PRELIMINARY INVESTIGATION INTO PROSPECTIVE APPLICATIONS OF NANOSILVER, PRODUCED USING TEFF (Eragrostis tef) FLOUR EXTRACT

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ABSTRACT

Silver-based nanomaterials have etched an indelible mark in multiple domains. The green synthesis of silver nanoparticles has received significant attention over the last few years vis-à-vis the conventional use of toxic chemicals and reagents in the preparatory stages. In this milieu, the work reported here highlights the use of an aqueous extract of teff (Eragrostis tef) flour to prepare silver nanoparticles (TSNPs). The compositional abundance of various phytochemicals, sunlight-induced bio-reduction of silver ions, and subsequent stabilization of the nanostructures by teff’s biomolecules were adroitly exploited. UV-visible spectroscopic analysis was employed to track the evolution of the TSNPs over time and their month-long storage stability. Exhibiting λ_{\text{em}} at around 426 nm and energy gap (as revealed by Tauc’s plot) of 2.26 eV, the silver nanomaterial was employed for methylene blue dye degradation (50% degradation in less than 20 min) and DPPH scavenging (IC_{50} = 243.42 μL containing 410 μg of TSNPs), attesting their catalytic and anti-oxidant potential. Such green nanosilica and reductant and stabilizing agents in the green synthesis of nanomaterials such as silver nanoparticles. Till date there exists very few reports on the use of teff in the domain of nanotechnology. High temperature and toxic reagents like H_{2}SO_{4} and HCl have been used to prepare nanosilica from teff straw (Bageru et al., 2017). Similarly, response surface methodology (RSM) has been resorted to prepare teff straw-based silica nanoparticles in a recent work (Amibo et al., 2022). On the other hand, Bacha and Demshash (2021) had reported the extraction of nanocellulose from teff straw using hot water treatment, acid-chlorite delignification, and alkaline hydrolysis process. Barring this, not much has been delved into the use of this extremely prospective bioresource for nanotechnological applications in accordance to the dictates of “green nanotechnology” which focuses on resorting to preparation of nanomaterials under ambient conditions, use of less toxic reagents and lesser energy expense besides water as the reaction medium, as highlighted in the introductory section.

INTRODUCTION

In the quest for sustainable and eco-friendly approach for the fabrication of nanoparticles and other nanoscale structures, green synthesis harnesses the power of biological and renewable entities, such as plants, microorganisms, or enzymes, to produce nanomaterials (Konwarth et al., 2010; Konwarth et al., 2011, Buchetti et al., 2019; Alsaiari et al., 2023; Dogra et al., 2023). Unlike the conventional slow and costly methods that entail toxic chemicals and energy-intensive processes, resulting in polydisperse, unstable nanoparticles with requisite for additional capping agent (Kaabipour and Hemmati, 2021), the greener fabrication protocols primarily involve water as the reaction medium and/or other green chemistry approaches/tools such as green eutectic solvents (Nam et al., 2023), sono-chemical approach (Joshi et al., 2023) and microwave irradiation (Kaur et al., 2023). Such green methods are envisaged to reduce the environmental footprint besides offering advantages, including cost-effectiveness and the ability to control particle size and shape, although, structural and functional complexity of nanomaterials, fabricated using greener routes demand deeper delving (Santos-Orihuela et al., 2023). The potential use of green-synthesized nanomaterials spans across diverse domains, from medicine and catalysis to environmental remediation and sustainable energy solutions, driving the development of a future based on cleaner and sustainable technological applications (Rani et al., 2023; Sani et al., 2023; Ramezani Farani et al., 2023). Amongst others, the recent use of various phytoextracts, such as Terminalia paniculata Roth based antioxidant and anti-inflammatory silver nanoparticles (Vernek and Taranath, 2023); banana pith extract based antibacterial and catalytic gold nanoparticles (Nayak et al., 2018); Syzygium cumini leaf extract based iron oxide nanoparticles for prospective nano-biofertilizer applications for optimizing legume production (Saleem and Khan, 2023); and Morinda oleifera extract based copper oxide nanoparticles for energy storage applications (Ikhoya et al., 2023) etc. merits special mention.

