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K. Velu

Department of Zoology,
Presidency College (Autonomous),
Chennai 600 005, Tamil Nadu,
India.

D. Elumalai

Department of Zoology,
Presidency College (Autonomous),
Chennai 600 005, Tamil Nadu,
India.

P. Hemalatha

Department of Zoology,
Presidency College (Autonomous),
Chennai 600 005, Tamil Nadu,
India.

M. Babu

Department of Zoology,
Presidency College (Autonomous),
Chennai 600 005, Tamil Nadu,
India.

A. Janaki

Department of Zoology,
Presidency College (Autonomous),
Chennai 600 005, Tamil Nadu,
India.

P. K. Kaleena

Associate Professor, Department of
Zoology, Presidency College
(Autonomous), Chennai-600 005,
Tamilnadu, India

For Correspondence:

P. K. Kaleena

Associate Professor, Department
of Zoology, Presidency-College
(Autonomous), Chennai-600 005,
Tamilnadu, India,

Phytochemical screening and larvicidal activity of peel extracts of *Arachis hypogaea* against chikungunya and malarial vectors

K. Velu, D. Elumalai, P. Hemalatha, M. Babu, A. Janaki, P. K. Kaleena

Abstract

Phytochemicals represent a rich resource for the discovery of novel pesticides that are effective, cheap and environmentally safe. The main targeted mosquito vectors *Aedes aegypti* and *Anopheles stephensi* cause serious human diseases. The chloroform, acetone, ethanol, methanol and aqueous peel extracts of *Arachis hypogaea* were studied for its larvicidal activity against the mosquito vectors. Phytochemical screening of the peel extracts showed the presence of bioactive compounds such as tannins, saponin, flavonoids, alkaloids, glycosides, beta cyanin, coumarins, quinones and steroids. GC-MS analysis of the peel extract of *A. hypogaea* was done to identify the major phyto compounds. Histopathological studies revealed damage in the tissues of the mid gut and cuticle. The results showed that the peel extract of *A. hypogaea* and its effective constituents can be considered as potent source for the production of natural larvicides.

Keywords: *Arachis hypogaea*, Phytochemicals, Larvicidal activity, Histopathology, Mosquito vectors.

1. Introduction

Development of resistance, cross-resistance, rising cost and possible toxicity hazards associated with synthetic insecticides are some of the reasons for revival of interest in plant based products in recent years [1].

Several mosquito species belonging to genera *Anopheles* and *Aedes* are vectors for the pathogens of various diseases like malaria, Japanese encephalitis, dengue, yellow fever and chikungunya [2].

Aedes aegypti is the vector that spreads yellow fever and dengue fever viruses and is endemic in tropical and subtropical regions around the world [3].

Anopheles mosquitoes transmit malarial parasites among humans. Approximately 91% of the 216 million cases estimated in 2010 were due to *Plasmodium falciparum*, transmitted by *Anopheles stephensi* [4]. The major problems associated with the use of chemicals for the control of pests is the development of resistance to the chemicals, and their undesirable side effects [5].

Extract from plants may serve as an alternative source of bioactive compounds that are biodegradable into nontoxic products and are potentially suitable for use to control mosquitoes. Plant extracts in general have best recognized as an important natural resource of insecticides [6].

Phytochemicals derived from plant sources can act as larvicides, insect growth regulators, repellents, oviposition attractants and can play an important role in the interruption of the transmission of mosquito-borne diseases at the individual as well as at the community level [7, 8].

Considerable work has been reported on the effect of plant extracts against mosquito larvae. The crude hexane extract obtained from flower heads of *Spilanthes Acmella*, *Spilanthes calva*, *Spilanthes paniculata* [9], partially purified extracts of leaves of *Vitex negundo*, *Nerium oleander* and seeds of *Syzygium*, [10] leaves of *Artemisia annua* and *Azadirachta indica* [11] the acetone crude extracts of *Fagonia indica* and *Arachis hypogaea* [12], extracts of *Nerium indicum* and *Thuja orientalis* [13] were proved to have excellent toxic effects on the larval population of different mosquito species.

