

Antiplasmodial activity and cytotoxicity of kapur (*Harmsioplanax aculeatus*) leaf extracts traditionally used for the treatment of malaria in Maluku

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ABSTRACT

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Harmsioplanax aculeatus leaf, locally name *kapur*, has been use traditionally to treat malaria in Maluku, Indonesia. However, the scientific evidences that support its use are still limited. This study aimed to investigate antiplasmodial activity of *H. aculeatus* leaf extract and its cytotoxicity on cancer cells line. Three extracts i.e. methanolic, *n*-hexanic and ethyl acetate extracts were evaluated for their *in vitro* activity against *Plasmodium falciparum* FCR3 strain using microscopic method. Cytotoxicity of the extracts on T47D, HeLa and Vero cells lines were determined using MTT assay method. The inhibitory concentration 50% (IC₅₀) against *P. falciparum* or the cells lines growth was determined using probit analysis. Furthermore, their selectivity index (SI) were determined. The results showed that the methanolic extract was the most active extract with an IC₅₀ value of 13.82 µg/mL and the most selective with a SI value of 172.84. The three extracts tested exhibited weak or no cytotoxicity against the cells lines used with IC₅₀ values ranged 101-2388.69 µg/mL. Further study will be conducted to isolate active antiplasmodial compounds from the methanol extract.

ABSTRAK

Daun *Harmsioplanax aculeatus*, secara local dinamkan tanaman kapur, telah digunakan secara tradisional digunakan untuk mengobati malaria di Maluku, Indonesia. Namun bukti ilmiah yang mendukung penggunaannya masih terbatas. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengkaji aktivitas antiplasmodial ekstrak daun *H. aculeatus* dan sitotoksiknya pada kanker sel. Tiga ekstrak daun kapur yaitu ekstrak methanol, *n*-heksan dan etilasetat aktivitasnya secara *in vitro* terhadap *Plasmodium falciparum* strain FCR3 menggunakan metode mikroskopi. Sitotoksitas ekstrak selanjutnya diuji pada kultur sel kanker payudara T47D, sel kanker servik HeLa dan sel normal Vero menggunakan metode uji MTT. Kadar penghambatan 50% (IC₅₀) terhadap pertumbuhan *P. falciparum* atau kultur sel tersebut ditetapkan dengan analisis probit. Selanjutnya indeks sel ektivitasnya (IS) ditetapkan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ekstrak methanol merupakan ekstrak paling aktif dengan nilai IC₅₀ sebesar 13,82 µg/mL dan paling selektif dengan nilai IS sebesar 172,84. Ketiga ekstrak uji menunjukkan sitotoksik lemah atau tidak toksik terhadap kultur sel yang digunakan dengan nilai IC50 bervariasi 101-2388.69 µg/mL. Penelitian lanjutan akan dilakukan untuk mengisolasi senyawa aktif anti plasmodial dalam ekstrak metanol.

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INTRODUCTION

Although the malaria prevalence and incidence were significantly reduced globally, malaria remains to be one of the most public health problems worldwide including in Indonesia. In 2018, an estimated 228 million cases and 405,000 deaths from malaria were reported worldwide.¹ In Indonesia, the most endemic areas are observed in the eastern regions of Indonesia including Maluku Province. In 2015, Maluku Province ranked fourth of high endemicity of malaria with annual parasite incidence (API) of 5.81% although new cases tended to decrease in last few years.²

Plasmodium resistance to antimalarial drugs available in clinic is the major problems in the treatment of malaria. Resistance to chloroquine in *Plasmodium falciparum* has led to adopt artemisinin combination therapy (ACT) as the first-line drug for the treatment of malaria in most endemic countries.³ However, *P. falciparum* resistant to artemisinin has been reported in the several endemic countries.⁴ Therefore, discover new chemical compounds with antimalarial activities is urgently needed. Medicinal plants traditionally used to treat malaria have been subjected to identify new antimalarial compounds.⁵

Medicinal plants have been used traditionally to treat malaria in various regions in Indonesia including in Maluku. One of the medicinal plants is *Harmsioplanax aculeatus* (Blume) Warb. Ex Boerl from Araliaceae family which locally well known as *kapur* plant. It is used to treat malaria by drip of the young leaves sap on the patient's eyes. In order to search of active compounds from medicinal plants, *in vivo* antiplasmodial activity of *H. aculeatus* leaf extracts has been evaluated against *P. berghei* infected Swiss mice.⁶ In this further study we reported *in vitro* antiplasmodial activity and cytotoxicity of *kapur* (*H. aculeatus*) leaf extracts.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Plant collection and authentication

Kapur leaf samples were collected from Amahai Village, Central Maluku Regency, Maluku, Indonesia and determined in the Taxonomy Laboratory, Faculty of Biology, Gadjah Mada University, Indonesia as *H. aculeatus* (Blume) Warb. Ex Boerl (Araliaceae, Voucher number 1 HaA).

