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PERTINENT KNOWLEDGE OF MEDICINAL PLANTS AS ELUCIDATED THROUGH NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS PUBLICATIONS IN NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Indigenous knowledge of medicinal plants provides a basis for problem solving strategies for communities in Nigeria and Africa as a whole. Over the years, there has been information dissemination of indigenous knowledge of medicinal plant in Nigerian newspapers, though there are other media such as radio, television, books and magazines. The main conveyor of this information is the newspapers. Three (3) major Nigerian national Newspapers, namely, The Nigerian Tribune, the Guardian and the Punch were analyzed and inference made from them. The study spanned a period of thirty six months between January 2007 and December, 2009, inclusive. Newspaper coverage and reportage on medicinal plants were identified and enumerated using descriptive statistics. A total of 1086 newspapers editions were content analyzed. Nigerian Tribune had the highest number of articles 37 (47%), followed by the Guardian with 34 (44%) while the Punch had the least number of articles 7 (9%) in 2007.

KEYWORDS: *Nigerian Newspapers; Medicinal plants; Pertinent knowledge; Content analysis*

Introduction

A newspaper according to Prythech (1995) is a serial publication which is designed to be a primary source of written information on current events connected with public affairs, either local, national and international in scope. It contains abroad range of news on all subjects and activities and is not limited to any subject matter. Okojie (1993), Cheney, Knapp and Czapla (2006) also affirmed that the pivotal value of newspaper as a tool for research cannot be estimated. Igbeka and Ola (2010) opined that newspapers provide up-to-date information on local, state/provincial, national and world issues, therefore they are widely read by people of all ages and walks of life in the community.

Plants have been indispensable sources of both preventive and curative traditional medicine preparations for human beings and livestock. Historical accounts of traditionally used medicinal plants depict that different medicinal plants were in use as early as 5000 to 4000 BC in China, and 1600 BC by Syrians, Babylonians, Hebrews and Egyptians (Dery, et al, 1999). In sub-Saharan Africa, thousands of kilograms of medicinal plants are collected and used by mothers in the home, traditional healers, livestock owners and pastoralists. Medicinal plants and knowledge of their use provide a vital contribution to human and livestock health care needs.

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They have medicinal qualities due to the substance they produce to protect themselves from insect pests and pathogens. Many medicines are extracted from the roots, roots bark and bark of plants. The great richness of the vegetal world can be seen in the many medicinal substances that the plants synthesizes; in range that goes from antibiotics, such as garlic and capuchin to heart-stimulants, such as cactus and foxgloves, as well as sedatives such as poppy and valerian, antirheumatics such as devil's claw (Pamplona-Roger, 2001). Many of these indigenous medicinal plants are used as spices and food plants. They are also sometimes added to foods meant for pregnant and nursing mothers for medicinal purposes (Okwu, 1999, 2001).

Traditional medicine is any ancient and culturally based healthcare practice different from orthodox medicine and it is often orally transmitted by communities from generation to generation. Recent statistics have shown that 75%-90% of the rural population in the world still relies on herbal medicine as their main health care. The long tradition of herbal medicine IK contrasts with the international knowledge system generated by universities, research institutions and private firms. It is the basis for local-level decision making in agriculture, health care, food preparation, education, natural-resource management, and a host of other activities in rural communities (Warren, 1991).

The indigenous knowledge of Africa needs to be codified into print and electronic formats for both audio and video to make it widely accessible through the global information infrastructure (Chisenga, 2002). Newspaper publication started in Nigeria in 1859 and today, there are quite a number of government and privately -owned newspapers in the country varying in frequency and time of publication as well as circulation rate, target audience and achievements. One of the primary functions of the newspaper is to objectively report news situation or events in all fields of human endeavour. Usually, management of the print media assesses the newsworthiness of events and based on the philosophy and interests of the organization, takes the decision on how best to present or showcase news events to achieve maximum effect. Newspapers are important because they carry current information and they keep the readers informed of events and happenings within and outside their immediate environments. They are useful for education, recreation, entertainment and relaxation. They are a rich source of information due to the sheer enormity of information they contain and the frequency of their production (Ola and Ojo, 2006).

Purpose of the Study

This study is designed to identify and analyze medicinal plants that are reported in three Nigerian newspapers. There is the need ascertain the information dissemination trend on IK and practice of traditional medicine as revealed by the selected newspapers in Nigeria.

