



Public Perception of Degenerative Diseases in Medan City in Choosing Herbal Medicine

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INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends the use of herbal medicines for maintaining public health, as well as for the prevention and treatment of diseases—particularly chronic conditions such as degenerative diseases and cancer. This recommendation also supports ongoing efforts to enhance the safety and efficacy of herbal medicinal products (World Health Organization, 2019).

The development and expansion of phytopharmaceutical production must be supported by increased utilization of these products within the health care system. The integration of phytopharmaceuticals and standardized herbal medicines into health services has been

regulated through the Minister of Health Regulation No. 21 of 2016 concerning the utilization of JKN capitation funds for health service activities and operational cost support in primary health care facilities (FKTPs) owned by local governments. Furthermore, funding for the use of phytopharmaceuticals and standardized herbal medicines may also be sourced from special allocation funds, as outlined in the Minister of Health Regulation No. 3 of 2022 regarding operational guidelines for the use of special physical allocation funds in the health sector for the 2022 fiscal year. The selection of medicines and vaccines primarily refers to the National Essential Medicines List (DOEN) and the National Formulary (Fornas). In instances where required medications are not included in these references, alternative drugs—including traditional medicines such as phytopharmaceuticals and standardized herbal products—may be used in a limited capacity based on medical indications and service needs, subject to the approval of the Head of the District/City Health Office. Additionally, in accordance with Presidential Instruction No. 2 of 2022 on accelerating the use of domestic products and supporting micro, small, and cooperative enterprises under the National Movement "Proudly Made in Indonesia" for government procurement, the provision and use of phytopharmaceuticals—categorized as domestic products—should be actively promoted. This initiative is being led by the Directorate General of Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices, with support from both central and regional governments (Kementerian Kesehatan RI, 2022).

The use of herbal medicine in Indonesia has continued to rise, aligning with government initiatives that promote traditional health practices. According to data from the Indonesian Ministry of Health (2018), approximately 49% of Indonesians utilize herbal remedies; however, only 10% access these through formal health institutions. This disparity highlights a significant gap between policy efforts to integrate herbal medicine into the formal healthcare system and actual community acceptance and access. Contributing factors may include insufficient public knowledge about the efficacy and safety of herbal treatments, as well as limited availability of herbal services within healthcare facilities (Kemenkes, 2018).

Based on regional health research data from North Sumatra in 2028, the proportion of individuals utilizing traditional health services was 35.17%, while 9.58% engaged in self-treatment using traditional medicine. A total of 69,517 individuals were recorded across 33 districts and cities in the province. In Medan City specifically, 28.61% of the population accessed traditional health services, and 7.63% practiced self-treatment using traditional methods, amounting to a total of 10,928 individuals. As one of Indonesia's major urban centers, Medan is experiencing a rising prevalence of degenerative diseases, driven by shifting

lifestyles, increasing urbanization, and the adoption of unhealthy dietary habits (Kemenkes, 2018).

The growing use of herbal medicines is particularly prominent in developing countries. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 80% of the population in these countries relies on herbal medicine. One of the driving factors behind this trend is the increasing prevalence of chronic degenerative diseases, which typically require prolonged treatment. As a result, many individuals seek alternative therapies that are perceived to be more affordable and safer than conventional pharmaceutical drugs. However, the utilization of herbal medicine is closely tied to public perception. This perception encompasses individuals' understanding, beliefs, and attitudes regarding the efficacy and safety of herbal remedies in managing degenerative conditions. Cultural traditions, family influence, traditional beliefs, and access to information significantly shape these perceptions. Conversely, the absence of clear regulatory frameworks and standardized quality controls for herbal products remains a critical barrier to broader public acceptance and formal integration into healthcare systems (Dewi, 2022).

