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# SCIENTOMETRICS OF GLOBAL SCIENTIFIC PRODUCTION ABOUT ETHNOMYCOLOGY

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## ABSTRACT

Ethnomycology is a branch of ethnoknowledge that describes the interaction between fungi and traditional communities over time. This study presents a scientometric analysis of global scientific production about Ethnomycology, based on a survey of articles indexed in Web of Science Core Collection database, between 1991 and 2019. The temporal distribution of the 173 articles obtained, showed a significant increase in over the years, indicating a growing interest in Ethnomycology by the scientific community. The most frequent journals were Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine (18%) and Economic Botany (12%), and the principal authors were Luczaj, L (1.7%), Garibay-Orijel, R (1.5%), Estrada-Torres, A and Pieroni, A (both with 1.3%). The most studied locations involve indigenous communities and are in Mexico (22%), followed by India (9%) and China (7%), and over half of the institutions where the research was conducted were also Mexican. The primary focus of the studies was the purpose of fungal use (37%), the most frequently reported being as food (50%) and medicine (32%). Of the 838 species mentioned, the most prominent were *Cantharellus cibarius* Fr. (3.7%), *Boletus edulis* Bull. (3.3%) and *Agaricus campestris* sensu Cooke (2.6%), all edible. The data showed that the ethnomycological knowledge available is strongly concentrated in Mexico, and the primary focus of use of fungi is as food. The main trends point to Ethnomycology as a young Science, but of growing interest, whose ethnomycological knowledge is concentrated in Mexico and in indigenous communities, with focus in use of fungi as food. However, the major gaps demonstrate the need for further ethnomycological studies involving other traditional communities, which not only indigenous, and other regions around the world, which could reveal new relationships between humans and fungi, thereby contributing to the conservation of global mycodiversity.

**KEYWORDS:** Ethnoknowledge, Fungi, Mycology, Scientometry, Traditional communities.

## CIENCIOMETRÍA DE LA PRODUCCIÓN CIENTÍFICA GLOBAL EN ETNOMICOLOGÍA

### RESUMEN

La etnomicología es un área del etnoconocimiento que describe la interacción entre los hongos y las comunidades tradicionales a lo largo del tiempo. Este estudio presenta un análisis cuantitativo de la producción científica global sobre Etnomicología, basado en una encuesta de artículos indexados en la base de datos de Web of Science Core Collection, entre 1991 y 2019. La distribución temporal de los 173 artículos obtenidos, mostró un aumento significativo en los años, lo que indica un creciente interés por la etnomicología por parte de la comunidad científica. Las revistas más frecuentes fueron *Journal of Ethnobiology and Ethnomedicine* (18%) y *Economic Botany* (12%), y los autores principales fueron Luczaj, L (1.7%), Garibay-Orijel, R (1.5%), Estrada-Torres, A y Pieroni, A (ambos con 1.3%). Los lugares más estudiados involucran a comunidades indígenas y se encuentran en México (22%), seguido de India (9%) y China (7%), y más de la mitad de las instituciones donde se realizó la investigación también eran mexicanas. El enfoque principal de los estudios fue el propósito del uso de hongos (37%), siendo los más frecuentemente reportados como alimento (50%) y como medicamento (32%). De las 838 especies mencionadas, las más destacadas fueron *Cantharellus cibarius* Fr. (3.7%), *Boletus edulis* Bull. (3.3%) y *Agaricus campestris* sensu Cooke (2.6%), todos comestibles. Los datos mostraron que el conocimiento etnomicológico disponible está fuertemente concentrado en México, y el enfoque principal del uso de hongos es como alimento. Las principales tendencias apuntan a la Etnomicología como una Ciencia joven, pero de creciente interés, cuyo conocimiento etnomicológico se concentra en México y en comunidades indígenas, con foco en el uso de hongos como alimento. Sin embargo, las principales lagunas demuestran la necesidad de realizar más estudios etnomicológicos que involucren a otras comunidades tradicionales, que no solo son indígenas, y de otras regiones del mundo, que podrían revelar nuevas relaciones entre humanos y hongos, contribuyendo así a la conservación de la micodiversidad global.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Cienciometría, Comunidades tradicionales, Etnoconocimiento, Hongos, Micología.

### INTRODUCTION

Considered one of the most recent areas of ethnobiology, ethnomycology is the study of traditional knowledge, cultural/environmental manifestations and implications of the relationships between humans and fungi over time and space (Moreno-Fuentes *et al.*, 2001). It can also be viewed as the study of the relationships between fungi and traditional communities, local knowledge and the use of these fungi, underscoring their ecological and cultural importance (Ruan-Soto *et al.*, 2009). Comandini & Rinaldi (2020) understand ethnomycology as observing and recording the interactions of fungi with people, in order to understand them as part of nature.

