Polyphenols contents and antioxidant potential of *Nauclea latifolia* Smith (Rubiaceae) aceton fractions from Burkina Faso

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**Abstract**

Scientific information on antioxidant properties and phenolic content of *Nauclea latifolia* used in ethnoveterinary medicine in Burkina Faso are limited. Therefore, the quantification of the antioxidant activity of different parts of this species remains an interesting and useful task, particularly for finding new sources for natural antioxidants. The aim of this study was to evaluate the antioxidant activity and total polyphenols of *Nauclea latifolia Smith* (Rubiaceae) aceton fractions from Burkina Faso. n-hexane, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol fractions of leaves, barks and root barks were tested for their antioxidant activities using DPPH, ABTS and FRAP methods. Folin-Ciocalteu and ACl3 reagents were used to quantify the polyphenols. n-butanol fraction of barks (58.16 ± 0.76 mg GAE/100 mg), dichloromethane fraction of barks (51.13 ± 0.99 mg GAE/100 mg) and the highest ABTS cation radicals scavenging capacity (7031.52 ± 254.98 µmol EAA/g). Nevertheless, this work encourages investigations on Burkina Faso plant species useful in the ethnoveterinary medicine as sources of antioxidants.

**Keywords:** Fraction; Ouagadougou; Barks, TotalPolyphenols Contents; Radicals.

**INTRODUCTION**

Infectious diseases of livestock are a major threat to animal and human health in the world and their effective control is crucial. Increases in the emergence or re-emergence of zoonotic infections pose significant additional threats to human health. In Burkina Faso, the sanitary situation is characterised by a predominance of many epidemic and endemic diseases, together with a lack of qualified health workers. The best way to control those infectious diseases is a holistic approach, which integrates robust diagnostic practices and vaccination. However, in many development countries, this approach is difficult to apply. Traditional herbal remedies are widely using by many people from Africa for their primary health care and the animal care for several reasons. The traditional medicine is considered to be effective methods for curbing infectious diseases, reducing its intensity, shortening its course, or even preventing its recurrences. The effectiveness of traditional medicine is mainly due to the choice of products, which optimize the functioning of the immune system and strengthen its reactivity. In addition to offering better and efficacious treatment options, the medicinal plants are also available, easily accessible and with minimal side effects relative to the conventional therapies.

*Nauclea latifolia* Smith (syn. *Sarcocephales latifolius*, Rubiaceae), is a plant widely used in West Africa for the treatment of several diseases. In Burkina Faso, different extracts are used in the management of fevers, malaria, febrile states, dry colic, intestinal parasites, dysentery, vomiting, gonorrhea, syphilis, bilharzia and nervous attacks. Phytochemical analysis of extracts of the plant showed the presence of saponins, tannins alkaloids, ...
flavonoids and phytate. More recently, some researchers have discovery from a bio-guided purification of the roots of Nauclea latifolia, an active compound natural phytochemical as tramadol. This drug is available as a synthetic analog since the 1970s. It is also known to have a strong antibacterial property. Accordingly, it could be interesting to continue the investigating of this plant to ascertain and validate its medicinal value with a view to discovering new leads for better and improved management of infectious disease conditions.

This study was conducted to investigate the antioxidant potential of the fraction n-hexane, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol of different parts of Nauclea latifolia. These could be the contributing factors to their health beneficial effects.

**MATERIAL AND METHODS**

**Plants Materials**

*Nauclea latifolia* Smith (Rubiaceae) was collected at periphery of Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) in September 2020. The botanical identification was done by Dr GNANABOTANIST at the National Herbarium of Burkina Faso where voucher specimens were kept. The part of plants collected were washed, dried in the shade at ambient temperature under the fan, crushed, and then sieved to obtain the fine powders.

**Preparation of Extracts**

The powdered plant samples (25 g) of each part were extracted with 250 ml of acetone (80 %) for 24 hours using an electric mixer. After filtration, acetone was removed using a rotary evaporator at 60°C. The aqueous extract was then fractionated by successive liquid-liquid partitioning with an equal volume of n-hexane, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol. Extracts were stored at 4°C until being used.