Herbal medicine is often used due to its perceived ease of application, affordability, and effectiveness. Its use is also aligned with the traditional mindset of individuals within households, particularly with regard to the concepts of bodily balance and health preservation—values that have long been embedded in household practices. Among the most commonly treated ailments is the common cold, which is traditionally perceived as a disturbance caused by an imbalance of wind elements in the body. Beyond minor ailments, herbal medicine is also believed to play a preventive and therapeutic role in more serious conditions, including cancer and degenerative diseases (Jennifer, 2022).

This study offers a distinct contribution compared to previous research, which has predominantly focused on the clinical efficacy of specific herbal plants or general patterns of herbal medicine consumption, often without exploring public perceptions within the specific context of degenerative diseases. Moreover, earlier studies have typically been conducted in rural or indigenous communities, where the use of herbal medicine is deeply rooted in local cultural traditions. In contrast, this study addresses the relatively underexplored dynamics of urban populations—particularly in Medan City—where access to modern healthcare services and health-related information is significantly broader. Additionally, this research adopts a more comprehensive analytical approach. While prior studies have often employed simple descriptive methods, this study integrates multiple dimensions—social, cultural, economic, educational, and personal experiences—to gain a nuanced understanding of public perceptions

regarding degenerative diseases and the choice to use herbal treatments. This multidimensional framework enables a more in-depth and holistic interpretation of the factors influencing healthcare decision-making. Importantly, this study also seeks to bridge the gap between public perception and health policy. Unlike earlier research, which frequently concludes at the level of outcome analysis, this study is oriented toward producing evidence-based policy recommendations that support the safe, effective, and integrative use of herbal medicine alongside conventional medical services. As such, the findings offer a novel contribution to the literature and add significant value to ongoing efforts to inform and shape relevant health policies.

The aim of this study is to examine the perceptions of residents in Medan City regarding the use of herbal medicine in the context of degenerative diseases. The research considers multiple influencing factors, including social, cultural, economic, and educational dimensions, as well as personal experiences that shape individuals' decisions to use herbal treatments. Furthermore, the study seeks to establish a link between public perceptions and health policy, with the goal of offering evidence-based policy recommendations to support the integration of herbal medicine into modern healthcare services. A phenomenological approach is employed to explore the subjective experiences of individuals in understanding and utilizing herbal medicine, while a case study design is used to investigate the specific dynamics of urban communities. Through this combined methodological approach, the study aims to enrich the existing literature and contribute to the formulation of more inclusive, contextually relevant, and evidence-informed health policies.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach with a phenomenological design, focusing on the subjective experiences and meanings that individuals assign to the use of herbal medicine in the context of degenerative diseases. The research was conducted in Medan City, which comprises 21 districts. Data collection focused on community members with degenerative diseases who have undergone herbal treatment. The study was carried out over a three-month period, from January to April 2025. A total of 12 informants participated in the study. These included one key informant—a herbal medicine seller with comprehensive knowledge of the research topic; one supporting informant from the family of a herbal medicine user, providing contextual insights; and ten main informants, all of whom were individuals diagnosed with degenerative diseases and had relevant experience and understanding of herbal medicine. Prior to participation, all informants signed a written informed consent form, which

outlined their rights, including the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Informants were also assured that their personal information would remain confidential and be used solely for research purposes, in accordance with established ethical research standards. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews conducted directly with the informants. Secondary data were obtained from journals and the 2018 Basic Health Research (RISKESDAS) report. Additional data collection methods included observation and documentation. The instruments used in this research included field notes, voice recorders, cameras, and a structured list of interview questions designed to guide the in-depth interviews with individuals affected by degenerative diseases. To ensure data validity, the study utilized source triangulation, involving multiple informants to cross-check the consistency of information. Method triangulation was also applied by combining observations with in-depth interviews across three informant groups. Observations were conducted specifically with the main informants and complemented by interviews to capture their lived experiences and perceptions of herbal medicine. Analytical triangulation was achieved by reviewing recorded interview data alongside other sources to enhance interpretation accuracy. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman framework, which includes four key stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This study received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Public Health, Prima Indonesia University (Approval Number: 005/KEPK/UNPRI/V/2025).

