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Analysis of phytochemical composition of *Bersama abyssinica* by gas chromatography – mass spectrometry

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Abstract

Bersama abyssinica has been reported to possess a varied range of therapeutical and pharmacological applications due to presence of bioactive compounds. The present study was carried out to determine the phytochemical present in the Bersama *abyssinica* leaf, stem bark and root bark methanolic fraction using Gas chromatography coupled to mass spectrometer (GC-MS) analysis. A total of 24 phytocompounds were identified from leaves whereas 21 compounds from stem bark and 19 from root bark. The classes of compounds identified include; terpenes, vitamin, carotenoid (rhodopin), flavonoids, steroid, unsaturated and saturated fatty acids. Most of the identified compounds were previously reported to possess antimicrobial, antitumor, antiseptic, preservative, and insecticidal and antioxidant activities. *Bersama abyssinica* leaf methanolic fraction had higher amount of compounds. The most abundant metabolites to all fractions are 2-furancarboxaldehyde, 5-(hydroxymethyl)-, 1,2,3-benzenetriol, 2,3-dimethylfumaric acid, 4-pyridinecarboxylic acid, ethyl ester; levoglucosenone, 2,5-dimethoxythiophenol and D-Melezitose recorded in leaves , stem bark and root bark of *Bersama abyssinica*.

Keywords: Phytochemical, GS-MS analysis, Bersama abyssinica, therapeutical, pharmacological uses

1. Introduction

Bersama abyssinica (Melianthaceae) belongs to the genus Bersama which comprises four species ^[1]. Other species includes B. engleriana, B. swynnertonii, B. swinnyi and B. yangambiensis. In East Africa, there are two subspecies of Bersama abyssinica namely; Bersama abyssinica Fresen. subssp. abyssinica and B. abyssinica subsp. paullinioides^[2]. Ethno medicinal information conveying this genus reveals that the plant species are used for various medicinal purposes. For example, in West Africa the Bersama engleriana bark, leaf and root decoctions are widely taken as a purgative to treat a range of stomach disorders, such as abdominal pain, colic, diarrhea, cholera, intestinal worms, amoebiasis and dysentery. Rabies, syphilis, gonorrhea and malaria are also treated with these decoctions ^[3]. Bersama abyssinica is used for treatment of rheumatism, aphrodisiac and snake bites by Babungo villagers in Cameroon^[4]. Previous biological analysis of Bersama abyssinica revealed the presence of antimicrobial secondary metabolites ^[5]. Despite the activity displayed by *Bersama* abyssinica, only Bersama engleriana has been phytochemically studied where Xanthone glycosides, terpenoids and anthraquinones with antitumour, antibacterial and antifungal activities were reported from the stem bark, roots and leaves of Bersama engleriana^[6]. Taking into account the importance of this medicinal plant, the methanolic fractions of leaves stem bark and root bark of Bersama abyssinica were analyzed for the phytochemical constituent for the first time using GC MS.



Fig 1: Bersama abyssinica seeds

Fig 2: Bersama abyssinica plant

2. Material and Methods

2.1 Preparation of plant materials and extraction

Leaves stem bark and root bark of *Bersama abyssinica* were collected from Ilolo village of Rungwe district in Mbeya, Tanzania. The plant materials were air dried under shade and then pulverized into fine particles and authenticated by Mr. Ahmed Mndolwa of Tanzania Forestry Research Institute (TAFORI). The voucher specimen number (BANZ 0114) was kept at Nelson Mandela African Institution of Science and Technology.

The plant materials were air dried under shade and then pulverized into fine particles. The pulverized leaves (1000 g), stem bark (1000 g) and root bark (1000 g) were sequentially macerated using petroleum ether, ethyl acetate, chloroform and ethanol for 48 h twice for each solvent. The respective extracts were filtered through muslin cloth on a plug of glass wool in a glass column and solvents were evaporated in vacuum using a rotary evaporator and stored in refrigerator at -20 $^{\circ}\mathrm{C}.$

2.2 GC-MS Analysis

An Agilent 6890N GC was connected to an Agilent 5975 MS used (Agilent technologies, USA). The GC-MS was equipped with Agilent 7683 B autosampler and split/ splitless injector with electronic pressure control.

Capillary column (HP-5MS, 30 m, 0.25 mm i.d., 0.25 μ m, Agilent J & W GC columns) was used. The temperature program was as follows: Initial temperature 70 °C, held for 1 min, 10 °C·min–1 ramp to 160 °C then held for 5 min, finally by 3 °C·min–1 to 240 °C and held for 18.5 min. The temperature of the injection port is 250 °C, helium used as carrier gas .The mass spectrometer operated in electron ionization mode with an ionizing energy of 70 eV, ion source temperature 230 °C, MS quadruple temperature 150 °C.

