

## **The Use of Ethnomedicine in South Brebes As The Basis For The Development of Traditional Medicine Independence**

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### **KEYWORDS**

Ethnomedicin, South Brebes, Traditional Medicine

### **ABSTRACT**

Indonesia is a country with very high biodiversity, including in terms of medicinal plants. In various regions, including South Brebes, traditional medicine practices based on local knowledge or *ethnomedicine* are still used by the community to overcome various health problems. This research aims to explore and document the *ethnomedicine* practices of the South Brebes community as the first step toward the independence of traditional medicine raw materials based on local wisdom. This study uses qualitative research methods. Data processing is described descriptively and presented in the form of tables and graphs. The results show that people in the South Brebes area, especially in Bumiayu, Tonjong, Paguyangan, and Benda Districts, are still actively using plants as traditional medicine to overcome various health problems, both mild and chronic. It is recorded that there are 73 species of plants used, with the leaf being the most dominantly used, followed by fruits, rhizomes, seeds, tubers, and other parts. The use of these medicinal plants includes the treatment of various diseases such as colds, fever, indigestion, hypertension, gout, diabetes, urinary tract infections, and chronic diseases such as stroke, cancer, and heart disease. In addition, medicinal plants are also used for body care purposes, such as facilitating menstruation, strengthening vitality, maintaining healthy skin, and increasing immunity. The existence and utilization of these medicinal plants reflect the local wisdom of the community in maintaining natural health and show great potential to be further developed in efforts to preserve and develop traditional medicines based on local biodiversity.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Exploration and inventory of medicinal plants and their use in communities based on local wisdom need to be carried out. Research to obtain phytogeography, agroclimate, utilization based on local wisdom, phytochemistry, and socio-economics of medicinal plants will be very important in building a database that can be used as important information in the process of domestication of medicinal plants to increase productivity, both in terms of quality and quantity, as well as a pilot for the independence of plant-based medicines.

Indonesia's potential as a *megabiodiversity* country after Brazil has a very large opportunity to develop medicinal plants. With a tropical forest area of 120.35 million hectares, Indonesia has around 80% of the total types of plants that have medicinal properties. It is estimated that there are around 40,000 species of plants in the world and 30,000 of them live in Indonesia. Among these 30,000 species, about 9,600 plant species are known to be efficacious as medicines and approximately 300 species have been used as traditional medicine ingredients

by industries or traditional medicine businesses (D'Avigdor et al., 2014; Julung et al., 2023; Shaheen et al., 2017; Teka et al., 2020; Utami et al., 2019).

Until now, the use of traditional medicine is still in demand in Indonesia. Although modern medicine has developed to remote areas, the use of plants as medicine is still in demand by the community (Amalia, 2020). Medicinal plants are increasingly intensively studied not only because of their tradition but especially their value in the field of pharmacy. The exploration of medicinal plants is increasing and has become one of the natural resources in Indonesia that has important economic value (Mentari & Yanti, 2020). The results of Riskesdas in 2010 stated that 55.3% of the Indonesian population uses traditional medicine (*jamu*) to maintain their health, and 95.6% of traditional medicine users admit that the traditional medicine used is very beneficial for health.

Research on the identification of the use of medicinal plants of the Dani Tribe in Jayawijaya Regency, Papua, determined 16 species of medicinal plants from 12 families that are used by the community with different and simple properties and uses (Simabala, 2016). Furthermore, the medical ethnobotany of the South Pulo Breueh settlement community found 67 species of medicinal plants. The parts of plants used as medicine are leaves, fruits, sap, stems, bark, rhizomes, and bulbs. The types of diseases treated using medicinal plants are diverse, namely 5 types of diseases (Dianto et al., 2015). Therefore, this study is the first step to identify the use of medicinal plants in the people of South Brebes.

Indonesia has extraordinary biological wealth, including the diversity of medicinal plants. In various regions such as South Brebes, people still practice traditional medicine that comes from hereditary knowledge or known as *ethnomedicine*. This practice not only reflects local cultural heritage and wisdom, but also holds great potential to be developed into a self-contained traditional medicine. However, knowledge about *ethnomedicine* has not been systematically documented and is slowly starting to be marginalized due to the dominance of modern medicine. In fact, the community's need for safer, more accessible, and locally-based traditional medicines is increasing, especially in the midst of efforts to strengthen the resilience of the national health sector. So with this background, the exploration and documentation of *ethnomedicine* practices in the South Brebes area is very important as a first step in supporting efforts to provide independent raw materials for traditional medicine based on local wisdom.

