



Exploring the therapeutic uses and practices of gumamela plant (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* L.)

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ABSTRACT

Context: Gumamela (*Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* L.) is widely recognized as an ornamental plant and is also used in traditional medicine for a variety of common health concerns. **Objectives:** This study explored the therapeutic uses and practices associated with gumamela among community members in Barangay Maniboc, Lingayen, Pangasinan. **Methods:** A qualitative approach was used to explore participants' experiences and traditional practices. Ten participants, including traditional healers, elderly community members, and individuals with firsthand experience using gumamela, were selected purposively. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed using thematic analysis and Colaizzi's method. **Results:** Participants reported using gumamela for cough, colds, fever, wounds, boils, inflammation, digestive concerns, urinary discomfort, and hair and scalp care. **Conclusion:** Gumamela remains an important component of traditional community health practices. Further scientific investigation is needed

Keywords: Bago tribe, ethnomedicinal plants; Philippines

INTRODUCTION

Gumamela, also known as *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis* L., is a tropical flowering plant known for its bright and colorful flowers. Aside from being used as an ornamental plant, gumamela has also been used in traditional medicine to help with common health concerns, such as cough, skin problems, digestive issues, and inflammation (Magdalita and San Pascual, 2022). We sought to describe: (1) the uses and practices of gumamela as traditional medicine; (2) the common health conditions treated using gumamela; and (3) the perceived effectiveness and benefits of gumamela in treating certain illnesses from community members in Barangay Maniboc, Lingayen, Pangasinan.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Participants and sources of data: the study involved ten participants from Maniboc, Lingayen, Pangasinan, including traditional healers, elderly community members, and individuals with experience using gumamela for medicinal purposes. Participants were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted in Maniboc, Lingayen, Pangasinan and lasted approximately 10 to 15 minutes per participant.



Ethical Considerations: the study adhered to established ethical principles to protect the dignity, rights, and welfare of participants. Ethical approval was obtained from the appropriate institutional ethics review committee before data collection. Informed consent was secured before participation.

RESULTS

Therapeutic uses

Theme 1. Topical Herbal Application: participants described crushing gumamela leaves and flowers and applying them directly to the skin for wounds, boils, swelling, and insect bites. Some reported heating leaves before topical application, while others crushed leaves until the sap or extract was released.

Participant No. 1: "*Alam mo yung akupit na bulaklak ng gumamela 'yon yung kunin tapos dikdikin mo, 'yon tapos ilalagay sa pigs.*" ["Do you know the hibiscus bud? That's what you take, then crush it and apply it to a boil."]

Participant No. 3: "*Ang turo ng matatanda sa amin yung dahon ng gumamela, ipapainit sa apoy tapos itatapal sa kagat ng insekto para hindi kumati, tapos nilalagyan namin ng tape para hindi matanggal.*" ["What the elders taught us is to heat the hibiscus leaves over a fire, then place them on insect bites to prevent itchiness, and secure them with tape."]

Participant No. 7: "*Yung dahon ng gumamela, hinuhugasan ko tapos dinidikdik ko hanggang sa lumabas yung katas. 'Yon ang itinatapal ko sa maliliit na sugat tapos pinapatungan ng malinis na tela.*" ["I wash the gumamela leaves, then crush them until the juice comes out. I apply it to small wounds and cover them with a clean cloth."]

These accounts illustrate topical application as a traditional practice for localized skin concerns. The reported benefits in this study represent participants' experiences and perceptions rather than clinically measured outcomes.

Theme 2. Decoction and herbal drink preparation: participants reported boiling gumamela leaves or flowers and consuming the preparation as a tea or decoction. Reported uses included fever, cough, urinary discomfort, and digestive concerns.

Participant No. 2: "*Yung tatlong bulaklak ng gumamela at isang basong tubig nilalaga ko lang tapos iinum ko.*" ["I just boil three gumamela flowers in one glass of water, then I drink it."]

Participant No. 4: "*Nilalaga ko lang yung gumamela, pero minsan dinudurog ko muna para mas lumabas yung katas bago pakuluan at inumin.*" ["I just boil the gumamela, but sometimes I crush it first so more of the extract comes out before boiling and drinking it."]