Methodology

The study content-analyzed three (3) major national news dailies, namely, The Nigerian Tribune, The Guardian and The Punch. This is out of over twenty newspapers published daily in Nigeria. Content-analysis is a practice of measuring and analyzing communication that has taken place, and making inferences from it. The study spanned a period of thirty-six (36) calendar months, (January-December) in three years- 2007-2009. Newspaper coverage and reportage on

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medicinal plants were identified and enumerated using descriptive statistics A total of 1086 newspapers editions were content analyzed.

Results

Table1: Distribution of articles on medicinal plant published in the newspapers from January to December 2007

Newspapers	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	TOTAL
The Guardian	3	-	5	4	1	5	1	6	3	2	-	4	34
Punch	-	-	-	-	-	1	4	1	-	1	-	1	7
Nigerian Tribune	1	-	-	5	1	4	1	4	3	2	8	9	37
TOTAL	**4**	**-**	**5**	**9**	**2**	**10**	**6**	**11**	**6**	**5**	**8**	**14**	**78**

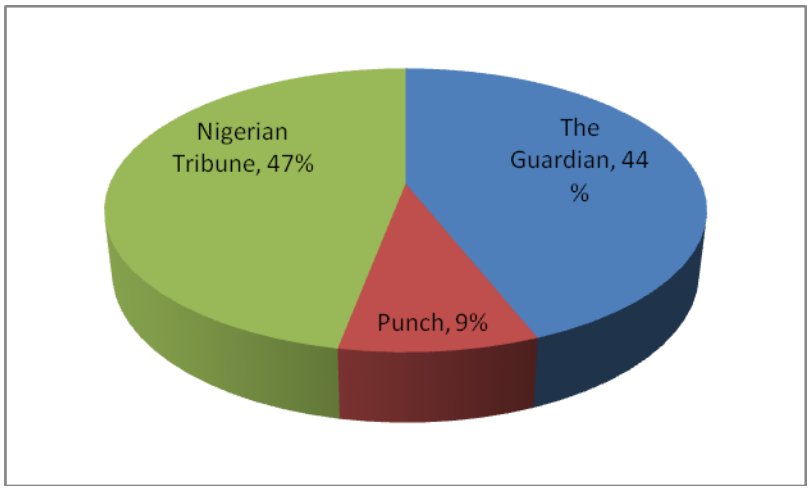

Fig.1 Distribution of articles on medicinal plant by three newspapers in Nigeria in 2007

Table2: Distribution of articles on medicinal plant published in the newspapers from January to December 2008

Newspapers	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
The Guardian	10	3	4	3	4	5	2	-	-	-	-	2	33
Punch	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		1
Nigerian Tribune	11	3	9	5	10	6	7	-	-	1	-	6	58
TOTAL	**21**	**7**	**13**	**9**	**14**	**11**	**9**	**-**	**-**	**1**	**-**	**8**	**92**

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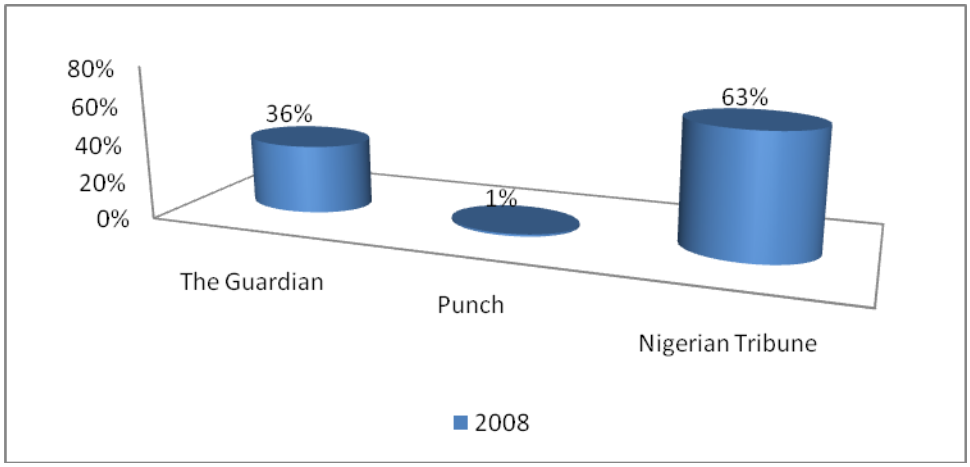

Fig. 2 Percentage distribution of articles on medicinal plant by three Newspapers in Nigeria in 2008

Table3: Distribution of articles on medicinal plant published in three Newspapers from January to December 2009