Table 1: Compounds detected in methanolic fractions of Bersama abyssinica Leaves

SN	Retention Time	Compound name	Molecular Formula	Molecular Weight
1	28	3,7,11,15-Tetramethyl-2-hexadecen-ol	$C_{20}H_{40}O$	296.531
2	28.612	Ethanol,2-(9-octadecenyloxy)-,(Z)-	$C_{20}H_{40}O_2$	312
3	32.240	Gibberellic acid	C19H22O6	346.37
4	42.988	Hexa-t-butylselenatrisiletane	C24H54SeSi3	506
5	45.561	Trimethyl-3-(3,8,12,16-tetramethyl-heptadeca-3,7,11	C ₃₀ H ₅₂ O	428.733
6	51.616	7,8-Epoxylanostan-11-ol,3-acetoxy	C32H54O4	502
7	52.852	Vitamin E	C29H50O2	430.7
8	18.25	2-Furancarboxaldehyde,5-(hydroxymethyl)-	$C_6H_6O_3$	126.11
9	19.626	1,1,3,3-Tetramethyl-1,3-disilaphenalane	$C_{15}H_{20}Si_2$	256.4903
10	21.308	1,2,3-Benzenetriol	$C_6H_6O_3$	126
11	25.838	Dasycarpidan-1-methanol, acetate (ester)	$C_{20}H_{26}N_2O_2$	326
12	5.739	Disiloxane 1,3-diethoxy-1,1,,3,3-tetramethyl	C8H22O3Si2	222.43
13	6.00	2H-q-Benzopyran, 3, 5, 6, 8a-tetrahydro-2, 5, 5, 8a-tetramethyl	C13H20O	192.2973
14	6.244	Furfural	$C_5H_4O_2$	96.08
15	6.681	Decane	C10H22	142.28
16	7.001	Decane,4-methyl-	C ₁₁ H ₂₄	156.308
17	8.01	1-Dodecanol,2-methyl-,(S)	$C_{13}H_{28}O$	200.36
18	7.861	Capric ether	C7H15 COOH	144
19	8.986	Undecane	C11H24	156
20	9.629	Perhydrocyclopropa[e]azulene-4,5,6-triol,1,1,4,6-tetramethyl	$C_{15}H_{26}O_3$	254.365
21	11.581	Dodecane	C12H26	170.33
22	13.505	2,3-Dimethylfumaric acid	$C_6H_8O_4$	144.127
23	14.728	Levoglucosenone	C ₆ H ₆ O ₃	126
24	15.543	4-Pyridinecarboxylic acid, ethyl ester	C ₈ H ₉ NO ₂	151.1626

Table 2: Compour	nds detected in methanoli	c fractions of Bersama	abyssinica stem bark
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SN	Retention Time	Compound name	Molecular Formula	Molecular Weight
1	13.521	2,3-Dimethyfumaric acid	$C_6H_8O_4$	144.127
2	14.728	Levoglucosenone	$C_6H_6O_3$	126
3	15.208	2-t-Butyl-5-propyl-[1,3]dioxolan-4-one	$C_{11}H_{20}O_3$	200.27
4	18.5	2-Furancarboxaldehyde5-(hydroxymethyl)	$C_6H_6O_3$	126
5	19.638	1,1,3,3-Tetramethyl-1,3-disilaphenalane	$C_{15}H_{20}Si_2$	256.4903
6	21.308	1,2,3-Benzenetriol	C ₆ H ₆ O ₃	126
7	22.42	1,4-Benzenediol,2-methoxy-	C7H8O3	140.1366
8	25.832	D-Melezitose	C ₁₈ H ₃₂ O ₁₆	504.44
9	26.962	Vanillic acid hydrazide	$C_8H_{10}N_2O_3$	182.1766
10	29.37	2,5-Dimethoxythiophenol	$C_8H_{10}O_2S$	170.23
11	30.635	Pentadecanoic acid,13-methyl-,methyl ester	$C_{17}H_{34}O_2$	270.4507
12	30.98	4-Hydroxy-2-methoxycinnamaldehyde	$C_{10}H_{10}O_3$	178.1846
13	32.622	Ethanone,2-(benzoyloxy)-1-[1,1'-biphenyl]-4-yl	$C_{21}H_{18}O_2$	302.38
14	34.422	8,11-Octadecadienoic acid, methyl ester	$C_{19}H_{34}O_2$	294.4721
15	36.332	5,8,11,14-Eicosatetraynoic acid	$C_{20}H_{24}O_2$	296.5
16	51.293	Rhodopin	C40H58O	554.89

17	5.81	Ethyl iso-allocholate	C26H44O5	436
18	5.81	Pyrrolidine,2-butyl-1-methyl-	$C_5H_{11}N$	85.15
19	6.272	Furfural	$C_5H_4O_2$	96.08
20	8.983	Undecane	CH ₃ (CH ₂) ₉ CH	156.31
21	9.41	2-furancarboxaldehyde,5-methyl	$C_6H_6O_2$	110.1106