Teff (Eragrostis tef), the annual cereal grass (family Poaceae), grown for its tiny nutritious seeds is native to Ethiopia and Eritrea and serves as a staple food crop to millions of people. The recognition that teff is gluten-free has instigated tremendous research impetus in the food science domain (Homem et al., 2022; Girija et al., 2022). Consequently, scientific documentation on the nutritional composition, processing quality, and health benefits of teff is pacing up. The existing literature suggests that teff is composed of complex carbohydrates with slowly digestible starch. Teff has a similar protein content to other more common cereals like wheat, but is relatively richer than the latter in the essential amino acid, lysine. It is also a good source of essential fatty acids, fiber, minerals (especially calcium and iron), and phytochemicals such as polyphenols and phytylates (Baye, 2014; Zhu, 2018; Girija et al., 2022; Viskak et al., 2022). Pertinently, the compositional abundance of such biomolecules may be suitably exploited as prospective bio-reductant and stabilizing agents in the green synthesis of nanomaterials such as silver nanoparticles. Till date there exists very few reports on the use of teff in the domain of nanotechnology. High temperature and toxic reagents like H_{2}SO_{4} and HCl have been used to prepare nanosilica from teff straw (Bageru et al., 2017). Similarly, response surface methodology (RSM) has been resorted to prepare teff straw-based silica nanoparticles in a recent work (Amibo et al., 2022). On the other hand, Bacha and Demshash (2021) had reported the extraction of nanocellulose from teff straw using hot water treatment, acid-chlorite delignification, and alkaline hydrolysis process. Barring this, not much has been delved into the use of this extremely prospective bioresource for nanotechnological applications in accordance to the dictates of “green nanotechnology” which focuses on resorting to preparation of nanomaterials under ambient conditions, use of less toxic reagents and lesser energy expense besides water as the reaction medium, as highlighted in the introductory section.

DICTATED by the afore-stated information, we proposed to develop an environmentally benign approach using water as the solvent and exploitation of the various biomolecules in aqueous extract of teff for the preparation and stabilization of silver nanoparticles (TSNPs) for a range of applications. This stems from the following hypothesis: Teff seeds (Baye, 2014) are a source of both bound and free polyphenols such as catechin, ferulic, rosmarinic, protocatuchec, p-coumaric acids as well phytosteroids and vitamians. High abundance of proteins, carbohydrates, fibers, and other minerals has been documented. The compositional abundance of various polyphenolic compounds and biomacromolecules in the aqueous extract of teff powder could be bracketed together with its plausible bio-reductive potency to generate silver nanoparticles from silver salt as well as endowing of electrostatic and steric stability to the nanoparticles. Furthermore, a high surface to volume ratio of the prepared nanoparticles is envisaged, implying a highly active surface (dictated by shape-size-surface chemistry accord) could be exploited for multiple applications like catalysis etc.
MATERIALS AND METHODS

Teff based aqueous extract mediated reduction

3 g white teff flour (procured from local market), suspended in 100 mL of double distilled water was subjected to overnight stirring over a magnetic stirrer (the ambient temperature was ~25 °C) and subsequent filtration through a muslin cloth to prepare teff based aqueous extract. Aqueous solution of silver nitrate (AgNO₃) (Abron Chemicals, India) was subjected to reduction using the teff extract, added drop by drop, followed by gentle manual swirling of the contents in conical flasks (replicates of three for various experimental conditions). The reaction was carried out in (a) a dark-chamber (the ambient temperature was ~23 °C), (b) under ambient light of the laboratory (the ambient temperature was ~24.5 °C) and (c) under sunlight (the ambient temperature was ~30 °C), using the reducing agent and the silver nitrate solution, adjusted to different v/v ratios (1:1, 1:2, 2:1) while the variations in the molarity of the silver nitrate solution were 0.01, 0.02, and 0.03 M.

Monitoring the rapidity of visible color-change (indicating the reduction of the silver ions and consequent formation of nanoparticles) and UV–visible spectral analysis assisted in choosing the reaction-conditions (dictated by the objective of preparing nanoparticles with narrow-size distribution/lesser polydispersity). These initial studies had dictated us to select the parameters of 2:1 (v/v) reducing agent: silver salt (0.01 M) solution for the preparation of the nanoparticles under sunlight. The results reported in this work are for the nanoparticles prepared under these parameters.

UV-visible spectroscopic characterization

The time-course dependent formation as well as a month-long dependent storage stability of the TSNPs were monitored using BIOCHROM Libra UV-visible double-beam spectrophotometer (scanning range: 300-700 nm, path length: 10 mm, bandwidth: 1 nm, single–cycle). Tauc’s plot was used to calculate the band gap energy of the TSNPs. All the graphs were plotted and analyzed using the OriginPro 8 software.

