



The Use of Sikkam Bark as a Digestive Medicine in Perjuangan Village, Dairi Regency

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ABSTRACT

This research discusses the use of Sikkam bark (*Bischofia javanica* Blume) as a digestive medicine in Perjuangan Village, Dairi Regency. Through a Health anthropology approach, this research explores local knowledge about the properties of Sikkam bark which is used to treat various digestive problems such as diarrhea, constipation and bloating. Data was collected through direct interviews and literature studies. The research results show that Sikkam bark is popular because of its availability, economical cost, and traditional belief in its efficacy. Its use involves certain processing processes and has side effects that need to be taken into account, such as stomach irritation and allergic reactions. People's belief in the medical and magical benefits of Sikkam bark also influences the practice of using it. This research makes an important contribution to the preservation of traditional knowledge and strengthens scientific evidence regarding the benefits of Sikkam bark in traditional medicine

Keywords: Traditional Medicine, digestion, beliefs

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini membahas penggunaan kulit kayu Sikkam (*Bischofia javanica* Blume) sebagai obat pencernaan di Desa Perjuangan, Kabupaten Dairi. Melalui pendekatan antropologi Kesehatan penelitian ini menggali pengetahuan lokal tentang khasiat kulit kayu Sikkam yang digunakan untuk mengatasi berbagai masalah pencernaan seperti diare, sembelit, dan kembung. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara langsung dan studi literatur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kulit kayu Sikkam populer karena ketersediaannya, biaya yang ekonomis, dan kepercayaan tradisional terhadap khasiatnya. Penggunaannya melibatkan proses pengolahan tertentu dan memiliki efek samping yang perlu diperhatikan, seperti iritasi lambung dan reaksi alergi. Kepercayaan masyarakat terhadap manfaat medis dan magis kulit kayu Sikkam juga mempengaruhi praktik penggunaannya. Penelitian ini memberikan kontribusi penting dalam pelestarian pengetahuan tradisional dan memperkuat bukti ilmiah mengenai manfaat kulit kayu Sikkam dalam pengobatan tradisional

Keyword: Pengobatan tradisional, pencernaan, kepercayaan



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1. Introduction

The bark of the Sikkam tree has long been used as traditional medicine in various Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia. This plant is easily found in tropical and subtropical regions and has been cultivated for various purposes for a long time. In Indonesia, Sikkam is known by various local names, such as *kayu umbai*, *kayu kelat*, and *kayu gajah*. Scientific research has shown that Sikkam bark contains various chemical compounds with antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, and antidiarrheal properties (Ati et al., 2021). The tannin content in Sikkam bark is believed to inhibit the growth of bacteria that cause diarrhoea. Flavonoid and alkaloid compounds are also thought to contribute to the anti-inflammatory and analgesic effects of Sikkam bark, which are beneficial for alleviating gastritis symptoms (Parulian Manurung et al., 2020).

Local communities in various regions, including the Dairi community, have used Sikkam bark in different ways to treat gastritis and diarrhoea. A common method is to boil the Sikkam bark with water to produce a decoction that is consumed. Sikkam bark powder can also be mixed with honey or other ingredients to be used as an oral or topical medicine. Although scientific research on the effectiveness and safety of Sikkam bark is still limited, some studies show promising results. A study in Indonesia found that Sikkam bark extract is effective in inhibiting the growth of bacteria that cause diarrhoea. Another study showed that Sikkam bark is safe for consumption and does not cause significant side effects (Pangondian et al., 2020).

In the book *Health Anthropology* (Putri, 2018), it is mentioned that various communities around the world utilize natural resources, including plants, to maintain health. This traditional knowledge becomes an important part of health anthropology, which studies the interaction between humans, culture, and health. One example is the use of Sikkam bark (*Bischofia javanica Blume*) as a remedy for gastritis and diarrhoea among the local Dairi community. This paper aims to understand the use of Sikkam bark in the cultural context of the local community. This anthropological study can help explain how knowledge about the benefits of Sikkam bark is passed down from generation to generation and the cultural and social factors that influence its use. The use of Sikkam bark as a remedy for gastritis and diarrhoea will be an interesting example of how traditional communities utilize natural resources to maintain health. Health anthropology studies can help understand the use of Sikkam bark in the cultural context and provide important information for further research. This interest drives the author to learn more about the benefits of Sikkam bark and the beliefs held by the Dairi community that keep its use popular.