Preparation of plant extracts

A total of 2 kg of *kapur* leaf powder were extracted using multilevel maceration techniques using *n*-hexane (3x24 h), ethyl acetate (4x24 h) and methanol (4x24 h) respectively. The solvents in each obtained mass were evaporated, then the crude extract was weighed to determine the yield of each extract. The compound profiles in the three extracts were identified using TLC both in visible light and under UV lamp.

In vitro antiplasmodial activity

The chloroquine-resistant *P. falciparum* strain (FCR3) was used in this study and cultures using a candle jar method according to Trager and Jensen after modification.^{7,8} One hundred μL of the *Plasmodium* culture in ring stage, after synchronized with 5% sorbitol, in a final 2% haematocrit and 0.5% parasitemia was added into the wells of 96-well microtiter plate. Serial five-fold dilutions were prepared using the culture medium from stock solutions of the *kapur* leaf extracts to obtain working concentrations of 200 to 1 $\mu\text{g}\cdot\text{mL}^{-1}$, depend on each extract. One hundred μL of the extract solution was then added in the wells in triplicate. The wells containing culture medium without the extracts were used as negative control. The plates containing the mixture of the *Plasmodium* culture and the extracts solution were placed in a candle jar and incubated at 37°C for 72 h in a CO_2 incubator. Followed after incubation,

a thin blood smear of each wells was prepared and then Giemsa staining was conducted. Parasitemia of each the Giemsa stained thin blood smears was observed visually using a light microscope to calculate the Plasmodium growth. The antiplasmodial activity was expressed by inhibitory concentration 50% (IC₅₀) or concentration that inhibit 50% Plasmodium growth which determined using probit analysis with SPSS 16 for windows.

Cytotoxicity assay

Cytotoxicity of the hexane, ethyl acetate and methanol extract of *H. aculeatus* leaves were evaluated by using the MTT assay method as previously conducted.⁸ Three cell lines i.e. Vero, T47D and HeLa cell lines were cultured in M199 cell culture medium and used in this study. Serial five-fold dilutions were prepared using the culture medium from stock solutions of the *kapur* leaf extracts to obtain working concentrations of 4000 to 12.5 µg.mL⁻¹, depend on each extract. One hundred µL of the extract solution was then added in the wells in triplicate. The wells containing culture medium without the extracts were used as negative control. The plate containing the mixture of the cells culture and the extracts solution was incubated at 37°C for 24 h in a CO₂ incubator. Followed after incubation period, the culture medium was removed from the wells and 25 µL of the MTT solution (2 mg/mL in PBS) was added to each well. The plates were incubated for 1.5 h at 37 °C, and 125 µL of DMSO was added to each well to dissolve the for mazan crystals. The plates were placed on a shaker for 15 min and the optical density was measured at a wavelength of 595 nm using ELISA Reader. The cytotoxicity was expressed by inhibitory concentration 50% (IC₅₀) or concentration that reduce 50% cell viability which determined using probit analysis with SPSS 16 for windows.

Thin layer chromatography (TLC)

The extracts were subjected to TLC analysis. The chromatograms were developed and dried on the silica gel TLC plates and the spots visually observed

directly or under UV366 to characterize various chemical substances. The developing solvents used were the mixtures of n-hexane:chloroform (1:9), chloroform:ethyl acetate (8:2), and chloroform:ethyl acetate (9:1).

UV-Vis DAD analysis

The methanol extract was then subjected to UV-Vis DAD analysis using Dionex UV-Vis System. The sample was dissolved in a solvent and then as much as 20 µL injected in a Dionex device with the following conditions: Program Chromeleon version 6.3, Pump; Dionex P580A LPG, Detector; Dionex, UVD 340S Photodiode Array Detector; Column: Knauer, 5.0 mmID; packing material 5 mm and Eurospher-100 C-18). Isocratic column equilibration using methanol: acid nanopure water (pH 2 using phosphoric acid) with a ratio of 10: 9 for 5 min then the solvent was changed gradient to 100% methanol within 30 min later followed by 100% methanol for 40 min. Compounds that have a chromophore are detected using UV-Vis DAD at 235, 254, 280, and 340 nm.

