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Research Article Checklist and Abundance of Open Grown Medico-Ethnoforest Tree Species in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: The global interest on the use of medicinal tree species for combating diseases is on the increase as against the synthetic drugs. There dearth of information on the open grown medico-ethnoforest tree species in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka. Hence, the study aimed at developing checklist and assessing abundance of open grown medicinal tree species in the university premises for sustainable management. **Materials and Methods:** Total enumeration and identification of open grown tree species with their medicinal properties were made. Checklist of species was developed using table and species abundance was computed using frequencies and relative density. **Results:** A total of 25 medicinal tree species with the frequency of 479, distributed within 23 genera and 15 families were encountered in the study area. *Azardirachta indica* had the highest occurrence with Meliaceae family having the highest frequency. Out of the 25 species identified as open grown medicinal tree species, 10 species are threatened/endangered. Furthermore, the study discovered open grown tree species within the study area are natural cure for about 40 diseases. **Conclusion:** The University premises support trees with medical remedies for various diseases. The University management should embark on enrichment planting of the threatened/endangered tree species.

Key words: Ethnoforestry, medicinal trees, open grown trees, relative density, UNIZIK

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Data Availability: All relevant data are within the paper and its supporting information files.

INTRODUCTION

Ethno forestry can be defined as the creation, conservation, management and use of forest resources, through continued practices of customary ways by local communities¹. Thus, it is specific and appropriate to each community and environment. Traditional medicinal plants are a therapeutic resource used by the population of the African continent specifically for health care, which may also serve as starting materials for drugs². Iwu et al.³ reported that infectious diseases account for one-half of all deaths in the tropical countries. As a result, people of all continents have long applied poultice and imbibed infusions of indigenous plants dating back to prehistory for health purposes⁴. Many infectious diseases have been known to be treated with herbal remedies gotten from medico-ethno forest trees species since man's existence. The maximum therapeutic benefits and minimum side effects of herbal remedies have been verified in numerous scientific findings²⁻⁴.

Medicinal and aromatic plants have demonstrated its contribution to the treatment of diseases such as Human Immune Virus (HIV), Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), malaria, diabetes, sickle-cell anemia, mental disorders^{5,6} and microbial infections³. According to the World Health Organization (WHO)⁷, 80% of the world population use medicinal plants in the treatment of diseases and in African countries, this rate is much higher. Iwu *et al.*³ reported that the primary benefits of using plant derived medicines are that they are relatively safer than synthetic alternatives, offering profound therapeutic benefits and more affordable treatment. The use of medicinal plants in developing countries as a normative basis for the maintenance of good health has been widely observed by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)⁸.

Furthermore, the increasing reliance on the use of medicinal plants in the industrialized societies have been traced to the extraction and development of several drugs and chemotherapeutics from these plants as well as from traditionally used rural remedies⁹. Moreover, in these societies, herbal remedies have become more popular in the treatment of minor ailments and on account of the increasing costs of personal health maintenance. Survey conducted by the WHO "Roll back malaria" program in 1998 showed that in Ghana, Mali, Nigeria and Zambia, more than 60% of the children with high fever were treated at home with herbal medicines¹⁰.

Over exploitation driven by strong market demand and human want to erect buildings poses a significant threat to the medico-ethnoforest tree species diversity. Despite the importance and wide application of medicinal trees in Nigeria, gap of knowledge still exist on the medicinal forest trees that exist in most communities and institutions such as Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. Hence, this study aimed at developing a checklist of the medico-ethno forest tree species in Nnamdi Azikiwe University main campus, Awka, for sustainable management of the tree species and consolidation of indigenous knowledge.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Description and location of study area: This study was carried out from 11th of June, 2019 to 27th of November, 2019 in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka Anambra State, located in the southeastern geopolitical zone of Nigeria. It was established in 1991. The area is characterized by various floras. It is located from latitude 6.245° to 6.283°N and longitude 7.115° to 7.121°E (Fig. 1). The temperature in Awka is generally 27-30°C between June and December but rises to 32-34°C between January and April with the last few months of the dry season marked by the intense heat. It has an average annual temperature of 26.3°C. It has a rainfall pattern ranging from 1828-2002 mm. The climate of Awka falls within the tropic wet and dry type based on Koppen's classification¹¹.

