



Efficacy of black pepper (*Piper nigrum*) extract against pepper whitefly, *Aleurodicus dispersus* (Hemiptera: Aleyrodidae)

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Abstract

Three extracted fractions from black pepper berries, *Piper nigrum* in three concentrations were examined for their insecticidal bioactivity against pepper whitefly, *Aleurodicus dispersus* (Hemiptera: Aleyrodidae), adults and second nymphal instars under controlled conditions. Obtained results showed that pepper whiteflies adults and nymphs were the most susceptible to methanol extract. The survival rate reduced to 17.1% and 50% for whitefly adult and nymphs respectively at 10% (w/w) after 72 hours of treatment as compared to control treatment. Extracts of leaves and stems were found to be not effective against the adult and nymphal instars, respectively. GC/MS analysis reveals the presence of various types of piperamide compounds and secondary metabolites in pepper berries extract that were responsible for insecticide activity through neurotoxic effect. The main components of piperamides were piperine, piperidine, pyrrolidine and pyridine which contribute to 12.91% of all secondary compounds in berries. Other active compounds that may cause mortality of whitefly include monoterpenes, sesquiterpenes, fatty acids and alkaloids, and some other constituents include α -pinene, linalool, copaene, and aniline. Thus, the bioactive extracts of black pepper berries extract have the potential to lower whitefly populations in a comprehensive pest management program in pepper cultivation activity.

Keywords: *Piper nigrum*, whitefly, pepper extract, piperamides

1. Introduction

Pest infestations assume alarming proportions leading to yield loss and slow decline in pepper plantation. To overcome this problem, chemical control seems to be the best option which enables to thoroughly eliminate the pest infestation. However, the widespread use of synthetic insecticide has led to many negative effects including toxic residue accumulation, development of resistant strains, toxicity to environment and increase cost of operation.

Different approaches have been developed to prevent, mitigate and control pest infestation in pepper cultivation. Beyond good culture practice and chemical control, the utilization of plant derived material or metabolite has been considered as a potential alternative way to tackle these problems. Today, a number of scientists have focused their interest in the control of pest infestation with alternative control agents as extract of plant leaves, flowers and seeds (Satya *et al.*, 1996, Santos *et al.*, 1990, Matthews, 1993 and, Ngamo *et al.*, 2007) [1, 2, 3, 4].

Among the plants investigated to date, plants from the family Piperaceae constituted a promising source of biological active compounds with insecticide activity. The most recognized species is black pepper, *Piper nigrum* L. is the perennial climbing vine extensively grown for its berries as spice. Black Pepper is considered as one of the most important ingredients in human food and ayurvedic medicine since ancient times. Pepper berries contain a number of active compounds especially piperamide compounds which are responsible for pharmacological activities. Steam distillations of pepper berries produce many active

compounds containing lignans, flavonoids, epoxides, piperine and etc (Srinivasan, 2009) [5]. These components contribute to antibacterial, fungicidal and insecticidal properties of pepper.

The pepper whitefly, *Aleurodicus dispersus*, is a major pest of pepper in humid tropical areas around the world where pepper is grown (Yap, 2016) [6]. The whiteflies are quite active and are commonly found feeding on the lower leaf surfaces (Fig 1). The whitefly has also been implicated in contributing to the pepper vine decline syndrome in many pepper producing countries (Yap, 2018) [7]. The adult insects may cause defoliation of whole pepper plants causing losses in vine vigor and yields. Heavy colonization of *A. dispersus* in pepper vines encourages the growth of sooty mould and led to reduction in photosynthesis rate (Byrne *et al.*, 1990, Kajita and Alam, 1996) [8, 9]. In addition, severe infestation of this pest also reduces the yield quantitatively and qualitatively through the formation of large quantities of wax and honeydew which promote the transmission of viral pathogens to the vines. Apart from that, this pest has also been reported infesting many types of tropical crops e.g. guava, passion fruit, orchard (Kajita & Alam 1996; Aiswariya *et al.* 2007) [9, 10]. Besides, serious infestations of *A. dispersus* have also been reported affecting various types of ornamental plants, including poinsettia (*Euphorbia pulcherrima* Willd) and madhobilota (*Hiptage benghalensis*) (Alim *et al.* 2014) [11]. In the present study, the objective is to determine the efficacy of pepper extract against *A. dispersus* and to determine the main active compounds responsible for this insecticide activity by using GCMS analysis.

