

Study Of Different Agents Of Traditional Medicine, Diagnosis, Treatment Of Diseases Under The Dialect Of Cañari Culture And The Use Of Medicinal Plants For Therapeutic Purposes In Cantons Of Cañar, El Tambo And Suscal

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Abstract

The traditional medicine of native peoples remains from generation to generation being used in every moment of their lives. The research is developed with the objective of determining the different agents of traditional medicine, diagnosis, treatment of diseases under the dialect of the Cañari culture and the use of medicinal plants for therapeutic purposes in the cantons Cañar, El Tambo and Suscal in the period March - August 2019. The research was descriptive, documentary and field design, the population was 172 agents who practice ancestral medicine and 668 inhabitants of the three cantons to whom the interview and the survey were applied respectively, obtaining the following results: of the agents who practice traditional medicine, 34.3% represent midwives, 25.6% are sobadores (a kind of massager), 16.3% are herbalists, 9.3% yachaks, 8.1% healers, and 6.4% bonesetters, in the three cantons; within the three cantons. Among the most treated illnesses are arco, colerín, mal aire, espanto, caída de zhungo, bad energies, and rabo. For the diagnosis of these diseases, egg and candle cleansing, cleansing with mounts, observation of signs or symptoms in patients, palpation, among others, are used. For treatment, rituals, cleansings, baths, and drinking infusions of healing herbs are performed. This study provided an approach to the relevance of ancestral medicine, frequency of use, as well as diagnostic processes and treatments from a multicultural approach so that it is a contribution to the integration of traditional medicine with conventional medicine, leading to strengthen interculturality through the exchange of knowledge.

Keywords: Agents, Traditional Medicine, Diagnosis, Treatment of Diseases, Dialect, Cañari Culture, Medicinal Plants, Therapeutic Purposes.

1. Introduction

Traditional medicine is characterized by its prevalence over time, to the point that today it is not only another practice of medicine, but also implies a link to the socio-cultural environment of indigenous peoples, as well as an alternative and broader view of the concept of health, which for many has regained interest in recent decades and continues to this day. In Ecuador, Andean communities and indigenous peoples of the Amazon, as well as cultural groups of the coastal region continue these practices.

The purpose of this research is to approach the topic of ancestral medicine, focusing on the environment of the Cañar, El Tambo and Suscal cantons, from an approach to the agents that practice this medicine in order to learn about their procedures. This research is carried out with an intercultural perspective, since approaching this knowledge allows a more real approximation to the experience of ancestral medicine, information that contributes to the integration of these health systems to the conventional ones that are promoted through the Ministry of Public Health of Ecuador.

In this sense, the aim is to offer a written document that indicates the frequency and location of traditional medicine agents in the cantons where the research will be carried out, their practices, the benefits that these practices generate in patients, their socio-cultural incidence, as well as a guide based on the treatment of the use of medicinal plants in relation to the most common diseases.

The paper has been structured in a total of four chapters. The first chapter addresses the problems experienced in the context of Ecuador in reference to ancestral medicine, as well as the context of the research. The second chapter contains the theoretical sections that will allow understanding ancestral practices, their importance, their intercultural implication, the strategies that the Ministry of Health has implemented for the integration of health systems, as well as the properties of medicinal plants widely used in traditional medicine. The third chapter covers the methodology used for the research, in which the processes carried out are described, as well as the research methods and form of analysis of the results. Finally, the fourth chapter covers the proposal, which will focus on the realization of a scientific article, the result of the research, conclusions and recommendations.

2. Objectives

2.1 General objective

To determine the different agents of traditional medicine, diagnosis, treatment of diseases under the dialect of the Cañari culture and the use of medicinal plants for therapeutic purposes in the cantons of Cañar, El Tambo and Suscal in the period March - August 2019.

2.2 Specific objectives

- Identify the different agents of traditional medicine, certified and non-certified, and their location in the different localities of the cantons of Cañar, El Tambo and Suscal.
- Determine the most common diseases, skills, techniques and methods used by traditional medicine agents for the diagnosis and treatment of diseases.
- Create a guide based on the Cañari dialect on the treatment of the most common diseases through the use of medicinal plants.

3. Methodology

3.1 Level of research

Descriptive research

The level of research was descriptive; the aim was to know the most common practices of traditional medicine agents in the cantons of Cañar, El Tambo and Suscal, as well as to have a record of their location and a quantitative indicator of the number of agents in each locality.

