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Medicinal Plants Mentioned In The Quran And Islamic Tradition: A Systematic Review Of Traditional Uses, Ethnobotanical Knowledge And Pharmacological Evidence

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ABSTRACT

Historical, ethnobotanical and pharmacological studies have been carried out on plants mentioned in the Quran and Islamic textual traditions. Plants mentioned in the Quran and the Islamic textual traditions have been the subjects of historical and ethnobotanical and pharmacological interest. Their botanical relationships, however, have not been so consistently synthesized, nor have the evidence for their medicinal properties. This systematic review gathers and standardizes the information from medicines collected for medicinal plants from different sources such as Holy Quran, Hadith collections, classical Islamic medical literature and relevant ethnobotanical resources. A total of 32 distinct medicinal plant species were identified in the review

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that are linked to Quranic and wider Islamic textual traditions. Some are *Allium cepa* L., *Allium sativum* L., *Nigella sativa* L., *Olea europaea* L., *Phoenix dactylifera* L., *Punica granatum* L., *Ficus carica* L., *Vitis vinifera* L., and *Zingiber officinale* Roscoe. The quantitative analysis revealed that the families with the highest number of species were Fabaceae (4 species), Burseraceae (3 species), and Amaryllidaceae, Asteraceae, Cucurbitaceae, Lamiaceae and Lythraceae (2 species each). The most common parts of plants were leaves, fruits and seeds (13, 9 and 8 species, respectively). Medicinal uses were grouped and the most popular were digestive disorders (21 plants), anti-inflammatory and analgesic uses (20 plants), respiratory disorders (14 plants) and reproductive health (13 plants). It is important to be able to isolate and identify the primary literature sources to make use of the traditional literature in a rigorous scientific manner, and to be able to distinguish primary literature sources from the modern experimental literature. The results offer a systematic basis for ethnobotanical, pharmaceutical, clinical and conservation studies. This study aimed to review the Quranic plants and Islamic medicinal traditions by examining the ethnobotanical and pharmacological activities of plant parts used in Islamic medicinal traditions. The objective of the present study was aimed at reviewing the Quranic plants and Islamic medicinal traditions by examining the ethnobotanical and pharmacological activity of the parts of plants used in Islamic medicine.

Keywords: Quranic Plants; Islamic Medicinal Traditions; Ethnobotany; Medicinal Plants; Pharmacological Activities; Traditional Islamic Medicine; Plant Parts Used; Taxonomic Distribution

Introduction

The historical association between humans, plants, food, health and traditional medicine has a significant aspect in plants referred to in the Quran and other significant texts in the Islamic tradition. Plants, foods, natural resources and elements related to human health, have been mentioned in the Quran as a main religious and cultural book of Islam in many passages. Quran as the central religious and cultural scripture of Islam, there are many passages concerning plants, foods, natural resources and elements related to human health (Babashpour Asl, 2022; Mohamed, 2024). After the advent of Islam, medical knowledge continued to develop as a result of the interplay of religious prescriptions, local knowledge and the learning heritage of the medieval Islamic world (Ahmad, 2024; Garuba *et al.*, 2025). Classical scholars like Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Ibn al-Baytar and Ibn al-Qayyim collected a vast amount of knowledge on medicinal substances and medicine, many of which were both based on or expanded on plants mentioned in the Quran and Prophetic traditions (Garuba *et al.*, 2025; El Sayed *et al.*, 2025). The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) used or recommended several plant-based remedies, details of which have been carefully preserved by his companions and were later collected in Hadiths and prophetic medicine books (Tibb-e-Nabawi) (Ahmad, 2024; Mohamed, 2024). Plants mentioned in the Quran and Hadith as well as their traditional uses, botanical features and modern importance have been previously documented (Ahmad *et al.*, 2009; El-Seedi *et al.*, 2019; Mohamed, 2024). For instance, El-Seedi *et al.*, (2019) have compared the

