



A Survey of Indigenous Medicinal Knowledge and Gynaecological Practice in South Sudan,

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Abstract

Indigenous knowledge systems are a key component of primary healthcare in South Sudan, especially concerning maternal and gynaecological health. Systematic documentation of specific practices, plant-based remedies, and the roles of traditional practitioners within the post-conflict setting remains limited. This survey aimed to systematically document and analyse indigenous medicinal knowledge and gynaecological practices in South Sudan. Its objectives were to catalogue medicinal plants used, understand the roles of traditional practitioners, and identify the main conditions addressed. A cross-sectional survey was conducted in six states. Data were collected through structured and semi-structured interviews with 347 key informants, including traditional birth attendants, herbalists, and community elders, using purposive and snowball sampling. Thematic analysis was applied to qualitative data, with descriptive statistics for quantitative findings. The study documented 89 plant species from 43 families used to treat 21 gynaecological conditions. Postpartum haemorrhage and infertility were the most frequently cited conditions for herbal intervention. Over 80% of respondents indicated that community members typically consult traditional practitioners before seeking facility-based care, primarily due to perceived accessibility and cultural congruence. Indigenous gynaecological knowledge remains a deeply integrated, first-line healthcare resource in South Sudan. The findings illustrate a dual healthcare system where traditional and allopathic medicine operate in parallel, often without formal linkage. Collaborative dialogue between traditional practitioners and the formal health sector is needed. Future research should prioritise pharmacological validation of the most cited remedies. Integration programmes should consider training and recognising traditional birth attendants to strengthen referral pathways and maternal health outcomes. Traditional medicine, medicinal plants, maternal health, traditional birth attendants, gynaecology, South Sudan, indigenous knowledge. This study

provides a systematic catalogue of indigenous gynaecological knowledge and practices in South Sudan, offering evidence to inform policies for integrating traditional and allopathic healthcare systems.

Keywords: *Indigenous knowledge, maternal health, ethnobotany, Sub-Saharan Africa, gynaecological disorders, survey research, traditional medicine*

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