Dye decolorization test (to check the prospective application as catalyst)

1 mg of methylene blue (MB) (Abron Chemicals, India) was dissolved in 100 mL of distilled water and its absorbance was monitored spectrophotometrically. The experiment was conducted by adding 1 mL of freshly prepared 0.2 M NaBH₄ (SRL Chemicals, India) to 25 mL aqueous solution of MB at room temperature (~25 °C). To this 1 mL of TSNPs was added and the reactants were vortexed. At a regular interval of time, 250 μL of the reaction mixture was withdrawn and diluted with 2.75 mL distilled water. The absorption of the mixture was monitored periodically using UV-visible spectrophotometer. The degradation was also monitored without the TSNPs. The reaction kinetics were evaluated by assuming the concentration of reactive dyes obeying the pseudo-ﬁrst order reaction, where the integrated form is expressed as follows:

\[
\ln \frac{A_f}{A_i} = -kt
\]

where, \(A_i\) is the absorbance at zero time, \(A_f\) is the absorbance at time \(t\), and \(k\) is the rate constant.

DPPH scavenging test (to check the prospective application as anti-oxidant)

Antioxidant activity of the TSNPs was measured by using the modiﬁed DPPH method as reported previously (Konwar et al., 2011). To examine the anti-oxidant potency, 200 μL of 400 μL, 600 μL, 800 μL and 1000 μL of the TSNPs were mixed with 2 mL of 100 μM DPPH (SRL Chemicals, India) solution. The samples were vortexed for around 15 s and allowed to scavenge DPPH in dark for 30 min. The absorbance of the samples was measured at 517 nm. In all the cases, measurements were done in triplicates. The scavenging percentage was calculated using the formula:

\[
\text{DPPH scavenging} = \left( \frac{A_i - A_f}{A_i} \right) \times 100 \]  

where \(A_i\) and \(A_f\) are absorption of blank DPPH and DPPH subjected to interact with the TSNPs at 517 nm, respectively.

Anticoagulant activity assessment

The experimental protocol to test the anticoagulant activity of the TSNPs was adopted from previously published report (Raja et al., 2015). Briefly, blood was collected from a healthy volunteer (post receipt of appropriate written consent) in different vials (C. S. T) without any anticoagulant by medical personnel, stationed at AASTU health-center. Immediately, TSNPs and teff extract were added to the tube S and T respectively at 0.5% (v/v) and anticoagulant activity of the samples was assessed. EDTA-tube (marked as E) served as positive control while vial C served as negative control. This experiment was approved by the B.Sc. Project Proposal Evaluation Committee, Department of Biotechnology, AASTU.

Effect on seed germination (Phyto-compatibility assessment)

Assessing the phytoxicity of nanoparticles (Konwar et al., 2011) was our next objective. For this, Cicer arietinum (chick pea) seeds were procured from the local market. The average germination rates of the Cicer arietinum seeds were greater than 95% as revealed in our initial experimentation. Seeds were kept in a dry and dark place at room temperature before use. These were surface sterilized in 1:1 volume of 3% hydrogen peroxide (SRL Chemicals, India) for 10 min, followed by rinsing thrice with distilled water. About 15 seeds were then soaked in distilled water (control) or nanoparticle suspension, taken in different concentrations for about 12 h. The soaking process resulted in imbibition and consequent swelling in all the seeds. The water and the nanoparticles suspension were drained off post soaking. The seeds were then, placed (with sufficient distance between each seed) on a piece of cotton filter-cloth (10 cm x 10 cm), taken on a Petri dish. The Petri dishes were incubated in the dark for 3 days (room temperature: ~26.5°C). Number of seeds germinated for each treatment as well as the length of the emanating radicles were noted. The experiment was conducted in replicates of three and the results were expressed as mean ± standard deviation. In conjunction to the above tests, the seeds were also soaked and incubated in the aqueous teff extract.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Preparation and UV-visible spectroscopic analysis