3.2 Research design

Documentary and field research

The present research was of the documentary and field type. The documentary analysis allowed to learn about previous research on ancestral medicine and its socio-cultural implications as well as its incidence in the national health systems. The field research allowed to know the number of agents, their location, the experience of the users of ancestral medicine as well as the most common practices, in order to describe them.

3.3 Population and sample

Population

The population under study was made up of the medicine agents with a total of 172 Agents of Ancestral Medicine.

Cantons	Population
Cañar	59.323 inhab.
El Tambo	9.475 inhab.
Suscal	4.419 inhab.
Total	73.217inhab.

Table 1: Population.

Source: Own elaboration

Sample

Sample size calculation: A widely used formula that provides guidance on sample size calculation for aggregate data is as follows:

$$n = \frac{Z_{\alpha}^2 Npq}{e^2(N - 1) + Z_{\alpha}^2 pq} \quad (1)$$

N: Constitutes the size of the population (persons to be surveyed)

Z_α: Depends on the assigned confidence level is a constant (55)

his value indicates the probability that the results of the investigation are true: 95% confidence is the same as saying that we can be wrong with a probability of 5%. The values of Z_α are obtained from the table of standard normal distribution.

The values of Z_α and their confidence levels are:

Value of Z _α	1,15	1,28	1,44	1,65	1,96	2,24	2,58
Grade of Confidence	75%	80%	85%	90%	95%	97,5%	99%

(Therefore, if a 95% confidence level is to be obtained, it is necessary to include the following in the formula **Z_α=1,96**)

p: This data is generally unknown and it is usually assumed that p=0.5 which is the safest option.

q: Proportion of individuals who do not possess this characteristic, i.e., 1-p

e: is the desired master error, in percent. The master error is the difference that may exist between the result obtained by asking a sample of the population and the result that would be obtained if the whole population were asked.

3.4 Data collection techniques and instruments

The data collection was carried out through the application of surveys directed to the users of traditional medicine; interviews were also applied to the agents of ancestral medicine; this instrument was used to learn about the practices, diagnoses, use of medicinal plants, types of users that are attended and diseases most frequently treated by traditional medicine.

3.5 Data processing and analysis techniques

The starting point was the collection of data through surveys and interviews, from which the location of each of the agents was obtained according to the visits made, data processing and organization was carried out using SPSS software version 23.

Proceeding to its digital analysis for the elaboration of tables and validation of variables by means

of statistical tests.

Its results were interpreted in relation to the synthesis of the researched and the existing in the theoretical section and the issuance of conclusions and recommendations.

4. Results

The following are the results of the survey applied to the population in the Cañar, El Tambo and Suscal cantones.

4.1 Age

Table 2 shows the distribution of the population according to age.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	30-39 years	182	27,2%	27,2%	27,2%
	40-49 years	326	48,8%	48,8%	76,0%
	50-59 years	160	24,0%	24,0%	100,0%
	Total	668	100,0%	100,0%	

Table 2. Age.

Source: Own elaboration

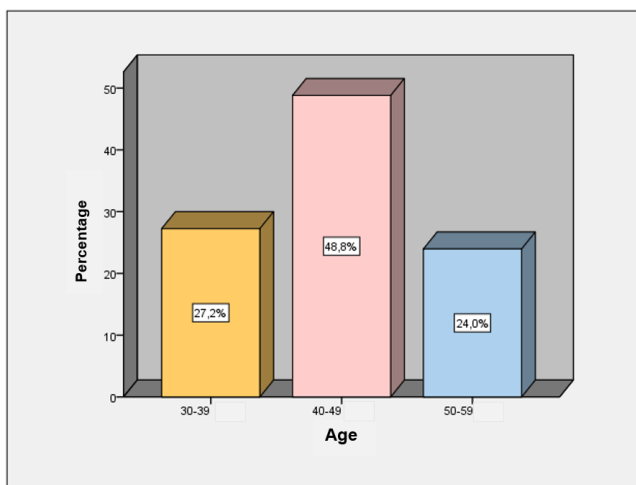


Figure 1. Age.

Source: Own elaboration.

When the survey was applied to the population in the cantons of Cañar, El Tambo and Suscal, 48.8% were between 40 and 49 years of age, 27.4% between 30 and 39 years of age, and 24.0%

between 50 and 59 years of age.