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traditional uses of plants related to the Quran and Hadith with the current research on the medicinal properties of plants. However, the earlier compilations vary widely in the number of species, in their list of species, and in the number of references that are scriptural (namely, citing the Bible) versus later medical or ethnobotanical elaborations. The link between historical documentation and current pharmacologic data, and conservation concerns, is still very much needed (Solihah & Kuswantoro, 2024). The main objectives of the present systematic review were thus to identify and taxonomically standardize the species of medicinal plants mentioned in the Quran and Islamic textual sources, to distinguish between Quranic, Hadith, classical medical and ethnobotanical evidence, to sum up the documented parts of the plants and traditional therapeutic applications and to assess the contemporary pharmacological evidence available for the plants.

Materials and Methods

Data Sources and Screening

The particles of plants used in the Quran and Islamic traditions were identified by following a systematic review approach. To identify plant species and plant derived products mentioned in quranic verses, related to food, health and medicinal uses, previous compilations of Quranic plants (Babashpour Asl, 2022, Mohamed, 2024) was used to examine the quranic verses. The plant references, traditional uses and medicinal interpretations were documented using hadith literature and classical Islamic medical writings as other historical sources (Ahmad, 2024; El-Seedi *et al.*, 2019; Mohamed, 2024). The continued use and medicinal value of these plants was put in context through pertinent ethnobotanical literature (Garuba *et al.*, 2025). A literature search was carried out in various scientific databases with key words of Quranic plants, Islamic medicinal traditions, ethnobotany and pharmacological evidence. The number of duplicate records was eliminated and only studies relevant to the identification of plants, traditional uses, and pharmacological data were selected.

Taxonomic Identification and Deduplication

The plants mentioned in the Quranic text, Hadith, and classical Islamic literature were systematically compiled using botanical literature, taxonomic databases, and floristic references (Ghazanfar & Wickens, 2023; Mohamed, 2024). All the current accepted scientific names, author citations, botanical families and synonyms have been checked with international resources such as Plants of the World Online and World Flora Online. Redundant records were merged due to multiple occurrences, or synonymous scientific names and alternative vernacular or transliteration names. For instance the species *Saussurea costus*, *Trigonella foenum-graecum* and *Thymus serpyllum* were repeated in the records from the initial extraction and eventually combined to make 32 unique species.

Data Compilation and Categorization

Data compilation and categorization. Information on botanical name, family, parts used and traditional medicinal uses were retrieved and tabulated in a standardized database (El-Seedi *et al.*, 2019; Mohamed, 2024). Medicinal uses reported were

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grouped into broad therapeutic categories: digestive, respiratory, hepatic, cardiovascular, dermatological, urinary, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory/analgesic, reproductive, neurological, metabolic, ophthalmic and oral health. The traditional indications recorded in Quranic, Hadith, classical Islamic medical and ethnobotanical literature were used for the classification. These were used for quantitative analysis of medicinal-use patterns and visualization (Garuba *et al.*, 2025).

Visualization and Analysis

Descriptive quantitative analyses summarized the patterns of the medicinal plants of the Quran. Taxonomic distribution, plant-part utilization, traditional therapeutic categories and plant–use associations were visualized using bar graphs, pie charts, heatmaps and graphical summaries in python (matplotlib and seaborn). Binary presence–absence matrices were used to show the relationships between species and therapeutic categories.

Results

The overall workflow for selection, taxonomic standardization and analysis of the Quranic medicinal plants is summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Workflow for Selection and Analysis of Quranic Medicinal Plants

