



Research Article

CULTURE AND TRADITIONAL MEDICINE PRACTICE AMONG THE IDOMA PEOPLE OF OTUKPO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA OF BENUE STATE, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

The Idoma people are indigenous to the middle belt region in North Central Nigeria and they possess a rich history and tradition of using medicinal plants in the management of various ailments. Oral transmission is the primary method by which history is passed from one generation to another. The present study involved an ethnomedical survey done with the aid of questionnaires and it covered Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State which is the headquarters of the Idoma speaking areas of the State. The information obtained showed that over a hundred species of plants from several families were identified and these were being used to manage a wide range of ailments from dysentery and gonorrhoea to asthma and pneumonia. The scientific names and the part of the plant used together with their mode of preparation and dosage regimen were also reported. The importance of this kind of documentation was also discussed as it will help to preserve the rich cultural heritage of the tribe and could also serve as a basis for further research on the documented plants and aid in global bio-conservation efforts.

Key Words: Ethno-medicine, Idoma, Nigeria, Extracts, Ailments.

INTRODUCTION

Some of the most viable tools for identifying new medicinal plants and also placing new emphasis on those earlier reported for bioactive constituents involve the use of ethnobotanical studies^{1,2,3}. The depletion of natural resources is progressing at an alarming rate yet, only a little is known about the flora present in the environment. If nothing is done about the documentation of this useful wealth of biological knowledge, a time may come that the information may be lost⁴.

One of such geographical locations that require attention is the Idoma speaking areas of Benue State, North-Central Nigeria. Otukpo is regarded as the cultural and traditional headquarters of the Idoma nation. Despite the availability of orthodox medicines, the indigenous people of the area still maintain a strong belief that the traditional medicine practices which are a huge part of the culture handed over to them by their forefathers are very effective and can therefore not be discarded due to the availability of orthodox medicines. It has been reported that about 60% of the people of this area depend on plants for the management of ailments⁵.

The present study is therefore aimed at reporting the Idoma cultural and traditional medicine practices and also to document

the use of medicinal plants in the treatment of a number of ailments by the people of this tribe.

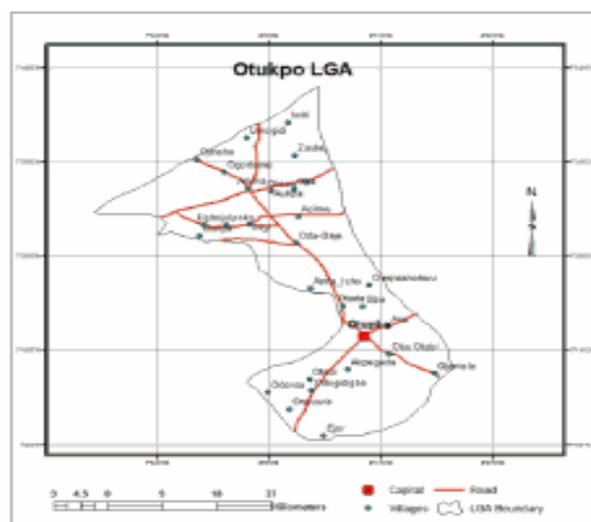


Figure 1: Map of Benue State showing the location of the Idoma speaking local government areas

MATERIALS AND METHODS

A previously reported method was adopted for the study⁴. Information on the plants was gathered via oral interview of Idoma people using a structured questionnaire with Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State as the case study location. Older individuals, local medicine men, herbalists and others who claim to have effective knowledge on the culture, norms and prescriptions were consulted. Samples of the plant materials were obtained in conjunction with the practitioners and a collection of such plants used in medical practice were made. Pictures of the plants collected were also taken by means

of a camera. The plant samples were then taken to the Forestry and Wildlife Department of University of Agriculture, Makurdi, Nigeria for appropriate identification, authentication and voucher numbers were assigned to them. Throughout the interviews, local plant names, useful plant parts, method of preparation, application mode, dosage and duration of treatment were recorded. Also, at the herbal practitioner level, information was gathered on their duration of practice, source of knowledge, the extent of patronage and level of success in curing the ailments all of which were noted as part of effort to ensure credibility of the study. This study lasted for about 5 years (2011-2016).

RESULTS

Medicinal Plants

The information generated from the study is presented below in table 1.