In the present study, the first objective was to use the aqueous extract of teff flour to prepare the TSNPs. The optical properties of nanoparticles are sensitive to size, shape, concentration, agglomeration state, and refractive index near the nanoparticle surface, therefore, UV-visible/IR spectroscopy serve as tools of immense pertinence in identifying and characterizing these materials. The UV-visible spectra supported the successful green-route mediated generation of the silver nanoparticles. No absorption peak was observed in UV-visible spectrum of Ag⁺ solution before reduction (Figure 1). This was attributed to Ag⁺ ions’ d¹⁰ configuration (Konwar et al., 2011). In our pursuit to ‘go green’ we had resorted to the use of sunlight as catalyst for the generation of the nanoparticles. Initially, we had tried to reduce the silver salt under (a) dark condition and (b) ambient light condition of the laboratory at room temperature. Although, there was visible color change (colorless to yellow, indicative of the reduction of the silver salt), it took considerably long time (more than an hour) in both the cases. For the photo-assisted preparation, the gradual generation of silver nanoparticles, using 2:1 ratio of the reducing agent and silver nitrate solution, was indicated by the progressive increase (till 22 min) in the absorbance intensity at around 420-430 nm in the UV-visible spectra. This is attributable to silver’s surface plasmon resonance (SPR) (Figure 1). The optical absorption of metal nanoparticles has been described traditionally and classically by Mie theory (Mie, 1908) as the localized surface plasmon resonance (LSPR). The optical absorption of metal nanoparticles can be described quantum mechanically due to intra- band excitations of conduction electrons by photon, mimicking the interactions of light on metal surface via the photoelectric absorption and Compton scattering. Plasmonic coupling of metal nanoparticles with light augments several useful optical phenomena that find application in ultra-sensitive biomolecular interactions, total internal reflection and lab-on-a-chip sensors. Furthermore, we had also assessed the prospects of preparing nanoparticles using solutions of varied ratios of the reducing agent and the silver salt. However, the preparation using 1:1 and 1:2 ratios required considerably long time and was associated with the appearance of a broad SPR peak, at around 450 nm, indicating considerably large particle size and polydisperse nanoparticles. Thus, we had resorted to proceed with the nanoparticles, prepared using 2:1 reducing agent to silver salt solution.

Figure 1 UV-vis spectra of the aqueous extract of teff flour, the aqueous solution of the silver salt, and the TSNPs that exhibit SPR at 426 nm. The evolution of silver nanoparticles over time is depicted.

The rapid generation of the silver nanoparticles under the influence of sunlight (photo-induced bio-reduction) could possibly be due to photo-induced homolytic
cleavage of the O-H bond of the various bio-reductants (example, amino acids) to form hydrogen radical that eventually transfers its electron to silver ion (Ag⁺), generating silver nanoparticles. The oxygen radical part attains stabilization in the solution through extended conjugation. On the other hand, the compositional abundance of the biopolymers like starch in the teff extract is expected to confer steric stabilization to the nanoparticles (Figure 2).

Figure 2 Schematic representation of photo-induced bioreduction of the silver ions based on the aqueous extract of teff flour and the subsequent generation of stable silver nanoparticles

Based on the UV-visible spectral analysis, we then proceeded with the calculation of the band gap in the prepared TSNPs. Nanoparticles are larger than individual atoms and molecules but are smaller than bulk solid. They obey neither absolute quantum chemistry nor laws of classical physics and have properties that differ markedly from those expected. The effect of size quantization particularly in metals and semiconductors is profound. The size of a nanoparticle is comparable to the de Broglie wavelength of its charge carriers (i.e., electrons and holes). Due to the spatial confinement of the charge carriers, the edge of the valence and conduction bands split into discrete, quantized, electronic levels (Figure 3). These electronic levels are like those in atoms and molecules. The spacing of the electronic levels and the bandgap increases with decreasing particle size. This is because the electron hole pairs are now much closer together and the Coulombic interaction between them can no longer be neglected, giving an overall higher kinetic energy. This increase in bandgap can be observed experimentally by the blue-shift in the absorption spectrum or sometimes even visually by the color of the samples. A larger bandgap means that more energy is required to excite an electron from the valance band to the conduction band and hence light of a higher frequency and lower wavelength would be absorbed.

Figure 3 Band-gap change in nanoparticles

The maximum absorbance wavelength is associated with the conduction band energy according to quantum theory of metal nanoparticles (Gharibshahi et al., 2017). The conduction band energy of Ag nanoparticles can be calculated indirectly from the absorption spectra by the following Tauc’s equation:

\[(\chi h\nu)^2 = B(h\nu - E_{cb})\]  

where \(\chi\) is the absorption coefficient, \(h\nu\) is the photon energy, \(E_{cb}\) is the conduction band energy, and \(B\) is a constant. According to this equation, by plotting the \((\chi h\nu)^2\) versus energy and extrapolation of the linear part of the curve to the energy axis, the conduction band energy of Ag nanoparticles can be obtained as shown in Figure 4. The band gap for the TSNPs was calculated as 2.26 eV. This is quite high compared to bulk silver (0 eV) and in lines with previously reported values for nanoparticles (Banerjee et al., 2008; Yukna, 2007; Gharibshahi et al., 2017).