4.2 Sex

Table 3 shows the distribution of the population according to gender.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Male	318	47,6%	47,6%	47,6%
	Female	350	52,4%	52,4%	100,0%
	Total	668	100,0%	100,0%	

Table 3. Sex

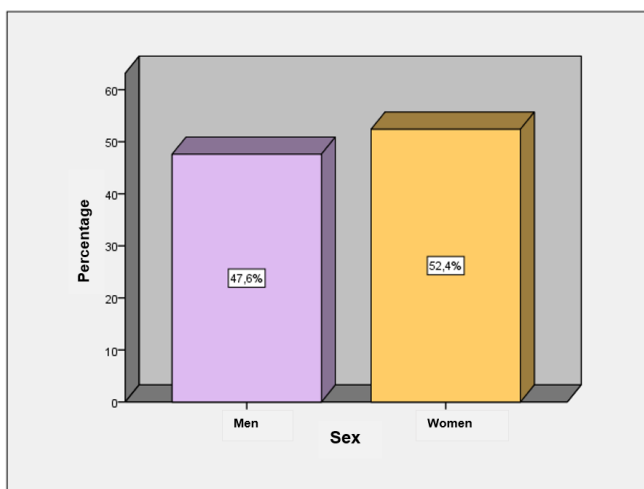


Figure 2. Sex

Source: Own elaboration.

The figure shows that 52.4% are female and 47.6% are male.

4.4 Ethnicity

Table 3 shows the distribution of the surveyed population according to ethnicity.

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Mestizo	377	56,4%	56,4%	56,4%
	Indigenou	291	43,6%	43,6%	100,0%

s			
Total	668	100,0%	100,0%

Table 3. Ethnicity.

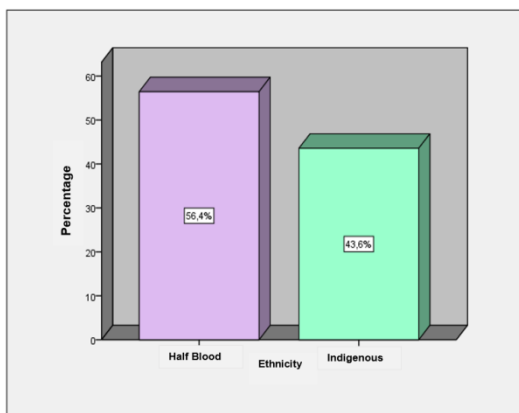


Figure 3. Ethnicity.

Source: Own elaboration.

In reference to ethnicity, it is indicated that in the three cantons investigated there is a large indigenous population (43.6%) and a mestizo population (56.4%), indicating the existence of ethnic diversity in the country.

4.4 Residence

Table 4 shows the distribution of the surveyed population according to their place of residence.

	Frequency	Percentage	valid Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid Catón Cañar				
Chontamarca	32	4,8%	4,8%	4,8%
Ventura	32	4,8%	4,8%	9,6%
San Antonio	31	4,6%	4,6%	14,2%
Gualleturo	31	4,6%	4,6%	18,9%
Juncal	31	4,6%	4,6%	23,5%
Cañar	40	6,0%	6,0%	29,5%
Zhud	32	4,8%	4,8%	34,3%
General Morales	31	4,6%	4,6%	38,9%
Ducur	31	4,6%	4,6%	43,6%

Chorocopte	31	4,6%	4,6%	48,2%
Ingapirca	21	3,1%	3,1%	51,3%
Honorato Vasquez	38	5,7%	5,7%	57,0%
Catón El Tambo				
El Tambo	163	24,4%	24,4%	81,4%
Catón Suscal				
Suscal	124	18,6%	18,6%	100,0%
Total	668	100,0%	100,0%	

