Antifungal, Antibacterial, Phytotoxic and Insecticidal Activities of Nigella sativa Seeds

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The crude methanolic extract and different fractions (n-hexane, chloroform, ethyl acetate) of Nigella sativa seeds were screened for antifungal, antibacterial, phytotoxic and insecticidal activities. The methanolic extract showed total inhibitions against Escherichia coli, Proteus mirabilis, Bacillus cereus and Xanthomonas oryzae at 3 mg/mL. The n-hexane fraction showed significant antibacterial activity against P. mirabilis, B. cereus and X. oryzae, while CHCl₃ fraction had 100 % inhibition against P. mirabilis, X. oryzae and E. coli. Chloroform fraction possessed significant antifungal activity against Penicillium oxalicum, Acremonium strictum, Verticillium lecanii and Trichoderma harzianum. The methanolic extract exhibited significant activity (92 %) against P. oxalicum, good activity (64 %) against A. strictum and moderate activity (56 %, 42 %) against V. lecanii and T. harzianum respectively. The n-hexane, aqueous and EtOAc fractions were also found active against most of the test fungi. The methanolic extract showed good (75 %) phytotoxic activity against Lemna minor, while EtOAc and n-hexane fractions showed no phytotoxicity. Chloroform fraction showed 70 % mortality of Tribolium castaneum, while EtOAc and n-hexane fractions showed no activity against T. castaneum.

Keywords: Nigella sativa, Antibacterial, Antifungal, Phytotoxic, Insecticidal.

INTRODUCTION

Plants have been recognized for their therapeutic and medicinal potential since ages. A medicinal plant is one that contains substances which possess some therapeutic property or have the potential to be used as precursor for the synthesis of chemo-pharmaceutical products1. Though plants are bestowed with large number of therapeutic chemicals but unfortunately most of these needs to be explored. Pakistan has a wide floral diversity consisting of about 6000 different genus and 700 species are being used for medicinal and aromatic purposes, but still the real commercial potential of these plants needs to be explored2-4.

The restorations of natural drugs started in last two decades mainly because of the broad and extended belief that green medicine is better than artificial products. Now-a-day, there are various medicinal plants based industries due to increase in the awareness of use of medicinal plants, all over the world, which are growing at a rate of 7-15 % yearly5. About 60 % of the world’s populations depend on the use of traditional plant extracts for their major health-care needs6.

At present, there are growing resistance against existing antibiotics and therefore a number of infectious diseases cannot be cured effectively7,8.

World Health Organization (WHO) reported that about 80 % of the world population relies on the traditional medicine for the treatment of different diseases. Since 1980, WHO has been encouraging countries to identify and develop traditional medicine. Therefore, the assessment of rich heritage traditional medicine is indispensable.

In this regard, one such plant is N. sativa (Ranunculaceae), which is a small herb distributed and cultivated all over the world and regarded as one of the best healing medicine available. In Arabic known as habbat al barakah and commonly called “black seed” black cumin” or “fennel flower” in English, N. sativa is a very old food and medicinal harvest9,10.

Our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) told that the N. sativa has the healing power except death. Avicenna said that N. sativa is Canon of Medicine, restore the energy and recover from fatigue. It is found in the “Tibb-e-Nabavi and also in the Unani Tibb for its benefits5,11.
The seeds of *N. sativa* have been used in pharmacological investigations. The studies have showed a broad spectrum of actions\(^{10,12,13}\); the plant also showed antitumor activity\(^{14}\). The seeds of *N. sativa* are used for buffalo reproductive efficiency and for the treatment of *Helicobacter pylori* disease in human\(^{15,16}\). The seeds are used as diuretic, jaundice, intermittent fever, dyspepsia, paralysis, skin diseases and pile\(^5\). Seed oil is used as condiment, carminative, food additive and painkiller in different parts of the world\(^{18,19}\). The world’s biggest food company, Nestle is in search of rights on the use of **L. minor** and **V. lecantei** in the middle of a complex legal battle\(^{20,21}\).

**Insecticidal activities:** For this activity, direct contact toxicity was used\(^{21}\). Describing the procedure, the test sample (200 mg/mL) was dissolved in 3 mL of methanol and applied to filter papers (90 mm diameter). The dried filter paper was placed in the separate Petri dish along with 10 adults of *T. castaneum*. Permethrin (235.71 µg/cm\(^2\)) was used as reference insecticide. These were kept without food for the interval of 24 h after which mortality was calculated.