Participant No. 5: "*Kumukuha ako ng bulaklak ng gumamela tapos hinuhugasan ko lang tsaka ko ilalaga.*" ["I pick gumamela flowers, wash them, then I just boil them."]

Theme 3. Hair and personal care use: participants also described using boiled or crushed gumamela leaves and flowers as hair and scalp preparations. Reported



purposes included conditioning the hair, reducing dandruff, and addressing hair *fall*.

Participant No. 6: “*Kumukuha lang ako ng bulaklak at dahon ng gumamela, tapos pinapakuluan ko. Kapag medyo lumamig na, ’yon ang ipinapahid ko sa anit at buhok ko.*” [“I get gumamela flowers and leaves, boil them, and once cooled, apply the preparation to my scalp and hair.”]

Participant No. 8: “*Kapag naglalagas yung buhok ko, ’yung gumamela na dahon, dinurog ko lang tapos yung katas, ’yon ang ginagawa kong parang shampoo at ipinapahid ko sa buhok ko.*” [“When my hair starts falling out, I crush gumamela leaves and use the extract like a shampoo, applying it to my hair.”]

Participant No. 9: “*Hinuhugasan ko yung dahon ng gumamela, tapos pinapakuluan ko. Pag maliligo na ako, ’yon ang ipinapangbanlaw ko sa buhok ko pagkatapos mag-shampoo lalo na kapag magaspang o buhaghag yung buhok ko. Pagkatapos nun, lumalambot na yung buhok ko.*” [“I wash the gumamela leaves and boil them. I use the preparation as a hair rinse after shampooing, especially when my hair is rough or frizzy. Afterward, my hair becomes softer.”]

Common health conditions

Theme 1. Respiratory and febrile conditions: participants reported using gumamela to relieve cough, colds, and mild fever, commonly by preparing an herbal drink.

Participant No. 2: “*Kapag inuubo o sinisipon po kami, nagpapakulo kami ng gumamela at iniinom. Nakakatulong po siya para gumaan ang pakiramdam at mawala ang kati ng lalamunan.*” [“When we have a cough or colds, we boil gumamela and drink it. It helps ease the feeling and relieves throat irritation.”]

Participant No. 5: “*Ginagamit po namin ang gumamela kapag may lagnat. Pinapainom po ito kasi nakakatulong daw pababain ang init ng katawan.*” [“We use gumamela when someone has a fever. It is given as a drink because it is believed to help lower body temperature.”]

Participant No. 4: “*Sa amin po, parang natural na gamot ang gumamela. Nakakatulong po siya sa ubo at sipon at pampalakas ng resistensya.*” [“For us, gumamela is like a natural medicine. It helps with coughs and colds and strengthens resistance.”]

Theme 2. Skin and inflammatory conditions: gumamela was reported as a topical remedy for boils, wounds, rashes, insect bites, and minor burns. Participants associated its use with reduced swelling, redness, and itchiness.

Participant No. 1: “*Dinudurog po namin ang dahon ng gumamela at ipinapahid sa sugat o pigs. Nakakatulong po ito para gumaling agad.*” [“We crush gumamela leaves and apply them to wounds or boils. It helps heal faster.”]

Participant No. 3: “*Kapag may kagat ng insekto o pantal, nilalagay po namin ang gumamela. Nawawala po ang pamamaga at kati.*” [“When there are insect bites or rashes, we apply gumamela. It reduces swelling and itchiness.”]



Participant No. 7: "Ginagamit din po ang gumamela sa paso o maliit na sugat. Nakakatulong po siya para hindi mamaga at mamula." ["Gumamela is also used for burns or small wounds. It helps prevent swelling and redness."]

Theme 3. Digestive and urinary concerns; participants described using gumamela decoctions or infusions for indigestion and urinary discomfort.

Participant No. 4: "Dati noong may hapdi sa pag ihi ko, pinapakuluan ko lang yung bulaklak ng gumamela, tapos iniinom ko siya. Okay naman siya, gumaan yung pakiramdam ko." ["Back when I had a burning sensation when urinating, I would boil hibiscus flowers and drink it. I felt some relief afterward."]