Table 3: Compounds detected in methanolic fractions of Bersama abyssinica root bark

SN	Retention Time	Compound name	Molecular Formula	Molecular Weight
1	5.833	Pyrrolidine,2-butyl-1-methyl-	C ₅ H ₁₁ N	85.15
2	6.285	Furfural	$C_5H_4O_2$	96.08
3	8.983	Undecane	CH ₃ (CH ₂) ₉ CH	156.31
4	9.414	2-Furandicarboxaldehyde,5-methyl-	$C_6H_4O_3$	124.0942
5	13.511	2,3-Dimethylfumaric acid	$C_6H_8O_4$	144.127
6	14.1	2,5-Furandicarboxaldehyde	$C_6H_4O_3$	61.68
7	14.737	Levoglucosenone	$C_6H_6O_3$	126
8	15.253	Pentanoic acid, heptyl ester	$C_{12}H_{24}O_2$	200.3178
9	18.404	2-Furancarboxaldehyde,5-(hydroxymethyl)-	$C_6H_6O_3$	126
10	19.638	1,1,3,3-Tetramethyl-1,3-disilaphenalane	$C_{15}H_{20}Si_2$	256.4903
11	21.34	1,2,3-Benzenetriol	$C_6H_6O_3$	126
12	45.56	2,2,4-Trimethyl-3-(3,8,12,16-tetramethyl-heptadecane-3,7,11,15-t	C30H52O	428
13	46.829	Ethyl iso-allocholate	C ₂₆ H ₄₄ O ₅	436
14	52.85	Cholest-4-ene,3?-(methoxymethoxy)-	C29H50O2	430.706
15	57.215	9,19-Cyclolanostane-3,7-diol	$C_{30}H_{52}O_2$	444
16	25.847	D(+)-Melezitose	$C_{18}H_{32}O_{16}.H_2O$	522.45
17	29.376	2,5-Dimethoxy thiophenol	(CH ₃ O) ₂ C ₆ H ₃ SH	170.23
18	30.637	Hexadecanoic acid, methyl ester	C17H34O2	270.4507
19	34.419	9,12-Octadecadienoic acid, methyl ester, (E,E)-	C19H34O2	294.4721

Table 4: Activity of phyto-compounds identified in the Methanolic Fractions of Bersama abyssinica Leaves, stem bark and root bark

S N	RT	Name of Compound	Nature of compound	Therapeutic Activity	References
1.	32	Gibberellic acid	Pentacyclic	Promoting growth and	[7,8]
			diterpene	Antimiarchial Anti	
2.	28	3,7,11,15-Tetramethyl-2-hexadecen-ol	Terpene Alcohol	Anumicrobial, Anu-	[9]
			_		
3.	51.616	7,8-Epoxylanostan-11-ol,3-acetoxy	Alcoholic compound	Antimicrobiai, anti-	[10,11]
				Antidermatitic, Antileukemic,	
	50.050		X7', ' 1	Antitumor, Antiageing,	[12 13]
4.	52.852	Vitamin E	Vitamin compound	Analgesic, Antidiabatic,	[12,15]
				Anti-inflammatory,	
				Antioxidant	
				Antioxidant, Antiseptic,	
				Antibacterial, Antidermatitic	
5.	21.308	1,2,3-Benzenetriol	Pyrogallol	Fungicide, Pesticide,	[14,15]
				Antimutaginic Dye	
				Candidicide	
6.	7.001	Decane,4-methyl-	Alkane Compound	Antidermatitic	[16]
7	8.01	Capria other	Fatty agid	Decrease cholesterol,	[17.18]
7.	0.01	Capite etter	Fatty actu	Antibacterial, antiprotozoal	
				immunomodulatory,	
0	13.505 2,3-Dimethylfuma	2.2 Dimethalformatic said	Fatty acid	Antitumor, sarcoidosis,	[19]
8.		2,5-Dimethyllumatic acid		antioxidant, antibacteria	
9.	14.728	Levoglucosenone	Fatty acid	Chiral agent, catalyst	[20]
10.	26.962	Vanillic acid hydrazide	Phenolic compound	Antioxidant, flavor compound	[21]
11	51 202	Dhadanin	Constansid	Antioxidant	[22]
11.	31.295	Knodopin	Carotenoid.		[]
10	0.414	2 former and availation of mathed	Aldeheide	antimicrobial, preservative,	[23]
12.	9.414	2-Iurancarboxaidenyde,5-metnyi	Aldenyde	antioxidant	[23]
				anti-inflammatory, anticancer	
12	46.920	$\Gamma(1, 1, 1, \dots, 11, 1, 1, 1, \dots)$	C(antimicrobial, antiasthma,	[24 25]
13.	46.829	Etnyi iso-allocnolate	Steroid	diuretic	[27,25]
1.4	50		T :		[26]
14.	58	9,19-Cyclolanostane-3,/-diol	Iriterpene	anti-inflammatory	