In previous studies, such as Simabala's (2016) research on the Dani Tribe in Jayawijaya Regency, medicinal plants have been identified for their uses and cultural significance. This research identified 16 species used by the community for medicinal purposes. Similarly, Dianto et al. (2015) conducted research on the South Pulo Breueh community and documented 67 species used for various health conditions, showing a broad application of local plant-based remedies. These studies highlight the richness of medicinal plant knowledge in indigenous communities, but they do not fully address the lack of systematic documentation and the growing importance of this knowledge in the modern context. In contrast, the current research addresses these gaps by focusing on the *ethnomedicine* practices in South Brebes, aiming to document and explore the medicinal plant knowledge that is increasingly being marginalized due to the dominance of modern medicine.

The purpose of this study is to document and explore the *ethnomedicine* practices in South Brebes, focusing on the medicinal plants used by the local community. The benefit of this study is to preserve local wisdom, promote the use of traditional medicine, and empower local communities in the field of healthcare by providing a self-sustaining approach based on locally available resources.

## RESEARCH METHOD

The research locations included five sub-districts in the South Brebes region: Bumiayu, Tonjong, Paguyangan, Salem, and Sirampog. The population of this study consisted of all residents in the southern Brebes area and all its plants. The samples were traditional medicines and individuals who practiced the use of plants as medicine, as identified by the informants. This study used qualitative research methods. Data processing was conducted descriptively and presented in the form of tables and graphs. The data processed included supporting information such as name, age, gender, education, and occupation. Basic data included the name of the medicinal plant species, the part of the plant used, the type of disease treated, preparation methods, and modes of administration. For the type of disease treated, further classification was carried out following Zaman (2009). The types of diseases treated using medicinal plants by the people of the southern Brebes region were grouped into three categories: infectious diseases, non-communicable diseases, and others (Mulyanah, 2019).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Ethnomedicine is a field of study that explores how various cultures interpret, handle, and cure diseases through the use of plants, animals, as well as spiritual practices and rituals that have been passed down from generation to generation (Kasmawati et al., 2019). Based on the documentation process of public knowledge, it can be known the types of plants that have been traditionally used to cure various diseases (Bhagawan et al., 2022; Cordero et al., 2023; Mustofa et al., 2020; Rahmadini et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2023). The results of interviews and field observations conducted in five sub-districts in the South Brebes region, namely Tonjong Village, Bumiayu Village, Paguyangan Village, Salem Village, and Sirampog Village, show that the people in this region still maintain local wisdom in utilizing medicinal plants as part of traditional medicine efforts. From a total of 50 respondents interviewed, it can be seen that the use of medicinal plants is still a living and relevant practice in daily life.

The people of South Brebes generally rely on knowledge that has been passed down from generation to generation in choosing and using medicinal plants. This knowledge is based not only on practical experience, but also on a strong belief in the natural properties of the different types of plants that grow around them. The following is a table containing the parts of medicinal plants used by the community in the South Brebes area:

**Table 1. Medicinal Plants Used by the People of South Brebes**

<b>Plant Parts</b>	<b>Plant Names</b>
Leaf	Papaya leaves, cat whisker leaves, runtas leaves, lettuce, pandan leaves, dadap serep leaves, betel leaves, celery leaves, putri malu leaves, cumin leaves, bay leaves, soursop leaves, moringa leaves, sambiloto leaves, randu leaves, god leaves, beluntas leaves, ciplukan leaves, virgin palm leaves, red andong, avocado leaves, guava leaves, large leaves, tempuyung, meniran, bandotan, basil, sembung, Virgin Footprint, Cocor Duck.
Fruit	Lime, star fruit, cucumber, guava, grapefruit, tomatoes, dragon fruit, apples, bananas, ajwa dates, areca nuts, papaya sap, noni fruit, tamarind.
Rhizome	Ginger, kamijara, turmeric, temulawak, kencur, galangal
Seed	Cardamom, cloves, coriander, Chinese petai, nutmeg
Tuber	Shallots, garlic, sweet potatoes

Trunk	lemongrass, honje stems, meniran
Flower	Kecombrang, star fruit flower, cataract flower, virgin site, ceplikan
Water and meat	Old coconut water, young coconut, beluluk (will be coconut/small coconut)
Parasitic plant	Benalu Tea
Root	Reeds, meniran, virgin sites, liquorice, temulawak, temu
Wood	Seccang wood

Source: Processed Personal Data (2025)

Based on table 1. It can be seen that the people of South Brebes use various parts of plants for traditional medicinal purposes, reflecting the wealth of local knowledge that is still well preserved. Leaves are the most widely used part, followed by fruits, rhizomes, seeds, tubers, stems, flowers, water and pulp, benalu, roots, and wood. This condition confirms that ethnomedicine practices are still an important part of the local public health system.