Arachis hypogaea (*Fabaceae*) Fig 1, is widely used for the treatment of various ailments in different countries, and is a rich source of resveratrol.

Because of significant pharmacological activity exhibited by the resveratrol, several researchers have focused on the development of various analytical methods to determine resveratrol in different matrices such as plant extracts, wine and serum. Peanut peels are a waste from blanched processing of peanut kernels. The peanut peel are sometimes used to feed cattle, however their value could be increased if other more valuable uses could be found [14]. The objective of this work was to evaluate the phytochemical compounds from peanut peels using different solvents and to determine the larvicidal activity of the extracts against the vectors of *chikungunya* and *malaria*.

2. Material and Methods

2.1 Preparation of plant Extract

Arachis hypogaea peels were collected and dried under shade at room temperature for about 20 days. The dried peels were powdered and sieved to get fine powder using an electric blender. 70 g of the powder was filled in the thimble and extracted successively with chloroform, acetone, ethanol, methanol and aqueous using soxhlet extractor for 10 h. All the extracts were concentrated using rotary flash evaporator and preserved at 5 °C in an airtight bottle until further use.

2.2 Phytochemicals screening

The phytochemical screening was carried out using standard procedure [15]. By this analysis, the presences of several phytochemicals listed in (Table 1) were tested.

2.3 Separation of bioactive compounds using TLC

a) Preparation of extract

10 mg / ml of the extract in methanol solvent was used for TLC examination. The same procedure was followed for methanol and chloroform extract preparation [16].

b) TLC Plate preparation

The silica gel 60 F₂₅₄ coated aluminum sheets were cut in size 1.5X5.5cm. Prepared methanol extract was loaded in silica plate and air dried.

c) Mobile phase preparation

The extracts were standardized in ethyl acetate with acetone and finally chloroform: ethyl acetate: methanol (3; 1.5; 0.5) ratio showed separated bands.

2.4 GC–MS analysis

GC–MS analysis were carried out an SHIMADZU QP 2010T which comprised of an auto sampler and gas chromatography interfaced to a mass spectrometer (GC–MS) instrument employing the following condition: capillary column –624 ms (30 m × 0.32 mm × 1.8 m) operating in an electron mode at 70 eV; helium (99.999%) was used as carrier gas at a constant flow of 1.491 ml/min and injection volume of 1.0 ml, injector temperature was 140 °C; ion source temperature of 200 °C. The oven temperature was programmed from 45 °C. Mass spectra were taken at 70 eV.

2.5 GC-MS Identification of compounds

Interpretation of mass spectrum GC–MS was conducted using database of National institute standard and technology having more than 62,000 patterns. The spectrum of the unknown compounds are stored in the NIST library. The compound prediction was based on Dr. Duke's Phytochemical and Ethnobotanical Database by Dr. Jim Duke of the agricultural

research service/USDA.

The names of the components of the test material were ascertained.

2.6 Selection of Mosquito species

The mosquito species selected for the present study were, *A. stephensi* and *A. aegypti*. *A. stephensi* is a vector of malaria in India and larvae of these species are generally found in distinctly different habitat. These are nocturnal and crepuscular in nature and also transmit the filarial worm causing filariasis [17] *Aedes aegypti* (L) mosquito spreads yellow fever, dengue fever and chikungunya. *A. aegypti* is a vector for transmitting several tropical fevers and the female bites for blood which she needs to mature her eggs [18].

2.7 Mosquito culture

All tests were carried out against laboratory reared *A. stephensi* and *A. aegypti* free of exposure to insecticides and pathogens. Cyclic generation of vector mosquitoes was maintained at 25-29 °C in the insectariums. Larvae were fed on larval food (powdered dog biscuit and yeast in the ratio 3:1) and adult mosquitoes on 10 per cent glucose solution. Adult female mosquitoes were periodically blood-fed on restrained albino mice for egg production [18].

