

Community Empowerment Through Cough Self-Medication Counseling And Utilization Of Herbal Medicines

¹Nurhikmah, ²Ibnu Imam Al Ayyubi, ³Eko Prayetno, ⁴Firda Noerzanah, ⁵Muhammad Rizal
Asri

¹Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, Indonesia. ^{2,4}Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Darul
Falah, Indonesia. ³Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang, Indonesia. ⁵Bartın
Üniversitesi, Turkey..

[¹hikmahnur192@gmail.com](mailto:hikmahnur192@gmail.com), [²ibnuimam996@staidaf.ac.id](mailto:ibnuimam996@staidaf.ac.id), [³echoprav99@gmail.com](mailto:echoprav99@gmail.com),
[⁴firdanzh@gmail.com](mailto:firdanzh@gmail.com), [⁵rizalasri23@icloud.com](mailto:rizalasri23@icloud.com)

*Correspondence Email: ibnuimam996@staidaf.ac.id

Abstract: This study explores the effectiveness of community empowerment through health education on self-medication for cough and the utilization of herbal remedies in Wawobeau Village, South Wawonii, Southeast Sulawesi. Using a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, this research emphasizes the active involvement of the local community in every stage of the empowerment process. The findings indicate that the education program significantly enhanced the community's knowledge and skills in managing minor health issues, particularly coughs. Before the intervention, many individuals either ignored symptoms or relied on inappropriate treatments. However, after participating in the program, the community became more proactive in seeking proper solutions, whether through the correct practice of self-medication or the use of locally available herbal remedies. The participatory approach ensured that the information was not only received but also internalized and applied by the community, leading to behavioral changes. Overall, this study highlights the importance of community-based health education as a means of knowledge transfer and a tool for fostering collective awareness and responsibility in maintaining public health. The findings suggest that such initiatives contribute to improving the overall quality of life in the region.

Keywords: Community Empowerment, Health Education, Self-Medication, Cough.

INTRODUCTION

Public health is one of the essential pillars of sustainable development (Angelina Hasibuan et al., 2024; Gotlib Conn et al., 2022; Pan et al., 2021; Sarfika et al., 2023; Shah et al., 2024). A good level of health not only supports individual productivity but also influences economic growth and overall quality of life (Ferida & Emi, 2025). However, in many remote areas, access to healthcare services remains a significant challenge. Geographical factors, economic limitations, and low health literacy often serve as primary barriers preventing communities from receiving



adequate healthcare services. One alternative solution to address these access limitations is self-medication (Rani & Rinezia, 2025). Self-medication allows individuals to manage minor health complaints independently, provided it is conducted with proper knowledge and practice (Lilis & Faradisa, 2025).

Cough is one of the most common health complaints experienced by the general population, including those in rural areas (Prayetno, Amalia, et al., 2024). Although often considered a mild symptom, improper management can worsen an individual's health condition, potentially leading to more severe respiratory infections. In this context, community understanding of appropriate self-medication is crucial to preventing the risk of complications (Amalia & Arina, 2025). Additionally, the use of herbal medicine as an alternative or complementary treatment has gained attention due to its accessibility and minimal side effects, particularly in rural communities rich in biodiversity (Rifqi & Cahyanto, 2025). Indonesia, a country with abundant biodiversity, has great potential for developing and utilizing herbal medicine. In various regions, including Southeast Sulawesi, traditional medicinal plants have been used for generations as part of local healing traditions (Rifdah & Yulisilvayani, 2025). Wawobeau Village, located in South Wawonii District, possesses significant potential for utilizing herbal medicine. However, a major challenge faced by the community is the lack of knowledge on the proper processing and use of herbal remedies. This limited understanding may reduce the benefits of herbal medicine and even pose health risks if used incorrectly.