Data collection: All open grown medicinal forest trees within the Awka main campus of Nnamdi Azikiwe University were enumerated. The trees were identified into their respective species and families. Additional information on ethnomedicinal properties and local names of the trees were obtained from literature. Some of the ethnomedicinal data collected included the ailments cured and tree parts used. The trees were listed in order of alphabets of their family names.

Statistical analysis: Descriptive statistics such as frequency was employed to analyze the count data of open grown tree species encountered in the study area.

Relative density (%) of each species was computed following the equation of Magurran¹²:

Relative Density (%) =
$$\frac{n}{N} \times 100$$
 (1)

where, n is number of individual tree species and N is total number of trees

Hence, the density status of each species was obtained following Edet *et al.*¹³ classification as:

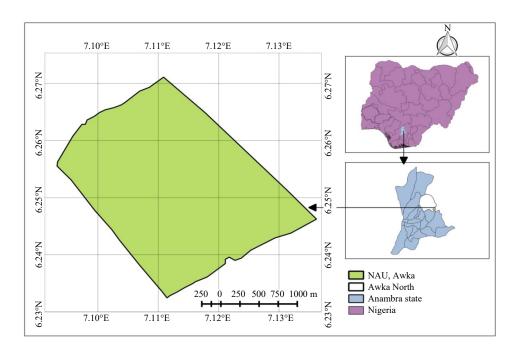


Fig. 1: Map of Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria

- Abundant (RD>5.00)
- Frequent (4.00<RD<4.99)
- Occasional (3.00<RD<3.99)
- Rare (1.00<RD<2.99) and
- Threatened/endangered (0.00<RD<1.00)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The result of the study showed that the 25 open grown trees found in the study area were medical remedies for ranging from malaria, snake bite to cure for asthma (Table 1). Urban vegetation, particularly trees, provides numerous benefits that can improve environmental quality and human health in and around urban areas. This study identified 25 medicinal forest tree species belonging to 23 genera and 15 families having a frequency of 479 in Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, Nigeria. Fabaceae was the most dominant family with four species; Apocynaceae, Loganiaceae, Meliaceae, Moraceae, Myrtaceae and Verbenaceae were represented by two species each. Many of the plant families recorded were represented by a single species (Table 1). The result of this study revealed that the medicinal trees found in the study area are traditional remedies and/or cures for about forty diseases and sicknesses.

The plants are used generally to cure diseases such as malaria, fever, cough, dysentery, skin infections, gynecological

problems and many others. The disease, malaria is a major health problem in the Nigeria and also prime among the top three causes of death in the country¹⁴. Similar result was reported in Enugu state of Nigeria¹⁵.

The plant parts used include barks, leaves, roots, stem and fruits and are prepared for medical use in different formulations such as decoction, infusion, powder and ointment etc. The vegetative plant parts (stem bark, roots and leaves) are most commonly used compared to the reproductive plant materials. According to UNESCO⁹, an increasing reliance on the use of these medicinal plants even in the industrialized societies has been traced to the development of several drugs and chemotherapeutics from these plants as well as from traditionally used rural herbal remedies.

The results showed that *Azardirachta indica* has the highest number of open grown medicinal forest tree species with 125 stands in the study area with Relative Density (RD) of 26.10%, followed by *Vitex doniana* (48) with RD = 10.02%, *Daniella oliveria* (46) 9.60% and *Annona senegalensis, Carpolobia lutea, Dialium guineense, Ficus capensis, Holarrhena floribunda, Pentaclethra macrophylla* and *Treculia africana* having the lowest RD = 0.21% and frequencies of a count each (Table 2). This study is in disagreement with the report of Chukwu and Chenge¹⁶, that reported *Eucalyptus camaldulensis, Terminalia superba, Eucalyptus tereticornis* and