2.8 Larvicidal Bioassay

A total of three trials were carried out with five replicates per trial against vector mosquitoes for the following bioassays. Toxicity assays of the crude peel extract was conducted separately using the fourth instar larvae of *A. stephensi* and *A. aegypti*. Stock solution (1000 ppm) was prepared by dissolving 100 mg of crude extract in 1 ml acetone and volume raised to 100 ml with distilled water. From this different dilution of 25 ppm, 50 ppm, 75 ppm, 100 ppm and 150 ppm were prepared in 200 ml de-ionised water in 250 ml beaker and 25 fourth instar larvae were released in it and mortality was scored after 24 h. The beakers were kept in a temperature control room at 28 °C ± 2 °C and the larvae were exposed to 200 ml water containing 0.1ml of acetone served as control. Each treatment was replicated five times [19].

2.9 Larval susceptibility tests

The larval susceptibility tests were carried according to standard WHO procedure [20]. The extract solutions of different concentrations were prepared and the fourth instar larvae of *A. stephensi* and *A. aegypti* were placed in each test solution to observe the larvicidal property as per the following procedure. Groups of 25 larvae were placed in 200 ml of the extract solution. Control experiments without extract were run in parallel. The larvae in each solution were then left for 24 h, the numbers of dead larvae were counted after 24 h of exposure, and the percentage mortality was reported from the average of five replicates. Mortality was recorded when control mortality ranged from 5 – 20 percent, and was corrected by Abbott's [21] formula.

2.10 Histopathological studies

The morbid larvae in the treatment and control were fixed in 10% formalin. The tissues were dehydrated with ethyl alcohol for 5 hours, after which they were placed in xylene for tissue clearing. They were then embedded and blocked by paraplast and sectioned with a microtome. Sections were stained using hematoxylin and eosin according to routine staining methods. Untreated larvae were also investigated in the same manner [22]

2.11 Statistical analysis

The average larval mortality data were subjected to probit analysis for calculating LC_{50} , LC_{90} and other statistics at 95% confidence limits of upper confidence limit lower confidence limit and chi-square values were calculated using the SPSS 11.5 (Statistical Package of Social Sciences) software. Results with $P < 0.05$ were considered to be statistically significant.

3. Result

3.1 Phytochemical screening

The preliminary phytochemical screening is a means of evaluating the potential phyto compounds in the peel extract of *Arachis hypogaea*. Phytochemical characterizations of methanol extracts of *A. hypogaea* are presented in Table 1. The phytochemical screening revealed the strong presence of carbohydrates, flavonoids, β -cyanin, phenols, coumarins and steroids. The other phytochemicals present were tannin, saponin, alkaloids, glycosides and quinine. Triterpenoids and terpenoids were present in trace amounts. The phytochemicals present in the peel extracts were further analyzed by TLC. Methanol peel extract of *A. hypogaea* showed five distinct bands under UV visualization. The compounds detected in Band 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 with R_f values of 0.93, 0.86, 0.81, 0.77, 0.70, 0.59, 0.46 showed the presence of Triterpenoids, alkaloids, phenolic compound, tannins, unknown compound, anthraquinones and quercetin (Fig 2).

3.2 GC MS analysis

The composition and identification of the compounds present in the methanol peel extracts of *A. hypogaea* by GC-MS analysis shown in Table 2. The active principles with their retention time (RT), molecular formula, molecular weight (MW) are presented in Fig 3. The main constituents were hexadecanoic acid, benzene dicarboxylic acid, oleic acid, octadecenoic acid, ethyl ester, eicosanoic acid and methyl [Z].