The protocol of this study was approved by the Medical and Health Research Ethics Committee (MHREC) Faculty of Medicine, Public Health, and Nursing, Universitas Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia (Ref: KE/FK/1152/EC/2016).

Data analysis

Data are presented as means ± standard deviation (SD). Selectivity index (SI) toward *P. falciparum* or T47D or HeLa cells lines versus Vero cell line were calculated from the following formula: SI = IC₅₀ against Vero cell/IC₅₀ against *P. falciparum* or T47D or HeLa cells lines.

RESULTS

In vitro antiplasmodial activity

Among three *H. aculeatus* leaf extracts tested, the methanolic extract with IC₅₀ value of 13.82 µg/mL exhibited the most active antiplasmodial activity compared to the extracts of n-hexane and ethyl acetate (TABEL 1).

TABLE 1. *In vitro* antiplasmodial activity of *H.aculeatus* leaf extracts

Extract	Concentration (µg/mL)	Growth inhibition (mean ± SD %)	IC ₅₀ (µg/mL)
Hexane	200	80.45±4.02	33.52
	50	52.78±3.85	
	25	39.12±4.12	
	5	25.97 ± 4.87	
	1	14.91± 3.76	
Ethyl acetate	200	64.67 ± 2.48	35.45
	50	50.02 ±3.42	
	25	45.12 ± 5.64	
	5	40.76 ± 2.56	
	1	22.18 ± 3.52	
Methanol	200	89.73 ± 2.68	13.82
	50	53.89± 3.54	
	25	50.06 ±3.29	
	5	41.76 ± 4.26	
	1	24.15± 3.28	

Cytotoxicity on T47D and HeLa and Vero cell lines

The cytotoxicity of the three *H. aculeatus* leaf extracts tested are presented on TABLE 2. All three extracts

tested might not exhibit weak or no cytotoxicity against T47D, HeLa and Vero cell lines. The IC₅₀ values of all the extracts tested ranged 101-2388.69 µg/mL.

TABLE 2. Cytotoxicity (IC₅₀ in µg/mL) against T47D, HeLa and Vero cell lines

Extract	T47D	HeLa	Vero
Hexane	>200	101-200	667.74
Ethyl acetate	>200	101-200	262.99
Methanol	>200	101-200	2388.69

Selectivity Index (SI)

Selectivity index (SI) toward *P. falciparum* or cancer cells lines are presented in TABLE 3. All three extracts

tested exhibited more selective toward the *P. falciparum* compared to the cancer cells lines. The SI values of all the extracts tested ranged <1.31-172.84.

TABLE 3. Selectivity index (SI) of *H. aculeatus* leaf extracts

Extract	<i>P. falciparum</i>	HeLa	T47D
Hexane	19.92	3.34 – 6.61	<3.34
Ethyl acetate	7.41	1.31 – 2.60	<1.31
Methanol	172.84	11.94 – 23.65	<11.94

Phytochemical analysis

The TLC chromatogram of *H. aculeatus* leaf extracts with visually and under UV 366 nm observation is presented in FIGURE 1. Some spots both in *n*-hexanic and methanolic extracts

were observed in the ethyl acetate extract. Furthermore, some spots with blue and pink colors were observed in three extracts obtained that indicated the present of flavonoid in the extracts.

