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“Development on the margin”

Study of Knowledge on Medicinal Plants in Zetaquira and Campo Hermoso Municipalities, Boyacá-Colombia

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Abstract

Conservation of knowledge on medicinal plants has been observed to some extent in few communities in rural areas. Nevertheless, the traditional knowledge that has been identified is already eroded, if not in all, then in most of the studied localities. Contributions to conservation of traditional knowledge is still remain. An ethnobotanical study was carried out in the municipalities of Zetaquira and Campo Hermoso, Departamento de Boyacá, Colombia. The study focused on identifying local factors that promote the knowledge on introduced and native medicinal plant species in both municipalities, and to describe medicinal uses of plant species in the two localities.

Within the methods: A survey and qualitative methods for data collection were applied. Subsequent calculations of IUUV values, and Jaccard index were completed. Statistical tools -Kruskal-Wallis test and a GLM regression- were used through the analysis. Forty-one adults, who represented diverse groups from the communities were interviewed. Twenty-five interviewees came from Zetaquira and sixteen from Campo Hermoso. Additionally, a questionnaire survey was conducted with students of local schools. Data of 195 students from Zetaquira and 177 students from Campo Hermoso could be used for further analysis.

Adults' knowledge on introduced and native medicinal plants was related to their strata of the subsidised health service system (SISBEN) and to their occupation. Regarding students' knowledge, their place of residence and level of class were the most influential factors.

Students described 51 medicinal plant species, while adults described 80. In total, seventy-eight species with medicinal use were identified of which 35 were native and 43 were introduced. The species belonged to forty-one floristic families. The most popular families were Asteraceae, Lamiaceae, Apiaceae, Rutaceae and Verbenaceae.

In Zetaquira, introduced plant species were significantly more popular than native ones (IUUV), whereas both groups were equally popular in Campo Hermoso. The most popular plant parts for medicinal use were leaves which in most cases were prepared by decoction or infusion.

In general, students and adults knew more on introduced plant species than on native ones. The distribution of knowledge could be influenced by a number of social and ecological factors that are discussed in this contribution.

Keywords: Boyacá-Colombia, ethnobotany, traditional knowledge