Figure 4 [A] UV-visible spectrum of the TSNPs, [B] Tauc plot, Variation of \((\chi h\nu)^2\) with \(h\nu\) for Ag nanoparticles as a function of wavelength

We had also resorted to the UV-visible spectroscopic studies to understand the storage stability of the nanoparticles under room temperature (−23−26 °C). In our case, post storage of the TSNPs for a month, a slight shift of SPR peak (from 426 nm to 430 nm) was observed, however, the peak width remained the same (Figure 5). The biomolecules present in the teff flour extract were envisaged to act both as the reducing and stabilizing agent, thereby preventing excess aggregation of the nanoparticles. It is pertinent to note that scattering from a sample is typically highly sensitive to the aggregation state of the sample, with scattering contribution augmenting with the increase in the aggregation of the particles.

Figure 5 UV-visible spectra demonstrating the considerable stability of the nanoparticles, stored under ambient conditions over a month

The optical attributes of nanoparticles may be altered when particles aggregate and the conduction electrons (as in silver nanoparticles) near each particle surface become delocalized and are shared amidst the neighboring particles. Occurrence of such events leads to shifting of the SPR to lower energies, causing the absorption and scattering peaks to exhibit red-shift to longer wavelengths. (Due to inaccessibility of other characterization tools (DLS, zeta potential, HRTEM etc.) during the execution of this B.Sc. project work in Ethiopia, we could not present a complete landscape of the physicochemical characterization of the nanoparticles. Nevertheless, the UV-visible spectroscopic analysis attested or at least indicated the successful preparation of the TSNPs. Thus, we proceed with our investigation into their prospective applications and preliminary delving of their action at the bio-interface.)

Dye decolorization (application as catalyst)

Use of various dyes in paper, plastic, leather, food, cosmetic and textile industries have led to multiple issues including skin irritation, liver, kidney damage as well as the widespread application could prove detrimental to the central nervous system and even result in mutation and cancer (Latha et al., 2019). The need of the hour is to mitigate the various synthetic dyes economically and safely in the environment. Amongst others, techniques such as carbon sorption, redox treatment, phyco-remediation, UV-light mediated degradation etc., have been explored (Latha et al., 2019). Use of nanoparticles for dye-abatement (Fairuzi et al., 2018) has been proposed as a rapid, low-cost methodology (without the formation of polycyclic products and oxidation of pollutants). In this regard, we had resorted to test the efficacy of the TSNPs for decolorization of methylene blue (MB), a common cationic dye. We found that the TSNPs functioned as an efficient catalyst (Figure 6 [A]) in decolorizing aqueous MB in presence of NaBH₄. The decrease of absorbance at λₘₐₓ (664 nm) of MB with time was followed spectrophotometrically. The bar diagram depicts the percentage of MB degradation with exposure time (Figure 6 [B]).

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Table 1
was significantly higher than that of AgNPs, prepared using
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percent scavenging of DPPH increased almost linearly with the increase in the
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4
28x143
Coleus
4
28x157
Brassica
4
28x176
Nepeta
4
28x219
Polygonum hydropiper
4
28x237
Trigonella
4
28x256
Morinda tinctoria
Figure 6 [A] Time-course-dependent absorption spectra of the MB solution in
the presence of the TSNPs. [B] Percentage of dye degradation with respect to time [C]
Kinetics of MB decolorization by the TSNPs
The degradation-percentage (%) of the dye was calculated by using the formula:
Dye degradation (%) = \( \left( \frac{A_0 - A}{A_0} \right) \times 100 \) ...[4]
where, \( A_0 \) is the initial concentration of MB solution and \( A \) is the concentration
after \( t \) minutes of reaction.
In the absence of the nanocatalyst, the dye-decolorization was found to
the negligible. Addition of the nanoparticles resulted in more than 50% decolorization
in less than 20 min. The kinetic data were fitted to first order rate equations
(Figure 6 [C]). The nanoparticles are envisaged to act as electron relay and initiate
shifting of electron from BH\(^+\) ion (donor \( \text{BH}_4/\text{BH}_3 \)) to acceptor (acceptor
LMB/MB), leading to reduction of the dye. Concomitant adsorption of the BH\(^+\)
ion on the surface of the nanoparticles is followed by electron transfer from the
\( \text{BH}_3 \) ion into the dye via the nanoparticles (Kumari et al., 2015). Highlights of
a few studies on MB dye degradation using silver nanoparticles, fabricated using
phyto-extracts are presented in Table 1.