**Chemicals and reagents**

Chemicals include Folin-Ciocalteu, sodium carbonate, gallic acid, aluminium chloride (AlCl₃), sodium acetate, rutin, vanillin, tannic acid, 2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH), ABTS (2,2'-azinobis-(3-ethylbenzothiazoline-6-sulfonique)), potassium ferricyanide ([K3Fe(CN)6]), trichloroacetic acid, iron III chloride, ascorbic acid, potassium persulfate, quercetin, hexane, ethyl acetate, methanol, n-butanol. All chemicals and solvents used were of analytical grade and were purchased from Sigma Aldrich, and local suppliers.

**Total Phenolics Content**

Total phenolic content of each extract was evaluated according to the spectrophotometric method using the Folin-Ciocalteu reagent described by Meda et al., (2010). A volume of 125 µl (0.1 mg/ml) of each extract was mixed with 625 µl of Folin-Ciocalteu reagent (0.2 N). After an incubation in the dark for 5 minutes, 500 µl of sodium carbonate (7.5% Na2CO3) was added to the mixture. After 2 hours incubation in the dark again, absorbance was read at 760 nm against a standard gallic acid curve (Y = 4668xe-3 * x; r² = 0.9991). The mean of three readings was used and the results were expressed in mg of gallic acid equivalent per 100 milligrams of dry extract (mg GAE/100mg).

**Total Flavonoids Content**

The total flavonoids content in the extracts was determined by the aluminum trichloride method described by Meda et al., (2010). To 625 µl (0.1 mg/ml) of each extract solution were added 625 µl of AlCl₃ (2%), the whole was mixed and incubated in dark. After 10 minutes, the absorbances were read at 415 nm against a quercetin calibration curve (Y = 1.259e-02 * x; r² = 0.9990). For each extract the average of 3 measurements was calculated and the amount of flavonoids was expressed in milligrams of quercetin equivalent per 100 milligrams of dry extract (mg QE/100mg).

**Antioxidant Activity**

**DPPH radical method**

The antioxidant power was carried out using the DPPH method according to the spectrophotometric method described by Meda et al., (2013). In a test tube containing 0.375 ml of the sample (0.1 mg/ml) of each extract, 0.75 ml of the DPPH solution (20 mg /l) was introduced. After 15 minutes’ post-incubation of the mixture at room temperature in the dark, the absorbances were immediately read at 517 nm with a spectrophotometer (GENESYS 30).

The radical scavenging activity (RSA) of each extract was measured using a reference curve of ascorbic acid. The antioxidant activity was expressed in µmol equivalent ascorbic acid per 1 gram of dry extract (µmol EAA/g).

**ABTS radical cation decolorization assay**

The ABTS cation radical (ABTS⁺) scavenging capacity of antioxidants was determined as described by Meda et al., (2010). ABTS⁺ was regenerated by adding an aqueous solution of ABTS (7 mM) to 2.5 mM potassium persulfate solution, and the mixture is kept in the dark at room temperature for 12 hours before use. The mixture solution was then diluted with ethanol and the absorbance was adjusted to 0.700 (± 0.02) at 734 nm using spectrophotometer. 10 µl of each sample was mixed with 990 µl of the ABTS⁻ solution and incubated in the dark. After 15 minutes the absorbances were measured at 734 nm against a standard curve of ascorbic acid. 3 measures were carried out for each extract and the results were expressed in µmol equivalent ascorbic acid per 1 gram of dry extract (µmol EAA/g).

**Iron (III) to iron (II) reduction activity (FRAP)**

The FRAP assay was conducted following the method described by Meda et al., (2010). Briefly, 0.5 ml of extract (100 µg ml⁻¹) was added to 1.25 ml of phosphate buffer (0.2 M, pH 6.6) and 1.25 ml of potassium ferricyanide solution (1%). The resulting mix was then incubated at 50°C in a water bath. After 30 minutes 1.25 ml of trichloroacetic acid (10%) was added and the mixtures were centrifuged for 10 min at 3000 rpm. The supernatants of solutions (0.625 ml) were added to distilled water (0.625 ml) and to freshly prepared FeCl₃ solution (0.125 ml; 0.1%). The absorbances were read at 700 nm against a standard curve of ascorbic acid. The tests were performed in triplicate and expressed in µmol equivalent ascorbic acid per 1 gram of dry extract (µmol EAA/g).

