

FLORISTIC DIVERSITY OF HAFIR FOREST (ALGERIA): IMPACTS OF DISTURBANCES ON SPECIES COMPOSITION

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Abstract

The Hafir oak forest grove in Tlemcen (Algeria) extends over 10,157.55 hectares (ha). Vulnerable, it is constantly subjected to various degradation factors, such as fires, anthropogenic pressure and climate change. The objective of our study is to identify the floristic composition of this oak forest. To do this, we carried out 120 Sampling plots according to the Braun Blanquet method supplemented with itinerant surveys along transects during the years 2022 and 2023. These allowed us to inventory 387 taxa divided between 67 families and 264 genera. These taxa are mainly dominated by Therophytes (49%) and Hemicryptophytes (21%). The analysis of the flora identified reveals a predominance of the Mediterranean biogeographic type and the presence of 10 endemic species. The study of the Hafir Forest shows an ecosystem in a state of stress, as evidenced by the high disturbance index of 59.43%, reflecting an expressive therophytization in response to climatic and anthropogenic disturbances. This research highlights the ecological importance of the Hafir Forest and the need to adopt conservation measures to preserve its unique biodiversity in the face of current threats.

Keywords: Hafir, floristic inventory, disturbance, life formes, chorology, anthro-po-zoogenic pressures, fires, adaptation.

Introduction

Cork oak forests, a Mediterranean forest ecosystem, play a crucial ecological and socio-economic role in the Mediterranean region. Dominated by the cork oak (*Quercus suber*), these forest formations according to Quézel & Médail, (2003) are not only reservoirs of biodiversity, but also essential spaces for soil protection, climate regulation and an important economic resource through the production of cork and other non-woody forest products. However, these ecosystems are currently facing multiple threats, in particular anthropogenic pressure: fires,

overgrazing and climate change, which compromise their integrity and their sustainability (Khaldi, 1998; WWF, 2004).

The Hafir forest, located in the wilaya of Tlemcen (Algeria), is one of the rare natural formations of cork oak in the west of the country. With an area of 10,157.55 ha, this forest represents an ecological and cultural heritage of great value (Boudy, 1955). However, like many Mediterranean cork oak forests, it is exposed to increasing pressures that threaten its biodiversity and its structure. Overgrazing, recurrent fires, unsuitable forestry practices and climate change have caused a progressive degradation of this forest, by disturbing its floristic composition and its regenerative capacity (Benabdeli, 1996; Bouchaour-Djabeur, 2001; Bouhraoua, 2003; Bouchaour-Djabeur, 2021; Bouchaour-Djabeur et al., 2020, 2021, 2024).

In this context, in order to assess the state of health of the Hafir forest and to be able to propose adapted conservation measures, this study aims to examine the floristic composition by identifying and analyzing contemporary species, their distribution and their adaptation strategies to current environmental conditions. In addition, according to Zeraia (1981) and Dahmani (1984), the analysis of biological and biogeographic types will make it possible to better understand the ecological dynamics at work in this threatened ecosystem.

Through this study, our objective is to increase knowledge of the biodiversity of the Hafir forest and to provide scientific bases for the implementation of sustainable management strategies. The preservation of this forest is not only essential to maintain local biodiversity, but also to ensure the ecosystem services it provides to local populations and the environment as a whole (Chevallier, 2002; Nsibi et al., 2006).

2. Material and methods

2.1. Study area

Covering an area of 10,157 ha, the Hafir national Forest is located 20 km from the capital of the wilaya of Tlemcen. This forest radiates over a territory of five municipalities including Sabra, Sidi Medjahed, Beni Bahdel, Bouhlou and Ain Ghoraba (BNEDER., 1979b) (Fig. 1).

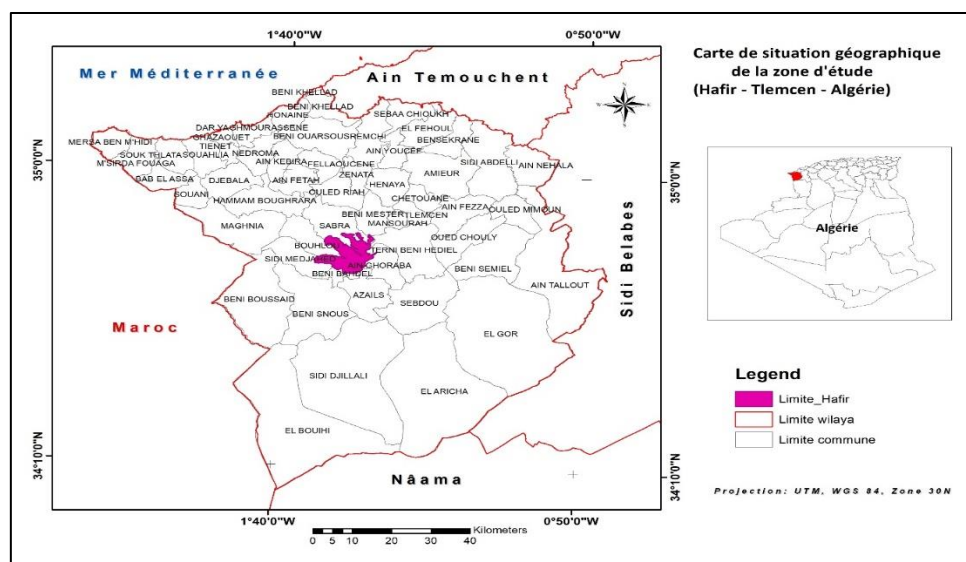


Figure 1: Situation map of the Hafir Forest (Tlemcen, Algeria)

Belonging to the Tlemcen mountains, the Hafir forest is characterized according to Doumergue (1910), Boudy (1948), Clair (1973), Benest (1985), Bouabdellah (1991) and Benest et al. (1999), by geological formations of upper Jurassic and lower Cretaceous age mainly formed of carbonates. Benest (1985), indicates that at the level of the Hafir forest, the Boumediene sandstones of upper Oxfordian-lower Kimmeridgian age are developing, characterized by the dominance of calcareous cement sandstones in the form of rather hard banks, with a thickness of up to 500 m.

The altitude of the Hafir forest varies from 700 m in the canton of Tebount to 1,418 m at the top of the canton of Djebel Koudiat Hafir near the forest house. An important hydrographic network composed of several wadis as well as a tangle of talwegs, some of which feed the Tafna wadi, characterizes the massif. Many streams and springs with low to medium flow depending on rainfall flow in full massif at the bottom of very deep depressions (Sauvagnac, 1956).

The Hafir bioclimate is characterized by a clear decrease in rainfall and an increase in temperatures, hence the existence of two dominant bioclimatic floors: the semi-arid and the sub-humid (Bouazza, 2020). These climatic conditions directly influence the dynamics of vegetation in a regressive direction (Bouazza and Benabadji, 2000).

The Hafir forest, is composed, in its natural state, essentially of deciduous trees, in particular three species of oak (*Quercus suber*, *Q. rotundifolia* and *Q. faginea* ssp. *tlemcenensis*), the wild olive tree (*Olea europea* ssp. *oleaster*) and a few feet of oxyphyllous ash trees (*Fraxinus oxyphylla*), but also softwoods such as Berber thuja (*Tetraclinis articulata*) and oxycedron juniper (*Juniperus oxycedrus*). In addition, Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*), pine pine (*Pinus*

pinea), common cypress (*Cupressus sempervirens*) and eucalyptus (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*) are found in some degraded cantons following reforestation carried out as part of soil defense and restoration on 575 ha between 1965 and 1969 (CFWT, 1995).

Bouhraoua, (2003), Letreuch, (2009), Bouchaour-Djabeur, 20216; Ghezlaoui et al., (2017); Bouchaour-Djabeur et al., 2020, 2021, 2024) describe that the undergrowth at the level of the Hafir forest is very rich in plants, either characteristic of high humidity, or symbol of degradation such as the presence of scrub. In the stations degraded by the fires, on the other hand, the scrub is very abundant.

