOR	Occasional	Ulcer Boils, Dressing
Rubiaceae	Morindalucida	Oruwo	ST, LV	FOR	Rare	Malaria, Diabetics
	Morindamorindioides	Oju-ologbo	RT, LV, FR	FOR	Rare	Fever, Jaundice
Rutaceae	Citrus aurantifolia	Orombo-wewe	LV, ST, RT, FR	FM, HHA	Occasional	Fever, Jaundice, Headache
	Citrus aurantium	Gayinganyin	RT, FR	FM, HHA	Occasional	Cough, Rheumatism, Sore throat
	Citrus sineensis	Orombo	ST	FM, HHA	Abundant	Malaria, Fever, Dysentery, Headache, Vermifuge

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	Fagarazanthoxyloides	Ata	RT, BK	FOR	Rare	Gonorrhea, Sickle cell anemia
Sapindaceae	Blighasapida	Ushin	BK	FM, HHA	Frequent	Malaria, Ulcer, Backache, Head ache
	Lecaniodiscuscupenioides	Akika	ST, RT, LV	FOR	Rare	Malaria, Fever, Dressing
Sapotaceae	Chrysophyllumalbidum	Agbalumo	ST, BK	FM	Occasional	Fever
Solanaceae	Capsicum frutescens	Ata	FR	FM	Very abundant	Malaria, Fever, Dysentery
Sterculiaceae	Cola acuminata	Obi-abata	BK, SD	FM	Abundant	Stimulant, Diarrhea
	Cola nitida	Obi-gbanja	BK, SD	FM	Abundant	Stimulant, Diarrhea
Tiliaceae	Glyphaeabrewis	Atori	LV	FOR, FM	Occasional	Gonorrhea, Diarrhea, Fever, Dressing
	Trumfetacordifolia	Esua	LV	FOR	Rare	Malaria, Laxative
Ulmaceae	Tremaguineensis	Ofoforo	LV	FOR	Rare	Fever, Cough, Bronchitis, Dysentery, Pneumonia
Violaceae	Hybanthusenneaspermus	Abiwere	LV, ST, RT	FOR, FM	Occasional	Painless delivery
Zingiberaceae	Afromomummelegaeta	Ata-ire	FR, SD, LV	FOR, FM	Frequent	Stimulant, Smallpox, Chicken pox

*RT=Roots, BK=Barks, FR=Fruits, LV=Leaves, SD=Seeds, ST=Stems

**FOR=Forest, FM=Household farm, HHA=Household area