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A survey on socio-economic profile, constraints of traditional veterinary healers and documentation of ethno veterinary medicinal plants in the Kodiakkarai forest, Nagapattinam district, Tamil Nadu

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Abstract

Ethno veterinary medicine is an important, affordable, conventional veterinary services gaining the limelight offlate. The present study assessed the socio-economic status, constraints of traditional veterinary healers and document the medicinal plants of kodiakkarai forest used by them in Nagapattinam district, Tamil Nadu. A total of 30 traditional veterinary healers were selected through snowball sampling, and data were collected using a structured interview schedule. The findings revealed that most healers were women, belonged to backward communities, were largely landless, and acquired their knowledge from forefathers, with a mean age of 49 years. The major constrain was identification, gathering and storage of medicinal plants and non-lucrative like western medicine. A total of 44 medicinal flora belonging to 27 plant families were identified. Leaves were the predominant plant part utilised with of the plants being trees. Majority of the anthelmintic plants were wild flora ith most of the plants / plant parts used in fresh forms for preparation of ethno veterinary medicines.

Keyword: Ethno veterinary medicines, medicinal plants, traditional veterinary healers, socio economic profile, constraints and documentation

Introduction

Livestock is an integral part of the Indian economy contributing to empowerment and financial independency to the unemployed youth, “stay at home” women folk, landless and less land farmers waving for regular cash flow and better nutrition availability at all households. Yet, limited access to resources and modern veterinary healthcare facilities has led many livestock farmers to rely on traditional herbal remedies currently termed as ethno veterinary medicine for managing various livestock diseases widening the opportunity for the livestock sector, particularly in view of the increasing global interest in organic livestock production, where herbal remedies could serve as an important alternative to conventional veterinary treatments (Mayer *et al.*, 2014) ^[6]. The use of such low-cost medicinal plants is widespread among organic livestock raisers (Lans *et al.*, 2008) ^[4]. and promoted for their sustainable use (Mayer *et al.*, 2014) ^[6].

The reservoir of this knowledge of medicinal plants for treatment termed Ethno Veterinary Medicine were the traditional veterinary healers. These traditional veterinary healers have a wealth of knowledge about medicinal plants their availability, dosage and mode of preparation for treatment for various ailments. Its through their efforts that ethno veterinary medicine are employed by livestock owners all over the world and has always stayed undermined. Again the knowledge of ethno veterinary medicine though practiced widely has been diminishing due to numerous reasons and needs efforts to identify, preserve and document the knowledge packages for the future. Hence, a study was carried out to document the socio-economic profile of traditional veterinary healers in Nagapattinam district and medicinal plants used by them from Kodiakkarai forest of Nagapattinam district.

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Methodology

A total of 30 numbers of traditional veterinary healers were identified from Nagapattinam districts of Tamil Nadu. Snow ball sampling technique was used to identify the traditional veterinary healers. The data were collected using a well-structured interview schedule that focused on the socio-economic profile of the traditional veterinary healers, Constraints of traditional veterinary healers and documentation of ethno veterinary medicinal plants found in the kodiyaikarai forest, Nagapattinam district

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic profile of the traditional veterinary healers

In Nagapattinam districts, majority (67%) of the traditional veterinary healers were female (Table 1). The reason being that, since mostly the women folk taking care of livestock rearing activities they learn about the treating livestock as well. But, Eiki *et al.*, (2022) [2] reported that most of the traditional veterinary healers in Kunene region, Namibia were males.

As for the age, the average age of the traditional veterinary healers was 49 years. Again the percentage of traditional veterinary healers belonging to middle age category and old age category were equal (43.33 % each) with only 13 % of them belonging to young category. This study is in line with

study of Jabber *et al.*, 2006 in Pakistan where the average age of the traditional veterinary healers was between 40 and 90 years. Majority of the families of traditional veterinary healers belong to small family size (60 %) and nuclear family type (76.67%) with only 26.67 per cent being above poverty line and the rest below poverty line. Also, more than 50 per cent household type of the traditional veterinary healers was found to be Semi-pucca type (53.33%) followed by kutcha type and pucca type of housing. Majority of the traditional veterinary healers belonged to Backward class (53.33 %) followed by the scheduled caste (40.00%) and most backward class (6.67%). Primary source of income for majority (60%) of the traditional veterinary healers were from Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) followed by working as fishing labour, livestock rearing, mason, catering etc.,

The source of knowledge for the traditional veterinary healers of Nagapattinam district was mainly from their forefathers and family members that accounted for about 70 per cent. Cent per cent of the traditional veterinary healers were providing with their home town service and not out of station services. This could be attributed to most of them being females as they do not tend to move away from home with majority (83.33%) of them willing to serve as traditional veterinary healers for life and disseminate the knowledge to the next generation.