Table 1: Description of various medicinal plant species used by the Idoma people in Benue State, Nigeria

S/no	Scientific name	Common names	Idoma name	Part(s) used	Uses	Voucher numbers
1	<i>Treculici africana</i> (Moraceae)	African bread fruit	Abalewu	Fruits, bark	Edible, medicinal	00106
2	<i>Entada africana</i> (Fabaceae)	Twatsa	Ail a	Bark	fertilizer for growing yams and other plants.	00103
3	<i>Waltheria indica</i> (Malvaceae)	Sleepy morning	Aka nehe	Leaves	Used to make fine rafter	00100
4	<i>Strychnos Spinosa</i> (Loganiaceae)	Green monkey orange	Ikpankele	Leaves, fruit	The leaf is boiled and the extract used to clean wounds, fruit is edible,	00097
5	<i>Elaeis guineensis</i> Jacq (Palmae)	Palm kernel fruit	Ikpali	Fruit, leaves	Used as laxative, anticonvulsant	00041
6	<i>Combretum nigricans</i> (Combretaceae)		Alo	Leaves, bark	Leaves used to cure dysentery, fever, bark used for headache	00105
7	<i>Ocimum gratissimum</i> Linn. (Lamiaceae)	African basil	Anyebci	Leaves	Leaves for stomach pain and dysentery	00107
8	<i>Hura crepitans</i> (Euphorbiaceae)	Sandbox tree	Awanda	Bark(sap)	Sap used for healing wounds	00102
9	<i>Azadirachta indica</i> (Meliaceae)	Neem tree	Dogon yaro/ neem	Leaves, fruit, bark	Leaves for fever, 'asaola' and to preserve beans as insecticide. Fruit is used to make oil for soap making and as insecticide.	00104
10	<i>Solanum americanum</i> Swartz. (Solnaceae)	American nightshade	Ibe	Leaf, bark (stem)	Leaf decoction used with <i>Jatropha curca</i> for children's convulsions. Leaf and stem are ground together for "acho" whitlow. Mix with <i>Pterocarpus erinaceus</i> and <i>Ocimum gratissimum</i> for fracture and dislocation. Leaf used for cough treatment.	00101
11	<i>Bridelia ferruginea</i> Benth. (Euphorbiaceae)	Kirmi (hausa)	Ede	Root, stem, bark	Root and stem used for dysentery. Bark extract used as a purgative	00061
12	<i>Napoleona vogelii</i> (Lecythidaceae)	Akpako	Enemokplich i	Fruit, bark, root, leaves	Root for concoction, leaves for dysentery and kwashiorkor	00043
13	<i>Securidaca longipedunculata</i> (Polygalaceae)	Violet tree	Ichahoko	Roots	Roots used for treating scorpion sting and snake bites.	00108
14	<i>Schwenkia americana</i> (Solcinciceae)		Ikpokwu gulwoyoye	Leaves	Boil leaves for whooping cough, leaves for whitlow by grinding and applying.	00137
15	<i>Cola nitida</i> (Malvaceae)	Goro (hausa)	Enme	Fruit	Fruit is edible	00121
16	<i>Cleistopholis patens</i> (Annonaceae)	Salt and oil tree	Obio	Roots, barks	Root and bark for treating wounds. Bark is used when blood does not come out after birth.	00116
17	<i>Pilostigma thonningii</i> (Schum) Milne-Redhead (Caesalpinaceae)	Camelfoot tree	Obankpanya	Leaves, root	Leaves used as medicine for dysentery and cough	00025
18	<i>Jatropha curca</i> Linn. (Euphorbiaceae)	Barbados nut	Ochigbede	Leaves, bark (sap)	Boil leaves for catarrh, sap for healing wounds and bleeding gums in children and ring worms.	00111

