Qualitative and Quantitative Phytochemical profiling of Digera muricata (L.) Mart Leaves

Tamilarasan S¹, Vidya R²*, Amudha P², Rajna V¹

¹Research scholar, Department of Biochemistry, Vels Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS), Chennai, India
²Assistant Professor, Department of Biochemistry, Vels Institute of Science, Technology & Advanced Studies (VISTAS), Chennai, India
Email: vidyabiochem@gmail.com¹

*Corresponding author’s E-mail: vidyabiochem@gmail.com

Abstract

Plants possess an extensive variety of therapeutic compounds that exhibit significant potential for application within the pharmaceutical industry. In order to identify the diverse phytochemical composition present in the plant, range of solvents including alcoholic, aqueous, hexane, petroleum ether and hydroalcoholic were employed these extracts were used and the preliminary qualitative analysis reveals the presence of phytochemicals in higher concentrations in the hydro ethanolic extract compared to other solvent. The powdered plant sample was further investigated for the quantification of phytochemicals which revealed the presence of high total phenolic content, total flavonoid content, saponin content, total tannin content and steroids content of 246.82 ± 17.27 GAE equivalents per gram, 193.18 ± 13.52 milligrams of quercetin equivalents per gram, 134.76 ± 9.43 milligrams of saponin equivalents per gram, of 61.80 ± 4.32 milligrams of Tannic acid equivalents per gram and 117.66 ± 8.23 milligrams of Cholesterol equivalents per gram respectively. The present study elucidates the potential for isolating specific compounds possessing economically valuable bioactive properties through the utilization of suitable plants and careful selection of an appropriate solvent for extraction.

Keywords: Phytochemicals, Antioxidants, Medicinal plants, Bioactive compounds

1. Introduction

The utilization of natural products derived from medicinal plants has played a significant role in enhancing therapeutic interventions from the management of diverse pharmaceutical conditions. The utilisation of medicinal plants as a valuable source of medicine has been well-documented since ancient times. Throughout history, various cultures and civilizations have recognised the therapeutic properties of plants and have relied on them to treat a wide range of ailments. This article aims to explore the enduring significance of medicinal plants as a reliable source of medicine, highlighting their historical importance and the continued relevance of their usage in contemporary healthcare practices.

Historical Significance

The historical significance of medicinal plants cannot be overstated. Ancient civilizations and ethnomedicine throughout history possess significant potential as a rich reservoir of bioactive compounds for the development of pharmaceutical interventions targeting various illnesses and infectious diseases. Medicinal plants have long been recognised as a valuable source of diverse bioactive compounds with a wide range of therapeutic properties (1). Digera muricata L. belongs to the family Amaranthaceae and used in folk medicine to treat renal disorders (2). It is a wild edible plant commonly known as “Cancali soppu” and has been widely distributed throughout India. The plant has traditionally been used as laxative and astringent to the bowels in ayurvedic system of medicine. The plant root has been traditionally given to lactating mothers to increase the lactation after the child birth and the flowers and seeds are used to treat urinary discharges (3). The plant has a good antimicrobial property that was
evaluated by Mathad et al., compared to the standard antifungal agent Nystatin, the plant extract showed good inhibitory concentration against C. albicans (4). In another study conducted by Rida et al., revealed that the gold nanoparticle activity of Digera muricata extracts showed good antibacterial property against Klebsiella, Staphylococcus pyrogen, Enterobacter and Citrobacter (5). The leaves were found to poses anticaner activity against prostate cancer and antiproliferative activity of crude extracts was determined on human cervical cancer and lung cancer (6,7). The plant also possess antioxidant property with increasing concentrations (8). Though the plant has been used to treat various ailments the phytocompounds that are responsible for the development of novel drugs in treating pathological conditions are unrevealed.

2. Materials And Methods

Collection of Plant Sample
The leaves of Digera muricata was collected from the cultivator and was authenticated by Dr. N.Mathivanan, Director and Head, Centre for Advanced Studies in Botany, University of Madras, Chennai. The voucher number of the specimen is MUBL1030.

Preparation of Plant Extracts
The leaves of Digera muricata was collected, and shade dried. A 10g of the plant in powdered form underwent a cold extraction process, undergoing maceration using various solvents, including hexane, petroleum ether, 70% hydro-ethanolic, aqueous and ethanol over a 24-hour period with periodic agitation. The resulting crude extracts were then filtered through Whatman filter No. 1, and the resulting filtrate was subsequently employed for phytochemical analysis.