Table 1: Socio-economic Characteristics of traditional veterinary healers n=30

S. No	Characteristics	Category	Frequency	%
1	Gender	Female	20	66.67
		Male	10	33.33
2	Age	Young (Up to 34 years)	4	13.33
		Middle (34 – 47years)	13	43.33
		Old (Above 47 years)	13	43.33
3	Community	Most backward	02	6.67
		Backward	16	53.33
		Schedule caste	12	40.00
4	Education level	Illiterate	01	3.33
		Primary	06	20.00
		Middle	02	6.67
		High school	10	33.33
		Higher secondary	04	13.33
		Graduate	07	23.33
5	Family size	Small (up to 4)	18	60.00
		Large (above 4)	12	40.00
6	Family type	Nuclear	23	76.67
		Joint	7	23.33
7	Family income	BPL (less than \$27,000)	22	73.33
		Above BPL	08	26.67
8	Experience as traditional healers	Less than 7 years	4	13.33
		8 -16 years	8	26.67
		More than 17 years	18	60.00
9	Primary occupation of the respondent	Fisherman	01	3.33
		Data collector – Harbour	01	3.33
		Fishing labour	05	16.67
		MNREGA	18	60.00
		Livestock rearing	1	3.33
		Mason	1	3.33
		Catering	01	3.33
		Homeopathy doctor	01	3.33
		Agriculture	01	3.33
10	Source of knowledge			0.00
		Forefathers and family	21	70.00
		Vaithiyars/gurus	05	16.67
		Veterinarian	02	6.67
11	Types of services rendered	Neighbours	02	6.67
		Home consultations	30	100.00

		Services rendered out of station	0	0.00
12	Willingness to serve as traditional healers	Lifetime	25	83.33
		In Years	05	16.67
13	Land holding	No land leased	30	100.00
		Landless	29	96.67
		Land owned	01	3.33
14	Housing type	Pucca	05	16.67
		Semi-pucca	16	53.33
		Kutchra	09	30.00
15	Willingness to disseminate	Yes	29	96.67
		No	01	3.33
16	Secondary occupation of the respondent	No secondary occupation	01	3.33
		Livestock farming	29	96.67

Constraints perceived by traditional veterinary healers of nagapattinam district

Few of the major constraints perceived from the traditional veterinary healers presented in table:2. They include were identifying the medicinal plants, gathering them and storing them is cumbersome, the next constraint was the non-lucrative nature of ethno veterinary medicine unlike the western medicine, less availability/ non-availability/ season

availability of medicinal plants attributed to urbanisation and deforestation, the need for preparation of medicines fresh and its labour intensive nature, less/ no financial aid from government, distortion of message content through years of oral transmission of knowledge, non-availability of literatures and script on use of medicinal plants and preparation process for livestock and availability of only few genuine traditional livestock healers.

Table 2: Constraints perceived by Traditional Veterinary healers of Nagapattinam district

S.No	constraints	frequency *
1	Identification, gathering and storing of medicinal plants is cumbersome	28
2	Not lucrative like western medicine	27
3	Less availability / non availability of the required medicinal plant	25
4	Preparation of medicines fresh and labour intensive	22
5	Cannot travel long for treatment and aged as well	21
6	No financial support from government side for Traditional livestock healers	18
7	Distortion of oral transmission of medicinal plants and doses	16
8	Non – availability of Literatures on use of medicinal plants and preparation process for livestock	15
9	Availability of only few genuine traditional livestock healers	12

*Multiple responses

Ethno veterinary medicinal plants used for medicine preparation and treatment of various ailments documented from traditional veterinary healers.

The ethno veterinary herbal plants and ingredients used for preparation and treatment of various ailments from the Kodiyakarai forest of Nagapattinam districts were documented

from the traditional veterinary healers. From this study, 44 plant species used for preparation of medicines for various ailments of livestock were documented Plant type, plant parts used, common name of the plant, botanical name and family name were also recorded and presented in table.:3

Table 3: Commonly used plants for preparation of ethnoveterinary medicinal plants used by traditional healers in Nagapattinam district of Tamil Nadu for treatment of Livestock