19	<i>Ricinus communis</i> (Euphorbiaceae)	Castor oil plant	Ochigbooh/ochiglo	Leaves, fruit	Leaf for scorpion sting; fruit used as contraceptive, fruit for industrial oil	00115
20	<i>Cnetis ferruginea</i> (Connaraceae)	Omu aja (yoruba)	Ocheja/ochitende	Fruit, root, leaves and stem	Root can be ground and rubbed at point of snake bite, fruit edible, decoction from leaf is used as an antiemetic	00129
21	<i>Quassia undulate</i> (Sinaroubaceae)	Quassia plant	Odonbra	Leaves, fruit	Fruit is edible, leaf used as medicine for vomiting. Grated bark is applied to burns and bleeding wounds (antimicrobial)	00125
22	<i>Trema orientalis</i> (Celtidaceae)	Pigeon wood plant	Ofofo	Leaf, bark (sap)	Leaf boiled and inhaled for fever	00127
23	<i>Newbouldia leavis</i> (P. Beauv.) seeman ex Bureau (Bignoniaceae)	African border tree	Ogblich	Leaves, root, bark	Boil leaves and inhale to treat fever, bark for treating wounds, root decoction for fever	00040
24	<i>Indigofera pulchra</i> (Fabaceae)		Ogwebeklo	Roots, leaves, bark and fruit	Boil leaves, stem, flower and fruit and drink for anaemic states. Fruit used to treat dysentery. Bark decoction used for treating diarrhea. Liquid obtained from powdered bark and roots is mixed with water is used as purgative.	00130
25	<i>Syzygium guineense</i> (Myrtaceae)	Snake bean tree	Onmaigwu	Bark		00008
26	<i>Cissus populnea</i> (Vitaceae)		Okoho	Leaves, fruit, bark	Leaves also medicinal for women in labor, fruit is used to prepare soup	
27	<i>Lophira lanceolata</i> Van Tiegh ex Keay. (Ochnaceae)	Dwarfed iron wood	Okopi	Leaves, bark	Leaves used for stomach pain and to control cough.	00013
28	<i>Anthonia macrophylla</i> (Fabaceae)	African rosewood	Enenayium	Fruit, bark	Used as a fertilizer tree and the fruit is edible	00117
29	<i>Cussonia barteri</i> Seem (Araliaceae)	Cabbage tree	Ochecho	Leaf, bark	Leaf is boil and used to bathe women after delivery.	00126
30	<i>Miragyna inermis</i> (Wild) O. Ktze (Rubiaceae)	False abura	Ochuche	Leaves, bark	Leaves are boiled and drank for hernia and fever. Leaves and bark used to treat fractures.	00134
31	<i>Detarium microcarpum</i> (Fabaceae)	Tallow tree	Akplatci	Seed, leaves	Leaves are medicinal and seeds are edible.	00125
32	<i>Ficus sp.</i> Vahl (Moraceae)	Fig tree	Ogapa	Leaves, bark	Leaf for fever	00110
33	<i>Lonchocarpus laxiflorus</i> (Fabaceae)	Folali tree	Okachi	Leaves, root, bark	Leaves are boiled and given to new born babies to strengthen them, roots used for pregnant women.	00123
34	<i>Pentaclethra macrophylla</i> (leguminosae)	Oil bean tree	Akpaka	Seed, bark, root,	Bark is boil for hernia. Root, pound the bark to extract the water for hernia; mould the chaff, grind and add to <i>burukutu</i> for waist and stomach pain	00054
35	<i>Sena siamea</i> (Fabaceae)	Cassod tree	Obigbodo	Leaf, root	Leaf decoction is used as bitters against malaria. Root decoction in water (12 to 24 hours until the water changes color) drank to bring down body temperature (antipyrexia)	00015
36	<i>Prosopis africana</i> (Guill & Perr.) Benth. (Fabaceae)	Pau carvao	Okpehe	Seeds, bark	Methanol extract of bark prevents bleeding in wound. Seeds used for soup "idoma magi"	00132
37	<i>Sena spectabilis</i> (Fabaceae)	Spectacular cassia	Okpehelcwu	Root, leaf	Root decoction taken for ulcer, malaria, typhoid, filariasis and erectile dysfunction in men. Leaf is also combined with <i>Uakpa heudelotii</i> , leaf decoction for "iba", hallucinations	00136
38	<i>Uakpaka heudelotii</i>		Olo	Fruit, bark	Fruit is edible	00112
39	<i>Lecaniodiscus cupanioides</i> (Sapindaceae)		Okpu	Leaves, fruit	Leaves are used for fever, fruit is edible	
40	<i>Vitellcira paradoxa</i> (Sapotaceae)	Shea tree	Okume	Leaves, fruit, bark	Leaf decoction taken for whooping cough and general pain. The stem is used for straightening dislocation. Fruit oil for joint pain and dislocation (topical application). Leaves are ground applied for dislocation and swelling if oil not available	00109
41	<i>Terminalia schimperiana</i> (Combretaceae)		Okwo	Leaves, root, bark, twigs	Decoction of Leaves for cough, very bitter. Root medicine (decoction) for stomach pain when taken. Twigs may be chewed to promote oral hygiene	00113
42	<i>Sterculia setigera</i> Del. (Sterculiaceae)	Karaya gum tree	Ompla	Leaf, bark	Leaf for "akpa catarrh, in infants:	00118