Therefore, providing proper education is essential to maximize the effectiveness and safety of herbal medicine. Public health education on correct herbal medicine use can address this issue by offering deeper insights into proper processing techniques, safe dosages, and potential side effects that should be considered. Additionally, such education helps communities identify the most effective herbal plants suited to their health conditions. This, in turn, enables them to make informed choices when using herbal medicine and maximize its benefits as a safe and effective alternative treatment (Margala & Fairuz, 2025). To enhance community understanding of self-medication for cough and the use of herbal remedies, a community-based empowerment approach is necessary. Empowerment is not merely about providing information but actively involving the community in the learning process, enabling them to identify, manage, and utilize local resources



Additionally, there remains a lack of studies discussing regulatory and policy aspects of self-medication, highlighting the need for further exploration of standards that ensure the safety and effectiveness of these practices. Another research gap is the limited studies on the effectiveness of health education provided by healthcare professionals in enhancing public understanding of responsible self-medication. While some research separately discusses medicinal plants and self-medication, their interrelation has not been comprehensively explored. Thus, further studies are needed to understand how communities adopt and integrate medicinal plants into their daily self-medication practices. This gap presents a novel contribution in this study, forming the basis of the researcher's interest in the topic. This study aims to describe the implementation of health education on self-medication for cough and the use of herbal remedies in Wawobean Village, South Wawonii, Southeast Sulawesi. Through this initiative, the community is expected to enhance their knowledge and skills in independently managing cough using available local resources. Furthermore, this article discusses the impact of community empowerment on improving the overall quality of life in the region.

METHOD

This study adopts the Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach, emphasizing direct community involvement in Wawobean Village at every stage of the empowerment process. This approach allows researchers to collaborate with community members in identifying existing issues, designing appropriate solutions, and evaluating the achieved outcomes together (Ramli & Abbas, 2025). By involving the community directly, this research does not merely focus on data collection but also on empowering them towards social change. Additionally, the PAR method provides an opportunity for the community to express their needs and perspectives, making the research findings more relevant and applicable to local conditions (Salsavira & Rosyidah, 2025). Through close collaboration between researchers and the community, the solutions developed are expected to be more effective and sustainable.

This initiative actively involves the community in a collaborative effort to educate them on proper self-medication for cough, including the use of over-the-counter (OTC) and limited OTC medications, as well as herbal treatments. It also promotes ethical coughing practices. Self-

medication refers to an individual's ability to treat themselves without requiring a doctor's prescription or supervision. It involves the use of OTC medications available in pharmacies, such as cough syrups, flu medicine, or pain relievers, to manage mild health conditions that do not require specialized medical attention. However, it is crucial to practice self-medication cautiously by adhering to recommended dosages and recognizing when a condition requires professional medical evaluation (Sitindaon, 2020).

To facilitate socialization and health education, PowerPoint presentations were used, along with the distribution of brochures outlining proper self-medication techniques for cough treatment. The brochures also provided information on various traditional herbal remedies available in the local environment that can help alleviate cough symptoms. After the session, a sharing and Q&A discussion was conducted with the community to further enhance their understanding. The self-medication health education program was conducted in several stages, as follows: (1) Conducting surveys with local health cadres to identify the most common minor illnesses in the community; (2) Seeking permission and coordinating with the village head of Wawobean to ensure smooth program implementation; (3) Coordinating and socializing the program with the community, determining the number of participants and target groups, and setting a schedule for the sessions; (4) Conducting a structured session on self-medication practices for cough treatment, covering both pharmaceutical and herbal options; (5) Facilitating an open discussion where community members can ask questions and share their experiences regarding self-medication and herbal medicine use; (6) Assessing the effectiveness of the program and providing motivational support to encourage sustainable health practices within the community; and (7) Wrapping up the session and summarizing key takeaways.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The health education program on self-medication for cough and the use of herbal medicine in Wawobean Village has had a significant impact in enhancing the community's understanding and skills in managing their health independently. This initiative is particularly crucial in remote areas like Wawobean Village, where access to formal healthcare services is limited (Figure 2). Through this program, the community not only gained knowledge about proper cough

management but also learned how to use herbal medicine correctly and effectively. This education equips them with the ability to select and use herbal treatments safely, reducing their dependency on medical professionals while maintaining their well being.



Figure 2. Brochure on Self-Medication for Cough

Evaluation results indicate that before the health education program, many community members lacked proper knowledge about using herbal medicine and were unaware of potential side effects if used incorrectly. However, after the program, there was a significant increase in their understanding. They are now more capable of identifying various herbal remedies available in their surroundings and processing them appropriately. This is particularly important in Indonesia, which is rich in biodiversity, providing abundant sources for traditional medicine.