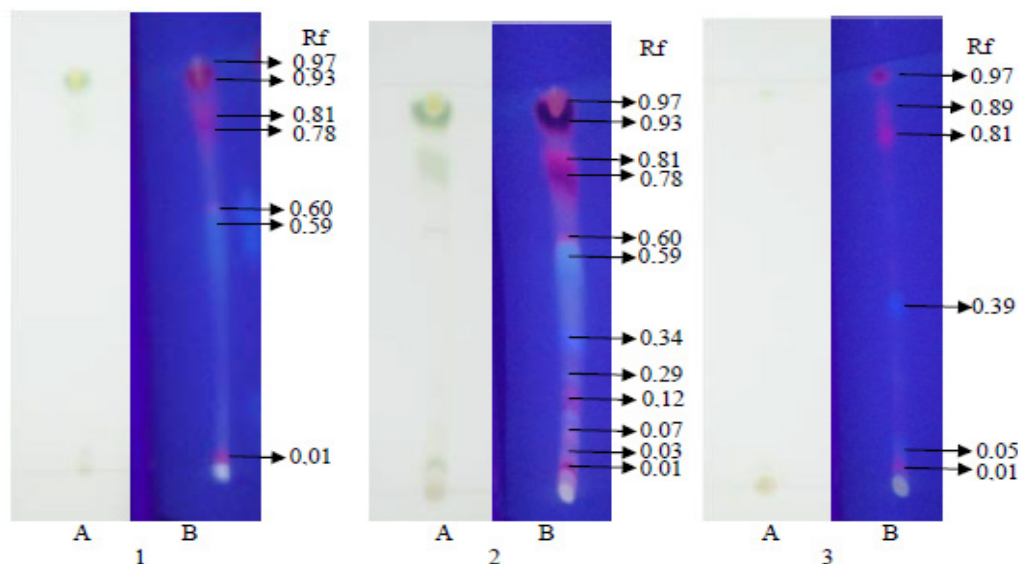


FIGURE 1. TLC profile of *H. aculeatus* leaf extracts. 1. *n*-Hexanic extract elucidated using *n*-hexane: chloroform (1:9); 2. Ethyl acetate extract elucidated using chloroform : ethyl acetate (8:2); 3 Methanolic extract elucidated using chloroform : ethyl acetate (9:1); A=photo in visible light and B = photo in UV 366 nm.

UV-Vis DAD analysis

TABLE 4 presents the compounds identified in methanolic extract of *H. aculeatus* by UV-Vis DAD and database from the Institute of Biology of

Pharmacy and Biotechnology, Heinrich Heine University, Duesseldorf, Germany. Twenty nine compounds were identified in the λ 235nm (11 compounds), λ 254nm (6 compounds), λ 280 nm (5 compounds) and λ 340 nm (7 compounds).

TABLE 4. DAD UV-Vis data and tentative structure assignment of compounds separated from methanolic extract of *H. aculeatus* leaf.

$\lambda=235$ nm		$\lambda=254$ nm		$\lambda=280$ nm		$\lambda=340$ nm	
t_r	Tentative Compound	t_r	Tentative Compound	t_r	Tentative Compound	t_r	Tentative Compound
18.28	Luteolin-7-glucoside (998.98)	3.160	nf	12.473	nf	16.193	nf
19.35	Apigenin monoglycoside (998.47)	12.473	nf	16.903	nf	17.443	nf
19.99	Hyperoside (=quersetin-3-galactoside; 998.64)	15.190	nf	19.357	nf	18.227	nf

21.35	Kaempferol-3-rutinoside (998.62)	18.789	nf	19.993	nf	19.357	nf
26.54	Nf	19.353	nf	21.350	nf	19.993	nf
30.97	Aureonitol (998.20)	19.993	nf			21.350	nf
31.78	nf					24.257	nf
32.52	Aurenitol (985.99)						
33.12	Cerebroside (996.09)						
36.05	Naamine (985.35)						
46.30	nf						

Note. Database was obtained from the Institute of Biology of Pharmacy and Biotechnology, Heinrich Heine University, Duesseldorf, Germany; t_r : retention time; nf: not found.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the methanolic extract exhibited the most active antiplasmodial activity (IC_{50} : 13.82 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$). Previous studies reported that the antiplasmodial activity of a natural product or compound can be categorized as high activity or very active if the $IC_{50} < 5 \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$, promising activity or active if IC_{50} between 5-15 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$, moderate activity or weakly active if IC_{50} between 15-50 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ and not active if $IC_{50} > 50 \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$.^{9,10} Based on these previous studies therefore, the methanolic extract of *H. aculeatus* leaf could be categorized as active extract.

Cytotoxicity assay is widely used for cytotoxicity tests of compounds and for anticancer screening. Vero cells was isolated from kidney epithelial cells of an African green monkey. It was used as normal cells to evaluate cytotoxicity of the tested extracts, while T47D (breast cancer cell line) and HeLa (cervical cancer cell line) were used to evaluate anticancer activity of the tested extracts. Based on the IC_{50} values obtained, an extract can be labeled as highly active if the IC_{50} value $\leq 20 \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ or moderate active if the IC_{50} value between 21-200 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ or weakly active if the IC_{50} value between 201-500 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ or inactive if the IC_{50} value $> 500 \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$.^{11,12} Based on this criteria therefore, the methanolic extract exhibited non active or noncytotoxic, whereas the hexane and ethyl acetate extracts exhibited weakly active or weakly cytotoxic against Vero cells line.