43	<i>Anchomanes difformis</i> (Araceae)		Ondulu	Root	Tuberous root is used for dysentery (that is when the decoction is taken)	00109
44	<i>Brysocarpus coccineus</i> Schum & Thonn. (Connoraceae)		Anyamkpechi	Leaves	The leaves are used for dislocation and for treating children's cough. Crush leaves in water and drink for gonorrhoea	00114
45	<i>Caesalpinia bonduc</i> (Fabaceae)	Gray nicker tree	Ogoli	Leaves, seeds	The Leaves can be boiled and applied for toothache, seeds used for children's rash on bottom.	00124
46	<i>Morinda lucida</i> Benth. (Rubiaceae)	Brimstone tree	Ongele	Root, bark, leaves	Decoction of leaves very bitter, mixed with that of <i>Newbouldia leavis</i> leaves for fever and "onyakwu", convulsion in children and for catarrh, bark for children's cough. Root very bitter used for treating fever	00119
47	<i>Senna alata</i> (Fabaceae)	Candle bush	Onipi k'eibo	Leaves, stem, seed	Leaves to cure eczema and ringworm	00120
48	<i>Combretum racemosum</i> (Combretaceae)	Bush willow	Opa	Leaves, roots	Grind Leaves and apply to treat wounds; also to treat chronic dysentery in children (leaf decoction). Roots may be boiled and drank for gonorrhoea	00128
49	<i>Khaya senegalensis</i> (Meliaceae)	African mahogany	Opi	Seed, bark	Seed oily extract used to treat permanent scar that is swollen to reduce the swelling	00052
50	<i>Anogeissus leiocarpus</i> (Combretaceae)	Bambara tree	Otla	Leaves, bark	Leaves boil for hernia when taken. Remove bark and boil for stomach pain, typhoid and cough. Leaves for conjunctivitis, boil and allow the steam to come to the eye	00056
51	<i>Annona senegalensis</i> Pers. (Annonaceae)	African custard-apple tree	Okpokpo	Root, leaf, fruit	Root and leaf mixed for snake bite and for children to build up their strength, also for cough. Root mixed with <i>Sarcocephalus latifolius</i> for kwashiorkor; peel and prepare with yam porridge for children. Combine fruit with <i>Uvaria chamae</i> against poison (antidote) and also for stomach pain when taken	00133
52	<i>Uvaria chamae</i> P.Beauv. (Annonaceae)	Finger root tree	Egbakeitu	Root, leaf	Root and leaf for stomach pain when decoction is taken, it can also be taken as purgative. Root for chewing stick to aid digestion. Leaf to cure case of poison and snake bite when decoction is taken	00135
53	<i>Sarcocephalus latifolius</i> (Rubiaceae)	African peach tree	Oya	Leaf, root	Decoction of leaves for bee-sting to prevent swelling when taken (for measles in igede). Root decoction for stomach pain. Leaves, roast into ash for "ogbongbom", swelling boils with water inside	00152
54	<i>Myrianthus serratus</i> (Moraceae)		Uweje	Leaf, fruit	Leaf used for fever, and to tie moi-moi. Fruit is used as bait for fish	00139
55	<i>Diospyros mespiliformis</i> (Ebenaceae)	Jackalberry plant	Unyiloko	Bark, leaf	Chewing stick, firewood	00059
56	<i>Dialium guineense</i> (Fabaceae)	Velvet tamarind	Umeka	Fruit, leaves, bark	Fruit is edible and marketable, leaves for cough also boil for new-born baby	00174
57	<i>Spathodea campanulata</i> (Bignoniaceae)	Fountain tree (African tulip tree)	Unogwu	Leaves, roots, bark	Leaves decoction is taken for gonorrhoea; medicine for swollen body in children. Roots for curing cuts and sores	00163
58	<i>Albizia zygia</i> (Fabaceae)		Ayamo	Bark	Extract of the bark can be applied on the skin for "ogbongbom", swelling boils with water inside	00013
59	<i>Melicia excelsa</i> (Moraceae)	Iroko tree	Uloko	Leaf, root, bark (sap)	Leaf, the white liquid is used for ear medicine. Root decoction taken for stomach pain	00147
60	<i>Azelia Africana</i> Sm. (Caesalpiniaceae)		Ukpo	Leaf, seed	Leaves serve as medicine for "akpa" Catarrh in children	00157
61	<i>Cochlospermum tinctorium</i> (Cochlospermaceae)		Ukpatafolo	Bark, root	Root medicine for "Ajenu" convulsion. Barks used to make ropes, the rope is used for waist pain, "ohi"	00167
62	<i>Gardenia aqualla</i> (Rubiaceae)		Ujonwu	Leaves, bark	Leaves for "ujonuto" shingles. Leaf boiled for cough and taken, for blood tonic (haematinic).	00177
63	<i>Acacia macrothysa</i> (Fabaceae)		Uje onyila	Bark (sap)	Sap is applied as medicine for whitlow	00143
64	<i>Acacia senegal</i> (Fabaceae)	Gum acacia tree	Uje uwo	Bark, leaves	Leaf medicinal, bark produces large quantity of sap	00153
65	<i>Cola gigantean</i> Del. (Sterculiaceae)	Kolanut	Ugo	Fruit, bark	Monkeys like to climb and eat the fruit. Wood for drums and carving	00162
66	<i>Sena singueana</i> (Fabaceae)	Wild cassia plant	Ugbono	Root, bark	Roots for filariasis; peel, put inside a bottle, add "hot" drink, leave for some time then drink- as a purgative. Also medicine for headache, "ukpolo"	00172