Overgrazing

At the level of the Hafir forest, the progressive increase in the population practicing extensive sheep and cattle breeding generated a need that compromised the vegetation cover and significantly modified its floristic composition. This pressure has caused a degradation of the vegetation and has led to the constitution of ephemeral lawns where toxic and/or spiny non-palatable species dominate such as *Centaurea parviflora*, *Calycotome spinosa*, *Urginea maritima*, *Ulex boivinii*, *Asphodelus microcarpus*, *Echium vulgare* and *Atractylis humilis* (Bouazza et al., 2000; 2010).

We are therefore in the presence of a rural population who has no alternative but to pour themselves into agro-sylvo-pastoral activities, through the practice of a subsistence economy, which tends to exert an increasingly increased pressure on the forest. This forest represents a favorite terrain of the livestock route estimated at 2957 heads of sheep, 169 heads of cattle and 1130 heads of goats at the level of the localities of Hafir and Ain Ftouh (Municipality of Ain Ghoraba), Oued Zitoun, Jrada and Moul Dachra (Municipality of Sabra) and Tameksalet (municipality of Bouhlou) (DSA, 2023). Indeed, grazing in this region is carried out throughout the year. In the summer, the herds occupy the farmland after the harvest, and the rest of the year they graze in the forests.

Faced with this situation, uncontrolled overgrazing has become more and more dramatic, causing an imbalance in the floristic composition, a regression of the vegetation mat, a destruction of the surface horizons, soil erosion, an absence of natural regeneration of woody vegetation, and an occupation of natural environments by therophytes (Le Houerou, 1980; Babali, 2014).

The fires

Like the various forest formations, the cork oak forests are not spared from the phenomenon of fire. It represents the most dangerous and difficult aggression by its intensity, its brutality and its damage caused to the cork oak (Nsibi et al., 2006). These fires, whether caused by intentional

human actions or by accidents, can lead to the total or partial destruction of vegetation and can modify the ecological conditions of the ecosystem by eliminating certain plant species and favoring the growth of other species better adapted to fire.

The Hafir forest experienced a significant number of fires that ravaged an area of the order of 3550.91 ha during the period from 1892 to 2020 (last recorded fire) (CFWT, 2024) as shown in the graph that follows (Fig. 2).

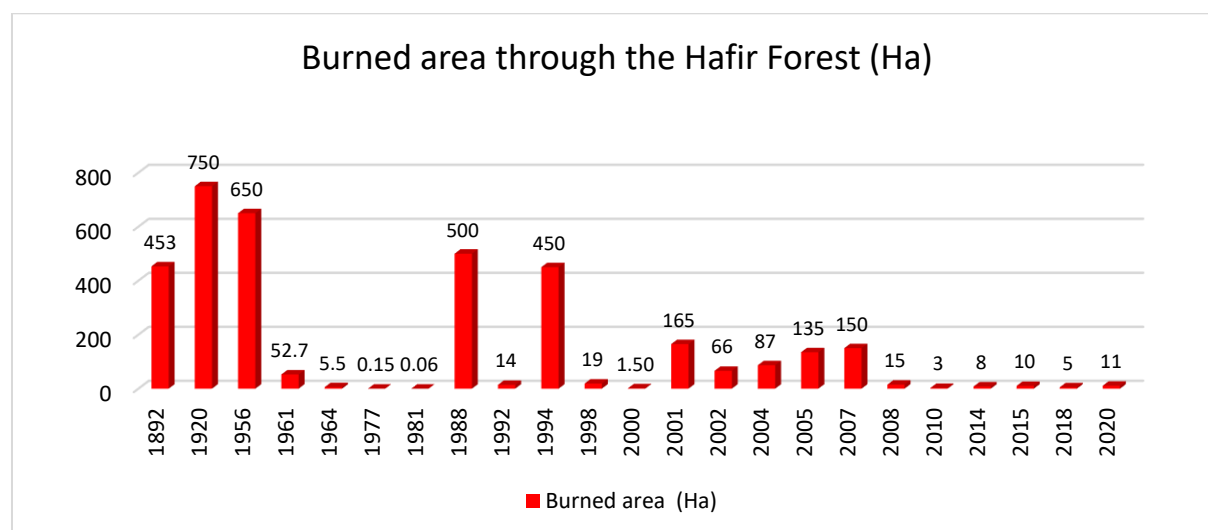


Figure 02: Evolution of fires through the Hafir forest during (1892-2020) (CFWT, 2024)

2.2. Methodology

The vegetation cover of the Hafir forest is characterized by a great heterogeneity, for this we opted for a stratified random sampling which takes into account the variability of the flora vegetation (Pardé and Bouchon, 1988). The vegetation inventory was carried out according to the Braun-Blanquet method (1951) and (Frontier, 1983).

Our inventory of the Hafir forest was conducted in 2022 and 2023, during the growing season (from February to October), in order to identify species from post-winter until autumn. Inside the forest, we have installed 120 plots representing average ecological conditions, making it possible to carry out the necessary surveys. The choice of the locations of the floristic surveys was guided by the homogeneity of the vegetation cover of the area in order to ensure the representativeness and reliability of the data collected. To complement the sampling and maximize the detection of rare or localized species, the floristic inventory was supplemented with itinerant surveys along transects of approximately 500 to 800 meters, crossing the main representative habitat types of the cork oak woodland. This approach increased spatial coverage and improved the chances of recording infrequent or habitat-specialist species. (Alexandre, 2010).

Gorenflot and Foucault (2005); Delpech, (2006), describe that the minimum area varies from 300 to 800 m² for forests, for this we opted for rectangular plots with a surface of 400 m² for each plot (20 m X 20 m) . At the end of the 120 plots carried out, we mentioned all the information on the characteristics of the plots, in particular the geographical coordinates and the altitude using GPS, the exposure using compass, the slope, etc. and established the list of all the (vascular) plant species present according to the Braun-Blanquet method of abundance-dominance coefficients.

Our study took into account several orographic parameters, in particular :

- The altitude :

Our inventory was conducted in the Hafir forest on several altitudes ranging from 700 m to 1399 m. The majority of the plots (86%, 103 plots) were carried out in the altitudinal ranges between 900 and 1299 m.

-The exposition :

The forest formations exposed to the West experienced the completion of 46 surveys followed by those exposed to the North with 39 surveys. The eastern and southern exposures are weakly represented in our study by 18 and 17 surveys respectively.

-The slope :

The vast majority (118) of the surveys were carried out on low to medium slopes. Only 2 surveys have been carried out on steep slopes due to the difficulty of access.

The identification of the inventoried plant species was made using the flora of Quézel & Santa (1962); Ozenda (1977) and Bonnier (1990). The determination of the biological types of plant species is based on the work of Ellenberg & Mueller-Dubois (1967).

We have noted for each species :

-the life form sensu Raunkiaer, (1934): Ph. (Phanerophyte), CH. (Chamephyte), HE. (Hemicryptophyte), GE (Geophyte), TH. (Therophyte).

-the chorological type: Endemic, Mediterranean, Nordic and Multiregional, (Quézel & Médail 2003)

In order to quantify the therophytization in our study area, we calculated the disturbance index defined by Hébrard (1995) by the following formula:

$$IP = (\text{number of Chamephytes} + \text{number of Therophytes}) / \text{total number of species} \times 100$$

Data processing

The statistical processing of the floristic composition of our study area was carried out by the correspondence factor analysis (AFC) assisted by the "Past 4.06b" software To identify the factors that structure these plant communities (Legendre & Legendre, 2012) . To do this, a code

consisting of four letters and a number is assigned to each of the taxa. The first letter indicates the genus, the other three letters that follow indicate the first letters of the species, the number represents the order of the taxa in the matrix, for example: *Aceras pyramidalis* is coded as follows: A-pyr 1.

The symbols of the abundance-dominance coefficients are not directly exploitable. Since the "+" is not a value, it has been replaced by the number "1".