Table 4. Respondents' residence

Source: Own elaboration

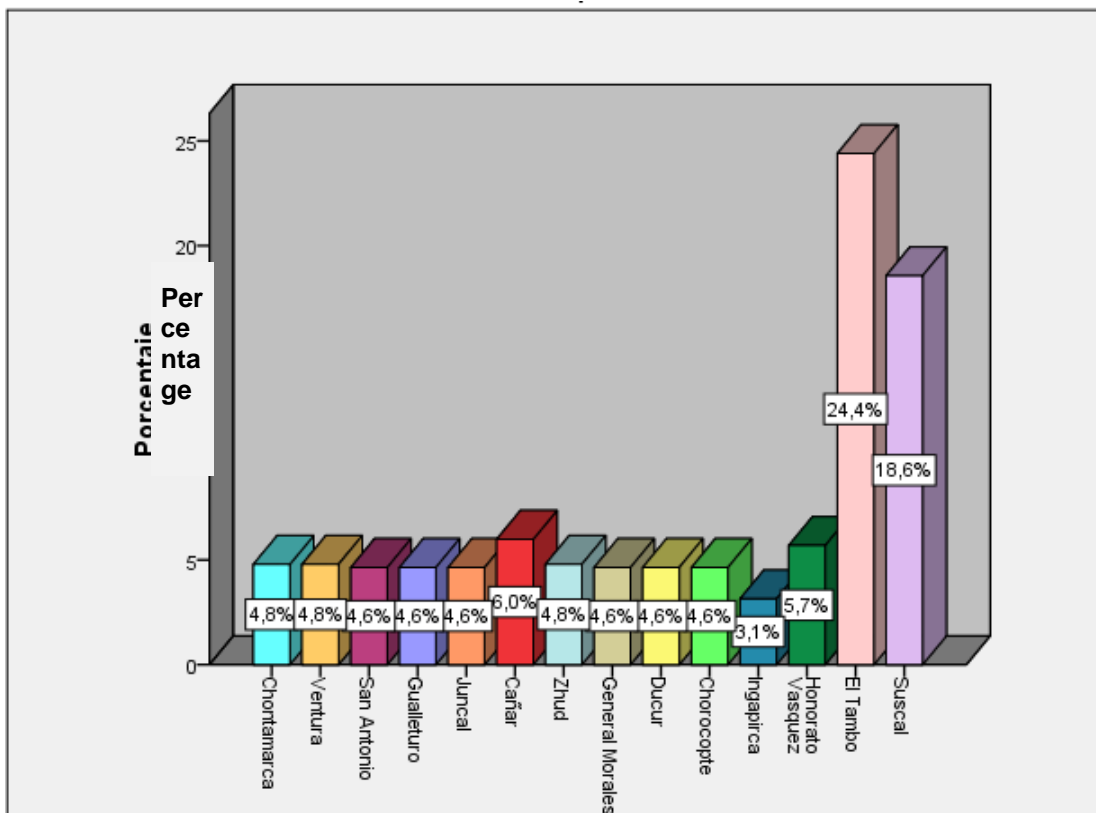


Figure 4. Residence of respondents.

Source: Own elaboration.

With respect to the people surveyed according to their residence, 4.8% of the population belonged to the parish of Chontamarca, 4.8% to Ventura, 4.6% to San Antonio, 4.6% to Gualleturo, 4.6% to Juncal, 6.0% in Cañar, 4.8% in Zhud, 4.6% in General Morales, 4.6% in Ducur, 4.6% in Chorocopte, 3.1% in Ingapirca, 5.7% in Honorato Vásquez, 24.4% in El Tambo and 18.6% in Suscal.

4.5 Question 1

Do you know what an Ancestral Medicine Agent is??

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Yes	542	81,1%	81,1%	81,1%
	No	126	18,9%	18,9%	100,0%
	Total	668	100,0%	100,0%	

Table 5. Question 1: Do you know what an Ancestral Medicine Agent is?

Source: Own elaboration

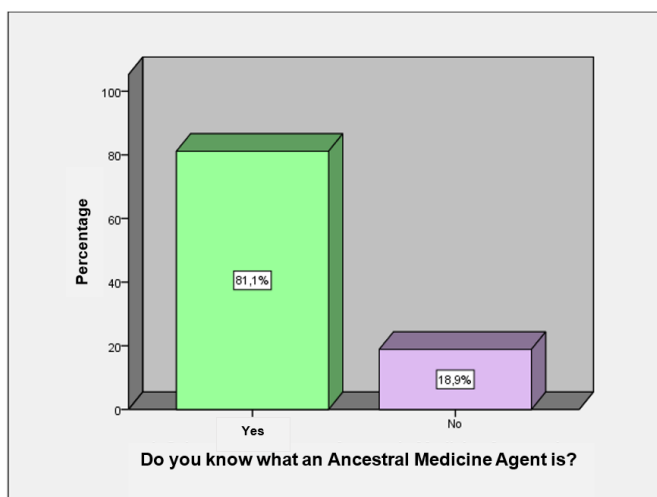


Figure 5. Question 1: Do you know what an Ancestral Medicine Agent is?

Source: Own elaboration

With respect to the knowledge of what is an agent of traditional medicine, 81.1% answered that they know while 18.9% answered that they do not, thus showing that despite the passage of time and globalization, people maintain their beliefs about traditional medicine.