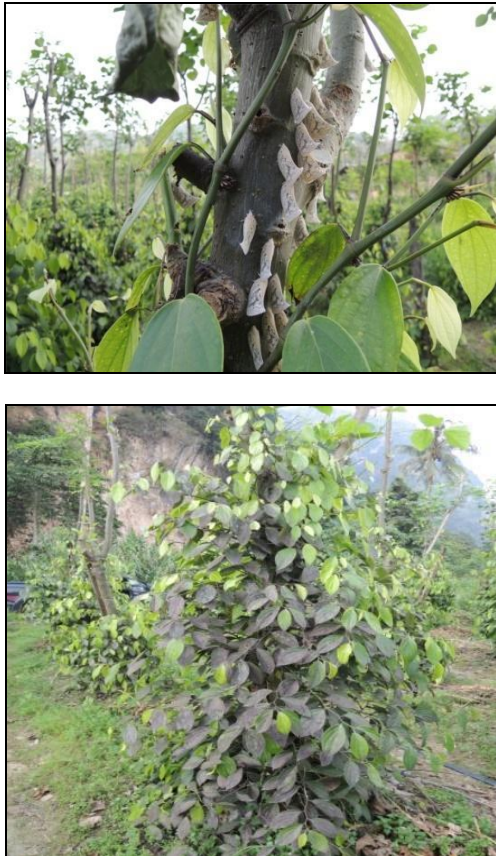


Fig 1: White flies (A) adult; (B) Formation of sooty mold on pepper leaves

2. Material and Methods

2.1 Crude extraction

The clean dried black pepper berries were grinded with an electric grinder to obtain the fine powder. 500 g of the fine powder were soaked in one liter of methylene chloride put in a 2-liter dark glass jar for 3 days with continuous shaking (Su, 1985) ^[12]. The solution was filtered with a piece of gauze and then, followed by a filter paper for three times till the clear solution. The obtained solution was evaporated in a rotary evaporator at 50°C and the residue was weighed and kept in a refrigerator at 4°C till use. The extracted crude was dissolved in the same solvent to get a 10% (w/w) stock solution, which diluted to obtain 1.25%, 2.5%, and 5% solutions. The same procedure was repeated for leaf and stem with ethanol and methanol as ascending arrangement of polarity.

2.2. Screening bioassays with plant extracts against *A. disperses*

The experiments were conducted in the greenhouse under control condition at Malaysian Pepper Board with temperature of $25 \pm 2^\circ\text{C}$ and relative humidity of $80 \pm 10\%$. Treatments included 3 concentration levels with 3 extraction solvents and 1 control via Methylene chloride, ethanol, methanol and distilled water. 3 replicated per treatment were arranged in a randomized design and the experiment was conducted twice.

2.3. Whitefly colony

Aleurodicus disperses colony were reared on tomato plants, in the specially designed whitefly cage (150cm x 90cm x 140cm) covered completely with 40 mesh insect netting. The tomato plants were allowed to grow in 15 cm plastic pot

to ensure sufficient food supplied to whitefly for subsequent bioassay test.

2.4. Repellent activity on whitefly adults

Repellent activity of the three fraction extracts of black pepper berries against adults whitefly was carried out using modified method of Cruz-Estrada *et al* (2013) ^[13]. Repellent activity was performed in whitefly cage as mentioned above. Test solutions with different concentration were prepared using methanol solvent (1.25%, 2.5%, and 5%). The tomato plants with 7 new leaves were used for experiment in the whitefly cage located in the greenhouse. Approximately 9 ml of black pepper extract with different concentration was applied twice on whole tomato plants at 3 hours interval by using 10 ml plastic sprayer. The tomato plants were then allowed to air dry under open condition in the whitefly cage. Subsequently, 10 adult whiteflies were introduced into whitefly cage containing treated tomato plants. The adult whiteflies were allowed to survive in the cage for 72 hours. The assessment was conducted by calculating the total number of whiteflies that remain alive 72 hours after treatment. Repeat the same procedure for black pepper leaf and stem extracts for determination of repellent activity against whitefly adults.