RESULTS

The characteristics of the informants in this study include coded initials, age, gender, educational background, occupation, knowledge of degenerative diseases, and knowledge of herbal treatments. A total of 12 informants participated in the study, consisting of one key informant (a herbal medicine seller), one supporting informant (a family member of a herbal medicine user), and ten main informants (community members diagnosed with degenerative diseases in Medan City who have chosen herbal treatment as their therapeutic approach). The main informants, representing individuals with degenerative diseases, were aged between 60 and 74 years. The supporting informant was 60 years old, while the key informant was 32 years old. In terms of gender distribution, the main informants included five males and five females, whereas the supporting and key informants comprised one female and one male, respectively. Educational backgrounds among the main informants varied: two held bachelor's degrees, one held an associate degree, and seven had completed senior high school education. Both the supporting informant and the key informant held bachelor's degrees.

Table 1. Characteristics of informants

Main Informant: The Community of Degenerative Diseases in Medan City.				
No	Initial/Code	Age	Gender	Education
1	SF (U1)	70	Man	Bachelor
2	SN (U2)	69	Man	Senior High School
3	NH (U3)	71	Woman	Bachelor
4	LW (U4)	62	Woman	Senior High School
5	AL (U5)	63	Man	Senior High School
6	AM (U6)	74	Woman	Senior High School
7	LS (U7)	63	Woman	Senior High School
8	ML (U8)	68	Man	Associate's Degree
9	SN (U9)	62	Man	Senior High School
10	FD (U10)	60	Woman	Senior High School
Supporting Informant: Family of Herbal Medicine Users				
No	Initial/Code	Age	Gender	Education
1	LY (P)	60	Woman	Bachelor
Supporting Informant: Family of Herbal Medicine Users				
No	Initial/Code	Age	Gender	Education
1	ST (K)	32	Man	Bachelor

Public Perception of Degenerative Diseases in Medan City in Choosing Herbal Treatment

The majority of informants reported positive experiences with herbal medicine, perceiving it as more effective and safer than conventional pharmaceutical drugs. All informants expressed a strong preference for herbal remedies, primarily due to their natural ingredients, which were associated with fewer side effects. Initial concerns regarding the efficacy or safety of herbal treatments were largely overcome after experiencing tangible health benefits. In conclusion, individuals with degenerative diseases in Medan City demonstrated a highly positive perception of and strong trust in herbal medicine, reinforcing its relevance as a preferred alternative or complementary therapeutic option within this community. This finding aligns with the statements provided by both key and supporting informants. This perception is reflected in the statements of both main and supporting informants. One participant (U-7) noted:

"Yeah, I believe so, because I think that herbal medicine from natural ingredients is far from chemicals; chemicals are not good for the body and must adhere to established standards."

Similarly, a supporting informant (P) shared:

"I feel more confident and assured about herbal medicine compared to medical treatments, as my husband has shown a preference for using herbal remedies."

The key informant (K), a herbal medicine seller, also observed a shift in community trust:

"Yes, I see many customers increasingly trusting herbal treatments because they directly experience the benefits. Some of them have tried various medical drugs but did not achieve the

results they expected, so they eventually switched to herbal remedies. After experiencing positive changes, they have become more confident and continue to use herbal medicine.”

These narratives highlight the growing confidence in herbal medicine among the urban population of Medan, driven by direct experience, family influence, and perceived limitations of conventional medical treatments. In conclusion, individuals with degenerative diseases in Medan City demonstrate a strong trust in and positive perception of herbal medicine, reinforcing its role as a viable alternative or complementary therapeutic approach.