Ethnomycology had its origin marked by the publication

of Valentina Pavlovna Wasson and Robert Gordon Wasson published in 1957, entitled *Mushrooms, Russia and History*, which discusses the use of neurotropic fungi (hallucinogens) in rituals by peoples of Siberia, Papua New Guinea and Mexico. In the same book, the authors used the terms “mycophobe” and “mycophile” for the first time to characterize the interactions of fondness for and/or aversion to fungi, respectively (Boa, 2004).

Ethnomycological studies began with a neurotropic approach, but other approaches were taken as researchers found evidence of other forms of use, such as medicinal and/or food (Pala *et al.*, 2013). However, the relationship between fungi and culture is deeply rooted in the history of humanity, particularly in China, where they have been consumed since before Christ (Aaronson, 2000). Strong interaction has also been

documented between the peoples of Central Africa, Mexico and Turkey and wild edible fungi (Boa, 2004).

The term scientometry is attributed to quantitative research aimed at assessing scientific progress in a certain topic. These analyses have contributed to elucidating the different approaches used in a particular field of knowledge (Strehl & Santos, 2002; Vanti, 2002). In this respect, the aim of this study is to present a global scientometric analysis of ethnomycology, revealing the trends and perspectives of this subject in the area of mycology. Specifically, we evaluate: the temporal evolution of the number and focus of the articles; the journals, authors and countries from the publication; and how the different populations of the world use fungi and which are these fungi.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The data were obtained from a search on the Web of Science Core Collection (WoS) database. The search was made using the terms Ethnomycol\* OR (Traditional knowled\* AND (Fung\* OR Mushroom\*)), without language restriction and indexed to the topics. An asterisk (\*) was used in all the terms so that variations in spelling would be considered in the search.

The WoS was used for being recognized as the most authoritative scientific literature indexing tool available (Li *et al.*, 2018). Thus, only articles published in indexed journals were considered, making the search criteria, despite being restrictive, more homogeneous, recovering only publications with global reach.

All the studies published between 1991 (when article abstracts were first added to the Web of Science database) and 2019 were extracted and the title, abstract and keywords of all the articles read. Those that discussed at least one ethnomycological aspect were selected (see criteria viii). The following criteria of each of these articles were analyzed: (i) the journal in which it was published; (ii) year of publication; (iii) country where the study was conducted; (iv) authors; (v) affiliation of all the authors; (vi) keywords; (vii) type of community

(indigenous or non-indigenous) addressed; (viii) focus of the work (categorizing it into fungal use, taxonomy, cultivation/commerce, ecology/conservation, gastronomy, medicinal and other importance); (ix) purpose of fungal use (categorized as food, medicinal, magical/religious, decorative and toxic); and (x) fungal species. It is important to underscore that in the purpose of use category, the same article sometimes describes multiple forms of fungal use, which explains why the number of uses recorded exceeded the total number of articles.

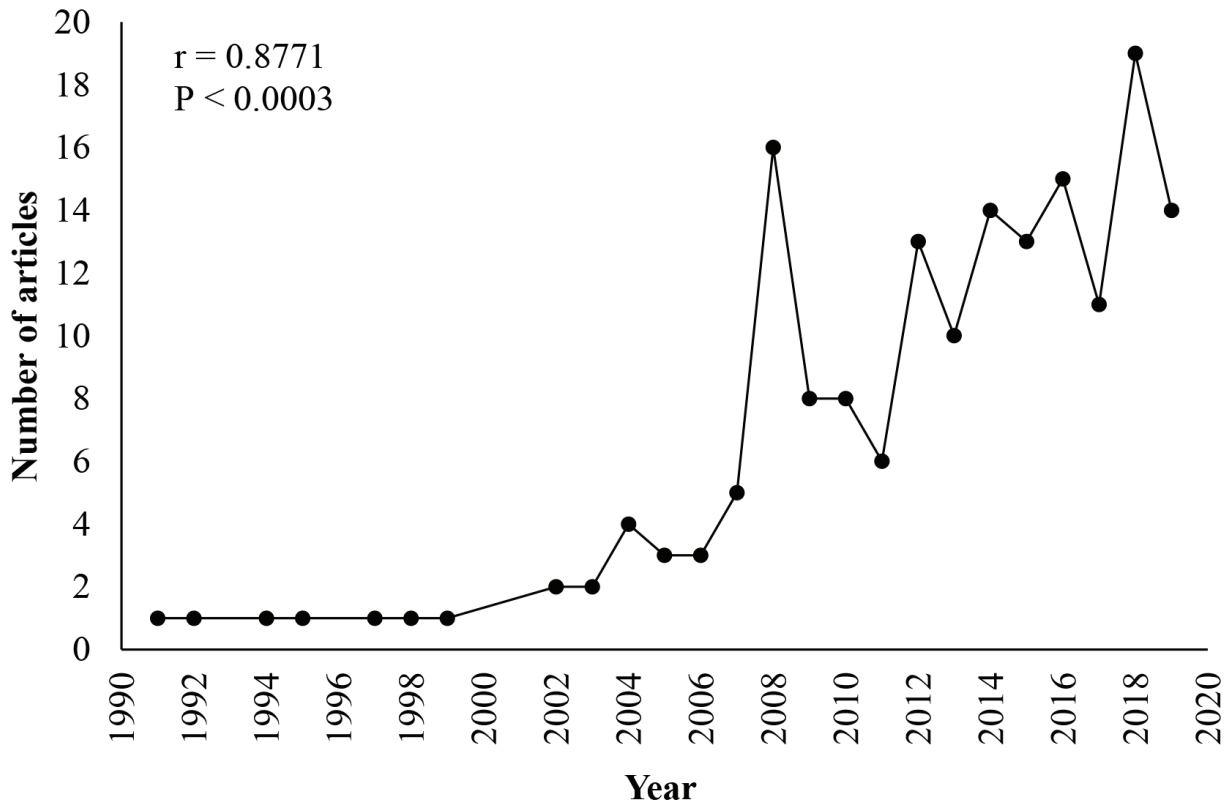
Pearson's correlation ( $r$ ) ( $P < 0.05$ ) between the years and number of published articles was calculated to determine whether the latter increased over the years. Likewise, the correlation between all the methods applied and reasons for fungal use was also calculated over the years. Positive  $r$  values indicate an increase in the number of published articles, while negative values suggest a decline.