2.5. Repellent activity on whitefly nymphs

Prior to whitefly nymphs bioassay, 10 adult's whiteflies were reared on tomato plants in whitefly cage for approximately 10 days to allow it to lay eggs. After 10 days of growth in whitefly cage, instar nymphs of whitefly were collected from the lower leaf surface and counted using stereomicroscope. Black pepper extracts were prepared in a similar manner to the above mentioned procedure. The whole tomato plants were sprayed with pepper extract and kept to dry before introducing whitefly nymphs into it. The whitefly nymphs were allowed to grow for 10 days. The efficacy of black pepper extract against whitefly nymphs was determined by calculating the total number of nymphs status under the stereomicroscope analysis: dead or healthy

2.6. Data analysis

Insecticide bioassays data were reported as total number of alive adult and nymphs. The analysis of data was performed using analysis of variance and Means in column with different letters are significantly different at 0.05 level using Duncan Multiple Range Test. (SAS) ^[14] version 8.1 for Windows. Probit analyses were used to determine LC_{50} and LC_{90} of all pepper extracts with different solvents (Stevens, 1999) ^[15].

2.7. GC/MS analysis

The chemical constituents of the black pepper berries crude extracts were identified by gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC/MS) at the Central Pesticides Laboratory, Malaysian Pepper Board. The compounds identification was done by comparing NIST, WILEY libraries and with the authentic spectra (Adams, 1995) ^[16] and the data of peaks with those reported in literature. The constituent percent were computed using GC peak areas on BP-I column without applying correction factors.

3. Results and Discussion

Bioassay of three pepper berries extract against *A. disperses* indicated that after 72 hours of application, pepper

whiteflies was the most susceptible to methanol extract followed by methylene chloride and ethanol extract. The later extraction solvents were 2 fold less sensitive, respectively. The repellent effect of 3 different *P. nigrum* extract against *A. disperses* was assessed by observing the number of insect that were still alive after application. Methanol extracts of black pepper, significant insecticidal effect and could be a potential organic insecticide against *A. disperses*. This might probably be due to present of sufficient quantity of secondary metabolites with insecticide activity. This finding was supported by research reported by Padalkar and Gaikar., 2008^[17] who stated that the recovery of piperine and its constituents was the highest when methanol solvent was used. Besides, earlier research also showed that black pepper extracts not only carrying insecticide properties, but also has been widely used for their antimicrobial properties in integrated disease management against several type of insect pest in agriculture industry (Kehinde *et al.*, 2018)^[18].

The toxicity effects of black pepper berries extract on the adult and nymphal whiteflies were recorded in Table 1, which showed that the methanol extract cause the most high mortality percentage. The maximum number of adult and nymphal whiteflies that remain alive after the treatment was 95.1% and 82.6% respectively at the concentration of 2.5% (w/w) after 72 hours of treatment as compared to control treatment, 56.2% and 73.1% at 5% (w/w) after 72 hours of treatment and 17.1% and 50% at 10% (w/w) after 72 hours of treatment as compared to control treatment. The LC₅₀

value was 1.485 for methanol with toxicity index 74.64% as in Table 2. On the other hand, the mortality percentages resulted from ethanol and methylene chloride fraction demonstrated almost similar efficacy pattern with the effective concentration was at 10% (w/w) with maximum mortality for adult and nymphal whiteflies after 72 hours of treatment as compared to control treatment were 82.9% and 50.0% respectively. The LC₅₀ was 2.142 and 2.215 for methylene chloride and ethanol extract with toxicity index of 86.42 and 83.54 respectively (Table 2). This indicated that the efficacy of *P. nigrum* extract were dependent on concentration of active compound present in the extract. The higher the concentration of active compounds, the higher the repellent effect against *A. disperses*. The mortality cause by methanol extract were higher than other solvent indicated that this extraction protocol manage to extract more active compounds with insecticide activity e.g. piperine, piperidine, analine, linalool and etc. These observations were nearly agreed with those study reported by Su and Horvat (1981)^[19] and Parmar *et al.*, 1997^[20]. They reported that species of the family Piperaceae particularly black pepper are rich in amides as the major secondary metabolites and responsible for the insecticidal properties of these plants such as piperine ([*(E,E)*-1[5-(1,3-benzodioxol-5-yl)-1-oxo-2,4-pentadienyl]piperidine]). This finding was further supported by the result of GCMS below. Also, similar results were observed previously (de Paula *et al.*, 2000 and Scott *et al.*, 2004)^[21, 22] when *P. nigrum* extracts were tested on Lepidoptera insects.