3.3 Larvicidal activity of *A. hypogaea*

Based on the probit analysis between the concentration of peel extract against fourth instar larvae of *A. aegypti* and *A. stephensi* after 24 h exposure are represented Table 3, 4 and Fig 4. The results clearly indicate that peel extracts of *A. hypogaea* at very low concentrations was toxic against fourth instar larvae of *A. aegypti* and *A. stephensi*. The methanolic peel extract was found to be potent against fourth instar larvae of *A. aegypti* and *A. stephensi* with LC_{50} and LC_{90} value of 45.75 ppm and 137.14 ppm and 45.98 ppm and 137.94 ppm respectively. Methanol extract of *A. hypogaea* showed 100 % mortality at 150 ppm against both the fourth instar larvae *A. aegypti* and *A. stephensi*.

Ethanol peel extract was also found to be effective against the fourth instar larvae of *A. stephensi* with LC_{50} and LC_{90} value of 47.49 ppm and 143.77 ppm and *A. aegypti* with LC_{50} and LC_{90} 52.95 and 158.85 ppm respectively. All the other tested extracts also showed mosquito larvicidal activity at a relatively high concentration when compared to methanol and ethanol peel extracts.

3.4 Histopathological effects

The histopathological effects of *A. hypogaea* in gastric caeca, stomach regions were studied.

The choice of these regions is justified by the fact that they are directly in contact with biocompounds of the extract. The untreated larvae of *A. aegypti* (control) midgut and gastric caecum showed a well preserved layer of epithelial cells. Regular microvilli border in the midgut and gastric caeca was observed in the control mosquitoes (Fig 5 A). The treated larvae of *Aedes aegypti*, the signs of intoxication began at the level of gastric caecum. The histology of *A. aegypti* larvae showed morphological and serious damage of the epithelial columnar cells (Fig 5 B). The gastric caeca and brush border cells were totally damaged. The second sign of intoxication was perturbation of alimentary flow in the alimentary canal and a few cells appear slightly hypertrophied with a perceptible beginning of vacuolization at the apical level. The pleiotropic membrane surrounding the lumen is ruptured and oozing of midgut content was observed. The third signs of intoxication are perceptible in the posterior part of the gut of *A. aegypti* larvae. Epithelial cells of the intestine start to burst and we noted a cytoplasmic rejection of cells material mixed with food was observed.



Fig 1: *Arachis hypogaea* plant
A - *Arachis hypogaea* B - Peel powder

Table 1: Phytochemical screening of peel extracts of *Arachis hypogaea*

S. No	Secondary metabolites	Chloroform	Acetone	Ethanol	Methanol	Aqueous
1	Carbohydrates	+++	+++	+++	+++	+++
2	Tannins	-	+++	+++	+++	-
3	Saponins	-	-	+++	+++	-
4	Flavonoids	-	+++	+++	+++	+++
5	Alkaloids	-	+++	+++	+++	-
6	Betacyanin	-	+++	+++	+++	+
7	Quinones	-	+	+++	+	-
8	Glycosides	-	++	+++	+++	-
9	Cardiac Glycosides	-	-	-	-	-
10	Terpenoids	-	+	+	++	-
11	Triterpenoids	-	-	-	+	+
12	Phenols	+	+++	+++	+	+
13	Coumarins	-	+++	+++	+++	+
14	Acids	-	+	+	+	-
15	Protein	-	-	-	-	+++
16	Steroids	+	++	+++	+++	-

+++ Strongly positive ++ Positive + Trace - Not detected

Table 2: Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometry of methanol peel extracts of *A. hypogaea*