Causes of Public Interest in Degenerative Diseases in Medan City in Choosing Herbal Treatment

Public interest in herbal medicine among individuals with degenerative diseases in Medan is primarily influenced by social information, particularly from friends, social media, and family members. Among these, peer and social media sources emerged as the dominant factors shaping health-related decisions. The main reasons cited for choosing herbal treatments include the natural composition of the remedies, their association with minimal side effects, and greater affordability compared to conventional pharmaceuticals. Although family traditions were not identified as a primary driver, some informants acknowledged that familial customs and past experiences did influence their choices to a certain extent. Overall, the findings indicate that social influence, trust in the natural efficacy of herbal medicine, and economic considerations are the most significant factors contributing to the community's interest in herbal therapies. Public interest in herbal medicine among individuals with degenerative diseases in Medan is primarily influenced by social information, particularly from friends, social media, and family members. Among these sources, peer networks and online platforms emerged as the most dominant in shaping perceptions and treatment choices. The decision to use herbal remedies is largely driven by beliefs in their natural composition, minimal side effects, and affordability compared to conventional medicines. While cost was identified as a contributing factor, informants emphasized that health benefits and preventive value often outweighed economic considerations. As one main informant (U-4) explained:

“It’s not about the price, it’s more about prevention—how my illness doesn’t become too severe. It’s better to address it quickly and handle it.”

A similar sentiment was expressed by the supporting informant (P), who stated:

“I’m not concerned about the price; what matters is my husband’s health.”

The key informant (K), a herbal medicine seller, reinforced this view:

“Even though the cost is cheaper compared to medical drugs, I see that customers do not only consider the price when choosing herbal products. Many also choose herbal remedies because

they want more natural treatments with fewer side effects. So, even if the price is lower, they also consider the benefits and safety of the herbal products they are purchasing.”

These responses highlight that although affordability is an advantage, the perceived safety, efficacy, and preventive value of herbal medicine are more central to decision-making. This underscores the complex interplay between social influence, health awareness, and perceived therapeutic benefits in shaping treatment preferences within the urban context of Medan.

Internal Factors Affect Public Perception of Degenerative Diseases in Medan City in Choosing Herbal Medicine

Awareness and Awareness

The internal factors influencing community perceptions of herbal medicine use for degenerative diseases in Medan City include knowledge and awareness. Most informants reported acquiring information from friends and social media, indicating the significant role of the social environment and digital technology in the dissemination of health-related knowledge. This ease of access to informal yet impactful information sources has contributed to a generally good level of understanding among informants regarding the benefits and risks associated with herbal medicine. All informants demonstrated sufficient awareness to make informed decisions about their treatment choices, suggesting that internal cognitive factors—such as comprehension of efficacy and safety—play a key role in shaping positive perceptions. These findings are consistent with the statements provided by main informants, key figures, and supporting informants, who expressed confidence in their understanding of herbal treatments and their relevance to managing degenerative conditions. These findings are consistent with the statements of the key informants, supporting figures, and main participants. Informants consistently emphasized the role of personal initiative, familial influence, and digital access in shaping their knowledge and awareness of herbal medicine. One main informant (U-1) shared:

“You see, after being informed by my friend, I searched the internet. It seems that herbal remedies have minimal risk because they are made from natural ingredients.”

The supporting informant (P) also described a combination of personal research and familial consultation:

“After my husband decided to use herbal medicine, I researched on Google and asked my extended family about the reactions to taking herbal medicine because I have a family member who sells herbal remedies under the Elken brand.”

The key informant (K), a herbal seller, highlighted both experiential learning and formal education:

“I gained knowledge about herbal medicine from my family and I also participated in various training and seminars on herbal medicine. Since childhood, I have been accustomed to seeing my parents or grandparents preparing herbal medicine for various illnesses, including degenerative diseases such as diabetes and hypertension. They taught me about the benefits of various medicinal plants and how to use them, so I carried this knowledge into my business.”

These narratives illustrate how internal factors—especially individual knowledge, personal experience, and familial transmission of traditional health practices—combine with digital literacy and modern sources of information to shape public perceptions and decision-making. The convergence of traditional wisdom and modern accessibility reinforces a strong foundation for informed choices regarding herbal treatment in the context of degenerative diseases.

External Factors Affect Public Perception of Degenerative Diseases in Medan City in Choosing Herbal Treatment.