Qualitative Phytochemical Screening Of Digera Muricata Leaf Extracts
Preliminary phytochemical screening was carried out by Harborne (9), Sofowara (10), Trease and Evans. The following test were performed based on Dubale et al. (11)

Test for Tannins
1ml of different extracts of D. muricata was taken in a test tube and 2ml of distilled water was added and filtered. To the filtrate 0.1% of ferric chloride was added and observed for the formation of blue-black colour.

Test for Saponins
2ml of different extracts of D. muricata was boiled with 20ml of distilled water. Then the solution was filtered and to 10 ml of filtrate 5ml of distilled water was added and vigorously shaken until the froth was persistent. To the froth 3 drops of olive oil was mixed and shaken. Then the formation of emulsion was observed.

Test for Flavonoids
To 1 ml of different extracts of D. muricata 5 ml of dilute ammonia was added in different test tubes and concentrated sulphuric acid was added. In the presence of flavonoids yellow colour is observed and the colour disappeared on standing.

Test for Terpenoids
To 5 ml of plant extracts 2 ml of chloroform and concentrated sulphuric acid was added and observed for a layer formation and an interface with reddish brown colour was found for the presence of terpenoids.

Test for Steroids
To 1 ml of different extracts of D. muricata 2 ml of acetic anhydride was added followed by the addition of sulphuric acid and the colour change from violet to blue-green indicated the presence of steroids.

Test for Alkaloids
The test was performed with Mayer’s reagent. To 1 ml of plant extracts a drop of Mayers reagent was added and a creamy white precipitate was observed indicated the presence of alkaloids in the plant extract.

Test for Triterpenoids
To 1 ml of different extracts of D. muricata 1ml of chloroform was added followed by the addition of acetic anhydride and concentrated sulphuric acid. The formation of reddish violet colour indicated the presence of triterpenoids in the extracts.
Test for Polyphenols
To 1 ml of different extracts of D. muricata 5 ml of ethanol was added in different test tubes and warmed in water bath for 15 minutes. To these extracts freshly prepared ferric cyanide solution was added and observed for the formation of blue green colour which indicated the presence of polyphenols.

Test for Cardiac Glycosides
The test is also known as Keller Killiani test where to 5 ml of different extracts of D. muricata 2 ml of glacial acetic acid was added followed by a drop of ferric chloride solution and 1 ml of concentrated sulphuric acid. The formation of brown ring at the interface indicates the presence of cardenolides (deoxy sugar) and violet ring below the brown ring with a layer of acetic acid and a greenish ring formation throughout the thin layer.

Test for Anthraquinones
5 ml of different extracts of D. muricata was hydrolysed with diluted sulphuric acid and benzene, followed by the addition of diluted ammonia and the formation of pink coloration indicated the presence of Anthraquinones.

Test for Anthocyanins
To 2 ml of different extracts of D. muricata 2 ml of 2N hydrochloric acid and ammonia was added and the colour change from pinkish-red to blue-violet indicated the presence of Anthocyanins.

Test for Coumarins
2ml of various D. muricata extracts were combined with 3 ml of 10% NaOH and the development of a yellow colour signified the existence of coumarins.

Test for Emodins
To 1 ml of different extracts of D. muricata 2 ml of ammonium hydroxide and 3 ml of Benedict’s reagent was added the formation of red colour indicated the presence of Emodins.

Quantitative Phytochemical Analysis of Digera muricata Leaf Extracts

Determination of Total Phenols
The total phenolic contents of Digera muricata were determined by modified Kim et al., method spectrophotometrically. To 1 g of plant powder 10ml of ethanol was added and filtered after 15 minutes. Gallic acid was used as a standard for calibration. 1 ml of diluted filtrate was added to a 25 ml volumetric flask and 9 ml of distilled water was added. To the mixture, 1 ml of Folin’s-Ciocalteu’s phenol reagent and vortexed, followed by the addition of 7% sodium carbonate solution. The mixture was kept in dark for 90 minutes at room temperature and the absorbance was read at 750 nm. The total phenolic content was determined by the calibration curve of gallic acid at concentration ranging from 10 to 100 μg/ml and the total phenolic content was expressed as milligrams of Gallic acid (GAE equivalents per gram of dried sample)(12).

Determination of Total Flavonoids
The total flavonoid contents were determined according to Katasani method by using aluminium chloride colorimetric method. To 1 g of powdered plant sample 1 ml of water was added and filtered after 15 minutes. The mixture was prepared by adding 0.5 ml of filtered plant extract, 1.5 ml of methanol, 0.1 ml of 10% aluminium chloride, 0.1 ml of 1M potassium acetate and 2.8 ml of distilled water. The absorbance of the reaction mixture was read at 510 nm using UV-Vis spectrophotometer(13).