Table 1: Number of *Aleurodicus disperses* adult and nymphs encountered live on treated cucumber plants with 3 chemical extracts of black pepper berries under controlled glasshouse condition

Extract	Conc. (%) w/w	No of live adults	No of live Nymphs
Methylene chloride	2.5	6.33±0.21b	32.77±0.52
	5	3.33±0.58e	27.66±2.31b
	10	2.22±0.60f	19.33±3.41c
Ethanol	2.5	5.11±0.72c	29.88±2.42b
	5	4.22±0.95d	28.00±2.41b
	10	2.22±0.48f	20.77±2.32c
Methanol	2.5	6.77±0.21b	29.00±3.25b
	5	4.00±0.68d	25.66±2.49ab
	10	1.22±0.31g	17.55±3.10d
Water	/	7.12±0.32a	35.11±3.05a

Means in column with different letters are significantly different at 0.05 level using Duncan Multiple Range Test.

Table 2: LC₅₀ value of black pepper berries extract against the *Aleurodicus disperses* adults

Extract	LC ₅₀	LC ₉₀	Slope	Toxicity index (%)
Methylene chloride	2.142	17.954	1.751	86.42
Ethanol	2.215	18.523	1.689	83.54
Methanol	1.485	15.642	2.91	74.65

In the second treatment experiment, the results shown that the 3 chemical extracts of black pepper leaf and stem were not significant different in the number of live adults or nymphs from the control. The number of alive adults and nymphs is almost similar or slight higher than control (Table

3). This mean that these 3 chemical extracts of black pepper leaf and stem did not cause mortality to adults and nymphal whiteflies encountered after treatment compared to controls. The number of live adults and nymphal whiteflies were ranged between 6.88 – 7.33 and 35.11-36.22 indicated that black pepper leaf and stem extract did not carried any repellent effect against *A. disperses*. This finding was further supported by research reported by Gupta *et al.*, 2013^[23] who stated that the recovery rate for piperine extracted from pepper leaf and stem was < 0.05%. The concentration of this piperamide compounds were considered redundant and will not bring any insecticide activity to any insects.

Table 3: Number of *Aleurodicus disperses* adult and nymphs encountered live on treated cucumber plants with 3 chemical extracts of black pepper leaf and stem under controlled glasshouse condition

Extract	Conc. (%) w/w	No of live adults	No of live Nymphs
Methylene chloride	2.5	7.33±0.66a	36.22±1.88a
	5	7.33±1.05a	35.11±2.98ab
	10	6.88±0.51ab	35.11±2.33ab
Ethanol	2.5	7.66 ±0.82a	36.33±3.62a
	5	7.12±0.98 b	36.22±3.98a
	10	7.88±0.66b	35.11±2.33ab
Methanol	2.5	7.12±0.23 b	35.11±2.26ab
	5	7.33±0.22a	35.11±2.23ab
	10	6.88±0.53ab	36.22±0.58a
Water	/	7.12±0.32a	36.11±3.05a

Means in column with different letters are significantly different at 0.05 level using Duncan Multiple Range Test.

The analysis by GC/MS chromatography revealed that the chemical constituents of the methanol extract of *P. nigrum* berries were characterized and identified from the mass spectral library and Kovats' retention indices. The Identification of the methanol fraction of black pepper berries extracts by GCMS analysis are shown in Fig 2. Chromatogram GC-MS analysis of the methanol extract of *P. nigrum* showed the presence of twenty five major peaks and the components corresponding to the peaks were determined and listed in Table 4. The obtained results showed that *P. nigrum* extract contain many functional groups and can be classified to monoterpenes, sesquiterpenes, scetogenins (fatty acids or derivatives), alkaloids, and miscellaneous components. Of the 25 compounds identified in *P. nigrum*, the component with the highest content was piperine (4.98%). Other major compounds included copaene (4.31%), α-pinene (4.01%), β-phellandrene (3.81%), Limonene (3.68%), pyrrolidine (2.98%), piperidine (2.85%), pyridine (2.1%) and aniline (1.32%). All of these compounds play an important role in providing repellent effect to *A. disperses* infestation. The present of these insecticide properties of black pepper further strengthen the hypothesis that black pepper poses a repellent effect against insect pest. However, Ferreira *et al* (1999) [24] in analyzed the *P. nigrum* extract had reported the main components of black pepper extract were sesquiterpene β-caryophyllene (11.8%) and the monoterpenes limonene (9.8%) and 3-σ-carene (14.3%). Similar report has also been reported on the different concentration of active compounds present in *P. nigrum* extract (Scott *et al.*, 2008, Aziz *et al.*, 2012, Liu *et al.*, 2007)

[25, 26, 27]. The explanation for this different was the constituents of different active compounds can vary with environmental conditions, such as climate, soil type and brightness.

