



# A Survey of Indigenous Medicinal Knowledge and Gynaecological Practice in Botswana,

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## Abstract

Indigenous knowledge systems are a significant component of healthcare in many African communities, including Botswana. In gynaecological practice, traditional medicine is commonly utilised, but comprehensive data on its contemporary application, the characteristics of the knowledge, and its relationship with formal healthcare are scarce. This study aimed to systematically document and analyse the scope of indigenous medicinal knowledge applied to gynaecological practice in Botswana. Its specific objectives were to identify commonly used medicinal plants and practices, to understand the profiles of knowledge holders, and to assess perceived efficacy and safety. A cross-sectional survey was conducted across multiple districts in Botswana. A structured questionnaire was administered through face-to-face interviews with purposively sampled traditional health practitioners, including herbalists and birth attendants. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis for qualitative responses. The survey revealed a robust, gendered system of knowledge, with over 80% of practitioners being women. A predominant theme was the use of specific plant decoctions for managing menstrual disorders, postpartum recovery, and fertility issues. However, a significant proportion of practitioners reported a decline in the intergenerational transmission of this specialised knowledge. Indigenous gynaecological knowledge in Botswana remains a vital, though potentially vulnerable, component of community healthcare. Its practice is extensive and gendered, addressing a range of women's health conditions. Further pharmacological research on the identified medicinal plants is warranted. Initiatives to document and preserve this knowledge ethically, alongside fostering structured dialogue between traditional and biomedical practitioners, should be prioritised by health policymakers. Indigenous knowledge, traditional medicine, gynaecology, medicinal plants, Botswana, traditional health practitioners This survey provides a systematic, contemporary overview of indigenous gynaecological knowledge and practice in Botswana, establishing a foundation for future research and integrative health policy dialogue.

**Keywords:** *Traditional medicine, Gynaecology, Indigenous knowledge systems, Sub-Saharan Africa, Survey research, Botswana, Healthcare utilisation*





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