We present a distribution map of the number of articles by country to analyze how these studies are distributed, using the Quantum GIS software (QGIS Development Team, 2020). The keywords with similar meanings were combined with a view to verifying ethnomycological research trends over time through principal component analysis (PCA). All the analyses were performed in the R Studio software, version 1.1.453 (RStudio Team, 2018).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The search extracted a total of 530 articles, but only 173 (see appendix) met the inclusion criteria established. The oldest article was published in 1991. Temporal distribution of the articles showed a substantial increase ( $r = 0.87$ ;  $P < 0.0003$ ) over the years, especially in the last decade (Figure 1). This rise in articles reflects the increase interest of researchers in this study area. In general, the number of studies in all the areas of knowledge has risen over the years, and the number of articles is the primary way of measuring this (Verbeek, 2002).

The articles are distributed among 67 journals, 72% of which contain a single article and 12% five or more.



**Figure 1.** Temporal distribution of ethnomycological articles published between 1991 and 2019.

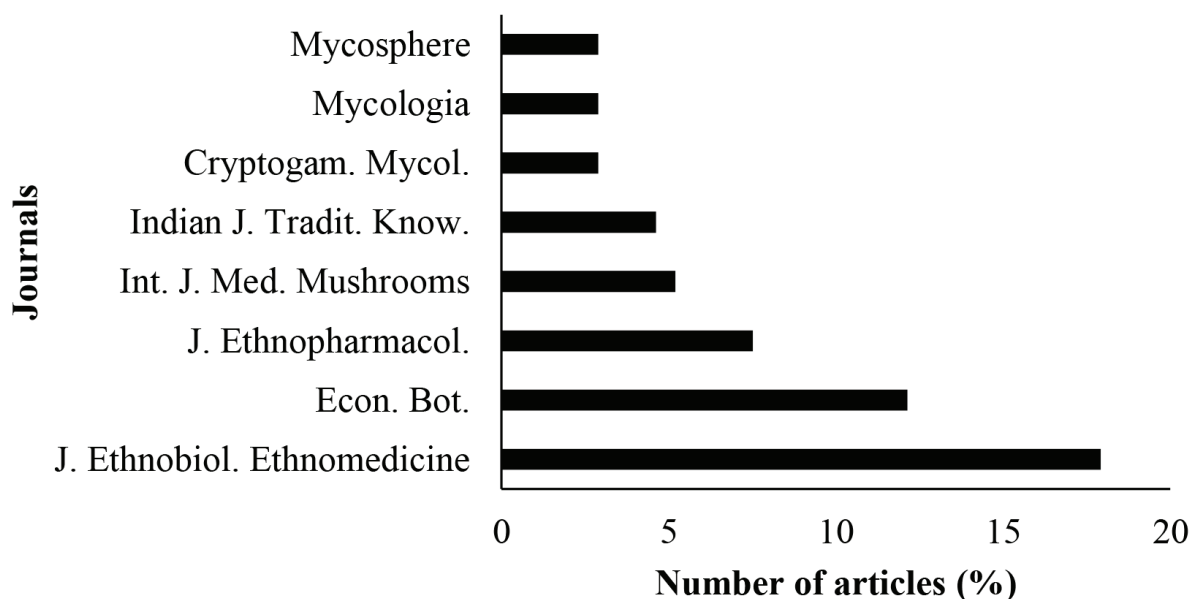
This shows a heterogeneous distribution between the number of publications and the journals that publish on the topic. The most frequent journals are the *Journal of Ethnobiology* and *Ethnomedicine* (covering 18% of the articles) and *Economic Botany* (12%) (Figure 2), both with more than 1.86 impact factor. The fact that nearly all the articles were published in journals that do not focus specifically on ethnomycology, but ethnobiology, shows that this is still an incipient area of science, studied only since the 1950s (Ruan-Soto, 2017). Of the 521 authors found, 87% published a single article, 11% two to four and 2% five or more; they are Luczaj, L (9 articles), Garibay-Orijel, R (8 articles), Estrada-Torres, A and Pieroni, A (7 articles each; Figure3).