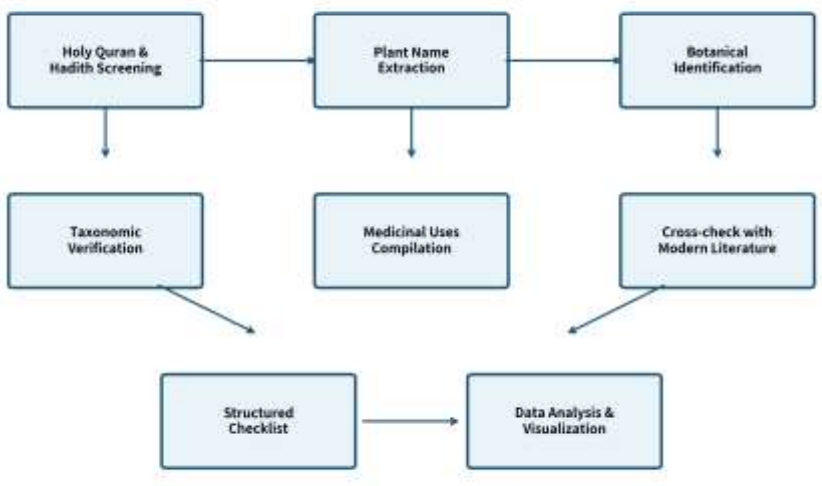

Figure 1. Workflow for selection, identification, and analysis of Quranic medicinal plants.

Taxonomic Distribution

The standardized checklist of 32 unique species is presented in Table 1. It summarizes botanical identity, plant parts utilized, reported medicinal applications and corresponding Quranic references, Hadith sources and classical Islamic medical literature.

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Botanical Name	English (Arabic)	Family	Part(s) Used	Key Medicinal Uses	Quran	Hadith / Classical
Acorus calamus L.	Sweet flag (Zareera)	Acoraceae	Roots	Eye, stomach, paralysis, malaria, arthritis	—	Bukhari; Ibn al-Qayyim
Agaricus campestris L.	Mushroom (Esh El-Ghorab)	Agaricaceae	Whole	Eye, strength, germicide, pain	—	Bukhari; Muslim; Ibn Majah
Allium cepa L.	Onion (Basal)	Amaryllidaceae	Bulb, leaves, seeds	Stomach, throat, cold, menstruation	2:61	Bukhari; Muslim; Ibn Majah; Zad al-Ma'ad
Allium sativum L.	Garlic (Thum)	Amaryllidaceae	Bulb	Antidote, wound, cough, TB	2:61	Bukhari; Muslim; Ibn Majah; Zad al-Ma'ad
Beta vulgaris L.	Beetroot (Silq)	Amaranthaceae	Roots, leaves	Liver, skin, hepatitis, womb	—	Bukhari; Ibn Majah
Boswellia carterii Birdw.	Frankincense (Luban)	Burseraceae	Gum	Stomach, wound, throat, TB	—	Ibn al-Qayyim; Al-Bayhaqi
Boswellia serrata Roxb.	Indian frankincense (Kundur)	Burseraceae	Gum	Memory, urine, swelling, baldness	—	Tibb-e-Nabvi; Ibn al-Qayyim
Cassia senna L.	Senna (Sana Makki)	Fabaceae	Leaves, fruit	Laxative, detox, stimulant	—	Ibn Majah; Zad al-Ma'ad
Cichorium intybus L.	Chicory (Hindiba)	Asteraceae	Leaves, roots, seeds	Eye, hepatitis, liver, kidney stones	—	Bukhari; Ibn al-Qayyim
Cinnamomum camphora L.	Camphor (Kafur)	Lauraceae	Leaves, branches	Teeth, cholera,	76:5	Bukhari; Muslim;