Social and Cultural Influences

External factors influencing community perceptions of herbal medicine for the treatment of degenerative diseases in Medan are primarily shaped by social influences, including support from family, friends, and the broader community. While cultural traditions and inherited practices were acknowledged, they were not identified as the dominant drivers of decision-making. However, some individuals reported that family customs still played a role in shaping their attitudes toward herbal remedies. In several cases, the choice to use herbal treatments was based on personal beliefs informed by independent research, reflecting a combination of social influence and individual agency. This indicates that decision-making is not solely rooted in traditional norms but is increasingly shaped by interpersonal networks and access to health information, allowing individuals to make informed and autonomous choices. Overall, the interplay between social support systems and individual exploration significantly contributes to the public’s perception and acceptance of herbal medicine in managing degenerative diseases. These findings are further supported by statements from the main, supporting, and key informants, which illustrate the interplay between social support and individual decision-making in the use of herbal medicine. One main informant (U-5) emphasized the role of personal evaluation before adopting herbal treatments:

“Not really, when I was told I didn’t follow it immediately, because I studied it and made sure first, then I was confident to use herbal medicine.”

This indicates that while social information initiates interest, the final decision is often shaped by independent research and personal conviction. The supporting informant (P) highlighted the significance of herbal medicine in the context of familial care:

“It plays a very important role for me because herbal medicine can help me maintain my husband’s immunity.”

The key informant (K), a herbal entrepreneur, underscored the value of social encouragement and collective effort in sustaining her business and belief in herbal remedies:

“Running a herbal business is not easy, but the support from family, friends, and business partners makes me more confident to continue this venture. They not only assist in promotions, but also provide motivation and encouragement to continue seeking quality herbal products that are truly beneficial for the community.”

These narratives reveal that external influences—particularly emotional and practical support from one’s social circle—play a vital role in reinforcing trust, promoting continued use, and even inspiring entrepreneurship related to herbal medicine. At the same time, individual critical thinking remains central to the acceptance and sustained use of herbal treatments, especially in urban settings such as Medan City.

DISCUSSION

Public Perception of Degenerative Diseases in Medan City in Choosing Herbal Treatment

Public perception of herbal medicine among individuals with degenerative diseases in Medan City is shaped by sociocultural therapeutic narratives, beliefs in traditional pharmacopoeia, and a degree of resistance to biomedical hegemony. These findings align with Kleinman’s concept of medical pluralism, wherein communities navigate and negotiate between traditional and biomedical systems within their specific social and cultural contexts. The notion of therapeutic positioning (Mattingly) further explains how individuals actively construct meaning and legitimacy around their treatment choices, influenced by personal and communal experiences. Additionally, the expanding role of digital medical ecology (Hardey) has enhanced access to information about herbal treatments, with social media and community networks serving as key platforms for the dissemination and validation of non-biomedical health knowledge. These virtual spaces reinforce the acceptance of herbal remedies and allow individuals to form shared therapeutic narratives that challenge dominant biomedical paradigms. However, the scope of this research is limited to a specific urban community, which may introduce social and selection bias. As such, the findings may not be generalizable to broader populations with varying cultural and healthcare access contexts. Future research is recommended to employ mixed-methods approaches and larger, more diverse samples to validate these findings and further investigate the dynamic interactions between traditional and biomedical health systems across different regions and demographics.

This study's findings are supported by prior research, such as Dewi (2021), which found that the public holds a generally positive perception of traditional medicine, primarily due to its perceived safety and long-standing use across generations. This perception is further illustrated through informant testimonies. For instance, one participant stated:

“Herbal medicines are safer, and their usage has started to decline compared to modern medicines based on chemical synthesis” (U6, 74 years old, high school education).

Such statements reinforce the sociocultural therapeutic narrative that positions herbal medicine not merely as an alternative to biomedical treatment but as an inherent part of cultural identity and health-seeking behavior, especially within urban communities. Despite the increasing availability of modern medical interventions, these communities continue to frame herbal remedies as familiar, culturally embedded, and less invasive, underscoring a persistent negotiation with the dominant biomedical paradigm.