4.6 Question 2

Do you know if there are any agents of Ancestral Medicine within the community?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Yes	490	73,4%	73,4%	73,4%

No	178	26,6%	26,6%	100,0%
Total	668	100,0%	100,0%	

Table 5. Question 2: Do you know if there are any agents of Ancestral Medicine within the community?

Source: Own elaboration.

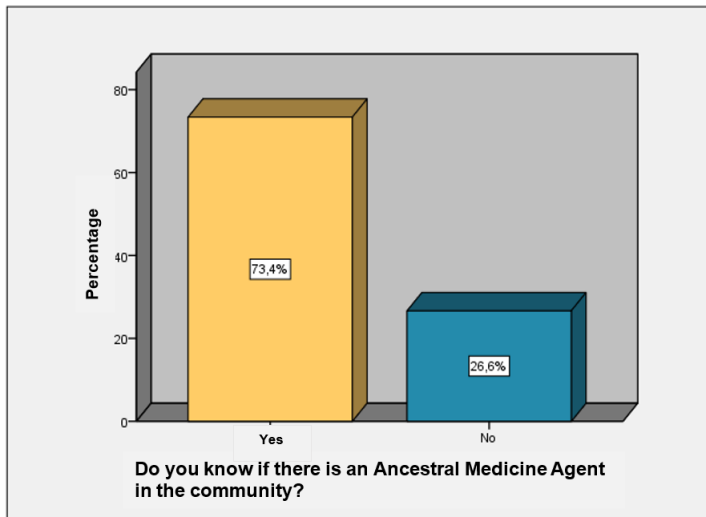


Figure 6. Question 2: Do you know if there are any agents of Ancestral Medicine within the community?

Source: Own elaboration.

73.4% of respondents answered that there is an agent of Ancestral Medicine in the community and that when they feel sick, they sometimes go to them, while 26.6% answered that they do not know of any Ancestral Medicine agent in the community.

4.7 Question 3

Do you believe in ancestral medicine?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Yes	540	80,8%	80,8%	80,8%
	No	128	19,2%	19,2%	100,0%
	Total	668	100,0%	100,0%	

Table 6. Question 3: Do you believe in ancestral medicine?

Source: Own elaboration.

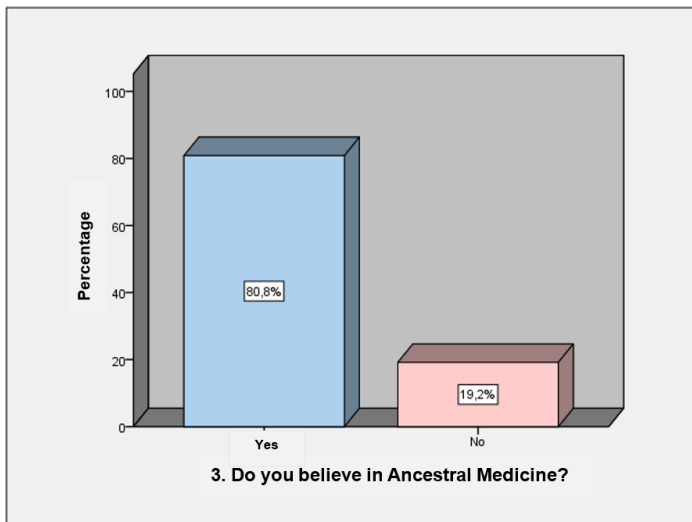


Figure 7. Question 3 Do you believe in ancestral medicine?

Source: Own elaboration.

Yes

80.8% of the surveyed population believe in ancestral medicine because ancestral medicine is a whole health system that has been kept alive thanks to the efforts and defense of indigenous peoples through the passage of time and at the same time they have been beneficiaries of this type of medicine 19.2% answered no because they do not know the benefits of this type of medicine.

4.8 Question 4

Do you or a family member go to Ancestral Medicine?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Yes	538	80,5%	80,5%	80,5%
	No	130	19,5%	19,5%	100,0%
	Total	668	100,0%	100,0%	

Table 7. Question 4 Do you or a family member go to Ancestral Medicine?

Source: Own elaboration.

