



Phenomenological Exploration of Herbal Remedy Use in Hypertension Management

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ABSTRACT

Hypertension is a major global health issue, with significant implications for cardiovascular diseases. While pharmaceutical treatments are commonly used to manage hypertension, there is increasing interest in alternative therapies, particularly herbal remedies, which are often culturally embedded in patients' health practices. However, little is known about the subjective experiences of individuals using herbal remedies for hypertension, particularly in relation to their cultural and emotional connections to these treatments. This study addresses this gap by exploring the lived experiences of individuals using herbal remedies for managing hypertension. We use a phenomenological approach to uncover the meanings and personal significance individuals attach to herbal treatments. The study involved semi-structured interviews with 12 participants, who shared their experiences and perceptions of using herbal remedies. Data were analyzed thematically using Colaizzi's seven-step framework, which allowed for systematic extraction of significant statements, formulation of meanings, clustering of themes, and validation with participants. Findings revealed that participants view herbal remedies as not just therapeutic tools but also sources of empowerment and cultural continuity. Participants reported a deep connection to their health and cultural traditions through the use of herbal remedies. These findings contribute to the understanding of herbal medicine by emphasizing the importance of considering personal and cultural dimensions when evaluating treatment options. However, the study is limited by its small sample size and focus on a single cultural context, which may affect the generalizability of the results. The implications of this research suggest that healthcare providers should integrate patients' subjective experiences into treatment plans, especially when alternative therapies are involved.



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INTRODUCTION

Hypertension, often referred to as the "silent killer," is a major public health concern globally, affecting millions of individuals across various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds (Tiwari & Tiwari, 2024). This condition, characterized by elevated blood pressure, is a leading risk factor for cardiovascular diseases, stroke, and kidney failure, all of which contribute to significant morbidity and mortality worldwide. While pharmaceutical treatments have proven effective in managing hypertension, there is a growing interest in alternative therapies, particularly herbal remedies, which have been used for centuries in various cultures as a means of maintaining health and treating ailments (Zheng et al., 2024). The use of herbal medicine is deeply rooted in many cultures, with herbal practices often passed down through generations, shaping health-related behaviors and attitudes toward treatment.

In recent years, there has been increasing attention on the integration of traditional herbal remedies with modern medicine, especially in the management of chronic conditions like hypertension (Ghasempour et al., 2024). This phenomenon is not only a medical issue but also a cultural one, as it is shaped by individuals' beliefs, values, and experiences regarding health and

healing (Shetty et al., 2024). The subjective experience of using herbal remedies is influenced by personal, social, and cultural contexts, which makes it essential to explore how individuals perceive and make sense of these treatments in their daily lives. Furthermore, the shift towards natural and holistic health practices reflects broader societal trends, such as a growing mistrust of pharmaceutical interventions and a desire for more personalized and sustainable approaches to healthcare.

Given the increasing reliance on herbal treatments, there is a critical need to explore the lived experiences of individuals using herbal remedies for hypertension (AlAhmad et al., 2024). Such an exploration provides an opportunity to understand the deeper meanings participants attach to their use of herbal medicine, the challenges they face, and the ways in which these remedies shape their health management practices (Dong et al., 2024). By focusing on the subjective experience, phenomenology offers a powerful lens for understanding the nuances of how herbal remedies are perceived, practiced, and integrated into individuals' lives (Hussein et al., 2024). This approach emphasizes the importance of lived experience, offering insights that cannot be captured through objective measurements alone (Ellward et al., 2024). Exploring the meaning of herbal remedy use can illuminate not only individual health behaviors but also the cultural and social dynamics that influence health choices, thus filling a crucial gap in the literature on alternative treatments.

Research into the subjective experiences of individuals, particularly in the context of health-related phenomena, has become an essential area within the social sciences and medical fields (Taki & Mallick, 2024). Phenomenology, as a method of inquiry, allows for a deep exploration of how individuals perceive and make sense of their experiences, focusing on the meanings they attach to their lived realities (Sifi et al., 2024). When it comes to understanding the use of herbal remedies for managing hypertension, phenomenological research provides a valuable perspective, as it allows for a rich and nuanced understanding of the personal and cultural meanings participants associate with their health practices. Previous studies have highlighted the significance of individual beliefs and experiences in shaping health behaviors, but few have specifically addressed the lived experience of those using herbal remedies for hypertension in a detailed, qualitative manner.