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				wounds, tonic		Ibn al-Qayyim
Citrullus lanatus Thunb.	Watermelon (Bittikh)	Cucurbitaceae	Fruit, seeds	Kidney, diuretic, immunity, cooling	—	Ibn Majah; Tirmidhi; Ibn al-Qayyim
Citrus aurantiifolia (Christm.) Swingle	Lime (Laymun)	Rutaceae	Fruit, juice	Digestive, hepatitis, diabetes, skin	—	Bukhari
Commiphora myrrha (T.Nees) Engl.	Myrrh (Murr)	Burseraceae	Gum	Wound, cough, urinary	—	Al-Bayhaqi
Cydonia oblonga Mill.	Quince (Safarjal)	Rosaceae	Fruit	Heart, diarrhea, dysentery	—	Ibn Majah; Ibn al-Qayyim
Ficus carica L.	Fig (Teen)	Moraceae	Fruit, leaves	Kidney/liver stones, dyspepsia	95:1-4	Bukhari; Ibn al-Qayyim
Flemingia grahamiana Wight & Arn.	Waras (Wars)	Fabaceae	Leaves	TB, throat, piles, leukorrhea	—	Ibn Majah; Ibn al-Qayyim
Hordeum vulgare L.	Barley (Sha'ir)	Poaceae	Grain	Heart, cholesterol, jaundice, cooling	—	Bukhari (Aisha); Ibn al-Qayyim
Lagenaria siceraria (Molina) Standl.	Bottle gourd (Yaqtin)	Cucurbitaceae	Fruit, leaves	Piles, cold, kidney, liver, heart	10:98	Bukhari; Ibn Majah
Lawsonia inermis L.	Henna (Hinna)	Lythraceae	Leaves	Skin, muscle, chickenpox, vaginal	—	Tirmidhi; Bukhari; Ibn Majah; Ibn al-Qayyim
Lens culinaris Medik.	Lentil (Adas)	Fabaceae	Seeds	Vitality, cold, eye, digestive	2:61	Ibn al-Qayyim
Lepidium sativum L.	Garden cress (Habbat al-	Brassicaceae	Leaves	Pain, arthritis,	—	Ibn al-Qayyim

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	Rashad)			menstruation, digestive		
Nigella sativa L.	Black seed (Habbat al-Sawda)	Ranunculaceae	Seeds	All ailments except death; fever, pain	—	Bukhari (Abu Hurayrah); Ibn Majah; Tirmidhi; Ibn al-Qayyim
Ocimum basilicum L.	Sweet basil (Rayhan)	Lamiaceae	Leaves, seeds	Arthritis, asthma, piles, hepatitis	55:12	Bukhari; Tirmidhi; Ibn al-Qayyim
Olea europaea L.	Olive (Zaytun)	Oleaceae	Fruit, oil	Eczema, baldness, kidney, respiratory	6:99; 16:11; 24:35; 95:1	Bukhari; Tirmidhi; Ibn Majah; Ibn al-Qayyim
Phoenix dactylifera L.	Date palm (Nakhl/Tamr)	Arecaceae	Fruit	Intestinal, heart, wound, diarrhea, piles	Multiple Surahs	Ibn Majah; Tirmidhi; Bukhari; Ibn al-Qayyim
Punica granatum L.	Pomegranate (Rumman)	Lythraceae	Fruit	Stomach, hepatitis, heart, liver, piles	6:99, 6:141; 55:68	Ibn al-Qayyim
Salvadora persica L.	Miswak tree (Arak)	Salvadoraceae	Branches, roots	Oral hygiene, diabetes, digestive	—	Bukhari; Ibn al-Qayyim
Saussurea costus (Falc.) Lipsch.	Costus (Qust Bahri)	Asteraceae	Roots	Carminative, antiseptic, TB, infection	—	Bukhari; Tibb-e-Nabvi
Thymus serpyllum L.	Wild thyme (Za'tar)	Lamiaceae	Leaves	Germicide, cough, stomach, liver, cold	—	Ibn al-Qayyim
Trigonella foenum-graecum L.	Fenugreek (Hulbah)	Fabaceae	Seeds, leaves	Cough, piles, lactagogue, diabetes	—	Tibb-e-Nabvi; Ibn al-Qayyim
Vitis vinifera L.	Grape (Inab)	Vitaceae	Fruit, juice	Cooling, kidney,	16:11; 2:266;	Bukhari; Ibn al-

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				fatigue, cancer support	23:19; 36:34; 6:99	Qayyim
Zingiber officinale Roscoe	Ginger (Zanjabil)	Zingiberaceae	Rhizome	Sexual, diuretic, diabetes support	76:17	Bukhari; Muslim; Ibn al-Qayyim

Table 1. Checklist of 32 unique Quranic/Prophetic medicinal plants (botanical identity, parts used, key traditional uses, and primary textual references).