S. No	Retention Time	Compounds	Molecular Formula	Molecular Weight
1	17.38	Hexadecanoic acid, methyl ester	C ₁₇ H ₃₄ O ₂	270.45
2	17.87	1,2 – Benzenedicarboxylic acid , butyl octyl ester	C ₂₀ H ₃₀ O ₄	334.44
3	18.07	Hexadecanoic acid ethyl ester	C ₁₈ H ₃₆ O ₂	284.47
4	18.33	n- Hexadecanoic acid	C ₁₆ H ₃₂ O ₂	256.42
5	19.15	10- Octadecenoic acid, methyl ester	C ₁₉ H ₃₆ O ₂	296.48
6	19.37	n- Hexadecanoic acid	C ₁₆ H ₃₂ O ₂	256.42
7	19.77	Oleic acid	C ₁₈ H ₃₄ O ₂	282.46
8	20.05	9- Octadecenoic acid, [E]	C ₁₈ H ₃₄ O ₂	282.46
9	20.58	Oleic acid	C ₁₈ H ₃₄ O ₂	282.46
10	22.27	9- Octadecenoic acid [z]-, 2,3-dihydroxybropyl ester	C ₂₁ H ₄₀ O ₄	356.53
11	23.03	Methyl [Z]-5,11,14,17-eicosatetraenoate	C ₂₁ H ₃₄ O ₂	318.49
12	23.48	Hexadecanoic acid, 2-hydroxy-1-[hydroxymethyl] ethyl ester	C ₁₉ H ₃₈ O ₄	330.50
13	26.35	9- Octadecenoic acid [Z]-, 2,3- dihydroxypropyl ester	C ₂₁ H ₄₀ O ₄	356.53
14	24.03	Docosanoic acid, ethyl ester	C ₂₄ H ₄₈ O ₂	368.64
15	21.85	Eicosanoic acid, ethyl ester	C ₂₂ H ₄₄ O ₂	340.58