**Statistical Analysis**

The results were expressed as mean ± standard error of the mean (SEM). 2 way ANOVA multiple comparisons was applied for the statistical analysis, followed by Tukey's multiple comparisons test for post-hoc analysis. Statistical analyses were performed using GraphPad prism 9.12 and a p-value <0.05 was considered to be statistically significant.

**RESULTS**

**Total Polyphenols Contents**

As a basis, total phenolics content was measured using the Folin–Ciocalteu reagent in each fraction. The results were
derived from a calibration curve \( y = 4668e^{-3 \times 0.034}, r^2 = 0.9991 \) of gallic acid and expressed in gallic acid equivalents (GAE) per 100 milligrams dry extract weight. The content of phenolics in different fractions ranged from 2.05 to 58.16 mg GAE/100 mg. n-butanol fraction of bark, dichloromethane fraction of barks, ethyl acetate fraction of leaves and n-butanol fraction of leaves had the greatest phenolics contents (58.16 ± 0.76; 51.13 ± 0.99; 26.14 ± 0.61 and 25.92 ± 0.91 mg GAE/100 mg, respectively), while the smallest phenolics contents were found in root barks fractions of n-hexane fraction, root barks fractions of ethyl acetate fraction and root barks fractions of n-hexane fraction (2.05 ± 0.02; 2.21 ± 0.04 and 5.26 ± 0.16 mg GAE/100 mg, respectively).

As a basis, total flavonoids content was measured using aluminum trichloride reagent. The results were derived from a calibration curve \( Y = 1.259e^{-0.2} x; r^2 = 0.9990 \) of quercetin equivalent and expressed in milligrams of quercetin equivalent per 100 milligrams of dry extract (mg QE/100mg). The total of flavonoids in different fractions ranged from 0.07 ± 0.01 to 4.85 ± 0.14 mg QE/100mg. The leaves fractions have presented the greatest flavonoids contents and the smallest flavonoids contents were found in dichloromethane fraction of stem and root barks.

Table 1: Phenolic content (TPC) and flavonoid contain (TFC) in n-hexane, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol fractions of roots, stem barks and leaves of Nauclea latifolia.

| PARTS      | SOLVENT    | TPC (mgEAG/100mg) | TFC (mgEQ/100mg) |
|------------|------------|------------------|------------------|
| Leaves     | n-hexane   | 22.55 ± 0.57     | 2.92 ± 0.13      |
|            | dichloromethane | 18.42 ± 0.61     | 2.91 ± 0.12      |
|            | Ethyl acetate | 26.14 ± 0.61     | 2.86 ± 0.22      |
|            | n-Butanol   | 25.92 ± 0.91     | 4.85 ± 0.14      |
| Stem barks | n-hexane   | 5.26 ± 0.16      | -----------------|
|            | dichloromethane | 51.13 ± 0.99     | 0.07 ± 0.01      |
|            | Ethyl acetate | 12.75 ± 0.76     | 0.39 ± 0.51      |
|            | n-Butanol   | 58.16 ± 0.76     | 0.68 ± 0.06      |
| Root barks | n-hexane   | 2.05 ± 0.02      | 0.24 ± 0         |
|            | dichloromethane | 19.92 ± 0.30     | 0.36 ± 0.06      |
|            | Ethyl acetate | 2.21 ± 0.04      | 0.64 ± 0         |
|            | n-Butanol   | 18.53 ± 0.15     | 0.32 ± 0         |

Values are the mean of three replicates (TPC) ±SEM.

In vitro antioxidant activity determination

Trolox Equivalence Antioxidant Capacity in n-hexane, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol fractions of different parts of Nauclea latifolia.

The results also showed a higher antioxidant content to capture the free radical (ABTS) in the different fractions leaves followed respectively by the fractions of stem barks and he different fractions of root barks.