We proceeded to the analysis of our results, organized in a matrix of 387 rows and 120 columns, considering only, the "presence (1) and the absence (0)" of the species, since the objective was the discrimination and the characterization of the species inventoried in the study area.

3. Results

3.1. Floristic composition

Like the forests around the Mediterranean, the Hafir Forest is characterized by a very rich floristic diversity. Our inventory allowed us to identify 12.33% of the Algerian flora and 21.74% of that of the Oran sector described by Quézel (2000), either 387 taxa of specific and sub-specific rank, divided between 264 genera and 67 families.

Eudicot angiosperms dominate with 50 families, 203 genera and 308 species. Monocots have 15 families, 56 genera, and 73 species. Gymnosperms are represented by only 2 families, 5 genera and 6 species (Fig. 3).

Of the 264 genera identified, 82 are multispecies while 182 are monospecific, giving a genera-to-species ratio of 68.22%. The genera with the most species are: *Cistus* with 5 species, closely followed by the genera *Silene*, *Euphorbia* and *Ranunculus*, each also with 5 species. in third place the genera *Plantago*, *Quercus*, *Linaria*, *Convolvulus* and *Galium*, each have 4 species (Fig. 4).

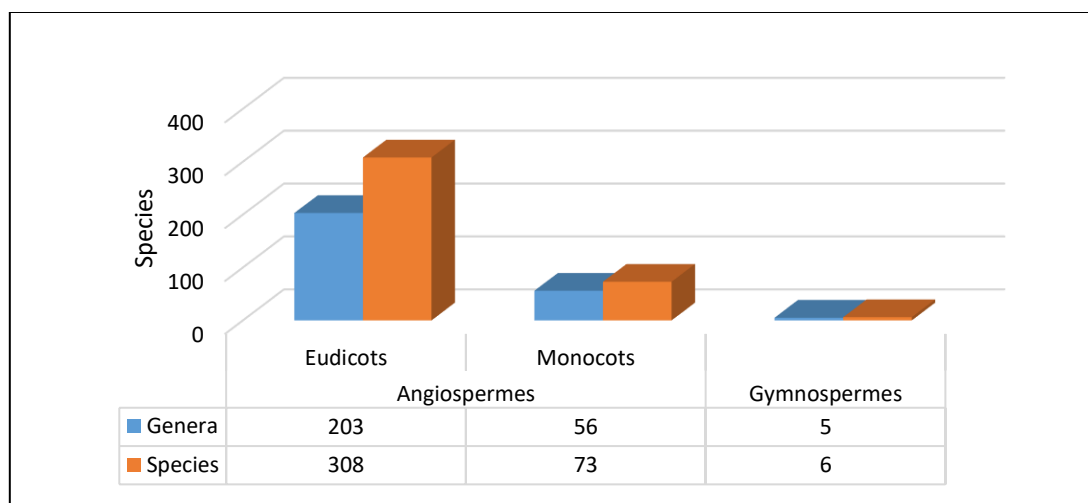


Figure 3: Distribution of the flora in systematic groups

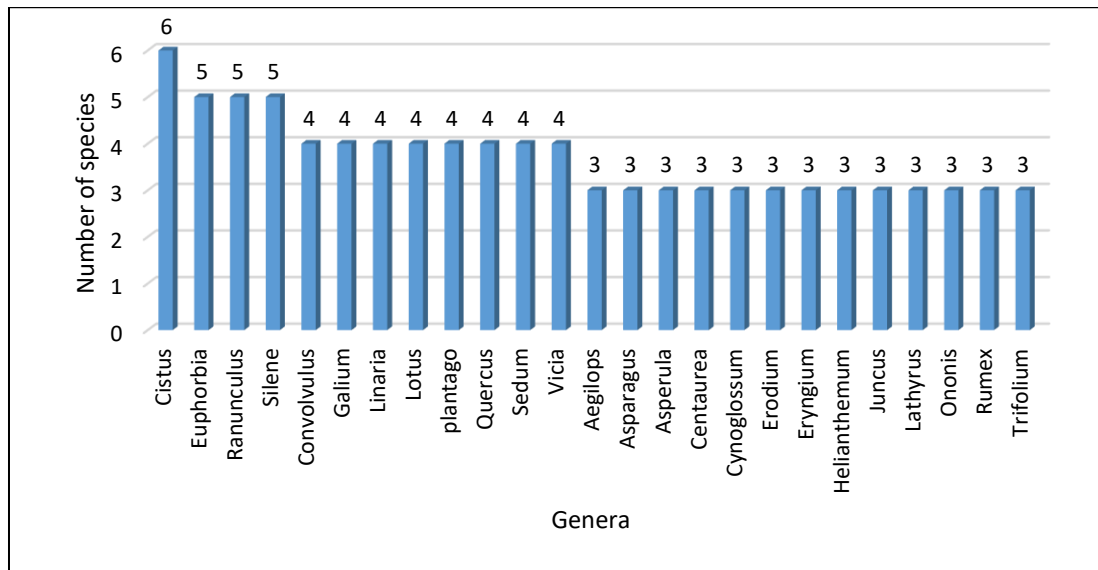


Figure 4: The most represented genera

With a family/number of species ratio of 17.31%, the taxa are categorized into 67 families (36 pluri-generic families and 31 mono-generic). Only 11 families represent more than 60% of the total inventoried species, these are classified in descending order as follows: *Asteraceae* (55 species, 44 genera), *Fabaceae* (44 species, 26 genera), *Poaceae* (30 species, 24 genera), *Apiaceae* (17 species, 14 genera), *Brassicaceae* (16 species, 14 genera), *Orchidaceae* and *Caryophyllaceae* (respectively 14 and 13 species, 10 and 08 genera), the *Lamiaceae* and the *Rubiaceae* (respectively 12 species, 9 and 6 genera), the *Plantaginaceae* (11 species, 5 genera) and finally the *Cistaceae* (10 species, 3 genera). The rest of the families have a low representation. (Fig. 5).

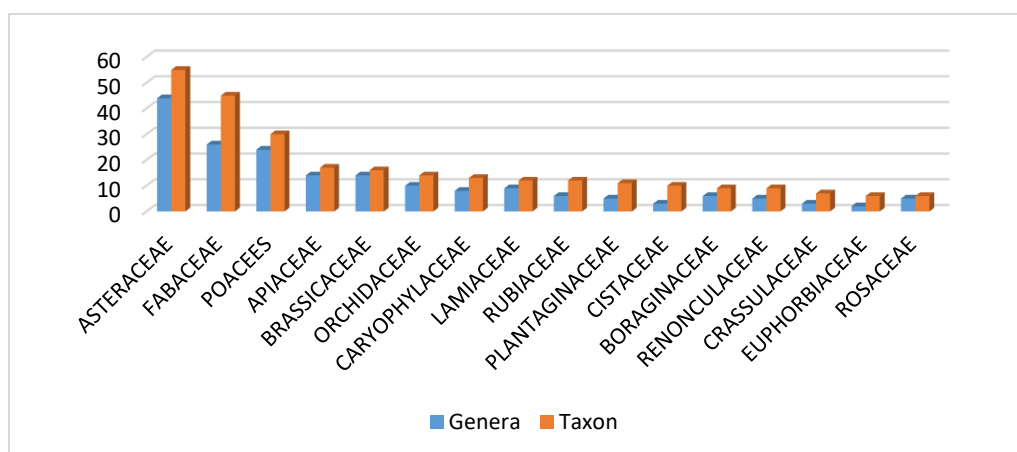


Figure 5 : The most represented families

The inventoried flora is classified in several biological forms. Annual herbaceous plants are represented with 52%, perennial herbaceous plants with 35% and finally perennial woody plants with 13% (Fig. 6).