Following the deduplication process 32 different species of medicinal plants belonging to 22 botanical families were retained. Fabaceae was the richest in species (4 species: *Trigonella foenum-graecum, Cassia senna, Flemingia grahamiana* and *Lens culinaris*). *Boswellia carterii, B. serrata* and *Commiphora myrrha*, of the Burseraceae family, were the second most numerous with 3 species. The other families were represented by one species each, except for Amaryllidaceae (2 spp.), Asteraceae (2 spp.), Cucurbitaceae (2 spp.), Lamiaceae (2 spp.) and Lythraceae (2 spp.). Taxonomic distribution thus shows a wide range of plants from plants from Islamic textual and historical sources (Figure 2).

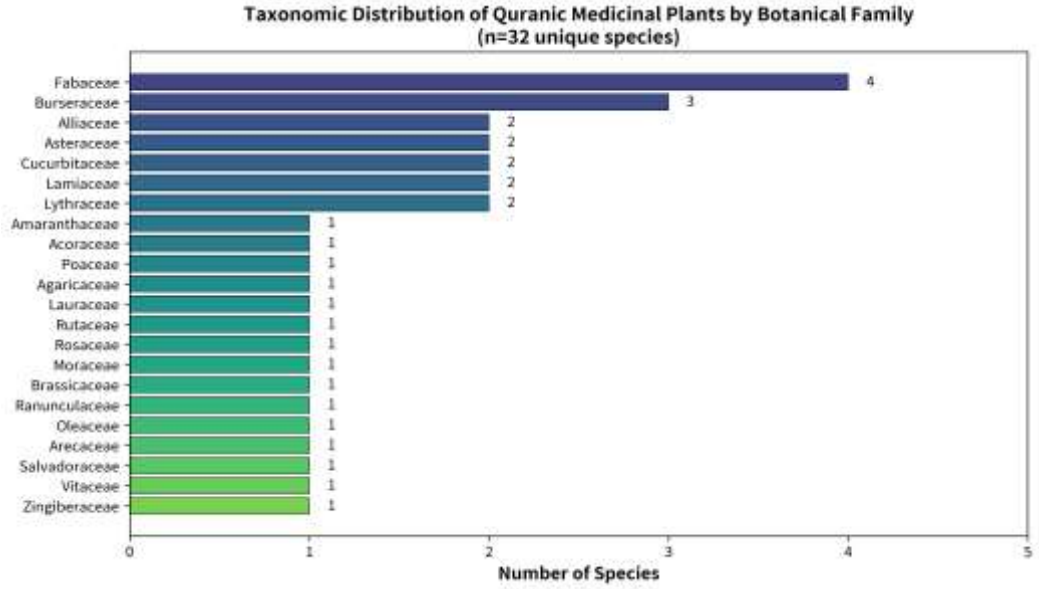

Figure 2. Number of Quranic plant species by botanical family (n = 32 unique species).

Plant Parts Used

The most common part of the plants reported were leaves (13 of 32 species), then fruits (9 species) and seeds (8 species). Five species had roots recorded, and three species for each of gum/resin, branches and juice. Other parts (bulbs, bark, whole plant, flowers, latex, rhizomes and oils) were less common. Multiple use parts were used in several species, suggesting that frequently, more than one part of the plant was used for medicine. Frequencies are multiple-use records, with more than one part

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being recorded for the same species leading to numbers not totaling 32 (Figure 3).