Of the 173 articles, 164 contained the locations from which the study data collection was carried out. These are distributed in 62 countries highlighted in figure 4. The distribution of studies according to location shows that research efforts were concentrated mainly in Mexico

(22%), followed by India (9%) and China (7%) (Figure 4). Ethnomycology has not been studied in many countries, demonstrating knowledge gaps in a number of regions worldwide.

A total of 302 institutions were identified from the authors' affiliations. Most (71%) hosted a single author. Only 5.3% employed five or more authors and 43.5% of these institutions were Mexican (Table 1). The fact that Mexico is the most studied country and has the largest number of ethnomycological researchers is likely due to the many mycophile communities in which fungi play an important cultural role and the development of a strong ethnomycological school with several researchers focused on this theme. In this respect, Ruan-Soto (2007) reported that Mexico is the cradle of ethnomycology.

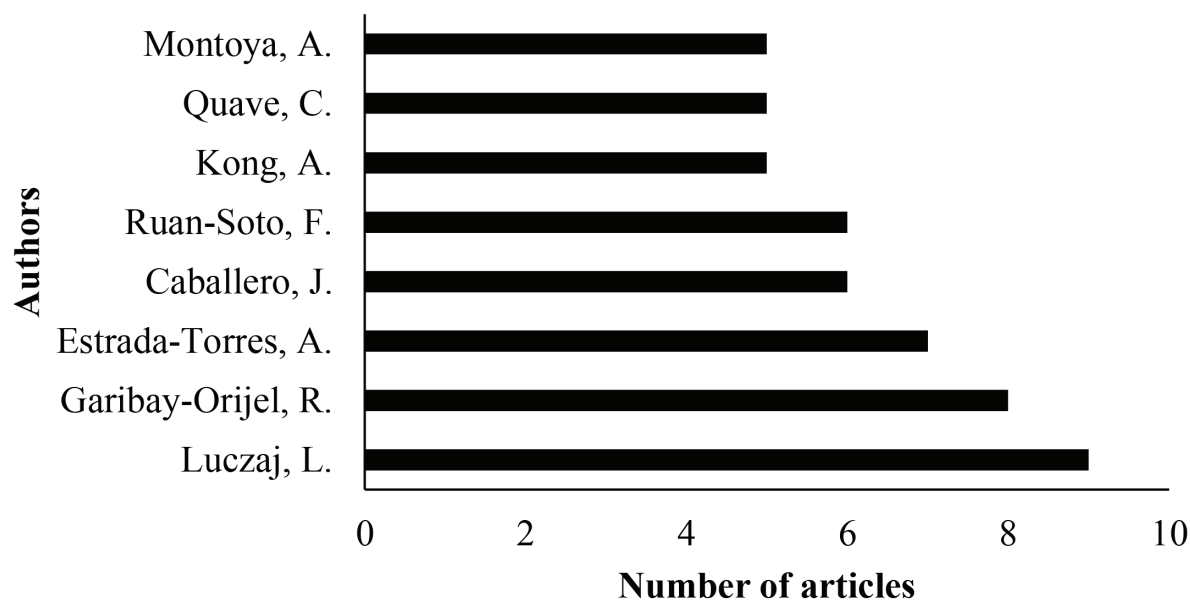
We observed that 14.4% (25 articles) of the publications were made by single authors. The authors with the largest number of publications collaborate with