67	<i>Ficus sur</i> (Moraceae)	Fig tree	Ugbankolo	Leaves, root, bark, fruit	Leaves boiled for new born baby to drink; also for soup. Root and bark medicinal, sap heals wounds. Some people eat the fruit called "ugbleku"	00170
68	<i>Fluggea virosa</i> (Phyllanthaceae)	Bush weed plant	Uganana	Leaves, bark	Leaves used in combination with <i>Phyllanthus muellerianus</i> leaves, to treat children's rashes	00140
69	<i>Lonchocarpus cyanescens</i> (Fabaceae)	Indigo vine plant	Ufu	Leaves, root, stem	Leaf and root medicine for "ukpomo" (minor hernia) and used in women as a fertility aid.	00027
70	<i>Vitex doniana</i> Sweet. (Verbenaceae)	Wild African black plum	Udu	Leaves, root, bark, fruit	Leaves decoction taken for stomach pain, root also for stomach pain. The bark may be soaked in cold water until the color changes, then drink. Fruit edible and for ink	00048
71	<i>Vitex sp.</i> Sweet. (Verbenaceae)	Wild African black plum	Endewo	Root, leaves	Root and leaves, boil and drink for children's kwashiorkor, also for pile (<i>ofu</i>). Root decoction for epilepsy (<i>ojigbano</i>) - wash root and mix with alligator pepper or ginger, boil, allow the water to cool and give to the patient to drink.	00160
72	<i>Myrianthus arboreus</i> (Moraceae)	Giant yellow mulberry	Ububu	Fruit, leaves	Fruit very important for soup	00151
73	<i>Chrysophyllum albidum</i> (Sapotaceae)	White star apple	Ububi	Fruit, bark	Fruit very palatable and marketable and scarce; part of the fruit can be used as chewing gum	00145
74	<i>Crossopteryx febrifuga</i> (Rubiaceae)	Ordeal tree	Oyampele	Fruit, bark	Fruit for children's gum troubles	00175
75	<i>Gossypium barbadense</i> Linn. (Malvaceae)	Pima cotton tree	Owu	Leaves, seed	Leaves for dysentery. Source of cotton wool. Seed for livestock feeding and oil	00155
76	<i>Harungana madagascariensis</i> (Hypericaceae)	Orange-milk tree	Fiofio	Leaves, bark	Leaves serves as fertilizer, wood for roofing, tree used in agroforestry to fix nitrogen	00016
77	<i>Alchornea latifolia</i> (Euphorbiaceae)	Achiotillo plant	Owi	Leaves, bark	Leaves can be boiled for whitlow (<i>ekpo</i>) and boils (<i>aplo</i>). Stick for fishing net.	00165
78	<i>Markhamia tomentosa</i> (Bignoniaceae)		Oteh	Leaves, fruit, bark	Boil leaves and inhale for children's catarrh. Birds feed on the fruits	00047
79	<i>Bambusa vulgaris</i> Linn. (Poaceae)	Bamboo plant	Otacho	Leaves, bark, root	Decoction of leaves can help clear dizziness when taken	00146
80	<i>Irvingia gabonensis</i> (O Rorke) Baill. (Irvingiaceae)	Wild mango tree	Ankpele	Leaves, bark, fruit	Boil leaves for filariasis when taken, fruit pulp eatable	00067
81	<i>Pterocarpus erinaceus</i> (Fabaceae)	Muninga barwood	Ache	Leaves, bark, fruit	Leaves, boil and apply the water to a serious wound	00010
82	<i>Erythrina senegalensis</i> d.c (Papilionidae)	Coral tree	Acheche	Leaves, bark	Boil leaves and inhale for fever. Wood for firewood	00156
83	<i>Markhamia lutea</i> (Bignoniaceae)	Markhamia (siala) tree	Achupu	Leaves, root, bark	Leaves for fever and stomach pain when decoction is taken. Root decoction for fever and stomach pain. Bark can serve same and prepare with porridge as laxative and for cough. Prepare with <i>ilewa</i> grass for "anigba", asthma or pneumonia in children	00166
84	<i>Pterocarpus laxiflorus</i> (Fabaceae)		Agama	Leaves, bark	Boil leaves for stomach pain when taken, wood used constructing hoe handle.	00176
85	<i>Daniella oliverii</i> (Rolfe) Hatch et Dalz. (Caesalpinaceae)		Agba	Bark, leaves, root	Leaves used for convulsion. Boil the bark for stomach pain. Root combine with <i>Uvaria chamae</i> and used for epilepsy when taken	00164
86	<i>Croton lobatus</i> (Euphorbiaceae)		Agenyi	Leaf	Boil the leaves and combine with <i>Citrus aurantifolia</i> (lime orange) leaf for children's stomach pain, diarrhea, and malnutrition when taken. Medicine for dysentery	00154
87	<i>Vitex chrysocarpa</i> Sweet. (Verbenaceae)		Ichimichi	Leaves, bark, root	Root decoction used to cure poison and snake bite when taken. Boil the leaves for toothache. Bark to cure hernia	00144
88	<i>Paulinia pinnata</i> (Sapindaceae)		Ikwubianwu	Leaves, bark	Leaves for dislocation, grind the leaves and apply to the affected place. Can be used to treat painful menstruation or urination.	00171
89	<i>Vangueriopsis nigerica</i> (Rubiaceae)		Iyangede	Leaves, root	Leaves mixed with <i>Cissus populnea</i> for easy delivery. Root for headache: cut the root, leave it in water for some time, drink the water	00161