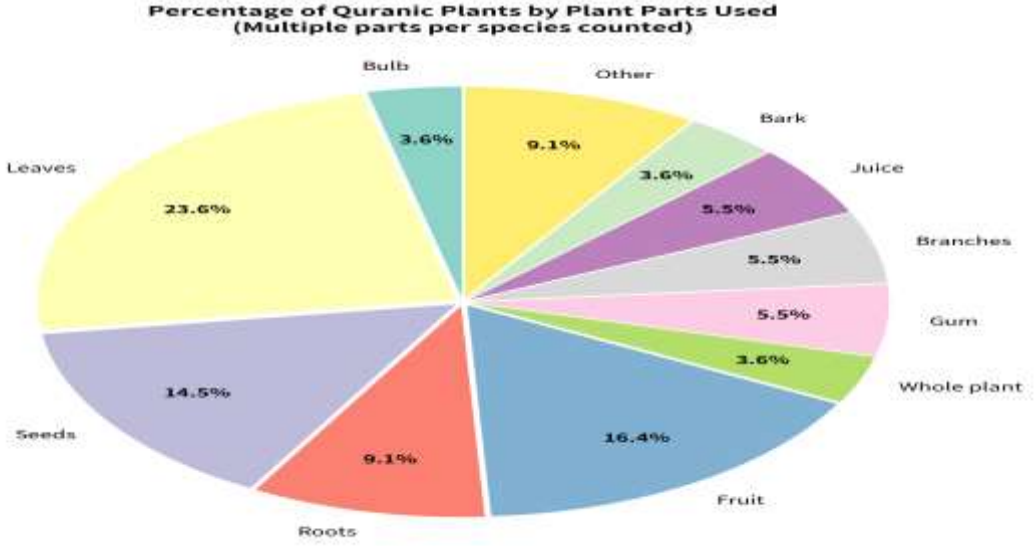

Figure 3. Percentage distribution of plant parts used among Quranic medicinal plants (multiple parts per species counted).

Major Therapeutic Activity Categories

Reported traditional medicine was categorized, digestive and gastrointestinal disorders were the most represented category (21/32 species) followed closely by anti-inflammatory/analgesic uses (20 species). Fourteen species were associated with respiratory ailments and 13 species with reproductive-health conditions. There were 11 species associated with dermatological conditions, and 10 species associated with urinary/kidney disorders. Other reported uses were hepatic, anti-microbial, cardiovascular, neurological, ophthalmic, metabolic and oral health. One species may have been recorded in more than one category and the frequencies are, therefore, multiple-use frequencies (Figure 4).

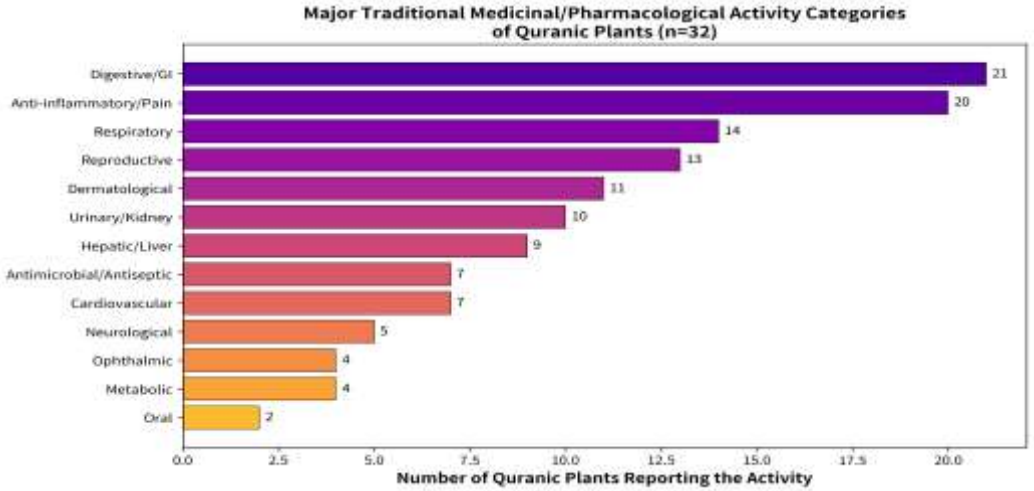

Figure 4. Major traditional medicinal/pharmacological activity categories reported for Quranic plants.