Determination of Total Saponins
Total saponin contents in Digera muricata were determined calorimetrically. 2 g of powdered Digera muricata plant sample was added in 100 ml of conical flask and to it 25 ml of methanol was added and incubated at 25°C at 120 rpm for 24 hrs and the extract was centrifuged at 3500 rpm for 20 minutes. The extract was filtered using Whatman filter paper No.1 and the methanol was evaporated using water bath and later dissolved in 10 ml of distilled water. The contents were transferred to a separating funnel and thrice the volume of n-butanol was added. After the extraction the solvent was evaporated using water bath. The dried saponin content was dissolved in 5 to 10 ml of distilled water and transferred the solution into a container that was weighed previously and then freeze dried. 10 mg of the saponin extract was dissolved in 5ml of 80% aqueous methanol and 50 μl of plant extract were taken and 0.25 ml of 8% vanillin reagent was added. The test tubes were placed on ice cold water bath and 2 ml of 75% sulphuric acid was added slowly and the contents were mixed and the tubes were left for 3 minutes. These tubes were placed on water bath at 60°C for 10 minutes and placed on ice. The
absorbance was measured at 544 nm with standard saponin and the contents were expressed as saponin equivalents (mg/gm of extract)(14).

**Determination of Steroids**
Steroid contents of Digera muricata plant sample was determined by Attarde Daksha et al., method, 10 g of plant sample was dissolved in 10 ml of chloroform and further diluted to 10 times. To 3 ml of diluted plant sample, 2 ml of Liberman-Burchard reagent and 2 ml of chloroform was added. The test tubes were covered with black carbon paper and kept on ice in dark for 15 minutes. The reagent reacts with the sterol to produce green color and the absorbance was read at 640 nm and cholesterol was used as a standard and the values were expressed as milligrams of cholesterol equivalents per gram of dried sample(15).

**Determination of Tannin**
Five grams of powdered plant sample were combined with 400 ml of distilled water, boiled for one hour and then adjusted to a total volume of 500 ml in a standard flask. For the analysis, 0.2 ml of the plant extract was mixed with 7.5 ml of water, followed by the addition of 0.5 ml of Folin-Denis reagent and 1.0 ml of sodium carbonate solution. The resulting sample was further diluted with distilled water. After a 30-minute incubation, the absorbance was measured at 760 nm using tannic acid as a standard. The total tannin content was quantified and expressed as milligrams of tannic acid equivalents per gram of dried sample (16).

### 3. Results and Discussion
#### Qualitative Phytochemical Analysis
The findings validated the existence of steroids, terpenoids, polyphenols, and glycosides in aqueous, ethanol, hexane, petroleum ether, and hydro-ethanolic extracts of *Digera muricata*. The aqueous extract of *Digera muricata* revealed the presence of tannins, saponins, flavonoids, steroids, terpenoids, triterpenoids, anthraquinone, polyphenols, glycosides, coumarins, emodins, anthocyanins, and the absence of alkaloids. The ethanolic extract of *Digera muricata* exhibited the presence of tannins, saponins, flavonoids, steroids, terpenoids, triterpenoids, anthraquinone, polyphenols, glycosides, coumarins, alkaloids, and the absence of emodins and anthocyanins. The hexane extract of *Digera muricata* demonstrated the presence of tannin, steroids, terpenoids, anthraquinone, polyphenols, and glycosides. Petroleum ether extracts showed the presence of steroids, terpenoids, polyphenols, and glycosides, with the absence of tannins, saponins, flavonoids, triterpenoids, alkaloids, anthraquinone, coumarins, emodins, and anthocyanins (refer to Table 1). In the hydro-ethanolic extract of *Digera muricata*, all tested phytochemicals were present, indicating a higher concentration and efficacy compared to other extracts. Consequently, this extract was used for further analysis.