90	<i>Kigelia Africana</i> (Lam) Benth (Bignoniaceae)	Sausage tree	Ijele	Leaves, bark, fruit	Leaves decoction used for fibroid and enlargement of breasts. Leaves also for waist pain, fever, stomach pain and loss of appetite.	00142
91	<i>Boerhavia diffusa</i> (Nyctaginaceae)	Tar vine tree	Ematu	leaves, root, seeds	Leaf and root decoctions for stomach pain, waist pain during pregnancy and for clearing a woman's womb (abortion). Medicine for children's weakness	00141
92	<i>Hymenocardia acidca</i> (Euphorbiaceae)	Large-red heart tree	Enache	leaf, stem	Boil the leaves and mix with <i>pap (akamu)</i> for dysentery. Leaf decoction for gonorrhoea, also for fibroids: mix with <i>Stereospermum kuthianum</i> and massage the stomach. Leaves decoction also for cough, children's fever and catarrh. For children's pneumonia: boil the leaves and bathe in water. Leaves may be combined with <i>aka, akoko, ikalaga</i> , boiled for someone having difficulty urinating. Also to cure bed wetting.	00026
93	<i>Ficus umbellate</i> Blume. (Moraceae)	Fig tree	Ebune	Leaf, stem	Stick for dislocation. Leaf medicine for "Akpiti", internal pain from bone and for headache. Leaf for stomach pain in a woman after birth, boil and drink, bathe; mix with <i>ofu igbengbli</i> for retained placenta.	00169
94	<i>Xylopia aethiopica</i> (Dunal) A. Rich. (Annonaceae)	Ethiopian pepper	Eduna	Leaves, fruit	Leaves for stomach pain. Boil the leaves and bathe with the water for body rash	00159
95	<i>Tabernaemontana pachysiphon</i> (Apocynaceae)	Milkwood plant	Egbi	Bark	Bark can be cut and dried in the sun, then boiled for acute fever when inhaled.	00150
96	<i>Parkia biglobosa</i> (Jacq) Benth (Fabaceae)	Nere tree	Eklinyi	Root, leaves, seed	Root for stomach pain. Good for fertilizing the soil.	00138
97	<i>Clappertonia ficifolia</i> (Malvaceae)	Bolo bolo	Emakele	Stem, bark, leaves	Leaves may be used to treat whitlow and for children's cough.	00148
98	<i>Maesobotry barteri</i>		Enampiepie	Fruit, leaf	Fruit edible, sweet, very marketable; also used for dysentery.	00149
99	<i>Pycnathus angolensis</i> (Myristicaceae)	African nutmeg plant	Akwa	Bark	Hard wood for building.	00012
100	<i>Pterocarpus osun</i> (Fabaceae)		Ewo	Leaves, bark	Leaves used to cook soup when fresh, and medicinal, wood for furniture.	00020