2. Methods

This study employs a qualitative method. Data collection was conducted using primary data by directly interviewing a local resident of Perjuangan Village who uses Sikkam bark via telephone with one informant. Secondary data collection involved gathering data from journals, articles, and books related to the discussion of Sikkam bark for health.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Reasons for the Continued Popularity of Sikkam in Dairi Regency

In Dairi Regency, traditional medicine is still commonly used, especially among those far from the city centre, particularly in Perjuangan Village. Traditional medicines frequently used for treating digestive disorders are often driven by the geographic conditions, which remain mountainous, resulting in cold temperatures, especially at night. This cold weather contributes to the frequent occurrence of digestive disorders as people feel they have "caught a cold." Additionally, since the majority of the population are farmers who often consume excessive amounts of coffee, digestive disorders are common.

The Sikkam tree, whose bark is used for treatment, is frequently employed for digestive disorders. The bark of the Sikkam tree is also used as a cooking spice for meat. We interviewed a 61-year-old woman named Mrs. Herman, who frequently uses Sikkam bark as a remedy. According to Mrs. Herman, Sikkam was originally brought from Simalungun and then planted in Sidikalang, where it grew abundantly. Initially, Sikkam was more commonly used for cooking. Sikkam does not grow just anywhere; it typically grows in the middle of forests. Mrs. Herman's village used to be forested, so Sikkam was often planted and flourished. However, with more newcomers and land clearing, Sikkam trees have become scarce. In Sidikalang city, Sikkam is rarely found except in remote villages.

In Perjuangan Village, the local community has long known the use and benefits of Sikkam bark as a traditional remedy for digestive disorders. The processing involves drying the Sikkam bark first, then boiling it to make a decoction. The decoction is then consumed as an herbal remedy believed to relieve digestive disorders such as stomach aches, diarrhoea, and other gastric issues. The use of Sikkam bark has been passed down through generations and is still used by the local community. This knowledge is acquired both from ancestors and through interaction with neighbors and social groups. Parents often involve their children in observing the preparation of this traditional medicine for health and culinary purposes. This tradition is well-preserved in Perjuangan Village, even though the Sikkam plant is becoming scarce.

The diseases believed to be treated by Sikkam bark include stomach aches, diarrhoea, constipation, bloating, and other digestive disorders. The decoction of Sikkam bark is believed to contain compounds that help alleviate these symptoms and improve digestive functions. The preparation of Sikkam bark varies depending on the condition or issue to be addressed. For example, to treat diarrhoea, Sikkam bark is usually boiled in water, and the decoction is consumed after it cools. For constipation, some people prefer consuming Sikkam bark powder mixed with water or food.

According to Mrs. Herman, to address diarrhoea, stomach aches, bloating, gastric disorders, and intestinal issues, Sikkam bark is cut into small pieces and boiled in boiling water until the water changes colour. It is then cooled and consumed several times a day until the symptoms subside. For constipation, Sikkam bark is dried, ground into a fine powder, and consumed with water or food regularly until the constipation resolves. However, consuming this traditional medicine should be done according to health conditions and appropriate dosages or by consulting those experienced in traditional medicine.

3.2 Factors Influencing the Continued Popularity of Sikkam Bark

The use of Sikkam bark is an integral part of the cultural tradition in Perjuangan Village, Dairi Regency. Despite the availability of modern medicines, many people in Perjuangan Village still use traditional remedies due to their natural and holistic benefits. The reasons for the continued popularity of Sikkam bark are as follows:

- a) **Availability and Accessibility:** Sikkam bark is still found in villages in Dairi Regency, although its presence is diminishing. This makes it more accessible than medical drugs that need to be purchased from pharmacies, especially for those in remote areas like Perjuangan Village.
- b) **Cost:** The use of Sikkam bark as a traditional remedy is usually more economical than buying medical drugs, which can be expensive. This helps reduce healthcare costs for people with financial constraints.
- c) **Traditional Beliefs:** The use of medicinal plants like Sikkam bark has been part of the tradition and culture in Dairi Regency for a long time. People believe in its effectiveness due to generational experiences and stories from their ancestors.
- d) **Perception of Natural and Safe Remedies:** Many people in Dairi Regency believe that traditional remedies using natural ingredients like Sikkam bark are gentler on the body compared to medical drugs that might contain chemicals or have unwanted side effects.