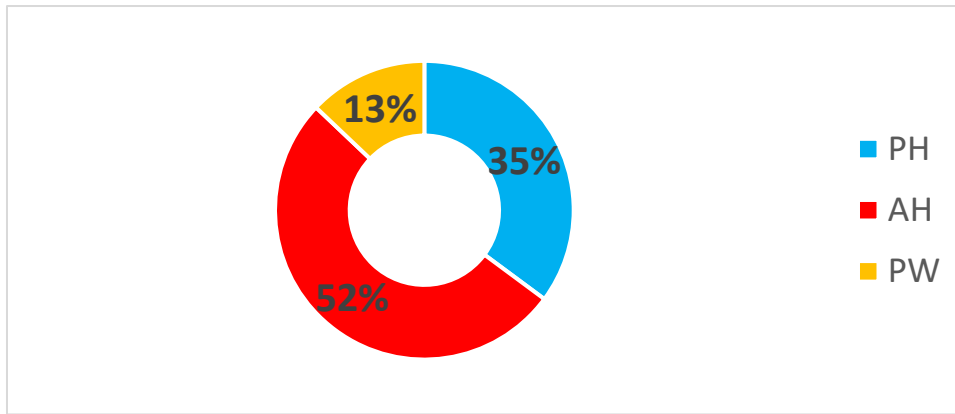


Figure 6 : Distribution of flora by life span

Legend: PH (perennial herbaceous), AH (annual herbaceous), PW (perennial woody).

3.2. Life forme

The results obtained highlight the dominance of Therophytes with a considerable rate of 49%, followed by Hemicryptophytes with 21%. Geophytes, Chamephytes and Phanerophytes appear respectively with 13%, 11% and 6%. (Fig. 7). The classification of the biological types by importance demonstrates that the vegetation studied has a biological spectrum of type : TH > HE > GE > CH > PH. The calculated disturbance index is equal to 59.43%.

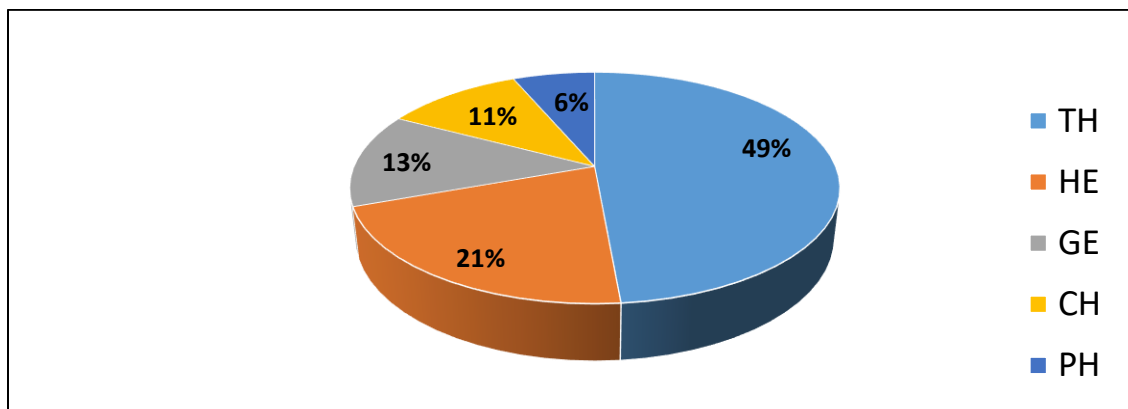


Figure 7: Distribution of flora by life form

PH (Phanerophytes), HE (Hemicryptophytes), GE (Geophytes), CH (Chamephytes), TH (Therophytes).

The distribution of life form by families showed a plasticity of 27 families which group 4 to 2 biological types in a single family. Each of the following families, in this case *Fabaceae*, *Poaceae*, *Ranunculaceae* and *Crassulaceae*, are present under four biological types, while *Asteraceae*, *Lamiaceae*, *Rosaceae*, *Apiaceae*, *Plantaginaceae* and *Convolvulaceae* are present under three biological types. The rest, either 17 families, group two biological types, in particular the *Orchidaceae*, *Brassicaceae*, *Caprifoliaceae*, *Caryophyllaceae*, *Cistaceae*, *Convolvulaceae*, *Cyperaceae*, *Dipsacaceae*, *Ericaceae*, etc. (Fig. 8).

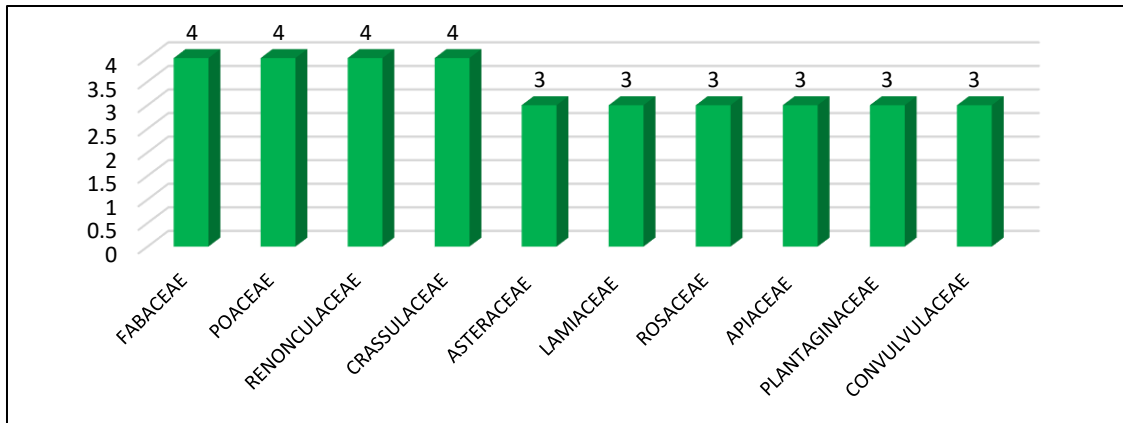


Figure 8: Distribution of life form by families

3.3. Chorological types

The analysis of the biogeographic spectrum of the studied vegetation shows the dominance of the Mediterranean chorological type with a rate of 74% (*Allium roseum*, *Asperula arvensis*, *Asparagus acutifolius*). The pluriregional types in this case those of Eurasia, Paleo temperate, Cosmopolitan, Paleo subtropical, etc., occupy the second position with a rate of 22% of the total flora inventoried (*Melandrium album*, *Sedum acre*, *Campanula erinus*). The endemic types with a rate of 3% are represented by the North African, Algerian-Moroccan endemic and Algerian-Moroccan-Libyan endemic species (*Glossopappus macrotus*, *Jasonia rupestris*, *Ophrys fusca subsp. maghribeca*, *Genista atlantica*, *Atractylis macrophylla*, *Galium tricornutum*). The Nordic type including the circumboreal, Euro-Siberian and south-western European species (*Cardamine hirsula subsp. hirsuta*, *Phleum phleoides*, *Ranunculus gramineus*) is represented by only 1% of the total flora studied (Fig. 9).

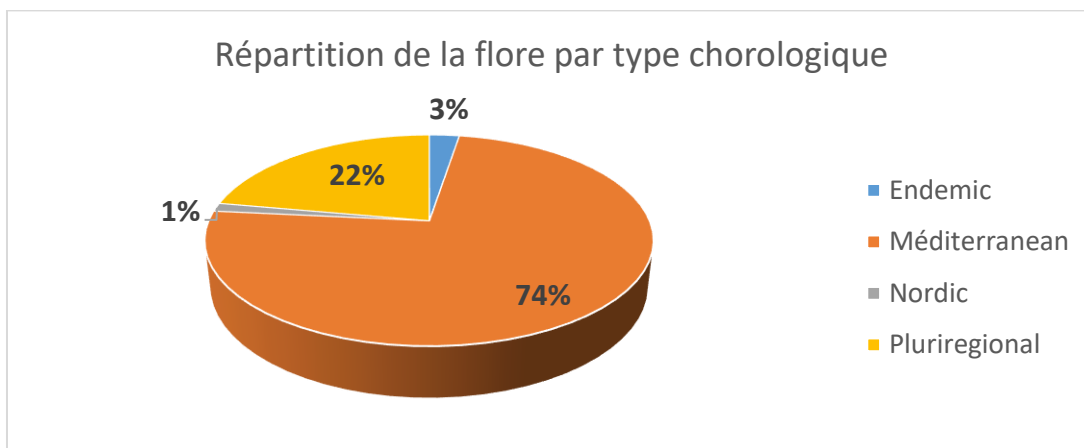


Figure 9 : Distribution of flora by chorological type

4. Discussion

With a sampling effort of 120 plots and transect, our floristic inventory was not very exhaustive for the entire Hafir forest. Some areas that had a high homogeneity and some grasslands were not taken into consideration. Despite this, we were able to highlight a significant floristic richness of the order of 387 species divided between 264 genera and 67 families.