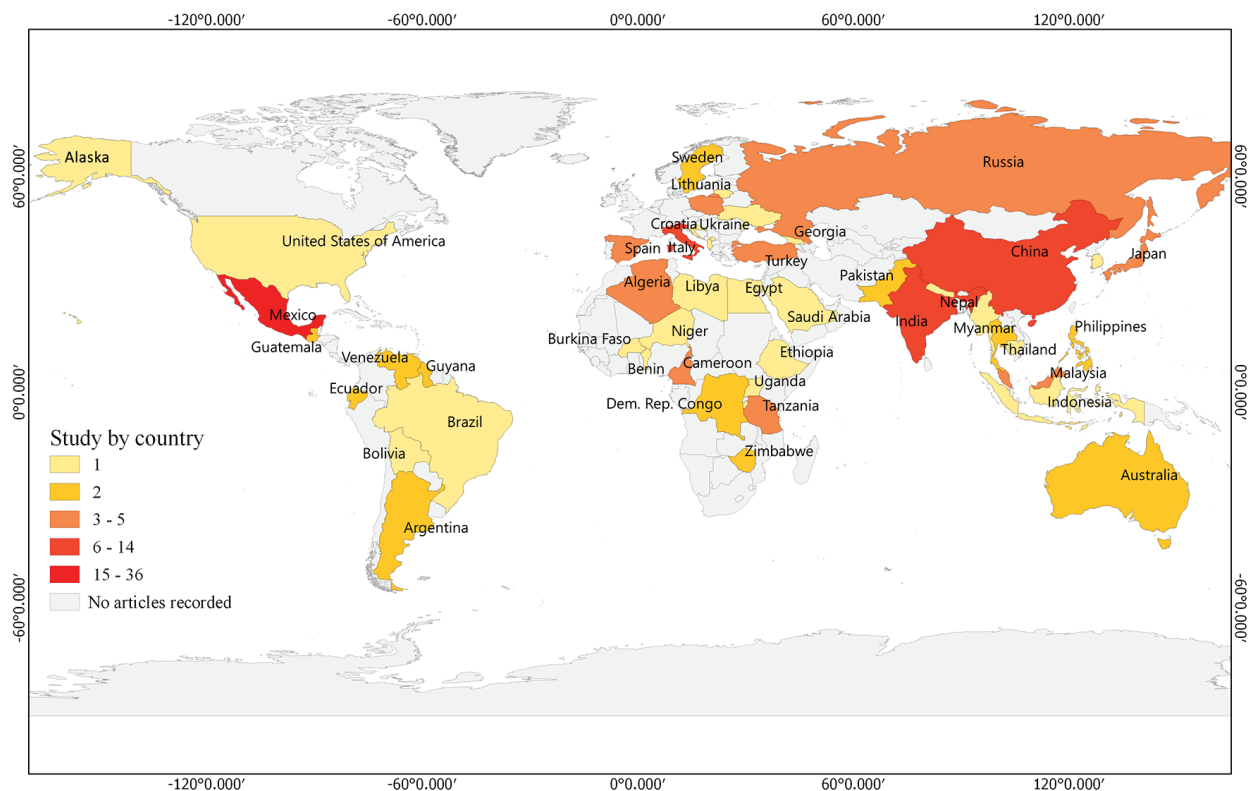
**Figure 2.** Distribution of ethnomycological articles published between 1991 and 2019, according to journal (n = 67 journals). Only journals with four or more articles were considered.

other authors, such as Garibay-Orijel, R., Ruán-Soto, F., Estrada-Torres, A., Caballero, J., Kong, A. and Montoya, A., all affiliated with Mexican institutions. This shows the significant contribution of these collaborators to the scientific production in this area. Similarly, Luczaj, L

published in collaboration with Kang, J. and Kang, Y. X., who are affiliated with Chinese institutions; and Pietras, M., associated with the Academy of Science in Poland. By contrast, Guzman, G., who is among the 10 most frequently cited authors, collaborated with co-author in



**Figure 3.** Authors with the largest number of ethnomycology articles published between 1991 and 2019 (n = 521 authors). Only authors who published five or more articles were included.



**Figure 4.** Distribution of ethnomycology articles published between 1991 and 2019, according to studies by country.

three publications. According to Nabout *et al.*, (2014), co-authorships tend to increase the quality of research and raise the probability of achieving a larger number of citations.

The articles that mentioned a community or ethnic group contained 65 names, 65% of which were indigenous, with the Zapotec accounting for 7.1% of the communities/ethnicities, located mainly in Oaxaca state, Mexico. For this indigenous population, mushrooms have considerable cultural significance, such as the species *Cantharellus cibarius* Fr., used as a food source (Garibay-orijel *et al.*, 2007).

When the primary focus of each study was identified, some had more than one object, resulting in 223 different approaches in the 173 articles. Analysis of the articles according to the primary focus produced the following seven categories: use of the fungi (37%); taxonomy (17%); cultivation/commerce (13%); gastronomic (10%); medicinal importance (10%); ecology/conservation (9%); and others (4%).

