

Ethnobotanical Study of Plants Used in Traditional Birth and Postpartum Care

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Abstract

Ethnobotany the study of the relationship between people and plants—offers profound insights into traditional healthcare practices, especially in maternal and child health. Across cultures, plants have played a central role in supporting women during pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum recovery. These practices, rooted in indigenous knowledge systems, reflect centuries of empirical wisdom and cultural beliefs. As modern medicine increasingly explores integrative approaches, documenting and understanding ethnobotanical traditions becomes vital for preserving biodiversity, cultural heritage, and maternal health strategies.

Keywords: *Ethnobotany; Traditional medicine; Cultural practices*

Introduction

Among the Kry ethnic group in Lao PDR, 49 plant species are used for pregnancy, childbirth, and postpartum recovery. Practices include spatial taboos, confinement in purpose-built huts, and dietary restrictions. Plants are used to mitigate hemorrhage, aid recovery, and care for infants [1].

Specific plants are used to mark transitions in matrescence (the process of becoming a mother). Scientific validation through phytochemical screening and clinical trials is essential. For example, Shatavari has shown estrogenic activity in lab studies, supporting its traditional use for lactation [2].

In Kerala's Kozhikode district, 153 plant species were documented for postnatal care, with roots and seeds being the most frequently used parts [3].

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Dosage and preparation methods vary widely, Some plants may interact with pharmaceutical, Toxicity risks exist if improperly used. Scientific validation through phytochemical screening and clinical trials is essential. For example, Shatavari has shown estrogenic activity in lab studies, supporting its traditional use for lactation [4].

Loss of knowledge: Modernization and declining interest among younger generations threaten oral traditions, Lack of standardization: Variability in plant identification and preparation methods. Limited research: Few studies focus on women's knowledge, which is often underrepresented in ethnobotanical literature [5].

Conclusion

Plants have long supported women through the transformative journey of childbirth and postpartum recovery. Ethnobotanical traditions offer a rich tapestry of remedies, rituals, and cultural wisdom that deserve recognition and scientific exploration. As global health systems seek holistic and inclusive approaches, the study of plants in traditional maternal care stands as a vital bridge between past and future, nature and nurture.

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