Furthermore, studies were carried out in the same region of Tlemcen, particularly that of Babali, (2018), describes, through 400 plots, 645 taxa divided between 85 families and 387 genera in the Moutas hunting reserve. Those of Medjahdi et al. (2018), in the cork oak forests of Hafir and Zariffet, highlighted 239 taxa divided between 174 genera and 61 families. In the same region and across the Tlemcen Mountains, Ghezlaoui et al. (2017) described 195 species belonging to 143 genera and 48 families.

Regarding central Algeria, the work carried out through the Chréa cork oak forest by Mekidech et al. (2018), highlighted 213 species belonging to 50 families. At the Western Tellian Atlas of Tiaret, the results obtained by Miara et al. (2017) based on 278 plots, highlighted 566 species belonging to 76 families. Zemmar and al. (2020), described 151 species divided into 125 genera and 54 families in the forest of Bissa Chlef. In the cork forest of Jebel Saadia, Hedidi, (2019) identified 127 species divided between 103 genera and 39 families.

In the east of the country, Bouchibane, (2021), recorded 377 taxa, 65 families and 246 genera in the mountain ranges of Kabylie Babors, and in the cork forests of eastern Numidia, Bennadja and al (2013), recorded 292 species.

In Morocco, Soukayna and al. (2024), identified 407 species divided between 257 genera and 67 families in the Zerhoun cork oak forest.

The dominance of the families *Asteraceae*, *Fabaceae* and *Poaceae* in our results has been pointed out by the authors already mentioned above. These families are known for their great diversity and their ability to adapt to different environments, which reflects their presence in several biological types. Kazi (2010) reported that these families clearly dominate the Oran weed flora with 166 species, either 39% of the total population. In our case, the *Asteraceae*, *Fabaceae* and *Poaceae* families alone capitalize on 33.51% of the total flora recorded. *Brassicaceae*, *Caryophyllaceae*, *Apiaceae*, *Orchidaceae* and *Boraginaceae* are among the other families that are well-represented in our inventory. They are arranged in much the same order of importance as Algerian flora (Kazi, 2010).

The Hemicryptophytes, Geophytes, Chamephytes, and Phanerophytes are greatly outnumbered by Therophytes, which account for 49% of the flora studied. In climates characterized by distinct seasons or frequent disturbances, the dominance of Therophytes and Hemicryptophytes

suggests an environment where annual or biannual survival strategies are advantageous. The prevalence of therophytes in the Mediterranean region is often around 50%, as reported by Daget (1980), Olivier et al. (1995), and Madon & Medial (1996).

The biological spectrum of the Hafir forest (TH > HE > GE > CH > PH) is typical of the semi-arid Mediterranean bioclimatic atmosphere according to the authors cited above. This therophytization announced in the Tlemcen region, defined by the high proportion of therophytes (Barbero et al., 1995), is due according to Babali (2014), to frequent overgrazing and especially to riparian crops, adding to this the recurrence of fires (Zemmar, 2020).

The unfavourable climatic conditions prevailing in the Hafir forest make the environment favourable to the proliferation of Therophyte species. This observation is in agreement with Negre, (1960); Daget, (1980) and Barbero et al, (1990) who point out that the therophytization of the environment, which represents a strategy of avoiding unfavourable periods (cold and drought), is linked either to the winter cold or summer drought of the region, or to disturbances of the environment (grazing). During the period from 1892 to 2020, more than 3550 ha of vegetation cover were ravaged by fires across the Hafir forest, which caused a loss of biodiversity and the creation of openings in forest formations allowing the opportunity for annual species to colonize the forest. The excessive overgrazing of the Hafir forest, which mainly affects the composition and diversity of the herbaceous stratum (Mekidech et al, 2018), has strongly contributed to this therophytization, knowing that this forest is under pressure from a herd estimated at more than 2957 head of sheep, 169 head of cattle and 1130 head of goats in the localities closest to the forest, not counting the livestock of the communes of in this case Sabra, Bouhlou and Sidi Medjahed.

The disturbance index calculated in our study area is equal to 59.43%. Those evaluated by Hedidi, (2019), Larbi, (2021), Zemmar, (2020), Meddah, (2020), Benkhettou, (2015), Merioua et al, (2013) are respectively in the order of 59.45%, 27%, 42%, 53.5%, 63.6% and 68%.

According to Blondel et al., (2010), Mediterranean ecosystems are characterized by high environmental heterogeneity, resulting in marked ecological gradients. To identify the factors that structure these plant communities, multivariate analyses are necessary (Legendre & Legendre, 2012), but few studies simultaneously integrate biological traits and ecological strategies (sensu Díaz et al., 2016).

The factorial correspondence analysis (CFA) of the inventoried species, of which only those with a relative frequency of 10% or more (144 species) were retained, highlighted 4 key dimensions structuring the distribution of these species by confirming clear and hierarchical ecological patterns (Tab. 3).

Table N° 3: contribution of species in the 3 axes of the AFC.

