

Date: 26 February 2025

Ethics Exemption Registration No.: ILAM-ETH-2025-001

To Whom It May Concern,

Subject: Formal Approval of Ethical Exemption for Non-Invasive Ethnobotanical Research

This letter certifies that the research project entitled "Medicinal Plant Selection as a Biocultural System: Linking Emic Illness Concepts and Traditional Ecological Knowledge in the Zagros Region, Iran", conducted by Dr. Ehsan Zeidali, botanist and faculty member of the Department of Agronomy and Plant Breeding, Faculty of Agriculture, Ilam University, has been reviewed by the departmental ethics review committee and has been formally exempted from the requirement for full ethical approval.

Study Details:

Principal Investigator: Dr. Ehsan Zeidali

Study Period: March 2023 – February 2025

Study Type: Non-invasive ethnobotanical documentation

Participants: 78 adult participants (≥ 30 years old) from local communities in Ilam Province

Basis for Exemption:

The study involved only:

1. Semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with adult participants
2. Documentation of traditional medicinal plant knowledge
3. No collection of biological samples, personal identifiers, or sensitive human data
4. Voluntary participation with informed verbal consent (due to literacy limitations in target communities, consisting predominantly of Lor and Kurdish populations)
5. Full anonymization through coded data recording

According to national and institutional guidelines in Iran, research of this nature, limited to non-invasive ethnobotanical interviews without human biological sampling, does not fall under the category requiring mandatory institutional review board (IRB) approval.

Ethical Standards Maintained:

This research was conducted in accordance with:

The ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki for studies involving human participants

Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedures, with participants informed of study objectives, voluntary participation, and right to withdraw



Principles of the Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and Benefit-Sharing, with commitment to sharing findings with local communities

No commercial use or bioprospecting of genetic resources was involved in this study

Retrospective Coverage:

This exemption applies retrospectively to all ethnobotanical fieldwork conducted between March 2023 and February 2025, as the study design was reviewed and determined to meet criteria for exemption prior to data collection.

This waiver is registered and hereby approved for academic and publication purposes. The department is available to provide further clarification if required.

Sincerely,

Dr. Yaser Alizadeh

Head of Department of Agronomy and Plant Breeding
Faculty of Agriculture
Ilam University
Ilam, Iran

Contact Information:

Email: y.alizadeh@ilam.ac.ir

Phone: +98 911 904 4764

Website: www.ilam.ac.ir

Faculty of Agriculture, Ilam University

Pajooresh Blvd., Ilam, Iran
Postal Code: 69315-516. I.R.