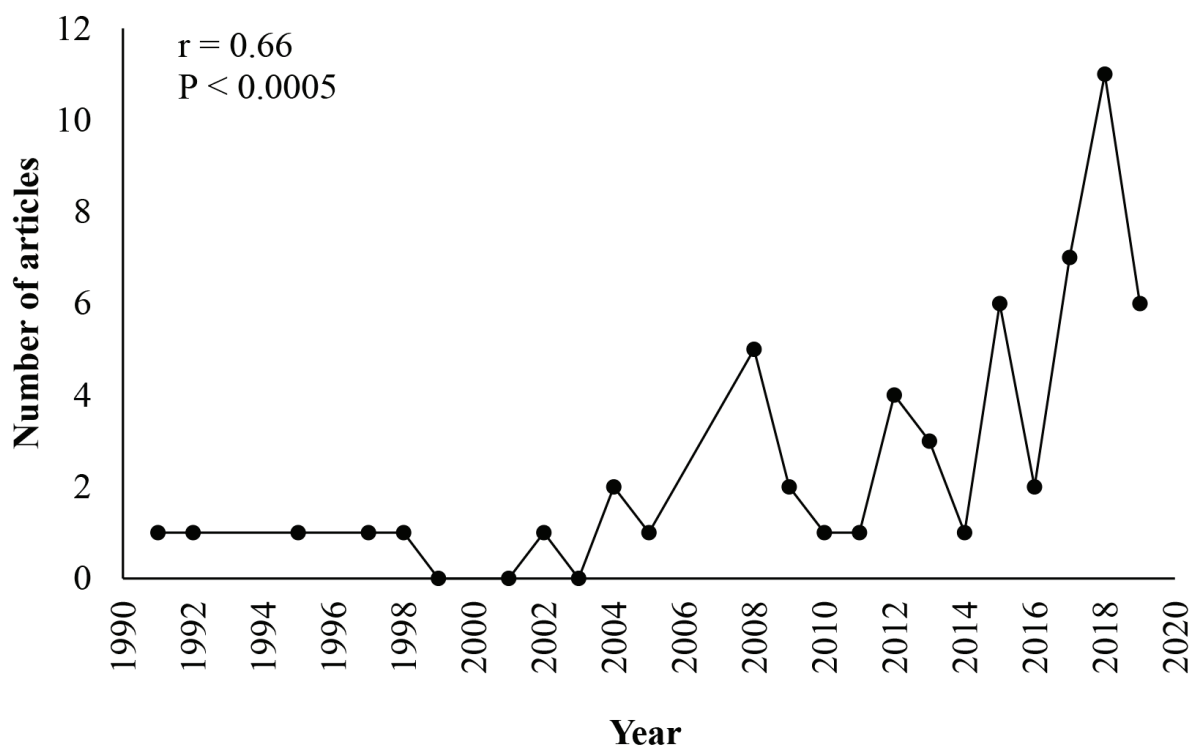
The temporal evolution of the study focus, according to Pearson's  $r$ , showed a moderate positive correlation for the "fungal use" category ( $r = 0.66$ ;  $P < 0.0005$ ) (Figure 5), with an increase in the number of studies in this area of ethnomycology. Within this category, five subcategories related to the type of use were identified, as follows: food (50%), medicinal (32%), decorative (8%), magic/religious (7%) and toxic (3%).

Moreno-Fuentes (2001) showed that since the 1980s ethnomycological studies have no longer focused primarily on hallucinogenic fungi, like Wasson's pioneering studies in 1957. This author reported the fungal use in rituals and the general ethnomycological concepts involving the different interactions between humans and fungi (Moreno-Fuentes, 2001; Ruan-Soto, 2007).

In his research on ethnomycology worldwide between 1960 and 1998, Moreno-Fuentes (2001) also showed a rise in the number of studies, most of which were conducted in Mexico and Japan. In the present study, articles on ethnomycology continued to increase over

**Table 1.** Main institutions affiliated with the authors of ethnomycology articles published between 1991 and 2019 (n = 302 institutions). Only institutions with five or more authors were considered.

INSTITUTION	FREQUENCY	
	ABSOLUTE	RELATIVE (%)
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, México	33	10.9
Universidad Autónoma de Tlaxcala, México	26	8.6
University of Malaya, Malaysia	15	5.0
Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México, México	13	4.3
University of Rzeszów, Poland	13	4.3
Instituto de Ecología, México	12	4.0
University of Innsbruck, Austria	11	3.6
Instituto Tecnológico del Valle de Oaxaca, México	7	2.3
University of Gastronomic Sciences, Italy	7	2.3
Northwest A&F University, China	6	2.0
Nanjing Agricultural University, China	6	2.0
Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Sweden	6	2.0
University of Prishtina, Kosovo	5	1.7
Universidad de Ciencias y Artes de Chiapas, México	5	1.7
Universidad Autónoma del Estado de Morelos, México	5	1.7
University of Buea, Cameroon	5	1.7



**Figure 5.** Temporal distribution of ethnomycology articles published between 1991 and 2019, whose primary focus was the use of the fungi.