15.	30.637	Hexadecanoic acid, methyl ester	Palmitic acid methyl ester	Antioxidant, Hypocholesterolemic, Nematicide, Pesticide, Antiandrogenic flavor, Hemolytic, Alphareductase inhibitor	[27,28]
16.	34.419	9,12-Octadecadienoic acid, methyl ester, (E,E)-	Linoleic acid	Hypocholesterolemic, Nematicide, Antiarthritic, Hepatoprotective, Antiandrogenic, Hypocholesterolemic 5-Alpha reductase inhibitor, Antihistaminic, Anticoronary, Insectifuge, Antieczemic, Antiacne	[29,30]

3. Results

The results pertaining to GC-MS analysis led to the identification of number of compounds from the GC fractions of methanolic extract of *Bersama abyssinica*. These compounds were identified through mass spectrometry attached with GC and the results are tabulated in Table 1. The nature of active principles with their retention time (RT), molecular formula and molecular weight (MW)) in the methanolic fraction of *B. abyssinica* parts are presented in Table1, 2 and 3.

The results revealed the presence of 24, 22 and 21 various phytocompounds in leaves, stem bark and root bark respectively. The leaves presented high amount of phyto components where Gibberellic acid, Hexa-t-butylselenatrisiletane, 3,7,11,15-tetramethyl-2-hexadecen-ol, ethanol,2-(9-octadecenyloxy)-,(Z)-; trimethyl-3-(3,8,12,16-tetramethyl-heptadeca-3,7,11; 7,8-epoxylanostan-11-ol,3-acetoxy,vitaminE;2-furancarboxaldehyde,5-

(hydroxymethyl),1,2,3-benzenetriol,dasycarpidan-1-

methanol,acetate (ester),capric ether and dodecanol 2methyl-,(S) are reported for the first time in Tanzanian *Bersama abyssinica* although similar compounds have been reported in other plants^[31].

However, 2,3-dimethylfumaric acid, 1,1,3,3-tetramethyl-1,3disilaphenalane,1,2,3-benzenetriol,fufural, 2furancarboxaldehyde,5-(hydroxymethyl) and undecane were present in both leaves and stem bark and root bark showing that there are some compounds which are evenly distributed in all plant parts. On the other hand 4pyridinecarboxaldehyde,5-(hydroxymethyl),2-

furancarboxaldehyde,5-(hydroxymethyl)-,1,1,3,3-

tetramethyl-1,3-disilaphenalane, 1,2,3-benzenetriol were identified in both root bark and stem bark showing that barks are potential source of bioactive compound as reported by other authors $^{[25]}$

Among the detected compounds few some reported to be potential therapeutic agents. For instance,9,12-octadecadienoic acid, methyl ester is effective antihistaminic, anti-coronary, Insectifuge and antieczemic ^[32, 33]. These findings are also supported by the study done by Zekeya and others (2014) that revealed the insecticidal activity of *Bersama abyssinica* extracts.

On the other hand ethyl iso-allocholate was reported to exhibit anti-inflammatory, anticancer antimicrobial ^[35, 25], whereas hexadecanoic is effective antioxidant, hypocholesterolemic, nematicide and pesticide properties ^[36]. However, vitamin E, 9,19-cyclolanostane-3,7-diol, 3,7,11,15-tetramethyl-2-hexadecen-ol and 2-furancarboxaldehyde,5-methyl were also reported to possess antimicrobial,

preservative, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant activity ^[26, 37, 38] whereas gibberellic acid was found to be effective in promoting growth and elongation of cells ^[39, 40].

Contrary, among the detected compounds only Levoglucosenone is known to be a chiral agent whereas 9,12-Octadecadienoic acid, methyl ester, (E,E)-was found to possess many activity than other compounds

Moreover, antimicrobial, antioxidant and anti-inflammatory activities were displayed by most compounds in this study indicating that different plant compounds can exhibit similar activity and this could be due to presence of similar functional groups



Fig 1: Mass Spectrum and structure of ethyl iso-allocholate



Fig 2: Mass Spectrum and structure of 1,1,3,3-tetramethyl-1,3disilaphenalane



Fig 3: Mass Spectrum and structure of levoglucosenone



Fig 4: Mass Spectrum and structure of 2,3-dimethylfumaric acid



Fig 5: Mass Spectrum and structure of rhodopin



Fig 6: Mass Spectrum and structure of 7,8-epoxylanostan-11-ol,3acetoxy



Fig 7: Mass Spectrum and structure of 1,2,3-benzenetriol

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