![Figure 1: Antioxidant activity by ascorbic acid equivalent antioxidant capacity (ABTS) method in n-hexane, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol fractions of different parts of Nauclea latifolia. Values are the mean of three replicates (ABTS) ±SEM](image)
Table 2: Tukey’s multiple comparisons test of Antioxidant activity by ascorbic acid equivalent antioxidant capacity (ABTS) method in n-hexane, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol fractions of different parts of *Nauclea latifolia*

| Tukey’s multiple comparisons | Mean Diff, 95.00% CI of diff | Below threshold? | Summary | Adjusted P Value |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|
| HEXANE                      |                              |                 |         |                 |
| Stem barks vs. Leaves       | -5298 (-5794 to -4802)       | Yes             | ****    | <0.0001         |
| Root barks vs. Leaves       | -4233 (-15025 to 6559)       | No              | ns      | 0.256           |
| Root barks vs. Stem barks   | 1065 (-9770 to 11900)        | No              | ns      | 0.8443          |
| DCM                         |                              |                 |         |                 |
| Stem barks vs. Leaves       | 216 (633 to 1066)            | No              | ns      | 0.4473          |
| Root barks vs. Leaves       | -529 (-1662 to 604)          | No              | ns      | 0.1944          |
| Root barks vs. Stem barks   | -745 (-1634 to 143)          | No              | ns      | 0.0827          |
| Ethyl Acetate               |                              |                 |         |                 |
| Stem barks vs. Leaves       | -3041 (-10716 to 4633)       | No              | ns      | 0.2745          |
| Root barks vs. Leaves       | -3799 (-12251 to 4653)       | No              | ns      | 0.2222          |
| Root barks vs. Stem barks   | -758 (-8167 to 6651)         | No              | ns      | 0.9301          |
| Butanol                     |                              |                 |         |                 |
| Stem barks vs. Leaves       | -577 (-11673 to 10519)       | No              | ns      | 0.9527          |
| Root barks vs. Leaves       | -1106 (-4825 to 2614)        | No              | ns      | 0.423           |
| Root barks vs. Stem barks   | -529 (-10186 to 9129)        | No              | ns      | 0.9641          |

DPPH Radical Scavenging Activity in n-hexane, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol fractions of different parts of *Nauclea latifolia*.

In this study, n-hexane, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol fractions of different parts of *Nauclea latifolia* were able to show free radical scavenging abilities (Figure 2). It was observed that the different fractions leaves had higher DPPH activity followed respectively by the fractions of stem barks and he different fractions of root barks.

![DPPH](image)

Figure 2: Antioxidant activity by 2,2-di-phenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH) radical scavenging capacity method in n-hexane, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol fractions of different parts of *Nauclea latifolia*. Values are the mean of three replicates (DPPH) ±SEM.
Table 3: Tukey’s multiple comparisons test of Antioxidant activity by DPPH radical scavenging capacity method in n-hexane, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol fractions of different parts of Nauclea latifolia.

| Tukey’s multiple comparisons test | Mean Diff | 95.00% CI of diff | Below threshold? | Summary | Adjusted P Value |
|----------------------------------|-----------|------------------|-----------------|---------|-----------------|
| HEXANE                           |           |                  |                 |         |                 |
| Stem barks vs. Leaves            | -808      | -849 to -766     | Yes             | ****    | <0.0001         |
| Root barks vs. Leaves            | -994      | -1036 to -953    | Yes             | ****    | <0.0001         |
| Root barks vs. Stem barks        | -186      | -228 to -145     | Yes             | ****    | <0.0001         |
| DCM                              |           |                  |                 |         |                 |
| Stem barks vs. Leaves            | 12.8      | -28.6 to 54.2    | No              | ns      | 0.7249          |
| Root barks vs. Leaves            | -619      | -660 to -577     | Yes             | ****    | <0.0001         |
| Root barks vs. Stem barks        | -632      | -673 to -590     | Yes             | ****    | <0.0001         |
| Ethyl Acetate                    |           |                  |                 |         |                 |
| Stem barks vs. Leaves            | -126      | -167 to -84.5    | Yes             | ****    | <0.0001         |
| Root barks vs. Leaves            | -828      | -869 to -787     | Yes             | ****    | <0.0001         |
| Root barks vs. Stem barks        | -702      | -743 to -661     | Yes             | ****    | <0.0001         |
| Butanol                          |           |                  |                 |         |                 |
| Stem barks vs. Leaves            | -38.3     | -79.7 to 3.10    | No              | ns      | 0.0736          |
| Root barks vs. Leaves            | -520      | -561 to -479     | Yes             | ****    | <0.0001         |
| Root barks vs. Stem barks        | -482      | -523 to -440     | Yes             | ****    | <0.0001         |

Ferric Reducing Antioxidant Power in n-hexane, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol fractions of different parts of Nauclea latifolia.