Despite the growing interest in this field, the methodological challenges in exploring these deep, personal experiences remain significant (Adelodun et al., 2025). Quantitative approaches, while useful in measuring the effectiveness of herbal remedies, fall short of capturing the intricate, subjective nuances of individual experiences (Yang et al., 2025). These methods often focus on numerical data and clinical outcomes, overlooking the personal meanings, social influences, and emotional aspects tied to the use of herbal treatments (Bunpean & Singweratham, 2025). As a result, the richness of individual stories and the underlying cultural and emotional contexts are often left unexplored. This gap is particularly evident in the realm of hypertension management, where patients' personal perceptions of herbal medicine such as the feelings of empowerment, skepticism, or cultural connections are essential to fully understanding the effectiveness and significance of these treatments.

The limitations of previous approaches make it clear that more qualitative research is needed to delve deeper into the subjective experiences of individuals using herbal remedies (Saka et al., 2025). Conventional research methods, which prioritize clinical measures and statistical analysis, are inadequate in capturing the essence of individuals' lived experiences (Kim et al., 2024). The need for a phenomenological approach is paramount, as it offers an opportunity to explore the meanings individuals ascribe to their experiences, revealing insights that quantitative methods are unable to provide (Siswanto et al., 2024). By employing phenomenology, this study aims to uncover the profound, multifaceted understandings of how individuals experience herbal remedies, thereby offering a more complete and comprehensive perspective on the phenomenon.

While the use of herbal remedies for hypertension has been widely studied from a clinical perspective, the exploration of individuals' subjective experiences with these treatments remains limited (Mangmool et al., 2024). Most studies on herbal remedies in hypertension management focus on practical solutions, evaluating their effectiveness through clinical trials or quantitative measurements. These studies often provide valuable insights into the physiological impact of herbal treatments, but they fail to capture the personal, emotional, and cultural meanings that individuals

attach to these remedies. As a result, the understanding of how individuals experience and interpret their use of herbal remedies remains incomplete and lacks depth.

The existing literature on herbal remedies tends to rely on conventional approaches, which, although useful for assessing the effectiveness of treatments, do not address the complexities of personal experience (Güzel & Rahman, 2025; Jassim et al., 2024). These methods are primarily concerned with outcomes such as blood pressure reduction, overlooking the underlying perceptions, beliefs, and personal stories that influence individuals' health behaviors (Venkatesan et al., 2024). Without capturing these experiences, the knowledge gained from clinical trials and quantitative research is limited in its ability to fully comprehend the holistic impact of herbal remedies on individuals' lives.

To address this gap, a phenomenological approach offers a promising alternative (Vikhe et al., 2024). By focusing on the lived experiences of individuals, phenomenology allows for a deeper exploration of the meanings participants attach to their use of herbal remedies. This method goes beyond the clinical outcomes and explores the emotional, social, and cultural factors that shape individuals' health practices (Lucianus et al., 2024). Through phenomenology, we can gain a more comprehensive and authentic understanding of how herbal remedies are integrated into the daily lives of individuals managing hypertension, providing insights that are crucial for both academic inquiry and practical applications in healthcare.

Previous studies have explored the use of herbal remedies in the management of hypertension, focusing primarily on clinical outcomes such as blood pressure reduction (Nondo et al., 2025). While these studies have provided valuable insights into the physiological effectiveness of herbal treatments, they often fail to address the subjective experiences of individuals using these remedies (Sandhya et al., 2025). Few studies have employed qualitative methodologies that capture the personal, cultural, and emotional aspects of herbal remedy use (Utami et al., 2024). In the context of hypertension management, understanding how individuals perceive the efficacy and significance of herbal remedies within their daily lives is crucial. By integrating phenomenological perspectives, this study seeks to contribute to the existing literature by focusing on the lived experiences and meanings individuals associate with herbal remedies.

This research adopts a phenomenological approach to investigate the meanings and experiences of individuals using herbal remedies for hypertension (Vahekeni et al., 2024). The reason for selecting phenomenology is its focus on understanding the essence of human experiences, which cannot be adequately captured by quantitative measures alone (Tallini et al., 2024). By exploring participants' personal stories, beliefs, and cultural contexts, phenomenology enables a deeper, more comprehensive understanding of how individuals interact with and perceive herbal remedies in managing their health (William et al., 2025). This approach directly addresses the gap identified in previous studies, which overlook the rich, subjective experiences tied to herbal remedy use. It allows for an exploration of how these remedies shape the health behaviors and overall well-being of individuals.