**Antifungal activity:** Antifungal activity of the test samples were evaluated as per reported procedure\(^22\) against *P. oxalicum*, *A. strictum*, *V. lecanii* and *T. harzianum*. Sabouraud dextrose agar (Sigma-Aldrich, Germany) was prepared, autoclaved and 4 mL was dispensed into sterile test tubes. The (non-solidified) SDA media was mixed with test solution 66.6 µL. The tubes allowed for solidification in the slanted position at room temperature. An agar surface streak of the selected fungi was employed for non-mycelial growth. DMSO and standard antifungal drugs served as negative and positive control, respectively. After 7 days of incubation at 28 ± 1 °C linear inhibition was calculated.

**Statistical analysis:** In SPSS (two way anova) calculation showed highly significant difference between the different fractions (P = .000) and between the different concentrations 1000, 100 and 10 mg/mL it was insignificant (P = .076).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Antibacterial activity:** The demand of medicinal plants has increased with the advancement of science and increase in infectious diseases particularly caused by *E. coli*, *P. mirabilis*, *B. cereus* and *X. oryzae*. All becoming resistant to many antibiotics\(^23\). This problem can be solved by the plant origin active ingredients; we have selected *N. sativa* which is locally available and traditionally used for different purposes. The previous research was conducted on different plant extracts *e.g.*, *Ziziphus jujuba\(^20\)*, *Tylophora hirsute\(^25\)* and on *Myrsine africana\(^23\)* on different strains of bacteria\(^{10,12,22}\). In our research methanolic extract possess significant antibacterial activity against *E. coli* (100 %), *P. mirabilis* (100 %), *B. cereus* (100 %) and *X. oryzae* (100 %). The n-hexane fraction possess significant activity against *P. mirabilis* (100 %), *B. cereus* (100 %) and *X. oryzae* (100 %) while low activity against *E. coli* (2 %). Chloroform fraction possess significant antibacterial activity against *P. mirabilis* (100 %), *X. oryzae* (100 %) and *E. coli* (100 %) while low activity against *B. cereus* (5 %). Aqueous fraction showed significant activity against *P. mirabilis* (100 %), *B. cereus* (100 %) and *X. oryzae* (100 %) while low activity against *E. coli* (30 %). The SPSS (two way anova) showed (P > 0.05) insignificant difference for different bacterial strains but significant difference for (P < 0.05) different fractions as shown in Fig. 1.

**Antifungal activity:** The methanolic extract of *N. sativa* showed significant activity against *P. oxalicum* (100 %), *A. strictum* (100 %), *V. lecanii* (100 %) and *T. harzianum* (100 %).
The chloroform fraction showed significant activity against P. oxalicum, (92 %) and good activity against A. strictum (64 %), moderate activity against V. lecanii (56 %) and T. harizinum (42 %). n-Hexane fraction showed good activity against A. strictum (69 %) and T. harizinum (61 %), moderate activity against P. oxalicum, (54 %) and V. lecanii (53 %). The EtOAc fraction showed significant activity against A. strictum (80 %) and good activity against V. lecanii (67 %) and T. harizinum (61 %), low activity against P. oxalicum, (26 %), aqueous fraction showed significant activity against A. strictum (86 %) good activity against V. lecanii (60 %) and moderate activity showed against Trichoderma (59 %) and low activity against P. oxalicum (19 %). The results of activity are given in Fig. 2.

The present research supports the work and expands the antifungal activity on other strains of pathogenic fungi.

**Insecticidal activity:** The plant origin insecticides are mostly environment friendly; therefore methanolic extract and various fractions of N. sativa were screened for insecticidal activity against T. castaneum using the contact toxicity assay. The results are mentioned in Fig. 3; chloroform fraction showed good activity (70 %) against T. castaneum while low insecticidal activity (30 %) was shown by aqueous fraction and methanolic extract (20 %). EtOAc and n-hexane fractions showed no activity against T. castaneum. N. sativa showed significant difference in Pearson Chi-Square test = .000 (two-sided) between the fractions.

**Phytotoxic activity:** L. minor is small mono cotyledonous aquatic plant, sensitive to bioactive compounds. It has been used for the detection of natural antitumor, phytotoxic compounds and to identify new plant growth stimulant. The methanolic extract showed good activity against L. minor (75 %) at 1000 µg/mL, moderate at 100 µg/mL (50 %) and low (40 %) activity at 10 µg/mL. The aqueous fraction showed good activity against L. minor (60 %) at 1000 µg/mL, moderate activity at 100 µg/mL (50 %) and low activity at 10 µg/mL (30 %). The chloroform fraction showed low activity at 1000 µg/mL (10 %) and 100 µg/mL (5 %). n-Hexane and EtOAc fractions showed no activity against L. minor. Results are shown in Fig. 4.

The results revealed that N. sativa seeds hold remarkable antimicrobial activity. Further research is in progress to isolate active compounds in this herb for manufacturing antimicrobial medicines.

**REFERENCES**