Furthermore, table 2 presents a list of medicinal plants used by the people of South Brebes Village, including their processing methods and the types of diseases that can be cured with these plants. Some examples of the use of medicinal plants are categorized based on the type of disease treated.

**Table 2. Processing and Utilization of Medicinal Plants Utilized by the People of South Brebes**

Medicinal Plants Used	How to Process and Utilize	Efficacy
Ginger	Grind until almost smooth, cook until boiling, add brown sugar to taste	For weak immunity and colds
Kamijara	Crush almost finely, cook boiling with brown sugar; or mash finely, give hot water, strain, add honey	For weak immunity, colds, children's immunity, and lowering fever
Turmeric	Boil with boiling water, add honey, lemon, lime, ginger, coconut oil; Warm or cold drink	Relieves joint pain, prevents heart disease, improves skin health, treats menstruation, indigestion
Kencur	Grate, squeeze, drink regular water; or wash thoroughly, puree, squeeze, mix warm water, or chew directly	Toddler fever cough, overcoming stomach acid
Galangal	Cleanse the skin, rub it with lemongrass, boil until boiling, mix honey and squeeze lime, drink regularly	Lowering uric acid, treating inflammation by rubbing on the skin
Cardamom	Squeeze almost finely, cook until boiling, add brown sugar to taste	For weak immunity and colds
Clove	Mash dry into powder, stick to the cavity using a cotton swab	Cavities
Coriander	Roast, boil with bay leaves, drink regular boiling water	Prevent stroke, lower cholesterol
Chinese Petai	Eaten straight	Treating worms
Nutmeg	Wash thoroughly, mash to powder, brew with warm water	Maintain healthy teeth and mouth, control blood sugar
Shallot	Grate, mix eucalyptus oil, apply on the back and soles of the feet	Overcoming hot steps in children

Medicinal Plants Used	How to Process and Utilize	Efficacy
Garlic	Geprek, boiled with sugar, drunk 3x a day; or chopped raw and drunk raw	Relieves cough, lowers cholesterol and blood pressure, prevents heart disease, overcomes ulcers, stomach cancer, flu
Sweet potato	Wash, peel, consume raw 1 hour before travel	Overcome motion sickness (natural antimo)
Citronella	Cut into small pieces, boil to a boil, add pure honey	Treating stomach acid, body aches and aches and pains
Squirt Squirt	Cut, mash, boil, cool until warm, boiled water compressed or drunk on the child	Lowering the heat in children
Stuttgart	Mash, boil water, drink	Relieves fever
Starfruit Flower	Boil to a boil, strain, drink warm	Treating cough
Cataract Flowers	Take the floret, wash it, soak it for 3 minutes, drop it into the eyes 2-3 drops 3x a day	Treating cataracts and glaucoma
Squirt	Pounded or boiled	Treats peptic ulcers, lowers cholesterol, arthritis
Papaya Leaves	Finely ground, give hot water, strain, drink; or boiled, boiled water is drunk	Reduce menstrual pain, treat typhoid and dengue
Cat Mustache Leaves	Pounded, give hot water, strain, drink; or sun-dried, blender into powder, brew hot water	Reduces menstrual pain, gout, blood pressure, neurological diseases
Runtas Leaf	Pounded, give hot water, strain, drink; or sun-dried, blender, brewed hot water	Reduces menstrual pain, gout, blood pressure, neurological diseases
Flexor	Finely ground, give hot water, strain, add honey; or sun-dried, blender, brewed hot water	Children's immune system, lowering fever, gout, blood pressure, neurological diseases
Lettuce	Finely ground, give hot water, strain, add honey	Children's immunity, lowering fever
Pandan Leaves	Cut into small pieces, boil until boiling, add pure honey	Treating stomach acid
Spare Leaves	Dadap Squeezed or pounded until wilted, stick on the forehead or the feverish part of the body	Relieves fever, treats swelling
Betel Leaves	Rolled up, insert into the nostrils to stop nosebleeds; or boiled, filtered, drinking warm water	Overcome nosebleeds, treat diabetes
Celery	Boiled 5 sticks, strain, drink warm	Treating low back pain, lowering high blood pressure
Leaves of the Embarrassed Princess	Boil 1 handful of leaves, add coconut oil, apply to the head	Overcome hair loss, nourish hair
Cumin Leaves	Boil to a boil, drink the decoction water morning and evening	Dealing with persistent urination (anyang-anyangan)
Bay Leaf	Roast coriander, boil with bay leaves, drink regular boiling water; or wash, puree, cook, strain	Prevent stroke, increase immunity, smooth the urinary tract, prevent kidney stones, overcome arthritis, lower blood

