



Ethnobotany Research and Applications: Required standards for manuscripts based on field research

Cheikh Yebouk

Correspondence

Cheikh Yebouk^{1,2*}

¹Laboratory of Plant Biodiversity and Natural Resource Development, University of Nouakchott, Nouakchott, Mauritania

²Laboratoire National de Contrôle de la Qualité des Médicaments, Nouakchott, Mauritania

*Corresponding Author: yebouk55@gmail.com

Ethnobotany Research and Applications 30:19 (2025) - <http://dx.doi.org/10.32859/era.30.19.1-3>

Manuscript received: 26/01/2025 – Revised manuscript received: 03/02/2025 - Published: 04/02/2025

Editorial

Ethnobotany Research and Applications (ERA), established in 2003, has consistently adhered to its mission of providing free, open-access, and rapidly published research materials worldwide. Over more than 20 years, ERA has grown significantly, publishing nearly 30 volumes and expanding its scope to include ethnobiology, ethnomycology and ethnozoology. Initially hosted at the University of Hawaii, it is now managed by Ilia State University in Georgia and indexed in Scopus and Crossref. With a CiteScore of 3.4 and an acceptance rate between 13-18%, the journal has achieved high academic standing in various fields. Submissions have quadrupled over the last years, with improved publication timelines, but many manuscripts need to be rejected due to failure to follow author guidelines, poor formatting, language issues, etc.

ERA faces recurring issues in submissions, including exaggerated claims about medicinal plant studies, misuse of statistical methods, and confusion between "use" and "knowledge." Many authors also neglect core botanical requirements such as proper species identification and vouchering, undermining reproducibility. The journal remains committed to its free and open-access model, supported by Ilia State University, an unpaid editorial team, and voluntary reviewers. Authors and readers are urged to participate in the peer-review process to sustain ERA's operations and uphold its standards of excellence.

Ethnobotany and ethnopharmacology provide invaluable insights into the relationships between plants and human cultures, especially regarding traditional knowledge, medicinal practices, and sustainable resource use. The Ethnobotany Research and Application Journal embraces this interdisciplinary field, promoting high-quality submissions that meet methodological rigor and align with global ethical standards.

The editorial team recognizes that the volume of submissions often exceeds the journal's publication capacity. Therefore, ensuring adherence to specific methodological and ethical standards is critical for manuscript acceptance. This article serves as a guideline for authors to align their submissions with these requirements. Drawing inspiration from similar standards established in other journals, this document outlines essential criteria for manuscripts focusing on field-based ethnobotanical research

On the Introduction

Manuscripts submitted to the journal should clearly articulate the cultural and historical context of the study area. Ethnobotanical research involves understanding the intricate relationships between plants and local populations, emphasizing their traditional knowledge and practices.

A good introduction should:

- Describe the human context of the study, including cultural diversity and socio-historical background.
- Pose a clear research question or hypothesis to guide the study.
- Provide a concise overview of previous related work to situate the research within a broader academic context.
- Provide an overview on the objectives of the study and include hypotheses that are being tested.

Manuscripts with a lack of novelty or well-documented uses (e.g., garlic as an antibiotic) should not be submitted, neither should manuscripts that represent essentially bioassays, phytochemical studies and reviews, or ecological studies, without broad inclusion of ethnobotanical data.

As in most scientific disciplines, manuscripts should follow the standard structure: Background, Methods, Results, Discussion, and Conclusions. However, results and discussion sections may be combined if justified.

Methodological Issues

High-quality ethnobotanical fieldwork depends on robust methodologies. Authors are encouraged to refer to key ethnobotanical and anthropological manuals (e.g., Alexiades & Sheldon 1996; Cotton 1996; Martin 2010) to ensure their approach adheres to disciplinary standards.

The methods section should include:

Study area

A detailed description of the study area, supported by a map showing boundaries, geographic context, and scale.

Data collection:

Participant selection criteria, interview or survey techniques, and content need to be well described., including the language(s) used, the role of translators (if applicable), and the duration and location of fieldwork.

Correlation of popular and scientific names

ERA requires that all work is based on identifiable vouchers deposited in official herbaria. Herbarium codes for the collection (based on Index Herbariorum) should be included if available, and voucher numbers need to be given for all specimens.

A simple extrapolation of scientific names based on vernacular names and literature is not acceptable.

Nomenclature must be based on standard taxonomic databases (best Plant of the World Online) for accurate nomenclature and botanical family classification.

Ethical Considerations

Prior informed consent from informants is the minimum requirement for publication. All studies must comply with international agreements such as the Nagoya Protocol and follow the International Society of Ethnobiology Code of Ethics.

Results

When presenting results, authors should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Botanical names must be written in Latin binomials, italicized, and accompanied by correctly abbreviated authorities. Families must not be italicized.
- For plant specimens voucher numbers must be included.
- Traditional uses of plants should be clearly categorized, specifying plant parts, administration methods, and dosage information if available.

- To improve submissions, authors are encouraged to provide quantitative data, such as use reports or frequency, and justify the use of ethnobotanical indices like Use-Value and Informant Consensus Factor. Socio-cultural data about participants, including gender and age distribution, should also be included to contextualize findings. The journal highlights the importance of complementing indices with robust statistical tests, such as ANOVA, and multivariate models like PCA or nMDS, to uncover significant relationships and patterns (Kikvidze, & Bussmann 2024)
- Tables and figures should be limited to 3–4 each, adding additional data as supplementary material in the appendix.

Discussion

The discussion section is essential for interpreting findings in the context of existing literature.

Authors should:

- Highlight the novelty and significance of their results.
- Analyze historical and cultural implications of plant uses in the studied area.
- If discussing potential pharmacological activities of medicinal plants, linking findings to scientific evidence.

Concluding remarks

Ethnobotany Research and Application encourages authors to contribute manuscripts that align with these guidelines, whether based on fieldwork, theoretical studies, or taxonomic reflections. By maintaining these standards, the journal aims to promote high-quality, open-access publications that advance ethnobotanical and ethnopharmacological research globally.

Authors are encouraged to explore this journal's platform, which ensures free submission and open access to all published articles, fostering the dissemination of ethnobotanical knowledge across diverse scientific communities.

Literature cited

Alexiades MN, Sheldon JW. 1996. Selected guidelines for ethnobotanical research: a field manual. New York Botanical Garden, New York.

Cotton CM. 1996. Ethnobotany: principles and applications. John Wiley & Sons, Chichester.

Kikvidze Z, Bussmann RW. 2024. Quo vadis ERA? - Editorial 2024. Ethnobotany Research and Applications 29: 1-3. doi: 10.32859/era.29.26.

Martin GJ. 2010. Ethnobotany: a methods manual. Routledge, London.