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Ginger (*Zingiber Officinale*) in Traditional Heritage: Exploring Local Knowledge and Usage Practices in the Community of Tarutung, Tapanuli Utara

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ABSTRACT

The use of ginger (*Zingiber Officinale*) as a traditional medicine and food ingredient has become an integral part of the lives of people in North Tapanuli, especially in the Tarutung area. This study highlights the local practices in the processing and use of ginger that have been passed down from generation to generation. Using literature review and observation methods, this research found that ginger has various health benefits, including treating coughs, colds, sore throats, diarrhea, and diabetes. Ginger is also popular in the form of beverages such as bandrek, which not only provides a delicious taste but also health benefits. Local knowledge about ginger processing and proper dosage is crucial to ensure the effectiveness of the treatment and avoid side effects. Therefore, the conservation and preservation of knowledge about ginger must continue to ensure its benefits can be enjoyed by future generations.

Keyword: Traditional Medicine, Ethnomedicine, Knowledge Conservation

ABSTRAK

Penggunaan jahe (*Zingiber Officinale*) sebagai obat tradisional dan bahan makanan sudah menjadi bagian umum yang tidak bisa lepas bagi masyarakat di Tapanuli Utara, khususnya di daerah Tarutung. Studi ini menyoroti praktik lokal dalam pengolahan dan penggunaan jahe yang diwariskan dari generasi ke generasi. Dengan metode studi pustaka dan observasi partisipatif, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa jahe memiliki berbagai manfaat kesehatan, termasuk mengatasi batuk, pilek, radang tenggorokan, diare, dan diabetes. Jahe juga populer dalam bentuk minuman seperti bandrek, yang tidak hanya memberikan rasa nikmat tetapi juga manfaat kesehatan. Pengetahuan lokal mengenai cara mengolah jahe dan menentukan dosis yang tepat sangat penting untuk menjamin efektivitas pengobatan serta menghindari efek samping. Oleh karena itu, konservasi dan pelestarian pengetahuan tentang jahe harus terus dilakukan untuk memastikan manfaatnya dapat dinikmati oleh generasi mendatang.

Kata kunci: Pengobatan Tradisional, Etnomedisin, Konservasi Pengetahuan

1. Introduction

Traditional medicine is no longer a novelty in the world of health. People, especially those from rural areas, often still rely on traditional healing techniques. The context of traditional medicine is not always about mystical things but also includes local knowledge of processing medicinal plants that only grow in their regions. However, its practice and use are sometimes still associated with the mystical world. One of the medicinal plants widely utilized by the community is ginger (*Zingiber Officinale*). This spice plant originates from South Asia and has spread to various regions around the world. Its usage practices vary, ranging from a food spice to being served as a beverage. This medicinal plant has long been used in various countries, including Greece, to treat various ailments such as motion sickness, nausea, and vertigo. Since the 16th century, it has also been used by King Henry VIII of England, who proposed its use to cure the plague, while Queen Elizabeth recommended it to enhance sexual desire (Kesehatan Ayurveda et al., 2019).

The people in the North Tapanuli region often use ginger as a traditional medicine to treat various

minor ailments. The knowledge of its cultivation and processing has become a valuable asset for the community that needs to be documented so that the value of this traditional knowledge can be passed down for a long time. The relevance to the present day is also a key point in this writing, where there is an increasing interest in natural remedies compared to synthetic drugs. This is further driven by the use of ginger to boost body stamina and maintain metabolism, especially given the high health crisis and the growing variety of diseases.

According to (Lisma, n.d.) the use of traditional medicine is one of the most appropriate alternatives, especially in conditions such as economic hardship and minimal side effects. Ginger is a solution for addressing several common health problems encountered in daily life, such as diarrhea and diabetes. It is easily found and helps manage contraindications. The local knowledge of the community needs to be preserved, along with the importance of conservation efforts to maintain the sustainability and purity of this medicinal plant. The role of traditional medicines and their practice is a cultural heritage that will always coexist with medical treatments from doctors.

2. Methods

In this study, the author employs participatory observation and literature review methods. The literature review involves collecting journals, books, blogs, articles, and writings related to the topic, then summarizing and analyzing them, and rewriting by comparing the observational facts with the author's perspective.

Participatory observation was conducted by observing the daily activities of the people in the Tarutung and Sipahutar areas of North Tapanuli, specifically in the villages of Hutabarat Partali Toruan and Hutagurgur Onanunggu 1. The observation took place from April 12 to 13, 2024. Participatory observation involved engaging in activities with the community, such as processing ginger into bandrek beverages, observing and recording detailed activities, and conducting brief interviews about this medicinal plant. After conducting observations and brief interviews, the author rewrote the observations by describing and comparing them with the previously reviewed literature.