S.NO	Name of the flora	Habitat	English name	Botanical name	Parts of the plant used	Plant Family
1	Aagaaya garudan	Creeper	Redfruit Creeper	Coralocarpus epigaeus	Leaves	Cucurbitaceae.
2	Sirupeelai	Herb	Mountain knotgrass polpola	Aerva lanata	Leaves	Amaranthaceae
3	Kumizh maram	Tree	siatic beechberry, Badhara bush	Gmelina asiatica	Stem, leaves	Lamiaceae
4	Kaarai	Shrub	Coromandel Boxwood, Caray Cheddle	Canthium parviflorum	Leaves	Rubiaceae
5	Kazharchi	Climber	Fever nut, Nicker bean	Caesalpinia bonducella	Dry fruit	Caesalpinaceae
6	Mathuram	Tree	Arjun tree	Terminalia arjuna	Bark	Combretaceae
7	Kaatumalli	Climber	Wild jasmine	Jasimum abyssinimum	Flower	Oleaceae
8	Pazhuvakaai	Climber	Spine gourd, Spiny gourd	Momordica diocia	Raw fruit	Cucurbitaceae
9	Poonaikali	Creeper	Velvet beans, Cowhage	Mucuna puriens	Pod	Fabaceae
10	Thillai	Shrub	Blinding tree, Milky mangrove	Excoecaria agallocha	Leaves	Euphorbiaceae
11	Maavilangu/ Maavilangam	Tree	Sacred garlic pear, spider tree	Cratera religiosa	Bark	Capparaceae
12	Milagu saaranai keera	Herb	giant pigweed,	Trianthema portulacastrum	Leaves	Aizoaceae
13	Perumarunthu	Climber	Indian Birthwort, Duck Flower	Aristolochia indica	Leaves	Aristolochiaceae
14	Kaatu Naarathai	Tree	Wild lime	Atlantia monophylla / Pambrus missions	Leaves	Rutaceae.
15	Manikaasaan / Kayambo	Tree	Ironwood Tree	Memecylon umbellatum	Leaves	Melastomataceae

16	Karunthuvarai	Tree	panicked ebony	Diospyros panicula	Raw Fruit	Ebenaceae
17	Veppalai	Tree	Pala Indigo Plant or Sweet Indrajao	Wrightia tinctoria	Leaves	Apocynaceae
18	Kozhinji	Herb	Wild indigo / Fish poison	Tephrosia purpurea	Leaves	Fabaceae
19	Vedaththalai	Shrub	Sicklebush	Dichrostachys cinerea	Leaves	Fabaceae
20	Pinaari/ pe kalaathi	Shrub	Indian privet, seaside clerodendrum	Clerodendrum inerme	Leaves	Lamiaceae
21	Virali	Tree	Bridal Couch Tree	Hymenodictyon excelsum	Leaves	Rubiaceae
22	Kaatu naval	Tree	Java plum, black plum,	Syzygium cumini	Leaves	Myrtaceae
23	Nona	Shrub	Indian Mulberry, Morinda Tree	Morinda pubescen	Leaves	Rubiaceae
24	Pei pudalai	Climber	wild snake gourd common fringed-flower vine	Trichosanthes cucumerina	Vegetable	Cucurbitaceae
25	Amman paccharisi	Herb	hairy spurge snake weed	Euphorbia hirta	Flower	Euphorbiaceae
26	Malai Vembhu	Tree	Malabar Neem, Forest Neem	Melia dubia	Leaves	Meliaceae
27	Veera / Veera	Tree	Hedge Boxwood	Drypetes sepiaria	Fruit	Putranjivaceae
28	Seenthal / seenthi	Climber	Amrita, Heart-leaved moonseed	Tinospora cordifolia	Stem	Menispermaceae
29	Rail poondur	Herb	Wild basil/ Ban tulasi	Croton bonplandianus	Leaves	Euphorbiaceae
30	Siriya nangai	Herb	--	Andrographis alata	Leaves	Acnathaceae
31	Periya nangai	Herb	Narrow leafed milk wort	Polygala elongata	Leaves	Polygalaceae
32	Kilaa	Shrub	Bengal currant, Christ's thorn	Carissa carandes	Fruit leaves	Apocynaceae
33	Vagupula / magizha maram	Tree	Bakul tree Spanish cherry	Mimusops elangi	Bark	Sapotaceae
34	Yannai neringi	Herb	Large caltrop giant caltrop	Pedaliium murex	Dry fruit	Pedaliaceae
35	Vellarugu	Herb	Indian whitehead	Enicostema axillare	Leaf blades	Gentianaceae
36	Nathai suri	Herb	Jointed button weed	Spermacoce hispida	Leaves, stem	Rubiaceae
37	Umari keera	Herb	Seepweed, Saltwort	Suaeda maritima	Leaves	Amaranthaceae
38	Paanaiyadaippan	Herb	Basket grass	Striga gesnerioides	Stem	Orobanchaceae
39	Yelumbhotti	Shrub	Bone Joint Plant, Bone Setter	Ormocarpum cochinchinense	Bark	Fabaceae
40	Siruvaagai	Tree	Bitter Albizia	Albizia amara	Leaves	Fabaceae
41	Kaatu kondrai	Tree	Indian Laburnum	Cassia fistula	Flower. Fruit	Fabaceae
42	Moodhirakanni	Shrub	Climbing Flax	Hugonia mystax	Fruit	Linaceae
43	Odhiyam	Tree	Indian Ash Tree	Lannea coromandelica	Leaves	Anacardiaceae
44	Seemai agathi	Shrub	Candle Bush	Senna alata	Leaves	Fabaceae

Habitat of the medicinal plants

The trees were the predominant form of medicinal plants

available which was 34.09% followed by herbs, shrubs and climbers 27.27%, 20.45% and 18.19% respectively.