The present of phytochemicals with insecticidal activity in black pepper has extensively studied. Among these phytochemicals, there is an increasing interest in the introduction of black pepper secondary metabolites for managing pest infestation (Jirovetza *et al.*, 2002) [28]. For Example the detection of linalool, limonene, pipene and copaene in *Piper* species have been proven to be effective against insect pest (Hussein *et al.*, 2017) [29]. Obtained data showed that the present of piperamides and secondary metabolites in methanol extract of dried black pepper berries can cause mortality of *A. disperses* adult and nymphs after 72 hours of treatment. Among piperamide compounds that are responsible for repellent effect include piperine, pyrrolidine, pyridine, and piperidine. The piperamide compounds almost contribute to 12.91% of the active compounds presented in pepper berries. This observation agreed with the work reported by Scott *et al* (2008) [25] which identified the piperamide compounds act as neurotoxic to insects. A similar result was reported by Singh *et al.*, 2004) [30] which mentioned that amide are the most important compounds and present in the highest concentration of all secondary compounds in berries of *P. nigrum*, but 2 to 10-fold differences can occur between samples. This research finding are also in accordance to Miyakado *et al.*, 1980) [31] who stated that piperamides compounds extracted from black pepper berries were responsible for the toxicity of bean weevil *Callosobruchus chinensis* in legume crop. In conclusion, the piperamides and it components extracted from black pepper berries significantly increase the mortality of *A. disperses* adult and nymphs by different mechanism of action, being neurotoxin one of these mechanisms, at least *in vivo*. Therefore, Black Pepper extract could be a potential control mechanism for replacing contact insecticide particularly neurotoxic compounds such as carbamates, pyrethroid and organophosphate. On the basis of aforementioned results, the present piperamides compounds and secondary metabolites in black pepper berries extract provide the advantage of all of the previously mentioned attributes: novel target site, enzyme inhibition and low mammalian toxicity (Scott *et al.*, 2008). The sheer abundance of piperamides and secondary metabolites suggested that black pepper extract is a promising ingredient for the production of insect repellent.

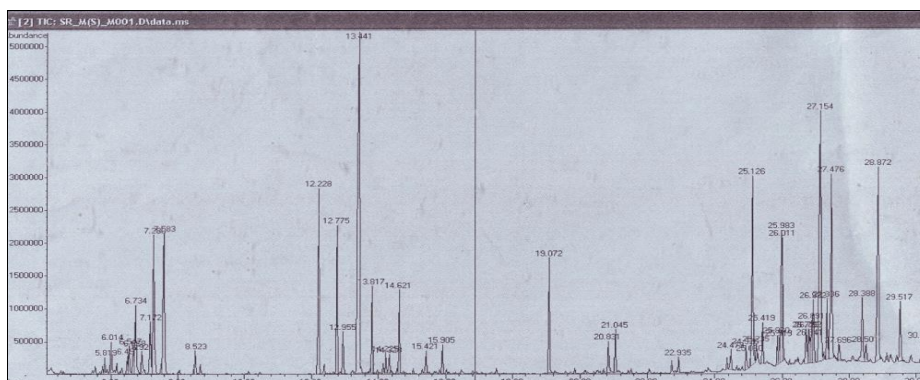


Fig 2: GCMS analysis of black pepper berries extract

Table 4: Main component identified by GCMS analysis of methanol black pepper berries extract

No	Compounds	Retention time (min)	Area,%
1	L-oxirane	5.818	1.35
2	α -pipene	6.012	4.01
3	β -phellandrene	6.666	3.81
4	β -pipene	6.732	1.22
5	β -Myrcene	6.921	1.21
6	D-Limonene	7.584	3.68
7	3-carene	8.522	0.87
8	linalool	12.228	2.58
9	copaene	12.773	4.31
10	α -terpinene	12.955	0.50
11	caryophyllene	13.440	1.00
12	naphthalene	14.226	1.02
13	carvone	15.421	0.66
14	cubebene	17.108	0.26
15	zingiberene	19.072	NC
16	piperidine	20.832	2.85
17	pyrrolidine	21.045	2.98
18	α -Elemene	21.602	NC
19	cadinene	22.935	NC
20	pyridine	24.926	2.10
21	benzamide	25.124	0.54
22	dodemorph	25.235	0.59
23	piperine	25.918	4.98
24	aniline	26.840	1.32
25	decadienamide	30.172	1.32

NC: Not calculated

3. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that the methanol extract of *P. nigrum* berries has a high insecticide activity against the *A. disperses* adult and nymphs. Thus, it can be a possible candidate for biocontrol against this whitefly infestation particularly at pepper industry.

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