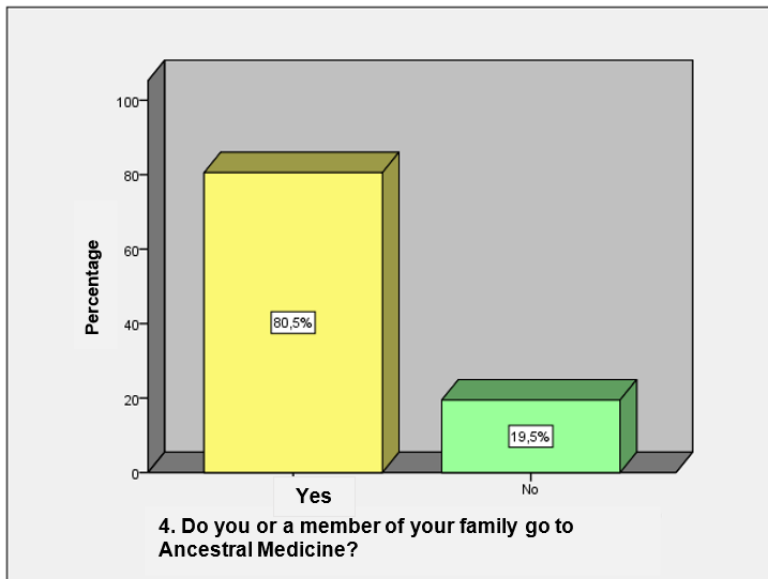


Figure 8. Question 4 Do you or a member of your family go to Ancestral Medicine?

Source: Own elaboration.

It can be observed that 80.5% of the surveyed population and their families have used ancestral medicine because these medicinal traditions are directly related to the cosmovision of the community and 19.5% stated that they do not use it because they do not trust this medicine.

4.9 Question 5

Why did you turn to this type of alternative medicine?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Reliable	438	65,6%	65,6%	65,6%
	Necessary	109	16,3%	16,3%	81,9%
	Did not trust	121	18,1%	18,1%	100,0%
	Total	668	100,0%	100,0%	

Table 8. Question 5 When you went to an Ancestral Medicine practitioner, why did you go to this type of alternative medicine?

Source: Own elaboration.

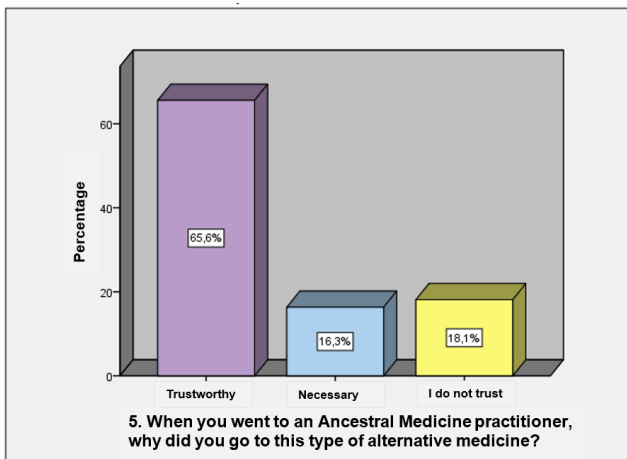


Figure9. Question 5 When you went to an Ancestral Medicine practitioner, why did you go to this type of alternative medicine?

Source: Own elaboration.

According to their perceptions, 65.6% responded that they trust it because it is natural and because it is effective in alleviating illnesses; 16.3% responded that it is necessary because there are ancestral illnesses that cannot be alleviated by conventional medicine; and 18.1% responded that they do not trust it because they have not been beneficiaries of ancestral medicine.

4.10 Question 6

Do you use medicinal plants for any healing purposes?

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	Yes	474	71,0%	71,0%	71,0%
	No	194	29,0%	29,0%	100,0%
Total		668	100,0%	100,0%	

Table 9. Question 6: Do you use medicinal plants for any healing purposes?

Source: Own elaboration.

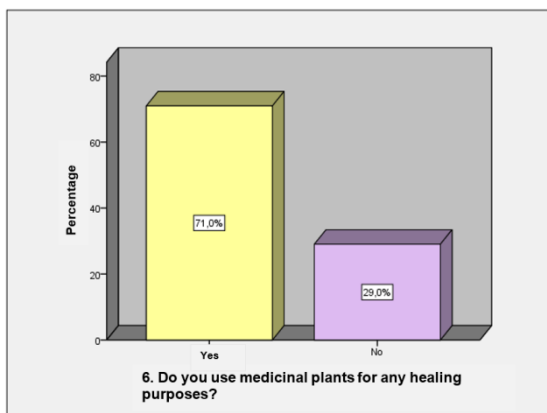


Figure 9. Question 6: Do you use medicinal plants for any healing purposes?