DPPH scavenging (application as anti-oxidant)

The free radical scavenging of the TSNPs was examined in the present study. The
percent scavenging of DPPH increased almost linearly with the increase in the
concentration of the nanoparticles in the test samples (Figure 7). From the plot,
50% DPPH scavenging was calculated for 243.42 \( \mu \)L of the TSNPs. Previously,
Laisangpuil et al. (2022) had reported that the DPPH scavenging activities of
AgNPs, prepared using S. acmella leaf extract (IC\(_{50}\) 3.85 ± 0.04 \( \mu \)g/mL)
was significantly higher than that of \( S. \text{ acmella} \) leaf extract (SAAE) (IC\(_{50}\) 474.0 ±
8.80 \( \mu \)g/mL). On the other hand, AgNPs, fabricated using spice blend of garlic,
ginger and cayenne pepper exhibited greater inhibition of DPPH radical with
IC\(_{50}\) < 31.25 \( \mu \)g/mL against 68.75 \( \mu \)g/mL for 2,2-diaminoxy (3-
ethylbenzothiazoline-6-sulfonic acid) or ABTS (Otunola and Afolayan, 2018). IC\(_{50}\)
values of 385.87 \( \mu \)g/mL and 30.04 \( \mu \)g/mL for DPPH scavenging was recorded
for AgNPs, prepared using aqueous extract of silk hair of com (Patra and Baek,
2016) and Erythrina suberosa (Roxb.) (Mohanta et al., 2017). Recently
work has unmasked IC\(_{50}\) values of 82 ± 0.79, 44.56 ± 0.02 and 26.6 ± 0.06 \( \mu \)g/mL
corresponding to flavxex extract, AgNPs, fabricated using flavxex extract, and
ascorbic acid respectively (Alzubaidi et al., 2023). Previously, the corresponding
author of this work had also reported DPPH based antioxidant activity of
Colocasia esculenta based silver nanoparticles (Barua et al., 2013) besides free radical
scavenging using orange peel-based silver nanoparticles (Konwar et al., 2011).
Numerous anti-oxidants of the orange peel (pooled into the system during
preparation and consequently surface-adsorbed) were proposed to act
synergistically in that system. Furthermore, with a high surface area to volume
ratio and an ambient electrostat field with anti-oxidant bio-moieties on the
surface, these silver nanoparticles were anticipated to develop a high tendency to
interact with and reduce DPPH like species. In this work, although, a higher
volume was required for our sample (in comparison to previous work, as reported
by Konwar et al. (2011), possibly due to lesser abundance of polyphenolic
compounds in teff compared to orange peel) to display 50% scavenging,
nevertheless, it raises the prospects of incorporating the prepared nanoparticles for
developing of nanocomposite packaging materials with the facet of free radical
scavenging. The nano-chemistry involved in this free radical scavenging attribute
of the nanoparticles needs further investigation, besides appropriate dilutions and
concentrations are important aspects in anti-oxidant assays.

Table 1 Few comparative results on the MB dye degradation using silver nanoparticles, fabricated using phyto-extracts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phytoextract/bioresource used for Ag NP preparation</th>
<th>Highlights about MB degradation</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morinda tinctoria leaf extract</td>
<td>Degradation efficiency percent of AgNPs was registered as 95.3% at 72 h</td>
<td>Vanaja et al. (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trigonella foenum-graecum seeds extract.</td>
<td>Complete reduction of MB to leucomethylene blue (LMB) was accomplished in less than 20 min in the presence of AgNPs</td>
<td>Vidhu and Philip (2014)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polygonum hydropiper extract</td>
<td>The MB solution turned into colourless solution within less than 15 min under UV light and vigorous stirring conditions</td>
<td>Bonnia et al. (2016)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Convulvulus arvensis leaf extract</td>
<td>Reduction of MB within 20 min in the presence of AgNPs with rate constant of 0.108 min (^{-1})</td>
<td>Hamed et al. (2017)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepeta leucophylla stem extract</td>
<td>Photocatalytic degradation of MB using biosynthesized silver nanoparticles of optimized dose (1.8 mL) for 180 min in the presence and absence of light were 82.8% and 61.25%, respectively</td>
<td>Singh and Dhalialw (2018)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brassica oleracea var. Botrytis waste extract</td>
<td>Degradation of organic dyes (including MB) within 3 hours of exposure time in presence of sunlight.</td>
<td>Ayaj et al. (2022)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coleus vettiveroids leaf extract</td>
<td>Maximum MB dye degradation of 97.57% was recorded at 150 min</td>
<td>Kadam et al. (2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sycygium samarangense flower extract</td>
<td>Within 2 h of direct sunlight, a maximum of 80% photocatalytic degradation of MB was reported</td>
<td>Basalius et al. (2023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onobrychis sativa extract of leaves and flowers mixture</td>
<td>The catalytic degradation of MB by NaBH(_4) in the presence of AgNPs@Os was found to be 68 % in 30 min.</td>
<td>Erenler and Hosahiloug (2023)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eragrostis tef extract</td>
<td>50% decolorization in less than 20 min</td>
<td>This study</td>
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</table>
Anticoagulant activity