Table 1: Checklis	Table 1: Checklist of forest trees with their medicinal values	alues			
Family	Species	Common name	Local name	Partused	Medicinal value
Annonaceae	Annona senegalensisPers.	Custard apple	Abo, Ubunu-ocha, Gwandar-daji	Leaves, Stem, Root, Bark	Treatment of Yellow fever, Venereal disease, diarrhea and gastrointestinal troubles ^{15,18}
Apocynaceae	Alstonia booneiDe Wild	Pattern wood or Camwood	Ahun	Root, Bark and Leaves	Treatment of snake bite and arrow poison, fever tumor ¹⁹
	<i>Holarrhena floribunda</i> (G. Don) Dur and Schinz	False rubber tree	Bakin mutum	Bark, Leaves, Whole Plant	Treatment of gonorrhea, dysentery, jaundice, female sterility, skin, infection, venereal disease, malaria and snake bite ²⁰
Arecaceae	Borassus aethiopum Mart	African fan palm	Ebi	Fruits, Root, Leaves	Root boiled with potash is used to treat swollen testis and treatment of infertility ¹⁹
Bignoniaceae	Newbouldia laevis (P. Beauv) Seaman ex Bureau	Tree of life, Fertility tree	Akoko, Ogilisi/ogirisi, Aduruku	Leaves	Treatment of asthma ¹⁵
Fabaceae	<i>Albizia lebbeck</i> (L.) Benth.	Indian siris	Ayinre-weere, kurmii, Kokko	Leaves, Flower, Stem, Bark, seeds	Anti-asthmatic, anti-inflammatory, anti-fertility and anti-diarrhea, antiseptic, anti-dysenteric, anti-tubercular, leprosy, paralysis, helminthic infection, allergic rhinitis, astringent, to treat the eye, psychoactive, flu, lung problems, pectoral problems, cough, gingivitis, abdominal tumors ²¹
	Daniellia oliveri (Rolfe) Hutchand Daz.	Copaiba balsam	Uya/Iya	Stem, Bark, Leaves	Treatment of gonorrhea and skin diseases, dysmenorrhea ¹⁹
	Pentaclethra macrophylla Benth.	African oil bean	Ugba	Stem, Leaves, Pods, Seeds and Bark	Treatment of infertility, lactogenity, convulsion, abortion and wounds ²²
	<i>Tetrapleura tetraptera</i> Schumac. and Thons	Aridan	Aridan, Okpokrikpo /ososho	Fruit	Treatment of sickle cell ¹⁵
Leguminosae	<i>Dialium guineense.</i> Wild	African velvet tamarind	Igbaru, Ichekun, Tsamiyarkurm	Stem, Root, Bark	Anti-diuretic, anti-cancer ²³
Loganiaceae	Anthocleista schweinfurthii Gilg.			Leaves, Plant, Root, Bark	Treatment of hemia, sores, vaginal prolapse, fever. It is used as a purgative and induces also to labor ²⁴
	<i>Anthocleista vogelli.</i> Planch	Cabbage tree		Bark, Sap, Leaf, Root, Seed	Eye treatment, ear treatment, laxatives, diuretics, edema and antidote for sting ¹⁸

Table 1: Continue	ne				
Family	Species	Common name	Local name	Part used	Medicinal value
Malvaceae	<i>Ceiba pentandra</i> (L.) Gaertn	Silk Cotton	Araba, Akpuowu	Leaves, Bark, Silk	Stimulant/laxative, fresh leaves used as vegetable. Bark boiled in water and used for diabetes and erectile dysfunction treatments. The silk used in some medicinal preparations ¹⁵
Meliaceae	Azardirachta indica (L.) Adelb Malicia exraka (Welw.) C C. Bern	Neem Mulbery Iroko	Dongoyaro, Atuyabasi/ ogwuakom Maina, Eke-oyibo, Dongo-yaro	Fruit juice, Stem, Leaves and Tree bark	Treatment of boils, anti-malaria and skin rashes ^{15,19} Treatment of rheumatism ¹⁵
Moraceae	Ficus capensis Thunb.	Bush fig, fig of heaven, African mustard tree,	Opoto, Farin, bauree, Anwerenwa	Leaves, Bark	It serves as a blood tonic and immune booster. It is used in the treatment of chest problem, toothache, tonsilitis, peptic ulcer, epilepsy ²⁵
Myrtaceae	Treculia africana Decne Eucalyptus camaldulensis Dehnh.	Africa Breadfruit River red gum tree	Afon, Ukwa Ugbaikolo	Leaves Leaves, Gums	Treatment of heart problem ¹⁵ Treatment of cough, rheumatism, dysentery, astringent and antisentic ^{26,27}
	Eucalyptus globulus Labill	Blue gum tree		Leaves, Gums	It is taken against asthma, against cold, to treat malaria, abscesses, chicken pox and rheumatism ²⁸
Pinaceae	<i>Pinus caribaea</i> Morelet	Carinnean pine		Leaves, Bark	Anti-septic, diuretic, antifungal, rheumatism, inhalers and skin issues ²⁹
Polygalaceae	<i>Carpolobia lutea</i> G. Don	Cattle stick	Ikpafum, Agba, Angalagala	Leaves, Bark	Treatment of gonorrhea, gingivitis, infertility, antiulcer and malaria ³⁰
Rubiaceae	Morinda lucida Benth	Brimstone Tree	Oruwo, Ezeogu, Melina	Leaves	Treatment of fever 15,19 Anti-directic anti-cancer anti-diabatic
verbellaceae	Official a at DOLCA NOAD.	קייים	מוניון מ	reaves, stelli, bain	treatment of bone fracture ³¹
	<i>Tectona grandis</i> Linn.f.	Теак		Leaves, Seed, Bark, Root	Bronchitis, biliousness, hyperacidity, diabetes, leprosy, astringent and helmintiasis. It is used in the treatment of pile ³²
	<i>Vitex doniana</i> Sweet	Black plum	Ejiji	Leaves, Root, Fruit, Bark	Treatment of malaria, diarrhea, sterility, Painful menstruation, cough, burns, fatigue ³³