Table 4: Habitat of the medicinal plants

S. No	Plant category	Frequency	Percentage
1	Herbs	12	27.27
2	Shrubs	09	20.45
3	Trees	15	34.09
4	Climbers/ creepers	08	18.19
	Total	44	100.00

The findings are contrary to findings of Dinbiso *et al.*, 2021^[1] research findings of southern Ethiopia that most medicinal plants were herbs (33.8%) followed by trees and shrubs and in Sulaiman range of Pakistan, most of medicinal plants documented were herbs (55%), followed by shrubs and trees.

Parts of the plants used for ethno veterinary preparation

The leaves were predominant plant part used for ethno veterinary preparation which was 56.82% followed by the fruits and vegetables 20.45 %, flowers and stem each 6.82%. this finding is in line with the study of Maroyi (2012) ^[5] in Zimbabwe.

Table 5: Parts of the plants used for ethno veterinary preparation

S.No	Parts of the plant	Frequency	Percentage
1	Leaves	25	56.82
2	Barks	04	09.09
3	Fruits / vegetable	09	20.45
4	Stem	03	06.82
5	Flowers	03	06.82
	Total	44	100

Source of plants

Majority of the medicinal plants were gathered from the wild which contributes 90.91 % and the rest 09.09% could be found commonly on home garden or in residential areas.

Table 6: Source of Plants

S.No	Source of plant	Frequency	Percentage
1	Wild	40	90.91
2	Home garden	04	09.09
	total	44	100.00

Table 7: Usage form of medicinal plants

S.No	Source of plant	Frequency	Percentage
1	Fresh	38	86.36
2	Dry	06	13.64
	Total	44	100.00

Families of medicinal plants

The predominant plant family was found to be Fabaceae (15.91%), Rubiaceae (11.36%) and Cucurbitaceae and Euphorbiaceae each 06.82%. The findings of the study tends to line with the study of Tabuti *et al.*, (2003)^[8] reported in his study at Uganda, South Africa that most commonly used

Usage form of medicinal plants

Majority (86.25%) of plants used of herbal preparations were in fresh forms only. About 13.64 % of the plants were used in dry form.

medicinal plants use for preparation of medicines belong to family Fabaceae followed by Euphorbiaceae. While he results are contrary to the study of Sharma *et al.*, (2022)^[7] wherein the predominant plant family he recorded in Uttarkhand, India was found to Lamiaceae followed by Solanaceae and Asteraceae.

Table 8: Families of medicinal plants

S. No	Family name	Frequency	Percentage
1	Fabaceae	7	15.91
2	Rubiaceae	5	11.36
3	Cucurbitaceae.	3	06.82
4	Euphorbiaceae	3	06.82
5	Amaranthaceae	2	04.55
6	Apocynaceae	2	04.55
7	Lamiaceae	2	04.55
8	Acnathaceae	1	02.27
9	Aizoaceae	1	02.27
10	Anacardiaceae	1	02.27
11	Aristolochiaceae	1	02.27
12	Caesalpiniaceae	1	02.27
13	Capparaceae	1	02.27
14	Combretaceae	1	02.27
15	Ebenaceae	1	02.27
16	Gentianaceae	1	02.27
17	Linaceae	1	02.27
18	Meliaceae	1	02.27
19	Menispermaceae	1	02.27
20	Myrtaceae	1	02.27
21	Oleaceae	1	02.27
22	Orobanchaceae	1	02.27
23	Pedaliaceae	1	02.27
24	Polygalaceae	1	02.27
25	Putranjivaceae	1	02.27
26	Sapotaceae	1	02.27
27	Melastomataceae	1	02.27
	Total	44	100

Conclusion

It could be concluded from the study that mostly the landless women acquired knowledge on ethno veterinary practices from their forefathers and served as traditional veterinary healers with their predominant secondary occupation being livestock farming. They also informed that identification, gathering and storage of medicinal plants were one among the few constraints faced. Also 44 plants belonging to 27 plant families were documented from the traditional veterinary healers. Leaves were the predominant plant part used for medicine preparation mostly in fresh form. Trees followed by herbs with majority of them found in the wild were used for making medicines. These socio-economic profile and constraints of Traditional veterinary healers and documentation of medicinal plants are crucial for the policy makers, extension agents, researchers and pharma companies

may include the traditional veterinary healers while planning, production and dissemination of ethno veterinary medicine for the welfare of farming community.

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