Newspapers	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May	June	July	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Total
The Guardian	-	2	3	2	3	1	3	1	-	1	2	1	19
Punch	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-		1
Nigerian Tribune	3	2	4	1	7	1	1	1	-	1	-	3	24
TOTAL	**3**	**4**	**7**	**3**	**10**	**2**	**4**	**2**	**-**	**3**	**2**	**4**	**44**

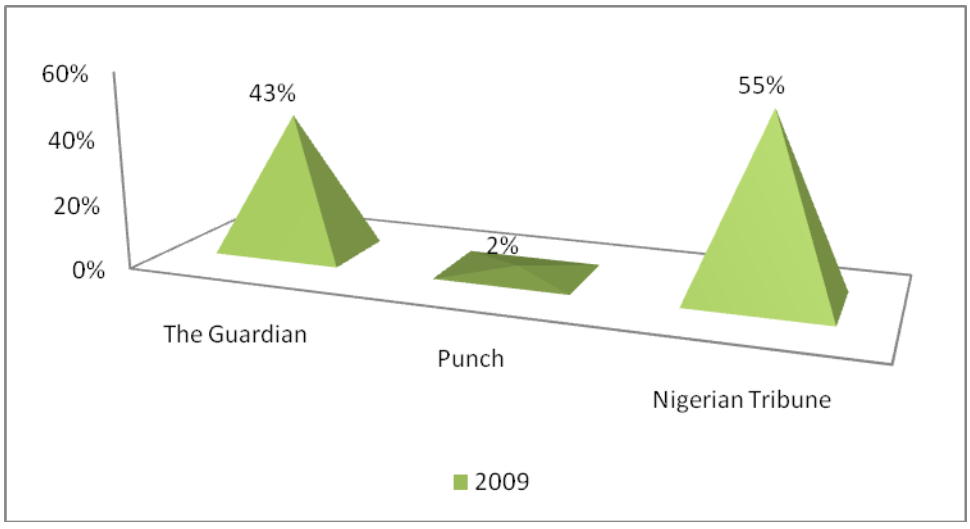

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Fig. 3 Percentage distribution of articles on medicinal plant by three major Newspapers in Nigeria in 2009

Table 4: Ranked productive contributions by authors on medicinal plants

Authors	Number of Articles	Newspapers
Sade Oguntola	65	Nigerian Tribune
Chukwuma Muanta	57	The Guardian
Seye Adeniyi	44	Nigerian Tribune
Ben Ukwuoma	7	The Guardian
Adeeze Amos	6	Punch
Muda Oyeniran	5	Nigerian Tribune
Anonymous	19	The Guardian
Fabian Odum	3	The Guardian
Anonymous	5	Nigerian Tribune
Ada Onyema	2	Punch
Anna okon	1	Punch
TOTAL	214	

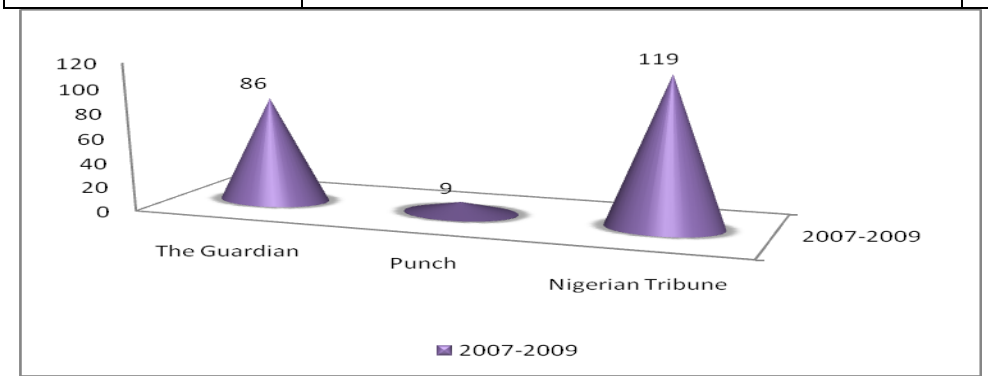

Fig. 4 Total no of articles contributed by the three Newspapers on medicinal plants from 2007-2009

TABLE 5: Reportage of some of the medicinal plants component used and their medicinal values in three Nigerian Newspapers between 2007 and 2009