Assessment of hemocompatibility of silver nanoparticles has been a prime focus in the realm of nanotoxicity assessment. Amongst others, Krajewski et al. (2013) pointed out that silver nanoparticles, on contact with blood could modulate the coagulation cascade (the sequence of various biochemical events involved in coagulation) or the inflammatory response. Shirivastava et al. (2009) had proved the potential of antiplatelet and antithrombic effect of silver nanoparticles and concluded that the silver nanoparticles have innate antiplatelet property which prevents integrin-mediated platelet responses. Kim et al. (2013) demonstrated that the anticoagulant property of heparin was enhanced by the addition of earthworm extract mediated gold nanoparticles. In our study, the anticoagulant property of TSNPs was examined by the addition of TSNPs to freshly collected blood (Figure 8). Blood clot was observed in the tube without any anti-coagulant. Blood collected in the EDTA-tube served as the control. On the other hand, no clot was observed for the blood collected in vials, supplemented with the TSNPs. This confirmed that the TSNPs could serve as blood anticoagulant. This is in accordance with the results obtained by Jeyaraj et al. (2013) and Raja et al., (2015). However, the effect of the nanoparticles on the morphology, population and functionality of the various blood cells must be studied in details.

Effect on seed germination (Phyto-compatibility assessment)

Exotics like nanoparticles can penetrate via the cell wall, primarily composed of polymeric carbohydrates, prior to membrane invagination in plant cells (Konwar et al., 2011) and can lead to alteration in various physiological activities of the plants. In this backdrop, investigation of the modulation of the phyto-physiology, assessed in terms of seed germination due to the plausible penetration of the TSNPs was one of the propositions in this work (Figure 9). Plant seeds with emerging radicle or cotyledon coming out of the seed coat were recorded as being germinated in the present experiment.

Table 2 Phytotoxicity assessment of the TSNPs on germination and radicle length of Cicer arietinum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>Average germination rate (%) of the seeds</th>
<th>Average radicle length (cm) post four days of incubation</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control (Sample code: C)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2.1 ± 0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSNPs (25 μL in 50 mL distilled water, resulting in final concentration of 0.84 μg/mL TSNPs) (Sample code: 1)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>2.3 ± 0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSNPs (100 μL in 50 mL distilled water, resulting in final concentration of 3.36 μg/mL TSNPs) (Sample code: 2)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3.6 ± 0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSNPs (200 μL in 50 mL distilled water, resulting in final concentration of 6.72 μg/mL TSNPs) (Sample code: 3)</td>
<td>98%</td>
<td>4 ± 0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSNPs (300 μL in 50 mL distilled water, resulting in final concentration of 10.08 μg/mL TSNPs) (Sample code: 4)</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>4.4 ± 0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSNPs (400 μL in 50 mL distilled water, resulting in final concentration of 13.44 μg/mL TSNPs) (Sample code: 5)</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>4.6 ± 0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TSNPs (500 μL in 50 mL distilled water, resulting in final concentration of 16.8 μg/mL TSNPs) (Sample code: 6)</td>
<td>99%</td>
<td>4.4 ± 0.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At this juncture we would like to mention that a handful of recent studies has evinced that the innovative technique of nano-priming involving seed priming/treatment with nanomaterials enhances seed germination, growth, and yield while providing resistance to different plant stresses. The employed nanomaterials in the technique facilitate electron exchange and augmented surface interactions within plant cells and tissues. Events such as stimulation of rapid starch degradation through amylase activation, generation of nanopores in shoot, expression of aquaporin genes, assisting in water absorption, and triggering of reactive oxygen species (ROS)/antioxidant mechanisms in seeds leading to coagulation cascade (the sequence of various biochemical events involved in coagulation) or the inflammatory response. Shirivastava et al. (2009) had proved the potential of antiplatelet and antithrombic effect of silver nanoparticles and concluded that the silver nanoparticles have innate antiplatelet property which prevents integrin-mediated platelet responses. Kim et al. (2013) demonstrated that the anticoagulant property of heparin was enhanced by the addition of earthworm extract mediated gold nanoparticles. In our study, the anticoagulant property of TSNPs was examined by the addition of TSNPs to freshly collected blood (Figure 8). Blood clot was observed in the tube without any anti-coagulant. Blood collected in the EDTA-tube served as the control. On the other hand, no clot was observed for the blood collected in vials, supplemented with the TSNPs. This confirmed that the TSNPs could serve as blood anticoagulant. This is in accordance with the results obtained by Jeyaraj et al. (2013) and Raja et al., (2015). However, the effect of the nanoparticles on the morphology, population and functionality of the various blood cells must be studied in details.