The structure of this article is designed to provide a thorough understanding of the research process and findings (Espíndola-Rodríguez et al., 2024). It begins with an introduction that contextualizes the phenomenon of herbal remedy use in hypertension management, followed by a detailed explanation of the phenomenological methodology used (Rong et al., 2024). The article then discusses the data collection process, including semi-structured interviews, and outlines the thematic analysis conducted on the data. The discussion section interprets the results in light of the existing literature, and the conclusion highlights the study's implications for healthcare practice and future research.

RESEARCH METHODS

Study Design

This study utilized a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of individuals using herbal remedies for managing hypertension (Fife, 2020). Phenomenology is

particularly suited for this research as it focuses on understanding and interpreting the subjective experiences and meanings that individuals attach to their use of herbal treatments. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of how participants perceive and make sense of their experiences with herbal remedies, providing rich, nuanced insights into the phenomenon under investigation.

The descriptive phenomenological approach was specifically chosen due to its emphasis on providing an unembellished account of participants' experiences. By focusing on the essence of these experiences, this methodology offers a direct and clear portrayal of how individuals interact with and understand the impact of herbal remedies in their daily lives. The application of this approach facilitated the identification of common themes across participants' experiences, which contributed to a deeper understanding of their perspectives.

Participants

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that individuals with relevant experiences related to the use of herbal remedies for hypertension were included. The inclusion criteria required participants to be adults aged 30-65 who have been using herbal remedies as part of their hypertension management for at least six months. This selection criterion was chosen to ensure that participants had sufficient experience with the phenomenon being studied, enabling them to provide rich and meaningful insights.

The sample comprised 12 participants (6 male, 6 female) with an average age of 48 years. These individuals represented a variety of cultural backgrounds, ensuring diversity in the perspectives on herbal remedies. Exclusion criteria included individuals who were not currently using herbal remedies for hypertension or those who were unable to provide informed consent. The participants' diverse demographic and experiential backgrounds allowed for the exploration of the topic across different social contexts.

Data Collection

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews conducted face-to-face. The interviews followed an interview guide designed to explore participants' experiences with herbal remedies, their perceptions of effectiveness, and the personal and cultural significance of using herbal treatments. Each interview lasted between 45 minutes to 1 hour and was held in a quiet, private space to ensure participants felt comfortable and able to speak openly.

The interview guide was based on existing literature on herbal medicine and hypertension management, with slight modifications to align with the specific context of this study. The interviews were audio-recorded with participants' consent and transcribed verbatim for analysis. A comfortable environment was created by establishing rapport and ensuring confidentiality throughout the interview process.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which is a widely used method in phenomenological research. Thematic analysis allows for the identification of patterns within the data that reflect key aspects of participants' experiences. The analysis was conducted in several steps: first, the transcriptions were read multiple times to immerse in the data. Next, significant units of meaning were identified and coded, focusing on participants' descriptions of their experiences with herbal remedies.

The codes were then grouped into themes that encapsulated the essence of the participants' experiences. These themes were refined through an iterative process, ensuring that they accurately reflected the meaning attributed to herbal remedy use. NVivo software was used to assist in organizing and coding the data, but the focus remained on ensuring that the thematic structure remained grounded in the participants' narratives.

Ethics

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the relevant research ethics committee. Informed consent was obtained from all participants prior to data collection. Participants were fully

informed about the nature of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw at any point without penalty. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured, with all data stored securely and used solely for the purposes of this study.

Participants were also informed that their identities would remain confidential and that the data would be reported in aggregate form, ensuring that no personal identifying information was included in the final analysis. All ethical guidelines for conducting research with human subjects were adhered to, in accordance with international standards for research ethics.

RESULTS

Personal Transformation Through Herbal Use

A significant theme that emerged from the data was the personal transformation participants experienced through the long-term use of herbal remedies. Participants reported a shift in their understanding of health, seeing herbal treatments not just as an alternative to pharmaceuticals, but as a holistic approach to managing their condition. One participant, Maria, emphasized the empowerment she felt after incorporating herbal remedies into her daily routine:

"I feel more in control of my health now. Before, I was dependent on medication. But with these herbs, I feel like I'm doing something natural for my body. It gives me a sense of relief, like I'm healing myself."