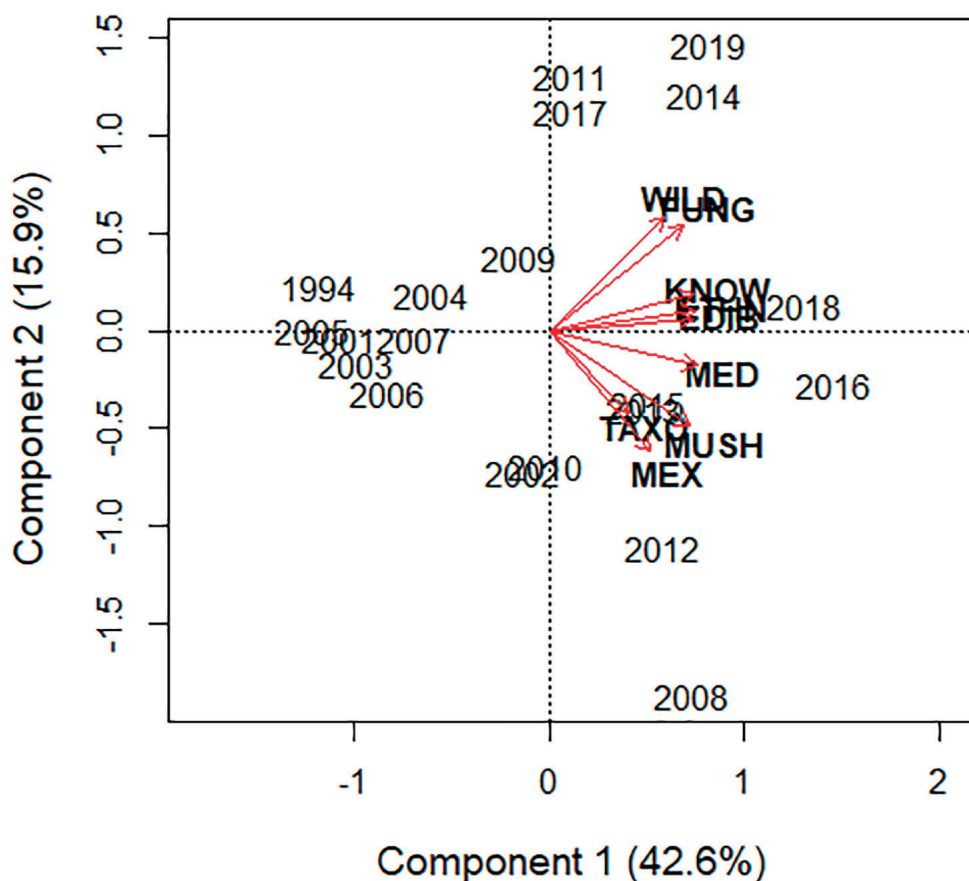
the years, with Mexico the site of most of the research and only two Japanese studies. This variation may be due to the search mechanism used, where only articles indexed in high-circulation journals were considered.

According to Garibay-Orijel and Ruan-Soto (2014), Mexico has 371 wild mushroom taxa, second only to China, the country with the largest number of wild mushrooms used as a food source. However, despite its rich history in the use of edible and medicinal mushrooms and being the largest exporter of cultivated mushrooms (FAO, 2006), China is not the main producer of scientific knowledge in ethnomycology, according to the results of the present study. This may be because the articles produced there are published in local journals, with low circulation and/or impact factors, or in Chinese, precluding their use here. Moreover,

commercial production has no relation with the studies conducted in the country.

The evaluation of the variation in keywords over the years, showed the first two components of principal component analysis (PCA) explain 58.5% of data variances (Figure 6). Studies in the last decade used terms with more restricted meanings and characteristic of ethnomycological studies, being that the words listed were directed, mainly the publications of the last 10 (component 1). Component 2 shows a negative correlation between keywords and the years between 1994 to 2007 and 2009, since they are not specifically related to ethnomycology, but can be used in other areas such as ecology.

A total of 838 fungal species were cited in the studies. Of the species with 10 or more citations (Table 2), the



**Figure 6.** Principal component analysis (PCA) of keyword variation over the years in ethnomycology articles published between 1991 and 2019.



most belong to phyla Basidiomycota and Ascomycota. The most frequent species were *Cantharellus cibarius* Fr. (3.7%), *Boletus edulis* Bull. (3.3%) and *Agaricus campestris* sensu Cooke (2.6%), all edible (Table 2). Garibay-Orijel & Ruan-Soto (2014), who listed the traditionally edible species in Mexico, found similar

results, reporting the following wild edible species: *Agaricus campestris* sensu Cooke, *Amanita caesarea* (Scop.) Pers., *A. rubescens* Pers., *Cantharellus cibarius* Fr., *Clitocybe gibba* (Pers.) P. Kumm, *Helvella lacunosa* Afzel., *Lactarius indigo* (Schwein.) Fr., *Ustilago maydis* (DC.) Corda and *Lyophyllum decastes* (Fr.) Singer

**Table 2.** Distribution of the main fungal species cited in ethnomycological studies published between 1991 and 2019, according to the family and number of citations. Only species cited 10 or more times were considered (n = 838).