Furthermore, the three extracts tested exhibited weakly active against T47D ($IC_{50} > 200 \mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$) and HeLa (IC_{50} 201-500 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$) cells lines.

Prayong *et al.*¹³ proposed that extracts or samples with an SI greater than three are considered to have a high selectivity. Based on these criteria, the three extracts tested exhibited high selectivity toward *P. falciparum*. The methanolic extract exhibited the most selective with SI value of 172.84 (TABLE 3). Among three tested extracts, the methanolic extract also exhibited the most selective toward the T47D and HeLa cells lines, although it was weakly active.

Among 29 compounds identified using DAD UV-Vis analysis, 8 compounds had been identified at λ 235 nm asluteolin-7-galactoside, apigenin monoglycoside, hyperoside (quersetin-3-gluctoside), kampferol-3-rutinoside, aureonitol (998.20), aurenitol (985.99), cerebroside and naamine (TABLE 4). These compounds have been isolated from another plants and evaluated for their biological activities.

Luteolin-7-glucoside is a glucoside flavanoid group found in burr parsley (*Caucalisplatycarpus* L).¹⁴ It is also found in edible plants and medicinal plants traditionally used to treat various illness. Luteolin exhibits various biological activities including anti-inflammatory activities, antioxidants, antimicrobials, cancer chemotherapy, cancer chemopreventive, cardioprotective, antihypertension, anticholesterol, antidiabetic, neuroprotective and

antiallergic.¹⁵ In addition, rich diets of luteolin-7-glucoside may be useful in the control of both nonalcoholic fatty liver disease and cardiovascular diseases.¹⁶

Apigenin monoglycosides are compounds belonging to the flavanoid aglycone. Apigenin is known as 4',5,7,-trihydroxyflavone, which is a flavonoid class of flavonoids. Apigenin is also an aglycone of several glycosides that occur naturally with the molecular formula $C_{15}H_{10}O_5$ with a molecular weight of 270.24.¹⁷ Apigenin is a yellow crystalline solid that has used to dye wool. Flavone compounds and their derivatives are well known to have several biological activities including antioxidants, anti-inflammatory, antitumor, antigenotoxic, anti-allergic, neuroprotective, cardioprotective, and antimicrobial.^{17,18} Apigenin it self is known to have activities including antioxidants, antigenotoxic, anticarcinogenic, antiangiogenic, antihepatotoxic, antinephrotoxic. Apigenin may be useful to treat pulmonary fibrosis, cardiovascular disease, autoimmune diseases, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, HIV, arthritis, HIV, arthritis, hemostasis, multiple sclerosis, multidrug and immunosuppressive resistance.¹⁹

Quercetin 3-galactoside is compound belonging to flavonoid-3-glycoside. It contains a flavonoid moiety which is O-glycosidically linked to carbohydrate moiety at the C3-position. Quercetin 3-galactoside is proven to have various biological activities including antinociceptive, antidepressant, neuroprotective, cardioprotective, antidiabetic, anticancer, antiviral, hepatoprotective, antioxidant and immunomodulator.²⁰

Kaempferol-3-rutinoside is a class of flavonoids. It is proven to have anticancer, antiinflammatory, antioxidant, neuroprotective, cardioprotective, antiobesity, antiulcer, antidiabetic, and antiosteoporotic.^{20,21} Where as aurenitolis a tetrahydrofuran derivative which is a hydrogenated analogue compound from the furan aromatic compound. It exhibits *in vitro* antiviral activity against influenza

virus replication.^{23,24} Cerebrosides are glycosphingolipids composed of hydrophobicceramidelinked to onesugar unit.²⁵ It can induce apoptosis in human colon cell lines.²⁶ Naamine is a group of alkaloids that have activity against plant viruses and phytopathogenic fungi.²⁷ It Naamine also has mild cytotoxic activity against MCF-7, A549, HeLa, and PC9 cells line.²⁸

This UV-Vis DAD analysis showed that the methanolic extract of the *H. aculeatus* leaves contains compounds that have the potential to treat various diseases. However, the compounds of the methanolic extract showing antiplasmodial activity have not been reported, yet. Further study will be focused to isolate and determine antiplasmodial active compounds from the methanolic extract.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the methanolic extract of *H. aculeatus* leaf exhibits the most potential *in vitro* antiplasmodial activity compared to that *n*-hexanicand ethyl acetate extracts. Furthermore, the three extracts testedexhibit weak or no cytotoxicity against T47D, and HeLa cells line.

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