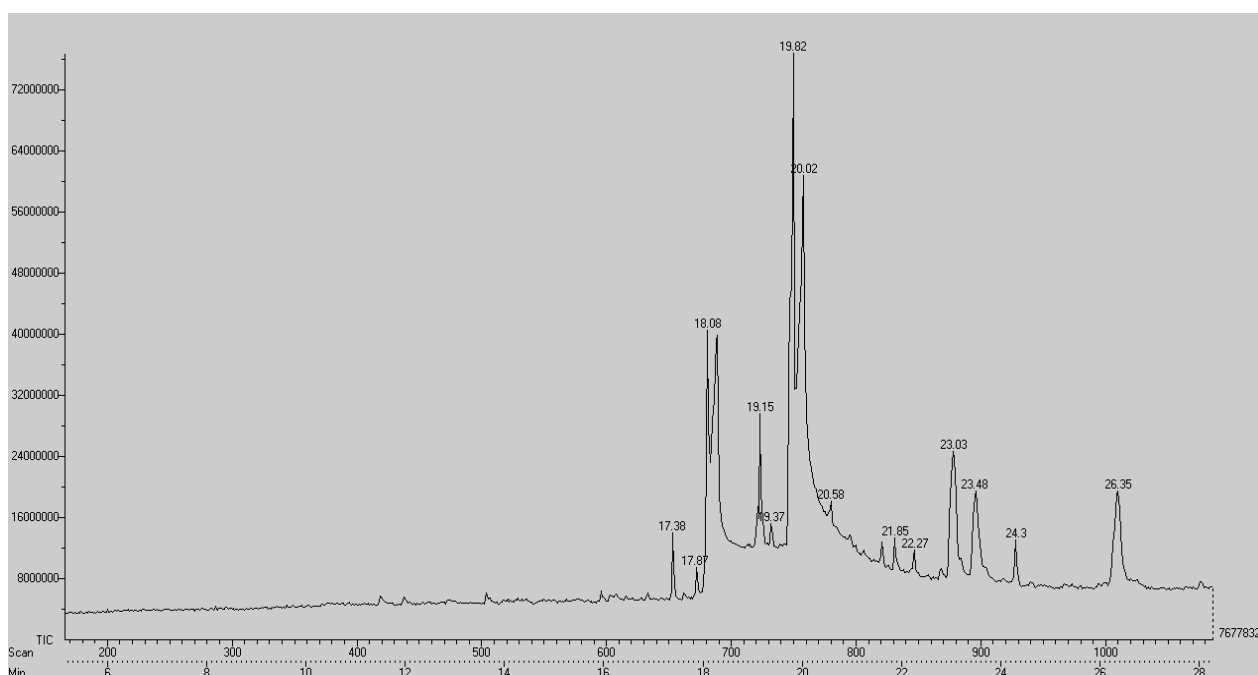


Fig 1: GC-MS analysis of methanol peel extract of *Arachis hypogaea*

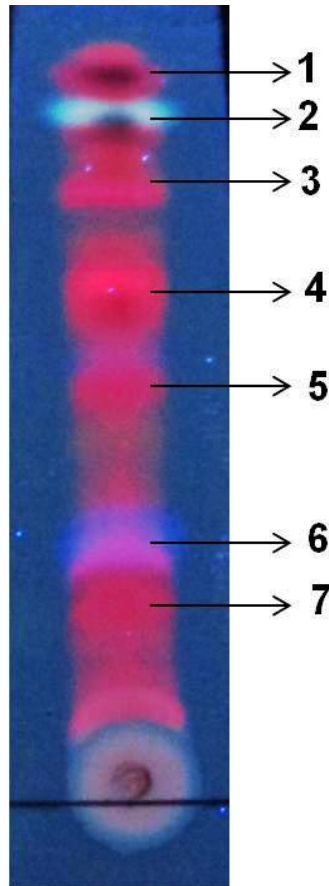


Fig 2: Separation of bioactive fraction of methanol peel extract of *A. hypogaea* by TLC.

Table 3: Larvicidal activity of peel extracts of *A. hypogaea* against fourth instar larvae of *Aedes aegypti*.

Extract / Species	Concentration (ppm)	24hr % Mortality	LC ₅₀ (UCL-LCL) (ppm)	LC ₉₀ (UCL-LCL) (ppm)	r ²
Aqueous	150	87	60.94 (68.88-53.92)	182.84 (203.55-167.14)	0.944
	100	74			
	75	58			
	50	37			
	25	22			
Acetone	150	90	59.58 (75.37-47.10)	178.74 (194.09-159.63)	0.974
	100	74			
	75	56			
	50	41			
	25	35			
Chloroform	150	94	53.21 (61.54-46.01)	160.72 (183.22-143.07)	0.946
	100	82			
	75	63			
	50	44			
	25	26			
Ethanol	150	99	52.95 (64.31-43.68)	158.85 (168.77-139.41)	0.956
	100	86			
	75	60			
	50	52			
	25	37			
Methanol	150	100	45.75 (59.48-35.19)	137.14 (152.98-121.09)	0.955
	100	90			
	75	75			
	50	55			
	25	41			

Table 4: Larvicidal activity of peel extracts of *A. hypogaea* against fourth instar larvae of *Anopheles stephensi*

Extract / Species	Concentration (ppm)	24hr % Mortality	LC ₅₀ (UCL-LCL) (ppm)	LC ₉₀ (UCL-LCL) (ppm)	r ²
Aqueous	150	75	71.57 (61.91-82.74)	214.62 (196.77-231.19)	0.935
	100	65			
	75	52			
	50	33			
	25	20			
Acetone	150	88	59.02 (66.53-52.36)	177.06 (197.33-153.14)	0.969
	100	72			
	75	65			
	50	52			
	25	29			
Chloroform	150	78	66.08 (76.76-56.89)	198.25 (218.54-177.42)	0.959
	100	66			
	75	53			
	50	37			
	25	24			
Ethanol	150	93	47.49 56.35-40.02	143.77 (169.01-123.88)	0.931
	100	82			
	75	67			
	50	50			
	25	39			
Methanol	150	100	45.98 (57.21-36.95)	137.94 (148.55-121.67)	0.947
	100	85			
	75	65			
	50	50			
	25	37			