Moreover, the participatory approach used in this program successfully engaged the community. The involvement of health cadres and community leaders in the educational sessions not only enhanced the effectiveness of information delivery but also fostered a sense of ownership over the program (Figure 3). As a result, community members felt more responsible for their own health, as evidenced by their increased participation in village health activities. Thus, this program not only served as a knowledge transfer initiative but also as an empowerment tool that encouraged active involvement in health-related decision-making.



Figure 3. Community Education and Awareness Session

The impact of this initiative is also reflected in the behavioral changes among community members regarding the management of minor health issues. Previously, many individuals tended to ignore cough symptoms or relied on inappropriate treatments. However, after gaining sufficient knowledge, they became more proactive in seeking the right solutions, whether by using herbal remedies or practicing proper coughing etiquette. This shift in behavior has the potential to reduce the risk of complications that may arise from improper treatment, such as more severe respiratory infections.

Community based health education plays a crucial role in this context and should not be overlooked. Providing direct education tailored to the community's needs is key to improving awareness and understanding of self-care practices. With better knowledge about managing their health, individuals can make more informed decisions about self-medication, reduce their dependence on healthcare facilities, and prevent the progression of illnesses. This, in turn, enhances their overall quality of life, including their physical, mental, and social well-being. In Wawobeau Village, this initiative can foster a healthier environment, increase awareness of the importance of health, and strengthen community resilience in facing future health challenges (Figure 4). Therefore, investing in community-based health education not only provides direct benefits to individuals but also plays a vital role in promoting inclusive and sustainable public health development.



Figure 4. Presentation and Practical Demonstration of Self-Medication for Cough

The health education program on self-medication for cough and the use of herbal medicine in Wawobeau Village has successfully achieved its goal of empowering the community. Through a participatory and educational approach, residents now have a better understanding and greater preparedness to manage minor health issues independently. This initiative not only taught them the proper way to treat coughs but also introduced them to the safe and effective use of herbal medicine. Moving forward, it is hoped that the community will feel more confident in managing their own health without always relying on formal healthcare facilities. This, in turn, can reduce the burden on the healthcare system and enhance their self-sufficiency in maintaining well-being. Additionally, this program has had a positive impact in fostering a proactive mindset toward health and increasing awareness of disease prevention through a knowledge-based and culturally informed approach (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Group Photo with Local Residents

This educational initiative not only provides short-term benefits but also plays a crucial role in building a stronger and more sustainable health culture at the community level. It is hoped that similar programs can be continued and expanded to cover other health-related topics, further improving the quality of life for residents in the region.

Table 1. Types of Plants That Can be Utilized and Used as Cough Medicine

No.	Scientific Name	Local Name	Part Utilized
1.	Zingiber Officinale	Jahe	Rimpang
2.	Centella Asiatica	Pegagan	Daun
3.	Mentha	Peppermint	Daun
4.	Morinda	Mengkudu	Buah
5.	Thymus Vulgaris	Thyme	Daun
6.	Curcume Longa	Kunyit	Rimpang
7.	Apis	Madu	Madu
8.	Citrus Limon	Lemon	Sari Buah

CONCLUSION

This study shows that counseling on cough self-medication and the use of herbal medicine in Wawobeau Village, South Wawonii, Southeast Sulawesi, has succeeded in increasing community knowledge and skills in dealing with minor health problems, especially coughs. Through the participatory approach applied, the community not only received information, but was also actively involved in the learning process, which encouraged them to identify and utilize local resources optimally. The counseling activities carried out showed a positive impact on changes in community behavior in dealing with cough symptoms. Previously, many individuals tended to ignore symptoms or rely on inappropriate treatments. However, after participating in the counseling, the community became more proactive in finding the right solution, both through the use of herbal medicine and the correct way of self-medication. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of community empowerment through community-based health education, which not only functions as a transfer of knowledge, but also as a means to increase awareness and collective responsibility in maintaining health. Thus, this activity contributes to improving the quality of life of the community in the area.

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