Species	Code	Life form.	Cluster	Factor1	Factor2	Factor3
<i>Phillyrea latifolia</i> L.	<i>P-lat</i> 288	PH	1	0.0042	- 0.6705	- 0.0248
<i>Erica multiflora</i>	<i>E-mul</i> 138	CH	1	0.0194	- 0.6905	- 0.0181
<i>Reseda alba</i> subsp. <i>alba</i> L.	<i>R-alb</i> 312	TH	1	- 0.0019	- 0.8054	- 0.0023
<i>Lomelosia stellata</i> (L.) Raf.	<i>L-ste</i> 225	TH	1	- 0.0043	- 0.8108	- 0.0021
<i>Lupinus hirsutus</i> L.	<i>L-hir</i> 231	TH	1	- 0.0008	- 0.7962	0.0495
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	<i>C-arv</i> 106	GE	1	0.0174	- 0.7672	- 0.0601
<i>Juncus effusus</i> L.	<i>J-eff</i> 195	GE	1	0.0191	- 0.7645	- 0.0580
<i>Trigonella gladiata</i>	<i>T-gla</i> 365	TH	1	0.0022	- 0.8313	- 0.0078
<i>Aceras pyramidalis</i> (L.) Reichenb	<i>A-pyr</i> 1	GE	1	0.0359	- 0.5385	0.0852
<i>Hippocrepis biflora</i>	<i>H-bif</i> 180	TH	1	0.0113	- 0.8481	0.0452
<i>Rosa canina</i>	<i>R-can</i> 316	CH	1	0.0191	- 0.8211	- 0.0353
<i>Marrubium vulgare</i>	<i>M-vul</i> 239	HE	1	0.0287	- 0.7854	0.0630
<i>Ajuga chamaepitys</i> (L.) Schreber	<i>A-cha</i> 8	TH	1	0.0057	- 0.8302	- 0.0196
<i>Medicago orbicularis</i>	<i>M-orb</i> 241	TH	1	- 0.0113	- 0.6644	0.5156
<i>Lithospermum officinale</i>	<i>L-off</i> 222	TH	1	0.0018	- 0.9204	- 0.0240
<i>Lobularia maritima</i>	<i>L-mar</i> 223	TH	1	0.0019	- 0.9139	- 0.0246
<i>Mantisalca salmantica</i>	<i>M-sal</i> 238	HE	1	0.0029	- 0.9072	- 0.0351
<i>Verbascum blattaria</i> L.	<i>V-bla</i> 375	TH	1	0.0030	- 0.9070	- 0.0335
<i>Lonicera implexa</i> L.	<i>L-imp</i> 226	PH	1	0.0376	- 0.7066	- 0.0142
<i>Lotus conimbricensis</i>	<i>L-con</i> 228	TH	1	0.0217	- 0.8622	- 0.0135
<i>Veronica beccabunga</i>	<i>V-bec</i> 377	TH	1	0.0189	- 0.7698	0.0047
<i>Viburnum lantana</i>	<i>V-lan</i> 379	TH	1	0.0304	- 0.7821	0.1365
<i>Helianthemum virgatum</i>	<i>H-vir</i> 177	TH	1	0.0129	- 0.9143	0.0183
<i>Rubia peregrina</i> subsp. <i>peregrina</i>	<i>R-per</i> 320	HE	1	0.0101	- 0.8057	- 0.0269
<i>Senecio glaucus</i> subsp. <i>mauritanicus</i>	<i>S-gla</i> 332	HE	1	0.0351	- 0.8134	0.1281
<i>Trisetaria flavescens</i>	<i>T-fla</i> 366	HE	1	0.0040	- 0.9557	- 0.0318
<i>Valerianella coronata</i>	<i>V-cor</i> 374	HE	1	0.0036	- 0.9521	- 0.0353
<i>Cotyledon umbilicus veneris</i> subsp. <i>pendulina</i>	<i>C-umb</i> 110	GE	1	0.0250	- 0.7233	- 0.0626
<i>Glossopappus macrotus</i>	<i>G-mac</i> 170	TH	1	0.0273	- 0.9308	- 0.0135
<i>Callipeltis cucullaris</i>	<i>C-cuc</i> 72	TH	1	0.0087	- 0.9318	0.0781
<i>Thapsia garganica</i>	<i>T-gar</i> 355	TH	1	0.0340	- 0.6490	0.5605
<i>Andryala integrifolia</i>	<i>A-int</i> 18	TH	1	0.0165	- 0.8736	- 0.0129
<i>Muscari neglectum</i> Guss.	<i>M-neg</i> 254	GE	1	0.0173	- 0.8538	- 0.0301
<i>Calycotome spinosa</i>	<i>C-spi</i> 70	CH	1	0.0246	- 0.9176	- 0.0083
<i>Centaureum erythraea</i> Raf.	<i>C-ery</i> 86	HE	1	0.0115	- 0.8456	- 0.0422
<i>Narcissus serotinus</i> L.	<i>N-ser</i> 257	GE	1	0.0255	- 0.8959	- 0.0163
<i>Quercus faginea</i> subsp. <i>tlemcenensis</i> (DC.) Maire et Weille	<i>Q-fag</i> 303	PH	1	0.0369	- 0.7347	0.0259
<i>Verbena officinalis</i> L.	<i>V-off</i> 376	HE	1	0.0216	- 0.8826	- 0.0203

<i>Ampelodesmos mauritanicus</i> (Poiret)	<i>A-mau</i> 14	CH	1	0.0058	- 0.8575	0.4389
<i>Ballota hirsuta</i>	<i>B-hir</i> 51	HE	1	0.0159	- 0.8024	0.3904
<i>Linaria triphylla</i> (L.) Miller	<i>L-tri</i> 218	TH	1	0.3192	- 0.7225	0.2866
<i>Veronica hederifolia</i>	<i>V-hed</i> 378	TH	1	0.0303	- 0.6795	0.4250
<i>Bellis annua</i> subsp. <i>minuta</i>	<i>B-ann</i> 53	TH	2	0.2773	- 0.2243	- 0.0167
<i>Vitis vinifera</i>	<i>V-vin</i> 385	TH	2	0.1930	- 0.2037	0.0489
<i>Ononis biflora</i> Desf.	<i>O-bif</i> 265	TH	2	0.3738	- 0.6158	0.0274
<i>Createagus azarolus</i> var. <i>azarolus</i>	<i>C-aza</i> 112	PH	2	0.5293	- 0.4471	- 0.0500
<i>Specularia falcata</i> (s.l.)	<i>S-fal</i> 346	TH	2	0.4126	- 0.6801	- 0.0124
<i>Erica arborea</i> L.	<i>E-arb</i> 137	CH	2	0.7289	- 0.3571	- 0.0273
<i>Cistus triflorus</i>	<i>C-tri</i> 102	CH	2	0.7766	- 0.3443	- 0.0301
<i>Rosa sempervirens</i>	<i>R-sim</i> 317	CH	2	0.4688	- 0.6264	0.0159
<i>Helianthemum helianthemoides</i>	<i>H-hel</i> 175	TH	2	0.5116	- 0.6957	0.0096
<i>Quercus suber</i> L. subsp. <i>suber</i>	<i>Q-sub</i> 305	PH	2	0.8509	- 0.3381	- 0.0132
<i>Cytisus villosus</i> Pourret	<i>C-vil</i> 127	CH	2	0.7946	- 0.3911	- 0.0330
<i>Cistus salvifolius</i>	<i>C-sal</i> 101	CH	2	0.6549	- 0.5842	- 0.0336
<i>Trachelium caeruleum</i> L.	<i>T-cae</i> 360	TH	2	0.5929	- 0.6103	0.0228
<i>Stachys ocymastrum</i>	<i>S-ocy</i> 347	TH	2	0.5468	- 0.4702	0.4239
<i>Orchis italica</i> Poiret	<i>O-ita</i> 273	GE	2	0.7404	- 0.5814	- 0.0230
<i>Ranunculus macrophyllus</i>	<i>R-mac</i> 308	HE	2	0.6918	- 0.5071	- 0.0080
<i>Quercus coccifera</i> L. subsp. <i>coccifera</i>	<i>Q-coc</i> 302	PH	2	0.6637	- 0.6551	- 0.0041
<i>Asperula hirsuta</i>	<i>A-hur</i> 43	HE	2	0.6555	- 0.6454	0.0060
<i>Asperula cynanchica</i>	<i>A-cyn</i> 42	HE	2	0.6937	- 0.6268	- 0.0090
<i>Cardamine hirsuta</i> subsp. <i>hirsuta</i> Syme	<i>C-hir</i> 75	TH	3	0.0261	- 0.0265	0.7605
<i>Cynosurus echinatus</i>	<i>C-ech</i> 123	TH	3	0.0609	- 0.0426	0.0985
<i>Erodium moschatum</i>	<i>E-mos</i> 141	TH	3	0.2393	- 0.1233	0.1852
<i>Euphorbia falcata</i>	<i>E-fal</i> 147	TH	3	- 0.0069	- 0.0281	0.9299
<i>Ulex boivinii</i>	<i>U-boi</i> 369	PH	3	- 0.0056	- 0.0300	0.9271
<i>Ulex parviflorus</i>	<i>U-par</i> 370	PH	3	- 0.0056	- 0.0300	0.9271
<i>Lamarckia aurea</i>	<i>L-aur</i> 202	TH	3	0.0673	- 0.2463	0.2070
<i>Sedum album</i> L. subsp. <i>gypsicolum</i> (Boiss. et Reut., Maire)	<i>S-alb</i> 329	HE	3	0.0024	- 0.0302	0.9213
<i>Argyrolobium zanonii</i> (L.) Link	<i>A-zan</i> 31	HE	3	0.0453	- 0.0484	0.1217
<i>Campanula erinus</i>	<i>C-eri</i> 74	TH	3	0.0189	- 0.0299	0.8586
<i>Rumex pulcher</i>	<i>R-pul</i> 323	HE	3	0.0464	- 0.0475	0.1187
<i>Stipa parviflora</i>	<i>S-par</i> 349	TH	3	0.0285	- 0.0337	0.8850
<i>Urospermum picroides</i>	<i>U-pic</i> 372	GE	3	0.0755	- 0.0698	0.1941
<i>Hedera algeriensis</i>	<i>H-alg</i> 172	CH	3	0.0385	- 0.0590	0.0561
<i>Briza maxima</i>	<i>B-max</i> 63	TH	3	0.0139	- 0.0323	0.8943
<i>Medicago minima</i>	<i>M-min</i> 240	TH	3	0.0607	- 0.0458	0.8113
<i>Orchis anthropophora</i> (L.) All.	<i>O-ant</i> 272	GE	3	0.0384	- 0.0560	0.0005
<i>Pistacia lentiscus</i> L.	<i>P-len</i> 295	PH	3	0.0594	- 0.0587	0.1276

