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Vivian Patrick, Tonga Noweg & Julia Nelson



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Utilization of Traditional Medicinal Plants by Bidayuh Communities in Sarawak, Malaysia

Vivian Patrick, Tonga Noweg, and Julia Nelson

Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Kota Samarahan, 94300 Malaysia

ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken in Bidayuh communities in the Padawan, Bau, and Siburan districts in Malaysia to (1) compare the medicinal plant utilization, (2) compare the number of medicinal plants collected annually and total number of medicinal plant species collected, and (3) assess the influence of key socio-demographic factors on the pattern of annual collection and preferred species. Surveys were conducted on 226 households, based on stratified random sampling. Key informant in-depth investigation and group meetings were used to gather further information. A total of 44 medicinal plant species that were used to treat 25 ailments were recorded from all districts. Five primary ailments for which the plants were used were fever (11 plant species), wound (10 plant species), post-partum care (eight plant species), hypertension (seven plant species), and diseases of the skin (seven plant species). There was a difference in the number of medicinal plants collected annually ($X^2(2) = 8.55, p = .01$) with the highest mean difference between Kuching (Mean rank = 125.65) and Siburan (Mean rank = 97.78) districts. There was a difference in total medicinal plant species collected among household heads due to education levels ($X^2(5) = 21.87, p = .00$) with the highest mean difference between primary school (Mean rank = 138.07) and college (Mean rank = 69.00) education.

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Traditional knowledge; wild plant; medicine; age; income; education

Introduction

Use of medicinal plants to treat ailments has been recorded since the first human civilization. About 20% of the recorded plant species of the world were used in the social health care systems.^[1] Today, medicinal plants are used in phytopharmaceuticals, galenicals, dietary supplements, pharmaceutical auxiliary products, intermediates for drug industries, beverages, traditional medicines, and drug production.^[2]

According to ‘The Future of the Dayak Bidayuhs,’ the Bidayuh are the fourth-largest tribe in Sarawak, after the Ibans, Chinese, and the Malays. In Bidayuh language, ‘*Bi*’ means ‘people’ and ‘*Dayuh*’ means ‘land.’ Hence,

CONTACT Vivian Patrick vivianpaterik@gmail.com Institute of Biodiversity and Environmental Conservation, Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, 94300 Kota Samarahan, Sarawak, Malaysia

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