Medicinal Plants Used	How to Process and Utilize	Efficacy
		pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol, uric acid
Soursop Leaves	Wash, boil until boiling, drink regular boiling water	Control high blood pressure, relieve gout pain, rheumatism, treat hemorrhoids, antihypertensive, diabetes
Moringa Leaves	Wash, boil 5-10 minutes, strain, add honey, drink regularly especially after large meals	Overcoming digestive diseases, maintaining heart health, lowering cholesterol, blood sugar, blood pressure, treating inflammation of the stomach, promoting breastfeeding
Sambiloto Leaf	Wash, boil until boiling	Treats respiratory tract, asthma, allergies, accelerates wound healing
Randu Leaf	Wash, boil to a boil, strain, drink	Treating asthma symptoms
Beluntas Leaf	Boil 3-5 leaves, drink the boiling water regularly	Eliminates body odor
Ciplukan Leaves	Wash, boil, filter, drink boiled water	Treating gout
Virgin Palm Leaves	Wash, boil with 3 cups of water until 2 cups remain, strain	Treating diabetes
Red Andong	Boil 5 fresh leaves with 2.5 cups of water until 1 cup remains	Treating wounds
Avocado Leaves	Boil 7 fresh leaves for 10 minutes with 2 cups of water	Lowers high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma
Guava Leaves	Mash young leaves and stone bananas, wash, mash finely	Treating hemorrhoids, diarrhea, abdominal pain or bloating
Bulk Leaves	Wash, boil 3 sheets, filter, drink boiled water	Lowers cholesterol
Tempuyung	Wash, boil, filter, drink	Kidney stones, inflammation of the intestine, hemorrhoids, antihypertensive
São Paulo	Wash, boil, drink	Treat stomach pain, external wounds
Bandotan	Wash the leaves thoroughly, Boil the leaves, then drink the boiled water; It can also be ground and applied to the injured skin area	Treating stomach pain; Treating external wounds
Basil	Boil or brew, drink	Lower blood sugar, high blood pressure
Squirt	Brew or boil, drink	Treat diarrhea, flu
Amateur Amateur		
Cocor Duck	Boil until the water is reduced by half, drink regularly	Overcome cough, cold, fever
Lime	Boil water, squeeze lime, add sugar, drink	Overcome the flu
Carambola	Wash, cut, blend with honey, strain, drink	Lower blood pressure
Cucumber	Wash, cut, blend, filter, drink routine	Lower and control blood pressure
Guava	Blender with water, filter, drink	Treat acute diarrhea
Seed Grapes	Eat 5 fruits and seeds	Take care of heart health
Tomato	Steam until soft, eat 3x	Treat prostate and appendicitis cancer

Medicinal Plants Used	How to Process and Utilize	Efficacy
Dragon Fruit	Chewed and eaten	Treat Heart, Constipation, Prevent Cancer
Apple	Eat with seeds, chew until crushed	Reduce inflammation and swelling
Banana	Eat when spots appear	Prevent tumors and cancer
Ajwa Dates	Eat 3 seeds a day	Reduce pain during childbirth, help give birth normally
Betel nut	Roast betel nut	Powerful medicine, increase stamina
Papaya Rubber	Mix 1/2 tbsp sap with sprites, drink	Treat tonsillitis
Noni Fruit	Cut, boil, drink	Lower the risk of cancer, take care of the heart, relieve joint pain, lower blood sugar
Tamarind	Wash, brew with hot water, add sugar, drink	Treat cough, strep throat, deep heat
Old Coconut Water	Drink directly, avoid air contact	Prevent and overcome heart disease
Benalu Tea	Boil 7 sheets, drink 3x a day	Cures cancer (including breasts)
For the sake of it,	Wash, boil, drink regularly	Anti-inflammatory, treats rheumatism and kidney pain
Seccang Wood	Boil, drink	Relieve colds, flu, coughs, increase immunity
Young Coconut	Drink fresh coconut water with honey	Treat fever, typhoid, diarrhea
Beluluk (Will Coconut/Small Coconut)	Boil with 2 glasses of water, drink	Overcome diabetes
Amateur Amateur	Boil with 5 glasses, strain, drink	Treat diabetes, cough, sore throat
Liquorice	Boil or brew, drink	Treat stomach, cough, ease breathing, take care of the skin
Temulawak	Cut, dry, blend, brew, drink	Treat gout, blood pressure, nerves, ulcers, take care of the liver, antioxidants
Key Encounters	Boil, drink	Prevent cavities, overcome dry cough