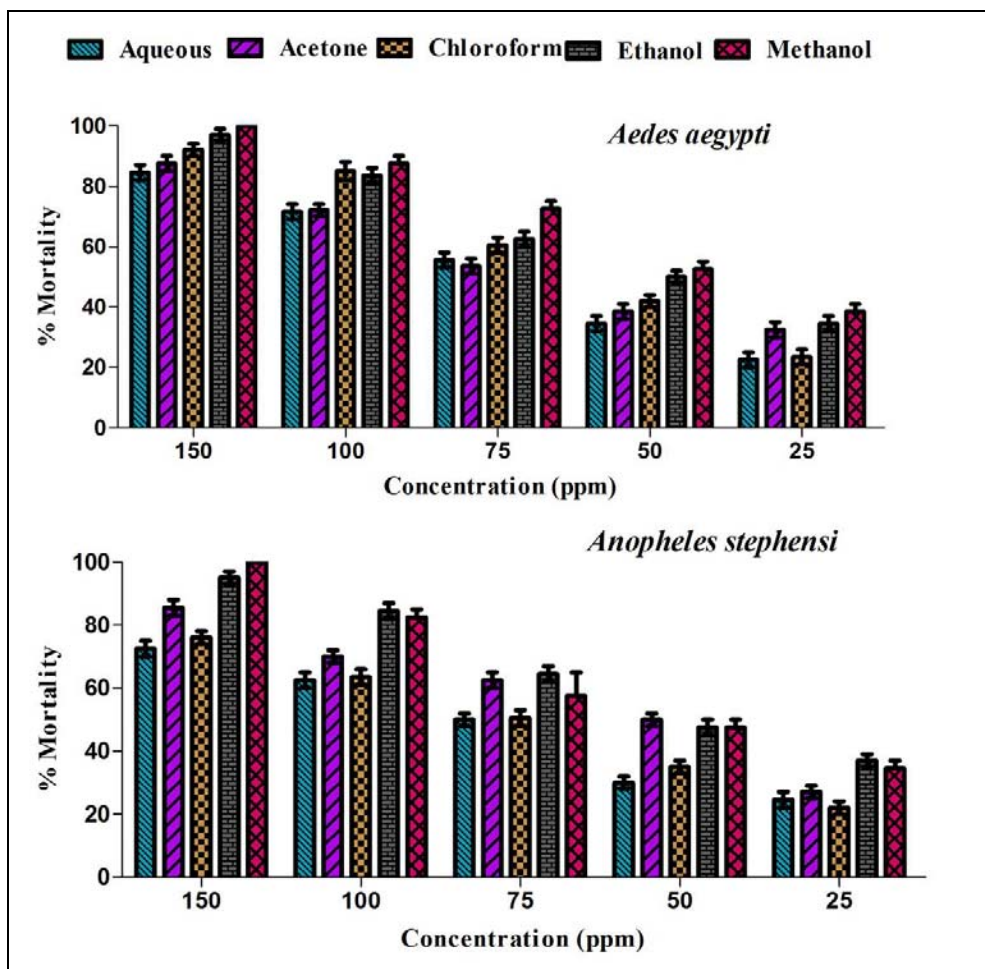


Fig 4: Larvicidal activity of peel extracts of *A. hypogaea* against *A. aegypti* and *A. stephensi*