![Table 1: Qualitative phytochemical analysis of *Digera muricata* Leaf extracts](https://jazindia.com)
Quantitative Phytochemical Analysis

Preliminary quantitative phytochemical analysis of *Digera muricata* revealed that the plant possessed high amount of total phenolic content of $246.82 \pm 0.27$ GAE equivalents per gram, total flavonoid content of $193.18 \pm 0.52$ milligrams of quercetin equivalents per gram, saponin content of $134.76 \pm 0.43$ milligrams of saponin equivalents per gram, total tannin content of $61.80 \pm 0.32$ milligrams of Tannic acid equivalents per gram and $117.66 \pm 0.23$ milligrams of Cholesterol equivalents per gram steroids content in the plant (Table 2). Thus, the results obtained suggest that the hydro-alcoholic extract of *Digera muricata* has good phytochemical contents that play a vital role in its medicinal applications.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Plant Extract</th>
<th>Total phenols (mg/g)</th>
<th>Flavonoids (mg/g)</th>
<th>Saponin (mg/g)</th>
<th>Tannin (mg/g)</th>
<th>Steroids (mg/g)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hydro-ethanolic extract of <em>Digera muricata</em> Leaves</td>
<td>$246.82 \pm 0.27$</td>
<td>$193.18 \pm 0.52$</td>
<td>$134.76 \pm 0.43$</td>
<td>$61.80 \pm 0.32$</td>
<td>$117.66 \pm 0.23$</td>
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Values represent mean $\pm$ standard deviation of triplicate sample

Cardiac glycosides have predominantly been used in the treatment of congestive heart failure as they are found to increase the force of myocardial contraction and they directly act on the smooth muscles. *Digera muricata* in this study was found to contain cardiac glycosides which are utilized for their pharmacological applications. In a study, the water extracts of *N. oleander* leaf and flower extracts showed good amount of cardiac glycoside content of $169.89 \pm 0.21$ and $123.44 \pm 0.10$ mg SE/g, respectively (17). Flavonoids are large class of phytochemicals that play a vital role in the pigments that are present in the flowers, seeds, fruits, bark and leaves. They are natural aromatic phytocompounds that are mostly reported to be phenolics. The amount of flavonoid contents was found to $193.18 \pm 13.52$ milligrams of quercetin equivalents per gram in the plant extract of *Digera muricata*. In some green leafy vegetables the highest amount of flavonoids were found in parsley of 14.35mg quercetin acid equivalent per gram dry weight which indicated that the plant has antioxidant potential thus the free radical scavenging activity is high comparatively (18). The solubility of polyphenols in the solvent depends on the degree of polymerization of the phenols, the interactions of the phenols with other plant molecules and the insolubility of complexes from the plant material and their recovery. Polyphenols such as epicatechin, rutin, tannic acid, ferulic acid and quercetin when polymerized enhances the antioxidant capacity of them and establishes the inhibition of XO, anticancer, antibacterial and oxidation of LDL (19). The plant possessed high amount of total phenolic content of $246.82 \pm 17.27$ GAE equivalents per gram, similarly in a study conducted revealed that high concentrations of 7.6%, 5.2% and 4.9% GAE, w/w polyphenols were found in *S. cumini, H. lanceolatum* and *P. mauritianum* which could be compared with other dietary sources like thyme, star anise or cocoa (20). Previous literatures suggest that extracts of *A. theiformis* contain 95% of total phenolic content which of which mangiferin identified in the plant possessed anti diabetic potential and also lowered the cholesterol levels (21). Steroids are one of the broad class of chemical compounds that are distinguished by their carbon structure, they are found to reduce swelling, redness and inflammations (22) the plant powder showed the presence of steroids in all the extracts and the highest concentration of steroid was obtained from the hydro ethanolic extract of the plant. Studies suggest that among all species, *E. arborea* has been identified as prominent source of steroids and triterpenoids that aerial parts of the plant has high amount of ursolic acid and alpha amyrin thus the plant has great antioxidant potential, anti diabetic (23). The plant extract contained $117.66 \pm 8.23$ Milligrams of Cholesterol equivalents per gram of steroid in the hydro alcoholic extract. Saponins are steroid or triterpene glycosides that are extensively found in plants and exhibit hemolytic and toxic effects (23).

4. Conclusion

The *Digera muricata* plant has been utilized in the traditional Indian medical system for its pharmacological properties, demonstrated through the preparation of decoctions or powders. The research concluded that the plant displays significant pharmacological potential, attributed to the presence of diverse class of phytochemicals including alkaloids, tannins, steroids, polyphenols, cardiac glycosides, terpenoids, coumarins, emodins, flavonoids, anthraquinone and anthocyanin. Consequently, further studies are necessary to identify new sources of phytochemicals aiding in the development of potential Phyto therapeutics for treating chronic degenerative and infectious diseases. Ultimately, to study the highest level of clinical evidence, it is essential to conduct thorough
investigations into the most promising secondary metabolites of the plant through well-designed randomized clinical trials.

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