

Indigenous knowledge on wild mushrooms in communities bordering miombo woodlands of central Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Apart from timber, fruits, honey, firewood and other benefits from forests, mushrooms are an important forest food resource whose gathering has largely relied on indigenous knowledge systems (IKS). We surveyed five miombo woodland rural communities in central Zimbabwe with respondents of at least 16 years old, focusing on wild mushroom identification criteria used, ethnomycological knowledge transmission mechanisms, known mushroom foragers, known woody species associated with gathered mushrooms, and indigenous mushroom nomenclature systems used. Mushroom cap colour (99.52 %) was of similar importance to use of cap texture (95.78%) but more important ($p \leq .05$) than cap shape, or other attributes. Women (69.04%) were more important ($p \leq .05$) knowledge transmitters than other family members. Millipedes (91.79%) and insects (83.55%) constituted higher ($p \leq .05$) mushroom foraging mention than other invertebrates. *Julbernardia globiflora* (84.16%) was more favourably mentioned ($p \leq .05$) to associate with most mushrooms than other woody species. Mushroom nomenclature largely derived from their morphological traits, texture and habitat. The study demonstrates prevalence of moderately strong IKS and mushroom links to vegetation. These findings will help in ethnomycological research on aspects of miombo mushrooms and any relevant forest policy to benefit rural communities.

Keywords: Central Zimbabwe; ethnomycological knowledge; indigenous knowledge systems; miombo; mushroom foragers; mushroom nomenclature; woody species