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SHARED PERCEPTIONS, SHARED SOLUTIONS: INTEGRATING HOUSEHOLD AND SCIENTIFIC INSIGHTS FOR SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF AN INVASIVE *NELTUMA JULIFLORA* (SW.) RAF. (FABACEAE: MIMOSOIDEAE) IN ETHIOPIA

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This study explores the socio-economic and ecological impacts of *Neltuma juliflora (Sw.) Raf.*, a species that has been widely regarded as invasive and harmful to the environment and people. The study was conducted in three purposively selected districts near Lake Abbe, where 37 households were randomly sampled across invasion-level strata, while 18 scientists with expertise in invasive plant species, particularly *N. juliflora*, were purposively selected to provide scientific perspectives. Data were collected through semi-structured household and key informant interviews, complemented by focus group discussions, enabling the integration of local community perceptions with expert knowledge for a comprehensive assessment of the species' impacts and management. A chi-square test of independence showed that there was no significant difference between the households and scientists that negative impact outweighs the positive impact (df = 1, Pearson Chi-Square= 1.49, p = .223). We suggest that *N. juliflora* could be used as charcoal, animal and human food, and for house construction. We argue that utilizing the species could be a viable option for managing it, as eradicating seems impossible in areas where it has already spread. The authors acknowledge that promoting the species through utilization could be controversial, but argue that it is worth considering as a potential solution given that eradication appears impractical in its current state. Our study notes that current management practices have been ineffective and costly. Further research is needed to fully understand the effectiveness of Benzene-rinsed *N. juliflora* burning, which was not previously reported in Ethiopia or elsewhere in the world.

Keywords: *Clear-and-Replace*; Control through utilization; Exotic; Invasive species, *Prosopis juliflora*; Non-native

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