DISCUSSION

The study was carried out in order to document the different uses of medicinal plants and cultural practices of Idomas in Otukpo Local Government Area of Benue State and to see whether the uses of the plants are fairly consistent over the project area, or if they change from village to village or even among the traditional medical practitioners. Otukpo is the famous settlement of the Idomas. All the respondents were grouped according to their specialties. Each category is recognized and accepted by the communities as knowledgeable and competent to provide health care using natural products as plants. The informants used were the herbalists, healers, spiritualists, hunters, farmers, fisher men, etc. interactions with participants and interviews were done at homes, farms, and/or clinics. Generally, the interview was conducted in Idoma language which is commonly understood and spoken by the inhabitants.

As a rule, some of the responses to questions were probed further for more details but precautions were taken to avoid leading questions and things that could be misinterpreted by the respondents. Some of the participants were visited more than once and were rest assured that the information given would be treated with utmost care and confidentiality and that it would be used only for research purposes. Show –and-tell/semi-structured method and personal interviews involved carrying standard herbarium specimen that shows all the important organs of the plants for easy identification. The fresh samples were occasionally used as well in cases where the villagers had difficulties in identifying the herbarium samples.

Fidelity levels (FL) were determined to identify the usefulness of the plants in the treatment of ailments. The index measures the degree of consensus between informants and their relative importance. The formula used includes $FL(\%) = (N_p/N) \times 100$ where, N_p is the number of informants that claimed uses of each plant for treatment of a particular disease, and N is the number of informants that claimed uses as a medicine to treat any given disease. For ailments like hemorrhoids, epilepsy, worms, abdominal pain, wound, cancer, inflammations, venereal diseases, etc, the fidelity in % were found to be 15, 9, 3, 6, 13, 30, 9, 12, 9 and 10 respectively.

Despite the advent of orthodox medications, traditional medicines still play a major role in meeting the healthcare needs of citizens of developing countries. It is therefore very important to document and preserve indigenous knowledge about the medicinal plants used by different cultures and ethnic groups in order to preserve them for posterity. This is also important because of the old age of the traditional medicine practitioners who may not pass on this information to future generations if it is not properly documented and the present study will go a long way in furthering the attainment of this goal.

CONCLUSION

The rich history of the Idoma people has been unveiled and documented during the study. Oral transmission is the primary method by which history is passed from one generation to another in Idoma land with little or no documentation and this study will aid in keeping records of these cultural practices.

Also, about a hundred plant species from numerous families have been identified and several recipes against different diseases have been reported and documented. Bio-conservation is also advocated in order to preserve them for future use.

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