Participant No. 1: "Yung gumamela, binababad ko lang sa mainit na tubig tapos 'yon ang iniinom ko. Effective naman kasi 'yan ang lagi kong iniinom kapag hindi ako natunawan at gumagaan naman yung tiyan ko pagkatapos ko inumin." ["I soak hibiscus flowers in hot water, then drink it. I use it when I have indigestion, and my stomach feels lighter afterward."]

Participant No. 2: "Kapag hindi ako natutunawan, nagpapakulo lang ako ng gumamela at iniinom ko lang na parang tsaa, gumagaan naman agad yung tiyan ko pagkatapos." ["When I have indigestion, I boil gumamela and drink it like tea, and my stomach feels better afterward."]

Perceived effectiveness and benefits

Theme 1. Anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial benefits: participants perceived gumamela as useful for reducing swelling, pain, and discomfort associated with minor skin conditions and for supporting wound healing.

Participant No. 7: "Kapag may sugat po ako, dinudurog ko yung dahon ng gumamela at nilalagay sa sugat. Nakakatulong po siya para hindi maimpeksyon at gumaling agad." ["When I have a wound, I crush gumamela leaves and apply them. It helps prevent infection and heal faster."]

Participant No. 1: "Ginagamit po namin ang gumamela sa pamamaga o pigsa. Nakakabawas po siya ng sakit at maga." ["We use gumamela for swelling or boils. It helps reduce pain and swelling."]

Participant No. 3: "Para po sa amin, mabisa ang gumamela kasi panlaban po ito sa bacteria. Nakakatulong po siya sa mga simpleng sugat at kati." ["For us, gumamela is effective because it fights bacteria. It helps with simple wounds and itchiness."]

Theme 2. Nutritional value: participants associated gumamela drinks with general health, resistance to illness, and perceived cleansing effects.

Participant No. 5: "Sa amin po, pinapakuluan namin yung bulaklak ng gumamela at iniinom parang tsaa. Nakakatulong daw po ito kasi may panlaban sa sakit at pampalakas ng katawan." ["We boil gumamela flowers and drink them like tea. It is believed to help fight illness and strengthen the body."]

Participant No. 2: "Sabi po ng mga matatanda, maganda ang gumamela sa kalusugan. Nakakatulong daw ito para hindi agad magkasakit at para lumakas ang



resistensi.” [“The elders say gumamela is good for health. It is believed to help prevent illness and strengthen resistance.”]

Participant No. 5: “*Ginagamit ko po ang gumamela minsan bilang herbal na inumin. Pakiramdam ko po nakakalinis ito ng katawan at nakakaiwas sa sakit.*” [“I sometimes use gumamela as a herbal drink. I feel that it cleanses the body and helps prevent illness.”]

Theme 3. Holistic and supportive health effects: participants described gumamela as a low-cost and readily available remedy that supports general well-being and personal care. Some reported relaxation after drinking gumamela tea, while others highlighted its affordability and use for hair and skin.

Participant No. 2: “*Kapag umiinom po ako ng gumamela tea, nakakarela po ito at gumagaan ang pakiramdam ko.*” [“When I drink gumamela tea, it relaxes me and makes me feel better.”]

Participant No. 5: “*Malaking tulong po ang gumamela kasi mura lang at natural pa. Hindi na kailangang gumastos ng mahal.*” [“Gumamela is a big help because it is inexpensive and natural. There is no need to spend much.”]

Participant No. 9: “*Ginagamit din po namin ang gumamela sa buhok at balat. Nakakatulong po ito para maging healthy ang itsura.*” [“We also use gumamela for hair and skin. It helps make them look healthy.”]

CONCLUSION

Further studies should scientifically evaluate the therapeutic properties and safety of gumamela, particularly for fever, boils, minor wounds, and other commonly reported uses. Researchers may examine preparation methods, appropriate dosage, phytochemical composition, antimicrobial activity, and clinical outcomes.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

DECLARATION OF HONOR

The authors declare on their honor that the research is genuine and that the manuscript does not contain fabricated or knowingly made-up research data.

AI ASSISTANCE DISCLOSURE

The authors used ChatGPT/GPT-5 to improve the clarity and readability of the manuscript. The authors carefully reviewed and edited the content and take full responsibility for the final text.

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