<i>Anthemis pedunculata</i> subsp. eu- <i>pedunculata</i> M.	<i>A-ped</i> 20	HE	3	0.0416	- 0.0577	0.0026
<i>Anthericum liliago</i> L. subsp. <i>algeriense</i>	<i>A-lil</i> 21	GE	3	- 0.0006	- 0.0351	0.6483
<i>Neslia paniculata</i>	<i>N-pan</i> 261	TH	3	0.0138	- 0.0302	0.8900
<i>Coronilla scorpioides</i>	<i>C-sco</i> 109	TH	3	0.0091	- 0.0350	0.6751
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	<i>P-lan</i> 300	HE	3	0.0154	- 0.0421	0.7391
<i>Ruscus aculeatus</i> L.	<i>R-acu</i> 325	GE	3	0.0454	- 0.0614	0.0216
<i>Globularia alypum</i> subsp. <i>alypum</i> L.	<i>G-aly</i> 169	CH	3	0.0052	- 0.0442	0.6616
<i>Ornithopus compressus</i>	<i>O-com</i> 274	TH	3	0.3243	- 0.0154	0.6837
<i>Tetraclinis articulata</i> (Vahl)	<i>T-art</i> 352	PH	3	0.0173	- 0.0416	0.7071
<i>Quercus ilex</i> subsp. <i>ballota</i> (Desf.)	<i>Q-ile</i> 304	PH	3	0.0749	- 0.0757	0.1362
<i>Lithospermum apulum</i>	<i>L-apu</i> 221	TH	3	0.4575	- 0.0596	0.5823
<i>Lotus ornithopodioides</i> L.	<i>L-orn</i> 230	TH	3	0.4578	- 0.0307	0.6086
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	<i>P-rho</i> 281	TH	4	0.5410	- 0.0083	0.0670
<i>Phlomis lychnitis</i>	<i>P-lyc</i> 291	TH	4	0.5770	- 0.0038	0.0076
<i>Reichardia picroides</i>	<i>R-pic</i> 311	TH	4	0.6498	- 0.0040	0.0335
<i>Paronychia echinata</i> Lamk.	<i>P-ech</i> 284	TH	4	0.4871	- 0.0224	0.0466
<i>Erodium chium</i>	<i>E-chi</i> 139	TH	4	0.7282	0.0168	0.0070
<i>Fumaria parviflora</i>	<i>F-par</i> 157	TH	4	0.7468	0.0258	- 0.0225
<i>Euphorbia paralias</i>	<i>E-par</i> 149	TH	4	0.7313	0.0136	0.0213
<i>Linum usitatissimum</i> subsp. <i>angustifolium</i> (Huds.) Fiori	<i>L-usi</i> 220	TH	4	0.5142	- 0.0849	0.1574
<i>Euphorbia platyphyllos</i>	<i>E-pla</i> 150	TH	4	0.7301	0.0050	0.0319
<i>Lotus creticus</i>	<i>L-cre</i> 227	HE	4	0.5921	- 0.0289	0.1089
<i>Chrysanthemum coronarium</i>	<i>C-cor</i> 94	TH	4	0.7080	0.0063	0.1076
<i>Koeleria phleoides</i>	<i>K-phl</i> 199	TH	4	0.8032	0.0150	- 0.0034
<i>Helianthemum hirtum</i>	<i>H-hir</i> 176	TH	4	0.8145	0.0122	0.0009
<i>Phalaris canariensis</i>	<i>P-can</i> 287	TH	4	0.6106	- 0.0136	0.1124
<i>Reseda luteola</i> L.	<i>R-lut</i> 313	TH	4	0.5445	- 0.0218	- 0.0079
<i>Calendula suffruticosa</i> Vahl	<i>C-suf</i> 69	TH	4	0.7922	0.0100	0.0490
<i>Cistus arboreus</i> subsp. <i>baetica</i>	<i>C-arb</i> 97	TH	4	0.8178	0.0088	0.0081
<i>Geranium lucidum</i>	<i>G-luc</i> 165	TH	4	0.7406	0.0091	0.0368
<i>Juncus bufonius</i>	<i>J-buf</i> 194	TH	4	0.8247	0.0074	0.0330
<i>Iberis odorata</i>	<i>I-odo</i> 187	TH	4	0.8323	0.0110	- 0.0142
<i>Phagnalon saxatile</i>	<i>P-sax</i> 285	CH	4	0.6161	- 0.0142	0.0029
<i>Bifora testiculata</i>	<i>B-tes</i> 56	TH	4	0.7684	0.0137	0.0651
<i>Cuscuta epithymnm</i> L.	<i>C-epi</i> 118	TH	4	0.6725	- 0.0017	0.0109
<i>Cistus monspeliensis</i>	<i>C-mon</i> 100	CH	4	0.8504	0.0095	- 0.0186
<i>Echium italicum</i> subsp. <i>pyrenaicum</i>	<i>E-ita</i> 135	TH	4	0.6151	0.0064	0.5055
<i>Cistus ladaniferus</i> subsp. <i>mauritanus</i> Pau & Sennen	<i>C-lad</i> 99	CH	4	0.5820	- 0.0151	0.4824
<i>Gagea lacaitae</i>	<i>G-lac</i> 159	GE	4	0.8421	0.0064	0.0075

<i>Chamaerops humilis</i> subsp. <i>argentea</i> André.	<i>C-hum</i> 90	CH	4	0.6768	- 0.0081	0.4330
<i>Carlina lanata</i>	<i>C-lan</i> 78	TH	4	0.6693	- 0.0020	0.4315
<i>Cistus villosus</i> L.	<i>C-vil</i> 98	CH	4	0.8848	0.0086	0.0039
<i>Crepis vesicaria</i>	<i>C-ves</i> 114	HE	4	0.9244	0.0130	- 0.0038
<i>Ranunculus spicatus</i>	<i>R-spi</i> 310	HE	4	0.9404	0.0108	- 0.0055
<i>Xeranthemum inapertum</i>	<i>X-ina</i> 387	TH	4	0.9227	0.0074	0.0034
<i>Asperula arvensis</i>	<i>A-arv</i> 41	TH	4	0.7547	- 0.0041	0.0964
<i>Colutea arborea</i>	<i>C-arb</i> 104	PH	4	0.9124	0.0084	- 0.0110
<i>Lavatera olbia</i>	<i>L-olb</i> 208	HE	4	0.9442	0.0116	- 0.0031
<i>Galium mollugo</i> subsp. <i>corrudaefolium</i> (Vill.) Briquet	<i>G-mol</i> 161	HE	4	0.9341	0.0108	- 0.0054
<i>Daphne gnidium</i> L. var. <i>mauritanica</i> L.	<i>D-gni</i> 129	CH	4	0.8793	- 0.0057	0.0084
<i>Pallenis maritima</i>	<i>P-mar</i> 277	CH	4	0.8124	- 0.0071	0.0152
<i>Melandrium album</i>	<i>M-alb</i> 242	HE	4	0.9395	0.0085	- 0.0065
<i>Aira Cupaniana</i> Guss.	<i>A-cup</i> 7	GE	4	0.9441	0.0070	0.0150
<i>Mentha pulegium</i>	<i>M-pul</i> 246	HE	4	0.8812	0.0002	0.0707
<i>Agrostis Reuteri</i>	<i>A-reu</i> 6	GE	4	0.9623	0.0082	- 0.0048
<i>Merendera filifolia</i>	<i>M-fil</i> 249	GE	4	0.8164	- 0.0147	0.0336
<i>Viburnum tinus</i> subsp. <i>tinus</i> L.	<i>V-tin</i> 380	TH	4	0.7761	- 0.0377	0.0359
<i>Stellaria media</i> subsp. <i>typica</i>	<i>S-med</i> 348	CH	4	0.7520	- 0.0330	0.0374
<i>Valeriana tuberosa</i> L.	<i>V-tub</i> 373	TH	4	0.8019	- 0.0299	0.0645
<i>Narcissus cantabricus</i> DC.	<i>N-can</i> 256	GE	4	0.8455	- 0.0173	0.0236
<i>Plantago albicans</i>	<i>P-alb</i> 297	HE	4	0.9000	- 0.0118	0.0873
<i>Antirrhinum majus</i> subsp. <i>eu-majus</i> P.F	<i>A-maj</i> 24	HE	4	0.8715	- 0.0154	0.0675
<i>Asphodelus microcarpus</i>	<i>A-mic</i> 44	GE	4	0.7845	- 0.0154	0.3641
<i>Teucrium polium</i>	<i>T-pol</i> 354	CH	4	0.7232	- 0.0218	0.4197
<i>Ophrys speculum</i> L.	<i>O-spe</i> 270	GE	4	0.8120	- 0.0277	0.0524