3.3 Side Effects of Sikkam Bark Usage

While the healing process using Sikkam bark can provide significant relief and gradually reduce symptoms, for more severe or chronic digestive issues, a more comprehensive approach involving consultation with medical professionals may be necessary. It is also important to note that every individual's body is different. Although Sikkam bark has many benefits for addressing digestive issues, it also has side effects. According to some literature (Hajimonfarednejad M et al., 2019), the side effects of Sikkam bark include:

- a) **Gastric Irritation:** High doses or excessive use can cause gastric irritation or worsen gastritis symptoms.
- b) **Allergic Reactions:** Some people may experience skin rashes, itching, or swelling. If such symptoms occur, it is advisable to consult a medical professional promptly.
- c) **Drug Interactions:** Sikkam bark may cause side effects or reduce the effectiveness of other medications being taken.
- d) **Digestive Disturbances:** Although Sikkam bark is used for digestive treatment, excessive use or improper preparation can cause digestive issues like diarrhea or bloating.

In Dairi Regency, if these side effects occur, people often seek other traditional remedies or consult local herbal experts. However, if the side effects are serious, some may seek medical treatment. This usually happens when the side effects threaten health or require medical attention. Some traditional remedies used to counteract the side effects of Sikkam bark include:

- a) **Betel Leaf:** Used to alleviate various digestive issues and related problems.
- b) **Ginger:** Known for its anti-inflammatory and digestive properties. Warm ginger drinks are often used to relieve bloating, nausea, and other digestive issues.
- c) **Curcuma:** Processed into herbal drinks to improve digestion and relieve digestive disorders.
- d) **Cinnamon:** Has anti-inflammatory properties and can help relieve digestive issues like bloating. Usually consumed as tea.
- e) **Coconut Water:** Used as a refreshing drink that can help relieve digestive issues like diarrhoea or bloating.

These ingredients are commonly used by the Dairi community to treat the side effects of Sikkam bark usage.

3.4. Local Beliefs

The part of the Sikkam plant used is the bark, which contains anti-inflammatory and antioxidant compounds beneficial for digestive health and overall well-being. Although other parts of the Sikkam plant, such as leaves, twigs, and roots, have potential uses in traditional medicine, their use is less common. However, the use of Sikkam bark remains dominant as the primary medicinal ingredient.

In addition to believing in the medicinal benefits of Sikkam bark, the Dairi community also holds other beliefs about its efficacy:

- a) **Magical Properties:** Some people believe that Sikkam bark not only has medicinal properties but also magical ones. They believe the plant can ward off evil spirits or protect from negative energy when used or placed in the home.
- b) **Ritual Harvesting:** Some believe that Sikkam bark must be harvested in a specific manner to maintain its efficacy. For instance, they might perform special ceremonies or ask permission from the tree's spirit when harvesting the bark.
- c) **Taboos and Restrictions:** Certain taboos or restrictions are associated with using Sikkam bark. For example, pregnant women may be prohibited from consuming it on certain days according to traditional calendars.
- d) **Ancestral Heritage:** Sikkam bark is considered a gift from ancestors with healing powers. This belief reinforces the importance of respecting traditional practices and knowledge passed down through generations.

The belief in Sikkam's efficacy reflects cultural values ingrained in the community. These beliefs are based on generational experiences and direct observations felt by those who use Sikkam bark as a remedy. Such beliefs can influence treatment preferences and health decisions, leading people to seek treatments that align with their cultural beliefs, such as using Sikkam bark, despite the availability of modern medical drugs.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that Sikkam bark (*Bischofia javanica Blume*) remains popular as a traditional remedy for digestive issues in Dairi Regency due to its availability, cost-effectiveness, and traditional beliefs in its benefits. Its use involves specific preparation processes and has side effects such as gastric irritation and allergic reactions that need to be considered. The community's belief in both the medicinal and magical properties of Sikkam bark also influences its usage. This study underscores the importance of preserving traditional knowledge and strengthening scientific evidence regarding the benefits of Sikkam bark in traditional medicine.

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