SPECIES	FREQUENCY	
	ABSOLUTE	RELATIVE (%)
<i>Cantharellus cibarius</i> Fr.	31	3.7
<i>Boletus edulis</i> Bull.	28	3.3
<i>Agaricus campestris</i> sensu Cooke	22	2.6
<i>Hypomyces lactifluorum</i> (Schwein.) Tul. & C. Tul.	21	2.5
<i>Schizophyllum commune</i> Fr.	20	2.4
<i>Amanita caesarea</i> (Scop.) Pers.	19	2.3
<i>Morchella esculenta</i> (L.) Pers.	19	2.3
<i>Lactarius deliciosus</i> (L.) Gray	19	2.3
<i>Helvella crispa</i> Bull.	17	2.0
<i>Hydnum repandum</i> L.	17	2.0
<i>Lactarius indigo</i> (Schwein.) Fr.	17	2.0
<i>Lycoperdon perlatum</i> Pers.	16	1.9
<i>Lyophyllum decastes</i> (Fr.) Singer	16	1.9
<i>Amanita rubescens</i> Pers.	14	1.7
<i>Amanita muscaria</i> (L.) Lam.	14	1.7
<i>Pleurotus ostreatus</i> sensu Cooke	14	1.7
<i>Auricularia auricula</i> (L.) Underw.	13	1.6
<i>Ramaria flava</i> (Schaeff.) Quél.	13	1.6
<i>Helvella lacunosa</i> Afzel.	13	1.6
<i>Clitocybe gibba</i> (Pers.) P. Kumm.	13	1.6
<i>Tricholoma magnivelare</i> (Peck) Redhead	13	1.6
<i>Gomphus floccosus</i> (Schwein.) Singer	12	1.4
<i>Morchella elata</i> Fr.	12	1.4
<i>Amanita basii</i> Guzmán & Ram.- Guill	11	1.3
<i>Boletus pinophilus</i> Pilát & Dermek	11	1.3
<i>Ganoderma lucidum</i> (Curtis) P. Karst.	11	1.3
<i>Ustilago maydis</i> (DC.) Corda	11	1.3
<i>Calvatia cyathiformis</i> (Bosc) Morgan	10	1.2
<i>Ramaria botrytis</i> (Pers.) Bourdot	10	1.2
<i>Lactarius salmonicolor</i> R. Heim & Leclair	10	1.2
<i>Pycnoporus sanguineus</i> (L.) Murrill	10	1.2

which demonstrates the cultural importance of wild mushrooms in Mexico.

## CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the main trends in scientific production in ethnomycology were: (i) an increase in the number of articles over the years; (ii) most of the studies were conducted in Mexico; (iii) most of the articles are in journals that are not specific to mycology; and (iv) the primary focus is on the use of fungi, and among these uses, as food source is the most frequent. On the other hand, the main gaps are the lack of studies on Africa, South America and Asia (except China and India). These gaps suggest the need to study traditional communities around the world in order to record the ethnomycological knowledge of these peoples, which may contribute to conserving local biodiversity, given that communities have their own mechanisms to manage and exploit resources more sustainably. It is worth noting that studies involving other search criteria may express results different from these, especially if non-indexed and with a regional reach publications are included.

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**Appendix 1.** List of articles on ethnomycology published between 1991 to 2019, indexed in the Web of Science Core Collection database.

ARTICLE TITLE	AUTHOR, YEAR
Ethnomycological data from siberia and north-east asia on the effect of <i>Amanita muscaria</i>	Saar, 1991
Psychoactive mushroom use in Koh Samui and Koh Pha-Ngan, Thailand	Allen & Merlin, 1992
Ethnomycology, biochemistry, and cultivation of <i>Psilocybe samuiensis</i> Guzmán, Bandala and Allen, a new psychoactive fungus from Koh Samui, Thailand	Gartz <i>et al.</i> , 1994
Ethnomycological notes from western Burundi	Buyck & Nzigidahera, 1995
<i>Haploporus odoratus</i> : a sacred fungus in traditional Native American culture of the northern plains	Blanchette, 1997
The iceman's fungi	Peintner <i>et al.</i> , 1998
Studies in tropical African <i>Lactarius</i> species 7. a synopsis of the section Edeles and a review on the edible species	Verbeken & Walley, 1999
<i>Fomes fomentarius</i> (L.: Fr.) Fr.: a mushroom with varied uses.	Roussel <i>et al.</i> , 2002
Ethno-pharmacological knowledge of Juang and Munda tribes of eastern India	Mahapatra & Panda, 2002
Traditional knowledge about mushrooms in a Nahua community in the state of Tlaxcala, Mexico	Montoya <i>et al.</i> , 2003
<i>Amanita muscaria</i> : chemistry, biology, toxicology, and ethnomycology	Michelot & Melendez-Howell, 2003
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## Appendix 1. Cont.

ARTICLE TITLE	AUTHOR, YEAR
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ARTICLE TITLE	AUTHOR, YEAR
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## Appendix 1. Cont.

ARTICLE TITLE	AUTHOR, YEAR
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ARTICLE TITLE	AUTHOR, YEAR
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From economic survival to recreation: contemporary uses of wild food and medicine in rural Sweden, Ukraine and NW Russia	Stryamets <i>et al.</i> , 2015
Towards a traditional ecological knowledge-based monitoring scheme: a proposal for the case of edible mushrooms	Pacheco-Cobos <i>et al.</i> , 2015
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## Appendix 1. Cont.

ARTICLE TITLE	AUTHOR, YEAR
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Ethnomycological aspects of traditional usage and indigenous knowledge about the arid-semi arid truffles consumed by the residents of the Eastern Anatolia region of Turkey	Akyuz <i>et al.</i> , 2017
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ARTICLE TITLE	AUTHOR, YEAR
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