No	Scientific Name	Common Name	Local Name	Part Used	Medicinal Uses	Frequency
1	*Parkia clappertoniana*	Locust beans	Iru in Yoruba, Ugba/ogiri in Igbo,Dadawa in Hausa	Seeds	Anti-hypertension	1
2	*Allium sativum*	Garlic	Ayuu in Yoruba, Ayo-ishi in igbo,Tafarunua in Hausa	Bulb	Suppression of growth of tumour, Anti hypertension	7
3	*Aframomum melegueta*	Alligator pepper or Grains of	Ata-ire in Yoruba, Ose oji in Igbo,	Seed of alligator ,	Erectile dysfunction premature	2

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		paradise	Ehin-edo in Edo	leaves	ejaculation, Measles	
4	*Mangifera indica*	Mangoes	Mangoro in Yoruba, Mango sawamsop in Igbo	Bark, leaves	Toothache, gastrointestinal disorder, dysentery, diarrhoea, sore gums, sore throat, malaria	2
5	*Persea Americana*	Avocado/pear	Igba/apoka-in Yoruba, Ube-bere in Igbo.	Fruit	Antic-hypertension, stomach ulcers	1
6	*Cymbogan citrates*	Lemon grass	Kooko oba in Yoruba, Isauri in Hausa, Acharacum in Igbo, Myoyak makara Ibiobio, Eti in Edo	Leaves	Malaria, typhoid fever, Diabetes	1
7	*Treculia Africana*	Bread fruits	Afon in Yoruba	Seed fruits	Atherosuerotic diseases, diabetes	4
8	*Carica papaya*	Pawpaw	Ibepe in Yoruba, Okworo-bere/ojo in Igbo, Gwaabaa in Hausa	Pawpaw sap, Leaves or latex pulp	Heart burn, ulcer, stomach disorder, natal hernia, skin disorders	5
9	*Azadiractha indica*	Neem	Dogoyaro in Yoruba, Atu yabasi/ogwu akom in Igbo, Maina in Hausa	Bark Leaves	Malaria, Prevent environmental pollution, toxicity, keeps away insects, cockroaches, treat some fungal infections and bacteria diseases specially those of the skin	4
10	*Occicum gratissmum*	Scent leaf	Efirin ajase in Yoruba, aai doya ta gida in Hausa, Nchuanwu in Igbo	Leaves	Stop nose bleeding, measles	3
11	*Vernonia amygdalina*	Bitter leaf	Oriwo in Edo Chusar doki in Hausa atidot in Ibibio anugbu in Igbo Ewuro in Yoruba	Leaves	Proper functioning of heart, muscles and tissue, measles	5
12	*Curcuma longa*	Tumeric	Ataile-pupa in Yoruba, Gangamau in Hausa, Ohu boboch in Igbo	Rhizome	Pain-killer, anti-inflammatories, antitoxidants.	6
13	*Vitellaria paracloxum*	Shea butter	*Ori* in Yoruba, Osisi in igbo, Kadanya in Hausa	Seeds	Prevents wound allergenic reactions Skin ulcers, skin	2

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					cracks and crevices, Rheumatic pains	
14	*Tetrapleuru tetraptera*	Aridan	Igbo-Ososho, aridan in Yoruba	Leaf, leaf stalk, stem bark, root bark and fruit.	Anti Convulsion, leprosy, inflammatory, rheumatoid pains, Schistosomiasis, stomach ulcers.	2
15	*Zingiber officinale*	Ginger	Ata -ile in Yoruba	Rhizome	Detoxify liver bronchitis, cough and cold, digestive disorders	6
16	*Citrus aurantifolia*	Lime	Osan wewe in Yoruba, Olomankilisi in Igbo, Lemunoisami in Hausa	Root bark, stem-twigs, leaves, fruit	Deworm	3
17	*Citrus paradise*	Grape	Osan gerepu in Yoruba	Fruit, stem-twig, leaves, root	Antibiotic, malaria	2
18	*Ananas comosus*	Pineapple	Ope oyinbo in Yoruba	Unripe fruit	Anti hypertension, constipation	3
19	*Allium cepa*	Onion	Alubosa in Yoruba	Bulb	Anti diabetic,hypertension	12
20	*Piper guinenses*	Black pepper	Iyere in Yoruba, Uziza in Igbo,Uda in Hausa	Seed, leaves	Cleanse womb	2
21	*Annona muricata*	Soursop	-	Fruit	Anti hypertension, anti-cancerous, anti-diabetes, anti fungal	3
22	*Kigelia Africana*	Sausage tree	Pandoro in Yoruba,Uturubein in Igbo,Rawuya in Hausa	Fruit	Fibroid	4
23	*Talinum triangular*	Water leaf	Gbure in Yoruba,Nte-oka/ineene, in Hausa Alenyruwa	Leaves		3
24	*Moringa oleifera*	Ben oil tree	Ewe ile, Ewe igbale	Leaves,flowers	Mal-nutrition, cancers,	1
25	*Hibscus sabdarffa*	Roselle	Amukan,I shapa, Zobo	Leaves	Diarrhoea, Pneumonia, Anti hypertension	3
26	*Pleurotus tuberigia*	Mushroom	Olu in Yoruba		eyesight, antic-cancer, antic-tumours, anti hepatitis	3
27	*Cocus nucifera*	Coconut	Agbon in Yoruba, Aku in igbo, Masara in Hausa	Nut	Anti poison,	3
28	*Tapinanthus*	African	Afomo in Yoruba	Leaves	Stomach ache,	1