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Plant–Activity Association Heatmap

The heatmap was used to represent associations among the 32 studied plant species and the eight most frequently reported traditional therapeutic categories (Figure 5). The presence/absence (1/0) of a reported medicinal use of a plant–category combination is shown in each cell. Allium sativum, Olea europaea, Phoenix dactylifera, Nigella sativa and Vitis vinifera were mentioned in several therapeutic categories, highlighting their wide range of traditional applications documented in the literature.

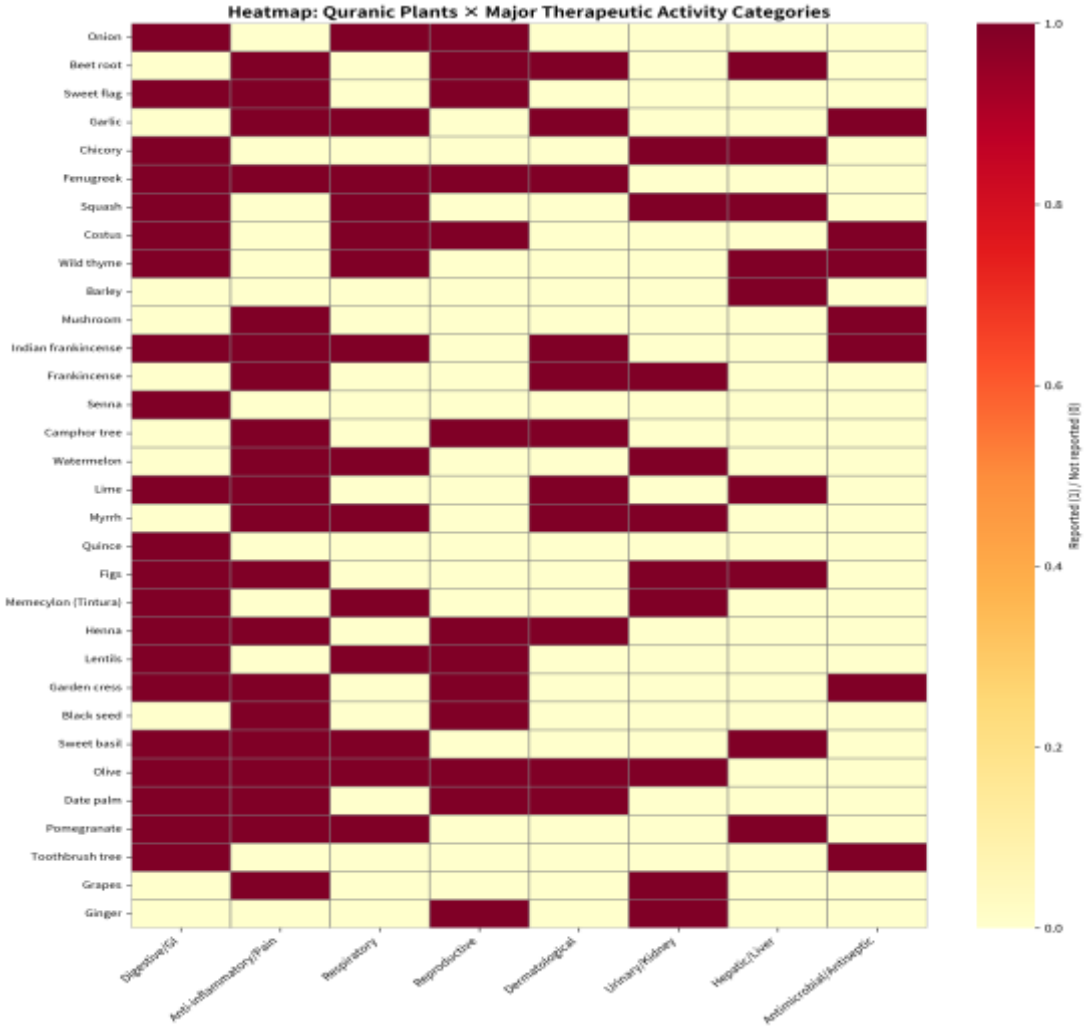

Figure 5. Heatmap of Quranic plants versus major therapeutic activity categories (1 = reported; 0 = not reported).