Causes of Public Interest in Degenerative Diseases in Medan City in Choosing Herbal Treatment

Public interest in herbal treatment for degenerative diseases in Medan is shaped by dynamic social environmental influences, including interactions with peers, exposure to social media, and the widespread circulation of digital health information. These elements contribute to the formation of sociocultural therapeutic narratives, which position herbal medicine as a legitimate and culturally resonant alternative to biomedical treatments. Central to this preference is the belief in traditional pharmacopoeia, which is perceived as safer and more natural compared to synthetic drugs, often associated with undesirable side effects. In addition to safety concerns, economic considerations—notably the relatively affordable cost of herbal remedies—also influence therapy selection, particularly among communities with limited access to or trust in formal medical care. While familial traditions exert some influence, the findings indicate that external social factors and personal beliefs regarding the safety and effectiveness of herbal treatments are more prominent in shaping therapeutic decisions. These patterns reflect the framework of medical pluralism as articulated by Kleinman, which highlights the negotiation and selection processes individuals engage in when navigating multiple treatment systems. In this context, herbal medicine emerges not only as a culturally embedded practice but also as a pragmatic and socially reinforced health strategy in urban settings like Medan. Similar findings were reported by Herman et al. (2024) in Kutai Kartanegara, where public concern over the potential side effects of synthetic pharmaceuticals was a key factor motivating individuals to switch to herbal medicine. Herbal treatments were viewed as more compatible with local cultural values and collective health narratives,

reinforcing their acceptance as a safer and more culturally resonant therapeutic option. The study emphasized the importance of education on herbal medicine to improve health literacy and strengthen community interest in traditional pharmacopoeia, particularly for the prevention and management of degenerative diseases. This perspective aligns with the views of informants in the present study. One participant stated:

“As I mentioned earlier, conventional medicine has side effects if not taken correctly and does not follow the rules, whereas herbal medicine does not.” (U10, 60 years old, high school education)

Such testimonies underscore the role of perceived safety, cultural familiarity, and trust in herbal remedies, further validating the relevance of traditional medicine in contemporary public health practices—particularly in urban settings experiencing a rise in chronic degenerative conditions.

Internal Factors Affect Public Perception of Degenerative Diseases in Medan City in Choosing Herbal Medicine

Awareness and Awareness

Knowledge and awareness within the community play a crucial role in the selection of therapeutic options, including the use of traditional pharmacopoeia for degenerative diseases. Individuals with high health literacy are typically more discerning when evaluating the benefits, risks, and effectiveness of herbal medicine. They tend to approach treatment choices with greater caution, carefully considering safety concerns and potential long-term risks, especially in comparison to conventional biomedical therapies. In the context of medical pluralism (Kleinman), this decision-making process reflects a dynamic negotiation between sociocultural therapeutic narratives and the dominance of biomedical hegemony. It underscores how individuals navigate multiple treatment systems, balancing traditional healing practices with the scientific and clinical standards of biomedicine. This interaction highlights the complexity of healthcare decision-making in contemporary society, where personal knowledge and cultural values intersect with broader medical frameworks.

The results of this study indicate that individuals with degenerative diseases in Medan exhibit a fairly high level of knowledge and awareness regarding herbal treatments. This knowledge is predominantly shaped by social interactions and exposure to digital media, highlighting the critical role of digital medical ecology (Hardey) in the dissemination of health-related information. Community awareness of the benefits and risks associated with traditional pharmacopoeia plays a pivotal role in treatment decision-making. As one informant (U8, 68 years old, D3) stated:

“Herbal medicine, yes it has benefits for health, because the medicine is made from natural ingredients.”

These findings align with the research conducted by Sidrah Nadira et al. (2023), which emphasizes the significance of community education in improving health literacy and awareness to prevent degenerative diseases. Additionally, this study supports the work of Santoso et al. (2021), which underscores the importance of knowledge about herbal therapies, particularly those with antioxidant properties, in the management of degenerative diseases.