Source: Own elaboration.

71.0% use medicinal plants for healing purposes because they have positive effects and alleviate their ailments, while they indirectly express their displeasure with pharmacology, indicating that pills or medicines produce a momentary relief; one of them even considers that drugs are a means of torture because of the adverse effects they cause, and 29.0% responded that they do not, because they have more confidence in conventional medicine.

4.11 Question 7

If you answered yes to question 6, please indicate the plants you have used and for what purpose.

	Frequency	Percentage	Valid percentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid No plants have been used	194	29,0%	29,0%	29,0%
Lemon balm (for colerín)	72	10,8%	10,8%	39,8%
Paico (for digestive problems, antiparasitic)	59	8,8%	8,8%	48,7%
Chamomile (stomach pains)	208	31,1%	31,1%	79,8%
Valerian (to treat nerves)	135	20,2%	20,2%	100,0%
Total	668	100,0%	100,0%	

Table 10. Question 7: If you answered yes to question 6, please indicate the plants you have used and for what purpose.

Source: Own elaboration.

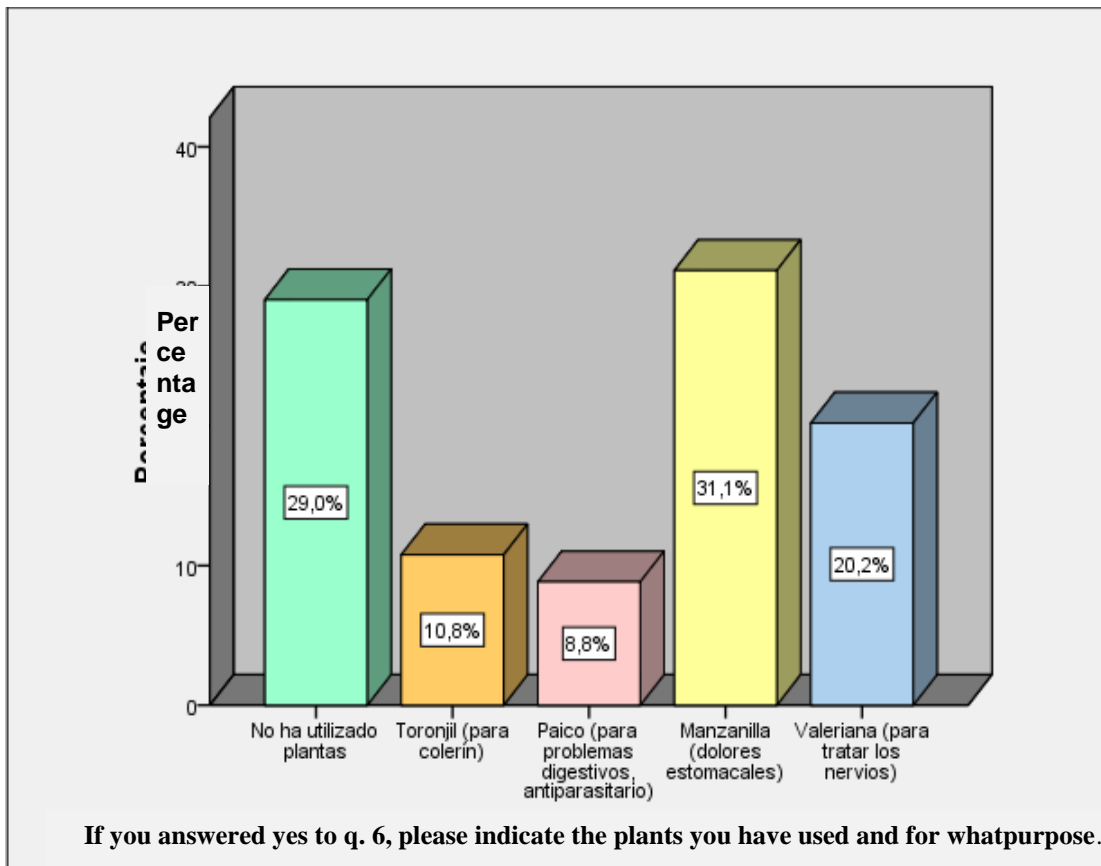


Figure 10. Question 6: Do you use medicinal plants for any healing purposes?

Source: Own elaboration.