Table 2: Abundance of open grown medicinal tree species in the study area

Species	Frequency	RD (%)	Status
Albizia lebbeck	4	0.84	Threatened/endangered
Alstonia boonei	15	3.13	Occasional
Annona senegalensis	1	0.21	Threatened/endangered
Anthocleista schweinfurthii	6	1.25	Rare
Anthocleista vogelli	16	3.34	Occasional
Azardirachta indica	125	26.10	Abundant
Borrassus aethiopum	37	7.72	Abundant
Carpolobia lutea	1	0.21	Threatened/endangered
Ceiba pentandra	2	0.42	Threatened/endangered
Daniellia oliveri	46	9.60	Abundant
Dialium guineense	1	0.21	Threatened/endangered
Eucalyptus camaldulensis	32	6.68	Abundant
Eucalyptus globulus	20	4.18	Frequent
Ficus capensis	1	0.21	Threatened/endangered
Gmelina arborea	25	5.22	Abundant
Holarrhena floribunda	1	0.21	Threatened/endangered
Melicia excels	11	2.30	Rare
Morinda lucida	4	0.84	Threatened/endangered
Newbouldia laevis	39	8.14	Abundant
Pentaclethra macrophylla	1	0.21	Threatened/endangered
Pinus caribaea	32	6.68	Abundant
Tectona grandis	5	1.04	Rare
Tetrapleura tetraptera	5	1.04	Rare
Treculia africana	1	0.21	Threatened/endangered
Vitex doniana	48	10.02	Abundant
Total	479	100	

Nauclea diderichias the most dominant tree species in Faculty of Renewable Natural Resources, University of Ibadan, Ibadan, Nigeria. The disagreement might be due to differences in the size of the studied area.

The distribution of the relative density status revealed that 10 species were under the threatened/endangered status, 8 species were abundant, 4 species were rare, 2 species were occasional and only a single specie was in the frequent status (Table 2). The high number of threatened species might be due to indiscriminate felling of trees to make space for siting of buildings and other structures. Akindele and LeMay¹⁷ pointed that indiscriminate and/or illegal logging activities and over-exploitation of trees have pose treat to tropical trees species especially in developing countries.

The University management should embark on enrichment planting of the tree species that have low frequency distribution and threatened/endangered such as Annona senegelensis, Ficus capenensis, Dalium guineensis, Treculia africana, Holarhenna floribunda, Carpolobia lutea, Albizia lebbeck and Pentaclethra macrophylla. Conservative measures should be put in place to checkmate these species as well as promote cultivation of more of these medico-ethno forest trees as cures for cancer, infections, diabetes and some other life threatening diseases discovered.

CONCLUSION

The study documented open grown trees with medical remedies for 40 diseases in the study area. *Azardirachta indica* was recorded as the specie with the highest relative density. Out of the 25 species identified as open grown medicinal tree species, 10 species were threatened/ endangered.

SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT

This study discovered medicinal tree species that can be beneficial for curing of several diseases of humans. The study also revealed the abundant status of these medicinal tree species to aid their conservation. This study will help the researcher to uncover the critical areas of medicinal use of tree species in the study area that many researchers were not able to explore and document. Thus a new theory on these medicinal trees species and possibly other combinations, phytochemicals, side effects and dosage may be arrived at.

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