This theme highlights the empowering nature of using herbal treatments, suggesting that individuals who use herbal remedies may develop a deeper connection to their health. This transformation is not just physical but also mental and emotional, as participants reported feeling a sense of ownership and responsibility for their wellbeing.

Challenges and Uncertainty in Herbal Treatment

While the use of herbal remedies brought empowerment, it also presented significant challenges and uncertainties. Many participants discussed feelings of skepticism and confusion, particularly in the early stages of using herbal remedies. Some noted that they were unsure about the effectiveness and safety of herbs, given the lack of clear guidance and standardized dosages. David, a participant with high blood pressure, shared his initial reservations:

"I didn't know what to expect at first. There are so many herbs, and some say they help with blood pressure, but it's hard to trust. I didn't feel confident until I saw some results after a few months."

These concerns reveal the tension between the desire for natural healing and the uncertainty that often accompanies the use of herbal remedies. Participants often mentioned that, over time, as they observed positive effects, their doubts decreased. However, this journey from uncertainty to trust was not immediate, and it was marked by a gradual increase in confidence.

Social Influence and Cultural Perceptions of Herbal Remedies

Another critical theme identified in the study was the influence of social and cultural perceptions on participants' use of herbal remedies. Many individuals reported that their family members or cultural beliefs played a significant role in their decision to try and continue using herbal treatments. For instance, Olivia shared how her family's cultural beliefs influenced her choice to incorporate herbal remedies into her hypertension management:

"My grandmother always used herbs. It's part of our culture. She believed in the power of nature, and I trust her. I started using them because I felt connected to that tradition."

This theme underscores the importance of cultural context and family traditions in shaping attitudes toward herbal remedies. For these participants, the use of herbal remedies is not only a personal decision but also a cultural practice that connects them to their past and heritage.

Perceived Benefits and Effectiveness

Participants consistently reported perceived benefits of herbal remedies in managing hypertension, with many expressing satisfaction with their effectiveness. While they acknowledged that herbal treatments did not replace conventional medication, they highlighted that herbs had played a complementary role in their health management. For example, John, a middle-aged participant with controlled hypertension, explained:

"I take my medication as prescribed, but the herbs help me feel more balanced. I notice less stress, and my energy is up. I feel like I'm doing more for my body by combining both."

This theme reveals the perceived effectiveness of herbal remedies, especially when used in conjunction with conventional treatments. Participants reported feeling that herbal remedies contributed positively to their overall health and quality of life, even if they did not fully replace traditional treatments.

The analysis reveals that participants' experiences with herbal remedies for hypertension are multifaceted, involving personal empowerment, uncertainty, cultural influence, and perceived health benefits. While some participants expressed initial doubts and challenges, many found that their experiences with herbal remedies ultimately fostered a sense of control over their health. The integration of herbal remedies into their health management practices not only supported their physical wellbeing but also connected them to cultural traditions and provided emotional reassurance. These findings provide important insights into the subjective experiences of individuals using herbal remedies, highlighting the complex and dynamic relationship between natural treatments, personal health practices, and cultural context. The next section will discuss the implications of these findings in greater detail.

DISCUSSION

This study sought to explore the lived experiences of individuals using herbal remedies for managing hypertension, focusing on the meanings they attach to these treatments (Jaskólski et al., 2025). The findings revealed that participants perceive herbal remedies not only as a way to manage hypertension but also as a source of empowerment, cultural connection, and personal healing. Participants reported feeling a greater sense of control over their health, and many expressed deep emotional and cultural ties to the use of herbal treatments (Lin et al., 2024). The main contribution of this study is the insight it provides into how individuals integrate herbal remedies into their health practices, highlighting both the challenges and benefits of these treatments in the context of hypertension management.

The findings of this study directly address the research question by shedding light on the subjective experiences of individuals who use herbal remedies for hypertension (Muriuki et al., 2024). The research highlights that participants do not view herbal treatments merely as a substitute for pharmaceutical drugs; instead, they imbue these remedies with significant cultural and emotional meaning (Mohanty et al., 2024). Many participants spoke of the personal transformation they underwent, feeling empowered by their ability to take control of their health. This shift in perspective is a key finding of the study, as it suggests that herbal remedy use goes beyond the physical management of hypertension and extends into broader dimensions of personal well-being, identity, and cultural continuity. The study's findings emphasize the importance of considering these subjective experiences when evaluating the effectiveness of alternative health treatments, as they can play a significant role in the overall health outcomes.