Discussion

In the present review, 32 medicinal plant species of 22 botanical families were found from the Quranic verses, Hadiths and classical Islamic medicinal literature. This variety is indicative of the scope of Islamic textual and historical knowledge of botany. Medicinal plants of the Quran and the Hadith have also been reviewed previously (El-Seedi *et al.*, 2019; Mohamed, 2024; Ghazanfar & Wickens, 2023) and

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their traditional uses have been discussed as well as their relevance to modern scientific research. Historical availability, cultural significance, and trade networks may be responsible for the relatively high number of Fabaceae and Burseraceae rather than a greater medicinal efficacy at the family level. Leaves and fruits, and seeds, were the most common plant materials reported. Particular interest is the prominence of edible parts, as many of the reviewed plants have both nutritional and medicinal usage. Frequency of reporting reflects traditional use, not necessarily pharmacological superiority. The most reported categories in therapeutic uses were digestive disorders, anti-inflammatory/analgesic uses, respiratory uses, and reproductive health. The patterns found are similar to previously synthesized works on medicinal plant usage in Islam (El-Seedi *et al.*, 2019; Garuba *et al.*, 2025); however, frequency of mentions should not be interpreted as prevalence of the disease or clinical efficacy. Several species are represented in several therapeutic categories (Allium sativum, Olea europaea, Phoenix dactylifera, Nigella sativa, Vitis vinifera). This type of multipurpose documentation is typical of classical materias medica and does not necessarily imply polypharmacological activity; experimental and clinical data should be indicated. One of the main methodological contributions of this review is that the evidence is clearly separated; it is possible to have a plant mentioned in the Quran without a medicinal use, also mentioned in the Hadith literature with a medicinal use, expanded in classical medical writings, and finally studied in experiments. These sources are complementary, but not equivalent. However, some previous versions have merged them together, which is a limitation (El-Seedi *et al.*, 2019; Mohamed, 2024). Nigella sativa, Olea europaea, Allium sativum, Zingiber officinale and Punica granatum are among the species considered in the reviewed, and they showed antioxidant, antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory and metabolic properties that were relevant to the selected traditional claims (Ara *et al.*, 2025; Firhath, 2026; El Sayed *et al.*, 2025). The strength of evidence is species dependent, preparation dependent, experimental model dependent and endpoint dependent. Historical documentation is therefore limited as a proof of clinical effectiveness and is more of an hypothesis generator. There are still many gaps for taxa and indications and there is a need for standardized phytochemical, pharmacological, toxicological and clinical studies. Conservation is also a factor. Some of the species with roots, bark or resin, which are harvested from wild populations (such as Saussurea costus, Boswellia spp.) can be subject of harvesting pressure. The documentation of history and the comparison with the current condition of conservation may be used to help maintain biodiversity and traditional knowledge (Solihah & Kuswantoro, 2024).

Conclusion

A total of 32 medicinal plant species from 22 botanical families were found in this systematic review and linked with Quranic references or Hadiths and classical Islamic medicinal traditions. The plants were associated with a wide variety of traditional therapeutic uses, primarily digestive and anti-inflammatory diseases, respiratory and reproductive health problems. The major parts of plants were leaves, fruits and seeds. Several of these species have also been evaluated for biological activity in modern drug studies with some of the biological activity corresponding to the traditional uses. There is no justification for assuming the therapeutic efficacy of a plant on the basis

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of its presence in a medical book or a Hadith or in the Qur'an. All differences in preparation, dosage, safety and clinical validation must be taken into account. The present review provides a more stringent model for the study of Islamic medicinal plant knowledge by separating primary textual evidence from later elaborations, and from contemporary experimental findings. The future needs to focus on characterization of phytochemicals, pharmacological validation, safety assessment, standard preparation, clinical evaluation and conservation research for taxa that have been harvested. This interdisciplinary approach can help distinguish between traditional or textual documentation and experimentally proven therapeutic evidence and provide promising avenues for investigation.

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