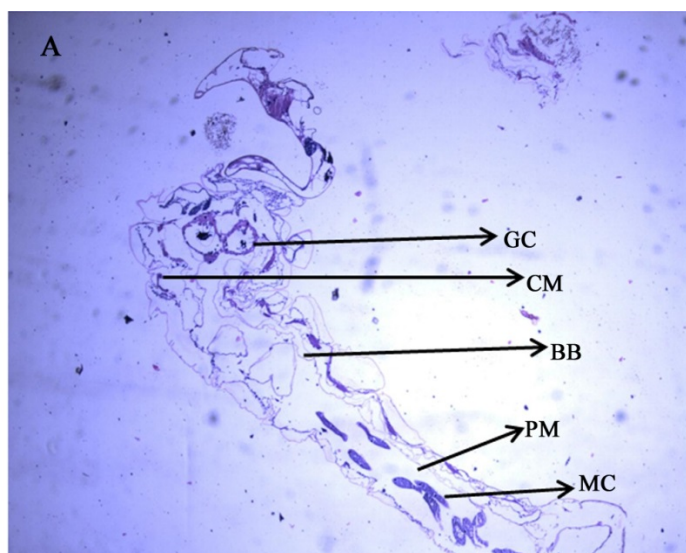
A. Control**B. Treated**

Fig 5: Longitudinal section of the digestive tract of 4th instar larvae of *A. aegypti* treated with methanol extract of *A. hypogaea* compared with control.

4. Discussion

An insecticide does not have to cause high mortality on target organisms in order to be acceptable [23] but it should prevent breeding. Phytochemicals may serve as suitable alternatives to synthetic insecticides in future as they are relatively safe, inexpensive and are readily available throughout the world [24]. The biological activity observed in the present study might be due to the various compounds, including phenols, terpenoids and alkaloids existing in plants [25]. These compounds may jointly or independently contribute to produce larvicidal activity against the mosquito species.

Phenols are generally known to be important sources of potent insecticides, fungicides, bactericides and herbicides for pest control. Triterpenoids are also credited with mosquito larvicidal activities [26]. These hydrocarbons inhibit the development stages of mosquitoes [27].

Phenolic compounds are synthesized in plants partly as a response to ecological and physiological pressures such as pathogen and insect attack [28]. The basic structural feature of phenolic compounds is an aromatic ring bearing methyl ester, hexadecanoic acid, eicosanoic acid, ethyl ester with more hydroxyl groups [29].

Plant phenolic compounds are classified as simple phenols or polyphenols based on the number of phenol units in the molecule [30].

In the present study the different solvent extracts of groundnut peel showed very high, moderate and low larvicidal effects. However, highest mortality was observed in methanol and ethanol peel extracts when compared to the other extracts. These results are in accordance with the observations of Elumalai *et al.*, [18] who reported the larvicidal potential of the whole plant extracts of *Tridax procumbens* against the larvae of *A. aegypti*, *A. stephensi* and *C. quinquefasciatus*. The larvicidal property of the peel extracts may be due to the presence of alkaloids, flavonoids and tannins and phenolic compounds [31].

The degenerating effect of the extract on the mosquito influenced the overall failure in adult emergence, maybe due to interference in chitinous cuticle formation as interpreted by Saxena and Yadav [32], noted that pupation followed prolonged larval stage in *A. stephensi* when treated with acetone extract of *Ocimum sanctum* along with abnormal larvae, intermediate pupae and several morphogenetic aberrations. These observations are further substantiated by histopathological changes observed in the fourth instar of *A. aegypti* when exposed to methanol peel extract of *A. hypogaea*. Neem compounds showed remarkable effects on caecum and gut of *A. aegypti* [22], which are in accordance with the present study.

The present study reveals that even relatively short term exposure of larvae to the peel extracts was found to markedly increase the mortality of the larvae overtime and thus reduce the total number of viable adults leading to a possible reduction in the total population dynamics of vectors [33]. It is evident from the present study that the peel extract of *A. hypogaea* might have a promising larvicidal efficacy.

5. Conclusion

The bioactive compounds from the peel extracts of *A. hypogaea* showed higher efficiency in reducing mosquito menace due to their larvicidal toxicity. The crude extract of *A. hypogaea* showed potent larvicidal activity against *A. aegypti* and *A. stephensi*. Hence the large biomass of the agricultural waste could be exploited for integrated mosquito control programs.

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