Figure 8 Anticoagulant activity assessment of the TSNPs on blood collected freshly from a healthy volunteer

Figure 9 [A] Treatment of Cicer arietinum seeds with different concentrations of TSNPs [B] Representative batch of germinated seeds, post three days of treatments. [C] Representative seeds with emanating radicles. Here, C refers to the control (without any treatment), while for codes 1-6, readers are requested to refer to Table 2.

In our experiment, it was observed that the average germination rate remained unchanged for the treated seeds with respect to the control. However, significant difference was noted for the average radicle length post four days of incubation (Table 2).
cultivated throughout the year and tolerant to a wide range of environmental changes. Additionally, it exhibits convenient germination with its thin seed coat. Pertinently, Candan et al. (2022) reported the application of infrared spectral analysis, aided by machine learning techniques to unveil that gold nanoparticles (AuNPs) and single-walled carbon nanotubes (CNTs) are taken up by C. arrietinum seedlings’ roots, leading to consequent build-up of the nanomaterials in stem and leaf parts. Priming Cicer arrietinum seeds with ZnO NPs (synthesized using Trichoderma harzianum) was projected as a means to aid chick pea plants to pile up greater amounts of sugars, phenol, total proteins, and superoxide dismutase (SOD) activity. Salt-wilt pathogen- Fusarium oxysporum (Farhana et al., 2022). Similar protective action of treatment with AgNPs (biosynthesized by rhizospheric microflora of chick pea) against wilt disease was previously reported by Kaur et al. (2018). Furthermore, AgNPs, synthesized using Aloe vera leaf extract (Anju, 2022) supported significant increment in biomass, shoot, and root growth in C. arrietinum and increased the yield of the plant. Biosynthesized iron oxide nanoparticles (IONPs) have been found to support callus induction, shoot regeneration and root induction of chickpea plants for prospective application in plant tissue culture (Irumu et al., 2020). Pawar et al. (2019) had also assessed the impact of iron oxide nanoparticles (Fe3O4 NPs) on chickpea seedling growth using different concentrations (4-16 μg/mL). They found that lower concentrations (up to 12 μg/mL) enhanced seed germination and growth, but higher concentrations were inhibitory. Our preliminary investigation has shown that TSNPs do have a phyto-physiology modulatory effect, as reflected in the varied lengths of the emerging radicle. It is to be noted that the aqueous teff extract did not influence the seed-germination negatively and the results were in lines parallel to that of the control. As far as this study is concerned, besides delving into the effect on the shoot length and survival percentage of the seedlings post transplantation, a number of questions have to be addressed: Will the effect of the prepared samples and the consequences of the internalization and bio-distribution be same for both dicot and monocot plants? Is the phyto-modulatory action species-specific? Does the penetration of Ag NPs into the root cells help the plants to ward off soil pathogens or lead to the loss of beneficial microflora, peripheral to the roots?

CONCLUSION

This work mirrors the successful sunlight-assisted rapid and efficient biogenesis of silver nanoparticles using aqueous teff powder extract (without any additional toxic chemicals), for multiple applications. However, the complete physicochemical attributes of the nanoparticles have not been investigated. The work reported in this work brings the fact to light that a common raw material of the Ethiopian food- delicacy can be useful even in the domain of nanotechnology. The stabilized silver nanoparticles synthesized under the ambient conditions shows tremendous potential for applications in several realms. These nanoparticles endowed with the attributes of free radical scavenging, catalysis, and antioxidant potency as well as phytocompatibility (as revealed in preliminary investigations) may be exploited for various biomedical, agricultural, and industrial applications. Furthermore, probing into the nano-biointerfacial actions at various levels could be the focus of future study. To cite for evidence, effect of the silver nanoparticles on PCR amplification of genes of interest, antimicrobial potency as well as in vivo effects could be investigated.

DECLARATION

(a) The un-reviewed version of this research article (DOI: https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-259560/v2) is hosted as a preprint in Research Square since 23 Feb, 2023. The link to the article is https://www.researchsquare.com/article/rs-259560/v2.

(b) The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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