29.0% have not used plants, 10.8% lemon balm (for colerín), 8.8% paico (for digestive problems, antiparasitic, 31.1% chamomile (stomach pains) and 20.2% valerian (to treat nerves).

5. Conclusions

- At the end of the research in the cantons of Cañar, El Tambo and Suscal, it was concluded that 34.3% of the agents of ancestral medicine are midwives, but they told us that at present they no longer attend births, they only attend consultations and give treatments to pregnant women, 25.6% are sobadores, 16.3% are herbalists, 9.3% are yachays, 8.1% are healers and 6.4% are bonesetters.
- The research confirmed the existence of 172 traditional medicine agents, of which 82 are certified and 90 are not certified, in the different localities of the cantons of Cañar, El Tambo and Suscal.
- Among the most common diseases, are the bow, colerín, bad air, espanto, fall of zhungo, bad energies, rabo. The skills, techniques and methods used by the agents of traditional medicine for diagnosis by the midwives are when the mother is low (low placenta) the patients have pain in the

belly, they feel that it is burning when they have their period, for the threat of abortion they begin to bleed if not already with pain in the belly they can no longer stand it, for the accommodation of the baby it is necessary to see by touching to see which side it is, for the over delivery they have body pain, headache, the signs are leaking milk by itself. The sobadores and bonesetters responded that with respect to the diagnosis of the most common illnesses, for fractures, to see if the bones are not level, for sprains to see if the knot is out, for the rope, it only feels like it is in a knot. Regarding the herbalists for diagnostic diseases such as gastritis the patient has a lot of pain in the stomach it burns, for colic for example when eating and then drinking water, for urinary tract infection pain when urinating burning, foul-smelling urine, for nerves the person is restless, restless, scared, cannot sleep.

The existing yachak and healers responded that to diagnose the most common illnesses such as espanto they only clean with eggs, for bad air they clean with eggs, for the evil eye they clean with eggs and break them in a glass of water, for the fall of zhungo they clean with eggs and the baby has diarrhea, and for bad energies they clean with a candle. According to the treatments administered to the diseases diagnosed midwives but currently do not attend births and only provide treatments to pregnant women when there is a threat of abortion is made to sit in a tub of cold water, even a half hour, in the low mother to water (to give massages) in the belly with kidney tallow and infuses hen, for the accommodation of the guagua that alone with massages not more one butter of cocoa and with massages in the belly, in the sobre partoagüita in infusion of shiran, root of nettle, alucema one puts a teaspoonful of drink.

The "sobadores" and "hueseros" responded that according to the treatment administered for fractures, the bone is set and tied with a bandage for three weeks; for sprains, one has to hold the hand straight and then push until the head goes in; and for the rope, one massages it with cocoa butter and it becomes soft. The herbalists said that the treatment for gastritis is shipalpa water with human flesh, for colic, zaragoza water and bircarbonato, for urinary tract infection, mallow water with a little salt and milk, and for nerves, take valerian water, chamomile, linden, and lemon balm.

The yachak and healers answered that the treatment for the fright is cleaned with the mountains, and then it is blown with drink carelessly, for the bad air it is cleaned with the candle and it is made to smoke with the incense, for the evil eye is cleaned with egg to remove the evil eye, for the fall of zhungo is made to throw the baby and there I go seeing to which side is moved the zhungo I accommodate, for the bad energies the cleaning is made with the guinea pig is taking out all the bad energies during 3 days.

- By creating a guide based on the Cañari dialect on the treatment of the most common diseases through the use of medicinal plants, an approach was provided to the relevance of ancestral medicine, frequency of use, as well as diagnostic processes and treatments from a multicultural approach in order to contribute to the integration of traditional medicine with conventional medicine, leading to the strengthening of interculturality through the exchange of knowledge.

6. Recommendations

- Health workers should make the communities of Cañar, El Tambo and Suscal cantons aware of the importance of valuing traditional medicine as it can provide benefits to conventional medicine.
- The health authorities and cantonal governments should take steps to certify all agents of traditional medicine in the cantons of Cañar, El Tambo, Suscal, and should also promote training and education in the area to ensure the recognition of ancestral medicine and value the importance of their work for the benefit of the population.
- The Catholic University of Cuenca, Cañar extension, together with nursing students, should promote the creation of community gardens with ancestral herbal medicine for the general knowledge of the population of the characteristics of each species and their health benefits.
- A more detailed study on the need to conserve medicinal species and their potential added benefit for ancestral medicine agents is recommended to better understand the interactions between local knowledge about medicinal plants and human health.

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