However, this study has several methodological limitations, including a narrow sample scope limited to specific communities, which may introduce social biases in data collection. As a result, the findings may not be fully representative of the broader population. To address these limitations, further research is recommended to expand the sample scope, incorporate mixed methods, and apply data triangulation. This would enhance the validity of the results and provide a more comprehensive understanding of the interactions between knowledge, sociocultural therapeutic narratives, and the use of traditional pharmacopoeia within the digital health ecosystem.

External Factors Affect Public Perception of Degenerative Diseases in Medan City in Choosing Herbal Treatment.

Social and Cultural Influences

Social and cultural influences significantly impact individuals' decisions when choosing herbal medicine. Key factors such as traditional beliefs, trust in the efficacy of herbal treatments, and recommendations from the social environment are the primary reasons for the continued popularity of herbal remedies among the public. Understanding these influences is essential for designing inclusive health policies that align with the cultural values and needs of the community, ensuring that health interventions are both effective and culturally relevant.

Social and cultural influences play a significant role in the decision-making processes of individuals in Medan, particularly those suffering from degenerative diseases, when selecting herbal treatments. Recommendations from family, friends, and the community help shape a sociocultural therapeutic narrative that strengthens trust in the effectiveness and safety of traditional pharmacopoeia. Additionally, the local culture, which has long recognized and integrated traditional medicine, provides a foundation for the acceptance of these practices. However, the analysis reveals that social support from the community is more influential than cultural or traditional factors in the selection of herbal remedies. This finding aligns with the study by Habib, Harahap, and Intan (2021), which emphasized that the use of traditional medicine in Medan is primarily influenced by social interactions and community support, rather than by culture alone. Similarly, Rosani (2024) found that recommendations from

relatives who had previously experienced success with herbal remedies were a key factor in treatment decision-making. This is consistent with the statement of one informant, who noted: “No, I only use herbal medicine to see its efficacy” (U3, 71 years, S1).

Although culture continues to be an integral part of the broader social context, the findings suggest that social influences, such as support and shared experiences from close individuals, have a more significant impact on an individual’s decision to use herbal medicine, particularly within the degenerative disease community in Medan City. These insights highlight the need for a deeper understanding of social dynamics and therapeutic narratives in shaping treatment choices. Moreover, these findings emphasize the importance of incorporating these social factors into the design of inclusive and responsive health policies that align with the cultural values and specific needs of the community.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings from the research on public perception of degenerative diseases in Medan City and the choice of herbal medicine, it can be concluded that the community holds a very positive perception of herbal remedies. The majority of informants reported positive experiences with herbal treatments, with several noting that herbal remedies are perceived as safer and more effective than conventional medical treatments. Key factors shaping this perception include high trust in herbal medicine, belief in its efficacy and benefits, especially due to its natural ingredients, and a general lack of concern about its use. These factors collectively reinforce the community’s preference for herbal remedies as a reliable therapeutic option for managing degenerative diseases.

Public interest in herbal medicine is shaped by various factors, including information received from the social environment, such as friends, social media, and family. The most influential factors driving this interest are the natural composition of herbal remedies, their lack of side effects, and their affordability compared to conventional medical treatments. While family habits do have some influence on decision-making, social factors and information from the broader social environment play a more dominant role in shaping individuals' choices. These findings suggest that the social context and access to health-related information are key determinants in the public’s preference for herbal medicine.

Internal factors, such as knowledge and awareness of herbal medicine, indicate that the majority of informants possess a fairly good understanding of both the benefits and risks associated with herbal remedies. The primary sources of this knowledge are social media and friends, underscoring the significant role of social and technological factors in the

dissemination of health information. On the other hand, external factors, such as social and cultural influences, further reinforce individuals' decisions to use herbal medicine. Among these, support from family, friends, and the community is more influential than cultural or traditional beliefs in shaping decisions regarding herbal treatment. This suggests that social support systems play a more dominant role in influencing health-related decisions than cultural traditions.

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