Legend: TH (Therophytes.), HE (Hemicryptophytes), GE (Geophytes), CH (Chamephytes) and PH (Phanerophytes).

Factor	1	2	3
Eigenvalue	45.551	29.446	14.603
% variance	31.63	20.45	10.14

Since the graphical representation of the scatter plots shows a condensation that makes it impossible to distinguish between species, we resorted to the use of the hierarchical K-means classification to segregate the different clusters (Fig. 13).

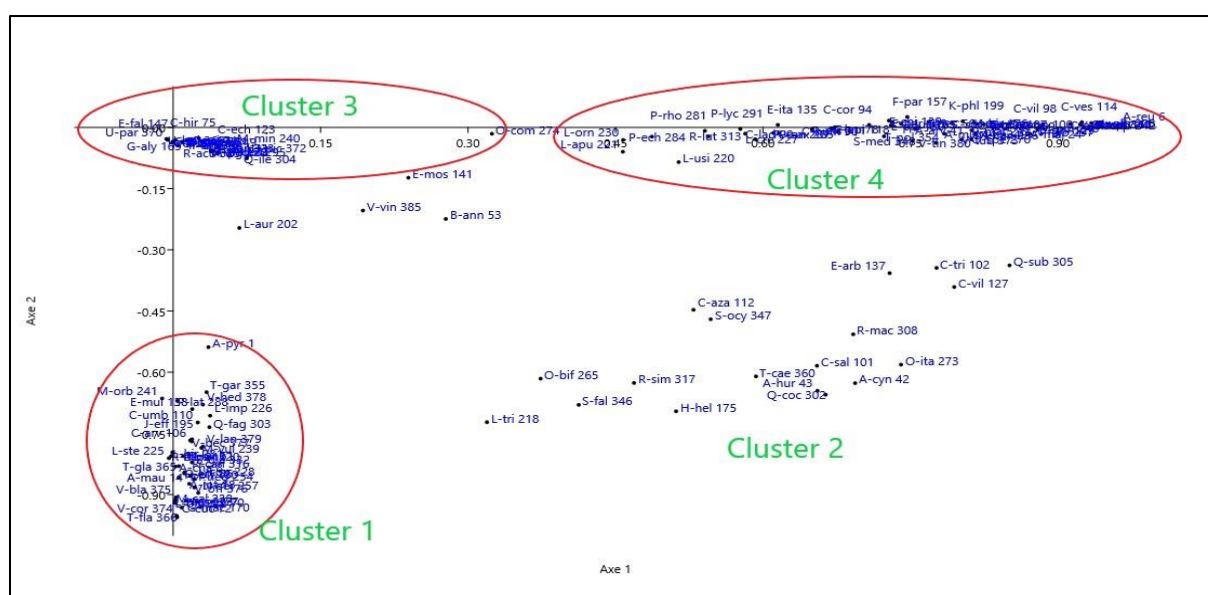


Figure 13: Species Factorial Design (Axis 1 and Axis 2)

Axis 1 (Factor 1), which represents 31.63% of the cumulative variance, marks a wide gradient contrasting the pioneer species of disturbed and open environments (*Lavatera olbia* and *Crepis vesicaria*, scores >0.9, cluster 4) with those of stable and less disturbed species (*Quercus ilex*, cluster 3). This axis mainly reflects the effect of human activities and natural disturbances on the distribution of species (Vilà et al., 1999), which is a phenomenon well documented in studies of Mediterranean ecosystems (Mouldi et al., 2010).

Axis 2 (Factor 2), representing 20.4% of the variance, is a gradient of edaphic aridity, with taxa such as *Trisetaria flavescens* (score -0.956) and *Globularia alypum* (score -0.570) being characteristic of the dry and poor soils of Mediterranean scrubland, (Mouldi et al., 2010).

Analysis of the contribution of individual species reveals that five species alone account for more than a quarter (28%) of the total variance: *Ranunculus spicatus* (6.1%), *Cistus monspeliensis* (5.8%), *Lavatera olbia* (5.5%), *Crepis vesicaria* (5.3%) and *Trisetaria flavescens* (5.3%). These hyper-contributing species are very good bioindicators of the large ecological gradients detected, as indicated in studies on species of the genus *Ranunculus* that are recognized for their sensitivity to environmental conditions and their role in photosynthesis under different light and temperature gradients (Carillo et al., 2019). The same goes for *Cistus monspeliensis*, which has bioactive properties and plays an ecological role in Mediterranean soils (Abou El Anouar et al., 2024).

As for *Lavatera olbia*, this species thrives in nutrient-rich soils and contributes to the structuring of plant communities (Mainetti and al., 2023). Finally, *Crepis vesicaria* is considered a bioindicator for assessing ecological gradients related to soils and sustainable agricultural practices (Wikipedia contributors, 2024).

The ecological typology that results confirms the coherence of the first groupings : Cluster 1 mainly includes species specialized in stable habitats (median factor 2 = -0.81), whereas generalists of disturbed habitats are found in Cluster 4 (median factor 1 = +0.73). It is discovered that the three species : *Veronica hederifolia*, *Echium italicum*, and *Linaria triphylla* have atypical factor profiles with high values on many axes at once, indicating unique ecological strategies.

Statistical validation tests (bootstrap analysis, Mantel test) corroborate the robustness of these findings. Excellent spatial coherence ($r=0.82$, $p=0.002$) and stable axis (95% CI [22.3-25.9%] for Factor1) are also present.

This rigorous multivariate analysis, validated by resampling methods, thus provides a solid basis for the interpretation of the distribution of plant species along the main recognized ecological gradients. The findings highlight a number of areas of potential practical utility in the management and preservation of the Hafir forest by using established bio-indicator species to track anthropogenic disturbances or climatic change. High Factor 1 species (*Crepis*, *Lavatera*) are necessary for the ecological repair of our ecosystem and the preservation of degraded soils. These species are perfect for colonizing degraded areas, while very negative factor 2 species (*Trisetaria*, *Glossopappus*) are suggestive of poor soils.

5. Conclusion

As previously stated, our inventory was not exhaustive for the entire Hafir forest; however, it was able to provide an overview of the floristic composition of the area studied. After this investigation, it was clear that 21.74% of the Oran sector's flora and 12.33% of Algeria's were identified. With a significant incidence of 49% for Therophytes and a preponderance of *Asteraceae*, *Fabaceae*, and *Poaceae*, this reported flora attests to the Hafir forest's susceptibility to anthropogenic and climatic disturbances, particularly overgrazing and frequent fires. Our research establishes a basis for future studies aimed at fully understanding floristic diversity to maintain, preserve, and enhance natural resources. It also supports botanists' efforts throughout the Tlemcen Mountains. A catalog of the medicinal plants in the region could also be added to this effort in the future.

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