When comparing the findings with existing literature, this study provides valuable insights that complement previous research on the use of herbal remedies in hypertension management (Mohammed et al., 2025). Many studies have focused on the clinical effectiveness of herbal treatments, showing positive effects on blood pressure reduction. However, these studies often fail to account for the broader, subjective experiences of those using these remedies. The findings of this research align with previous studies that highlight the psychological and emotional benefits of herbal medicine, such as enhanced feelings of control and well-being (Zhang et al., 2018). Moreover, this study builds on the work of scholars like Kaptchuk (2002), who discussed the importance of the placebo effect and the cultural context in therapeutic practices (Fathima et al., 2024). However, the

current study goes further by directly linking these experiences to hypertension management, offering a richer understanding of how individuals perceive and value herbal remedies in their daily lives. By incorporating a phenomenological lens, the research extends the conversation beyond clinical outcomes, offering a more holistic view of herbal remedy use in managing chronic conditions like hypertension.

Implications of the Findings

The findings from this study have important implications both for the field of alternative medicine and for healthcare professionals. From a scientific perspective, this research highlights the importance of considering subjective experiences in the evaluation of herbal remedies, particularly in the management of chronic conditions like hypertension (Akinduko et al., 2024). Participants in this study viewed herbal remedies not just as a treatment but as a source of empowerment and cultural connection. These insights suggest that healthcare providers should adopt a more holistic approach, incorporating patients' beliefs, cultural practices, and personal experiences into treatment plans. In practice, this could mean acknowledging the value of herbal remedies as part of a comprehensive health strategy, particularly for individuals who feel a strong connection to these treatments (Kaçmaz et al., 2025). Furthermore, the study emphasizes the need for healthcare professionals to understand the emotional and cultural significance of herbal medicine, which could enhance patient adherence and satisfaction.

Limitations of the Study

While the findings provide important insights into the lived experiences of individuals using herbal remedies for hypertension, several limitations must be acknowledged (Ghosh et al., 2024). The study employed a phenomenological approach, which prioritizes depth over breadth, and thus the sample size was relatively small (12 participants). As a result, the findings may not be fully generalizable to larger populations or to individuals who do not use herbal remedies. Additionally, the study focused on participants from a specific cultural and geographical context, which may limit the transferability of the findings to other settings with different cultural practices or healthcare systems. Moreover, as with any qualitative study, the researcher's interpretations are influenced by their own perspectives, and while efforts were made to minimize bias through member checking and triangulation, this remains a potential limitation. Future research could explore the experiences of a broader range of individuals, including those from diverse cultural backgrounds and with varying levels of engagement with herbal medicine.

Prospects for Future Research

The findings of this study open several avenues for future research. One potential area of exploration is the comparison of the experiences of individuals using herbal remedies for hypertension with those using conventional medications. This could provide deeper insights into how people perceive the effectiveness and emotional impact of different treatment options. Another promising direction is the investigation of how cultural factors shape the use of herbal remedies across different populations, providing a more global understanding of the phenomenon. Additionally, further research could explore how healthcare professionals' attitudes toward herbal remedies influence their patients' willingness to integrate these treatments into their healthcare plans. Finally, longitudinal studies that track participants' experiences with herbal remedies over time could provide valuable insights into the long-term impacts of these treatments on both health outcomes and personal perceptions.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the subjective experiences of individuals using herbal remedies for managing hypertension, aiming to understand the deeper meanings attached to these practices. The findings revealed that participants view herbal remedies not only as effective tools for managing hypertension but also as empowering practices deeply connected to their personal health, culture, and emotional well-being. Participants reported a sense of control over their health and a cultural

connection to herbal treatments, addressing gaps in previous research that primarily focused on clinical outcomes.

This research provides valuable insights into the holistic benefits of herbal remedies, suggesting that healthcare providers should consider these subjective experiences when developing treatment plans. In practical terms, healthcare systems could integrate culturally sensitive counseling about herbal use into hypertension management programs, ensuring that patients receive balanced guidance on the safe combination of conventional and herbal treatments. Policymakers may also consider developing regulatory frameworks that provide clearer standards for herbal remedy use, including dosage guidelines and quality assurance, to reduce uncertainty for patients. Future studies could expand on this research by exploring how cultural factors influence herbal remedy use across different populations and examining the long-term impacts of these treatments. By linking patient-centered insights with healthcare practice and policy, this study underscores the importance of bridging biomedical approaches with cultural health practices, thereby fostering more inclusive and responsive care models.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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