Source: Processed Personal Data (2025)

Based on data, this study revealed that the people of South Brebes use around 73 types of traditional medicinal plants for various health purposes. Each plant has a distinctive way of processing and utilization according to the desired properties. Some of the most popular and frequently used plants include Ginger, Turmeric, Kencur, Galangal, and Meniran. For example, ginger is usually crushed until almost smooth and then boiled with brown sugar to increase immunity and overcome colds. Turmeric is boiled with various additives such as honey, lemon, and coconut oil, which effectively relieve joint pain and improve skin health. While kencur is usually grated and the juice is drunk to overcome cough and reduce stomach acid.

The way this medicinal plant is processed varies, ranging from boiled, brewed, ground, to eaten directly. Plant decoction is a very common method because it is easy to do and effective in extracting active substances from plants. For example, bay leaves and coriander are roasted and boiled to lower cholesterol and prevent stroke, while meniran leaves are boiled and drunk to treat stomach pain and external wounds.

Some plants are also used topically, for example bandotan leaves that are pounded and applied to external wounds or used as a decoction drink to treat stomach pain. Likewise, cloves are crushed and attached to cavities to reduce pain. Other plants, such as basil and lemongrass,

are used to lower blood sugar and treat stomach acid, while cataract flowers are used to treat eye disorders such as cataracts and glaucoma through soaked flower drops. In addition to leaf and rhizome plants, various fruits are also used. For example, lime is boiled and drunk to overcome the flu, dragon fruit is chewed for heart health and cancer prevention, and Ajwa dates are routinely consumed to reduce pain during childbirth.

The use of medicinal plants in South Brebes reflects the wealth of in-depth local knowledge about the benefits of various plants that grow in the surrounding environment. The local community adapts the way of processing medicinal plants according to the type of disease and health conditions to be treated, using traditional methods that are simple but proven to be efficacious. This medicinal plant is generally used to treat various health problems ranging from mild illnesses to chronic conditions, such as stomach pain, flu, fever, arthritis, diabetes, high blood pressure, and skin disorders. In addition, these plants are also used to increase immunity and as an external medicine, showing the flexibility of their use in daily life.

Ethnomedicine plays an important role in preserving traditional knowledge that has been passed down orally from generation to generation. This makes documentation of this knowledge very important, so that it does not disappear over time (Kristiyanto et al., 2020). Apart from being a cultural heritage, information about the use of medicinal plants can also be the basis for the development of local-based herbal medicines through scientific research. Laboratory studies, the effectiveness of medicinal plants can be ascertained, the active compounds contained can be identified, and the safe dosage for humans can be precisely determined.

Then, the development and utilization of local medicinal plants has a positive impact on the welfare of the community. Because, by utilizing existing natural resources, South Brebes residents can reduce their dependence on chemical drugs which usually have high prices (Hazin et al., 2023). In addition, new economic opportunities are also opened through the cultivation and processing of medicinal plants into products such as herbal medicine or herbal extracts that have selling value. Thus, ethnomedicine not only plays a role in the health sector but also contributes to community empowerment and sustainable development at the local level.

## CONCLUSION

The communities in South Brebes—particularly in Bumiayu, Tonjong, Paguyangan, and Benda Districts—actively preserve the tradition of using 73 plant species for treating health issues, ranging from mild ailments (colds, fever, indigestion) to chronic conditions (hypertension, diabetes, cancer). Leaves are the most utilized plant part, followed by fruits, rhizomes, seeds, and bulbs, with additional applications in body care such as menstrual support, vitality enhancement, skin health, and immunity boosting. This generational practice, rooted in local wisdom, underscores the cultural and ecological value placed on biodiversity. To harness this potential, future research should focus on phytochemical validation, sustainable cultivation strategies, and socio-economic studies to integrate traditional knowledge into modern healthcare systems while ensuring community empowerment and biodiversity conservation.

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