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	dodoeneifolius	mistletoes			dysentery, diarrhoea	
29	*Hymenocardia acida*		Orupa in Yoruba	Leaves,	Anti-ulcer,	2
30	*Garcina kola*	Bitter kola	Orogbo in Yoruba, Adu/aku-inu in igbo, Nmiji goro in Hausa	Seeds	Respiratory tract diseases, asthma	3
31	*Bambusa vulgaris*	Bamboo	Oparun in Yoruba, ose otosi in Igbo,ehin-edo in Edo		Measles	1
32	Telefaria occidentalis cucurbitarceae	Fluted pumpkin	Ugwu in Igbo	leaves	Antic-anaemic (blood tonic) Cancer, lung, breast prostate, ovarian cancer	2

Discussion

Table 1 shows that 78 articles on medicinal plant were reported in the three Newspapers covered from January to December, 2007. Nigerian Tribune had the highest number of articles 37 (47%), followed by The Guardian with 34 (44%) while the Punch produced the least number of articles 7 (9%). It was further observed that the month of December recorded the highest number of articles, while February had no article on medicinal plant in 2007. There were 92 articles (Table 2) on medicinal plant in the three Newspapers covered from January to December 2008. Nigerian Tribune had the highest number of articles 58 (63%), followed by The Guardian with 33 (36%) articles while the Punch had the least number of article one (1%). It was further observed that the month of January had the highest number of articles, while there was no article in August, September, and November.

Table 3 shows that 44 articles on medicinal plant were reported in the 3 Newspapers covered from January to December, 2009. Nigerian Tribune had the highest number of articles 24 (55%), followed by The Guardian with 19 (43%) while the Punch had only one (2%). It was further observed that the month of May recorded the highest number of articles, while in September; none of the news papers reported any article on medicinal plants. Table 4 shows that 214 articles on medicinal plants were reported in the three Newspapers. Sade Oguntola from the Nigerian Tribune had the highest number with 65 articles to her credit, while Chukwuma Muanta from the Guardian Newspaper ranked second with 57 articles and followed by Seye Adeniyi from Nigerian Tribune with 44 articles.

Cumulatively, the Nigerian Tribune had the highest number of articles on medicinal plants 56% (119), followed by the Guardian 40% (86) and while Punch Newspaper had 4% (9).Table 4 shows the list of medicinal plants reported, their different uses, and the frequency of reportage in the three Nigerian between 2007-2009. Table 5 reveals the type of medicinal plants reported in the three Nigerian papers, this agrees with the assertion of Petersons (1989) who opined that newspapers form essential resources for a number of research fields. Okorafor (1991) also submits that newspapers are vital research resources in the humanities, social sciences and also report discoveries in science and technology. The indigenous knowledge of this plants needs to be documented, in order to preserve African heritage for the next generation. To make

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effective use of information/knowledge, it has to be shared and distributed. Information technology can be used as a tool in documenting and preserving this knowledge.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study content-analyzed three (3) major national news dailies, namely, The Nigerian Tribune, The Guardian and The Punch. The study spanned a period of thirty-six (36) calendar months, (January-December) in three years - 2007-2009. The findings showed that 214 articles were reported within this period. The use of medicinal plants is an important part of health care system in Africa. Africans especially those living in the rural areas depend heavily on them due to the local availability, accessibility and low prices. There is the need to create more awareness on the importance of medicinal plants and disseminate information on indigenous knowledge about them. African governments should set up agencies that will identify various medicinal plants in their communities and document them. They should also collate experiences, from farmers and those that are using these plants for health care. A lot of benefits can be derived from collecting, preserving and disseminating IK systems on these plants. This invariably can lead to baseline information for the development of orthodox medicine through pharmacognosy.

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