3. Results and Discussion

Ginger has become a highly popular plant among the community, offering numerous benefits. Its processing is relatively easy; besides being a spice and a food ingredient, ginger can also be boiled as a simple remedy for various ailments (Hesti Dwi Setyaningrum & Cahyo Saparinto, 2013). Ginger is beneficial as an ethnomedicinal ingredient, encompassing knowledge, practices, and medical beliefs that develop within a particular culture and are passed down through generations within an ethnic community (Silalahi, n.d.). Various communities use ginger in their traditional medicine in different ways. For example, the Acehnese people boil ginger with bitter melon seeds, chives, and pepper to relieve muscle aches. On the other hand, the residents of North Sumatra treat rheumatism with finely pounded ginger mixed with garlic, shallots, pepper, aromatic ginger, and salt, then add lime and lemon juice before consumption (Sulistyaningsih et al., n.d.). This concoction is also used to alleviate colds, and many other regions use ginger as a remedy with their ethnomedicinal techniques and processing methods.

Based on observations, the people in the North Tapanuli area frequently use ginger as a remedy for coughs, colds, and sore throats. Almost everyone can cultivate and process this medicinal plant. Its easy conservation and practical processing make it very popular. In one area of North Tapanuli, namely Tarutung, the community is familiar with the term "Bandrek," a beverage made from ginger. The preparation involves simply boiling peeled ginger with clean water and then adding palm sugar and sweetened condensed milk. This drink is widely favored not only for its delicious taste but also for its ability to relieve sore throats, coughs, and colds, as well as to warm the body. When they have a fever, people tend to seek this drink as the primary option for recovery and warming up. Indeed, ginger can warm the body due to its gingerol content, which, when consumed, stimulates heat receptors on the tongue and mouth, triggering a warming sensation, enhancing blood circulation, and accelerating metabolism, ultimately producing a warming effect (Khristiana, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, ginger was widely used by the community to boost body metabolism, particularly by processing it into bandrek. The community believed that ginger's warming properties could protect the body from viral attacks (Deni Sunaryo, 2020). Ginger is also widely used in cooking. Generally, people use ginger more as a food ingredient, where its use enhances the aroma and taste of dishes while also serving as an immune booster (Laelasari & Zakiyatus

Syadza, 2022).

Ginger is used as traditional medicine and as a food ingredient, becoming an integral part of daily life for the people of North Tapanuli, especially in the Tarutung area. This tradition is passed down from generation to generation, with deep knowledge of ginger's benefits being preserved within the community, including methods of conservation and processing. The community observes and directly experiences the efficacy of ginger in addressing various ailments, which strengthens their trust in this plant.

Research indicates that ginger can be a pleasant natural choice for addressing health issues such as diarrhea and diabetes due to its anti-inflammatory properties and ability to combat free radicals, both of which are often the causes of these issues. Ginger contains phenolics, which give the plant its ability to lower blood glucose levels in diabetes patients (I. Suharto, 2019).

Studies show that compounds in ginger, such as gingerol and shogaol, have anti-inflammatory properties (Srikandi, 2020). In cases of diarrhea, the gingerol in ginger has antibacterial properties that help reduce the growth of harmful bacteria in the intestines. This makes ginger an excellent natural option for alleviating diarrhea symptoms and speeding up the healing process. Some community members and parents also use ginger as a remedy for diarrhea, albeit in small amounts. They process ginger by pounding it, mixing the juice with water, boiling it, and adding a bit of honey as a sweetener. According to local knowledge, excessive consumption and incorrect dosing can worsen diarrhea, so the dosage must be precise. Typically, for diarrhea, they consume just half a glass.

For diabetes, ginger helps improve insulin sensitivity in the body, aiding in blood sugar control. Studies show that ginger can lower fasting blood sugar levels and assist in long-term blood sugar control in diabetes patients. Additionally, ginger is beneficial for the immune system. The antioxidants in ginger help combat free radicals that can damage body cells. Some elderly individuals with sore throats consume raw ginger by peeling and sucking on it like candy. Regular consumption of ginger can strengthen the immune system and reduce the risk of disease. This botanical contains numerous benefits, and knowledge of its processing and cultivation needs to be preserved. Its relatively easy and straightforward cultivation should ensure that conservation efforts continue (A. Hikmat, 2011)

4. Conclusion

The utilization of ginger as traditional medicine and a food ingredient in North Tapanuli, particularly in Tarutung, underscores the important role this plant plays in the daily lives of the local community. This tradition has been passed down from generation to generation, reflecting deep knowledge and proven practices regarding the health benefits of ginger. Ginger is not only easy to cultivate and process, but it is also effective in addressing various health issues such as coughs, colds, sore throats, diarrhea, and diabetes. The active compounds in ginger, such as gingerol and shogaol, have strong anti-inflammatory, antibacterial, and antioxidant properties. The use of ginger in beverages like bandrek demonstrates how traditional practices can combine health benefits with delicious flavors.

The people of North Tapanuli also show creativity in processing ginger for various purposes, both medicinal and culinary. Local knowledge about proper processing and dosage is crucial to avoid side effects and ensure the effectiveness of the treatment. Overall, ginger as part of traditional medicine and a food ingredient in North Tapanuli is a prime example of how local knowledge and practices can provide natural, effective, and sustainable health solutions. Conservation efforts and the preservation of knowledge about ginger must continue to ensure its benefits can be enjoyed by future generations.

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