The results also showed n-butanol fraction and DCM fraction of the stem barks had higher FRAP abilities to reduce ferric ions, followed by the all fractions of leaves and the ethyl acetate fraction of the stem barks. Root barks fraction showed lower FRAP abilities to reduce ferric ions.

Figure 3: Antioxidant activity by ferric reducing (FRAP) method in n-hexane, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol fractions of different parts of Nauclea latifolia. Values are the mean of three replicates (FRAP) ±SEM.
Table 4: Tukey’s multiple comparisons test of Antioxidant activity ferric reducing (FRAP) in n-hexane, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol fractions of different parts of Nauclea latifolia

| Tukey’s multiple comparisons test | Mean Diff, 95,00% CI of diff, Below threshold? | Summary | Adjusted P Value |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------|---------|-----------------|
| HEXANE                           |                                               |         |                 |
| Stem barks vs. Leaves            | -1377 to -1683 to -1070 Yes **                |         | 0.0018          |
| Root barks vs. Leaves            | -1518 to -1823 to -1213 Yes **                |         | 0.0011          |
| Root barks vs. Stem barks        | -142 to -157 to -127 Yes **                   |         | <0.0001         |
| DCM                              |                                               |         |                 |
| Stem barks vs. Leaves            | 417 to 284 to 550 Yes **                      |         | 0.0031          |
| Root barks vs. Leaves            | -631 to -2247 to 986 No ns                    |         | 0.2574          |
| Root barks vs. Stem barks        | -1047 to -2643 to 549 No ns                  |         | 0.1101          |
| Ethyl Acetate                    |                                               |         |                 |
| Stem barks vs. Leaves            | -254 to -370 to -137 Yes **                   |         | 0.0039          |
| Root barks vs. Leaves            | -1269 to -1405 to -1133 Yes ****              |         | <0.0001         |
| Root barks vs. Stem barks        | -1016 to -1109 to -922 Yes ****               |         | <0.0001         |
| Butanol                          |                                               |         |                 |
| Stem barks vs. Leaves            | 1169 to 861 to 1478 Yes **                    |         | 0.0028          |
| Root barks vs. Leaves            | -1577 to -2202 to -951 Yes **                 |         | 0.0079          |
| Root barks vs. Stem barks        | -2746 to -3255 to -2237 Yes ***               |         | 0.0004          |

DISCUSSION

Polyphenol contain and antioxidant activity in n-hexane, dichloromethane, ethyl acetate and n-butanol fractions of root barks, stem barks and leaves of Nauclea latifolia from Burkina Faso were evaluated. Polyphenols are known as potent antioxidants and contribute to some beneficial properties such as anti-viral and anti-microbial, anti-inflammatory, and immunomodulatory properties. The polyphenols can be quantified by various methods, in this study, the total polyphenolic contents of the different fractions part of root barks, stem barks and leaves is determined using the diluted Folin-Ciocalteu reagent. The total phenol and flavonoid content of the different fractions of the plant are presented in Table 1. The n-butanol fraction of root barks, dichloromethane fraction of root barks, ethyl acetate fraction of leaves and n-butanol fraction of leaves had the greatest phenolic contents. This variation could be explaining to various reasons such as solubility and polarity, environmental factors and origin of Nauclea latifolia samples. Several analytical methods have been developed to assess the antioxidant properties of the medicinal plant extracts.

In this study, the quantification of antioxidant activities of the different fractions have been focused on the DPPH, FRAP and ABTS methods of root bark, stem barks and leaves of Nauclea latifolia. The assays of antioxidants by ABTS and DPPH tests are based on the mechanism of the suppression of oxidative stress by the ability to scavenge free radicals. The assays of antioxidants by FRAP method is focused on the measure the ability of antioxidants to reduce ferric (Fe3+) ions. Antioxidants are broadly classified in 4 groups because of the complex nature of the redox-antioxidant system in vivo as free radical scavengers, inhibitors of free radical formation, cellular and tissue damage repairers, and signaling messengers. The results generated from this study demonstrated that different fractions of leaves followed by the fractions of stem barks and the different fractions of root barks respectively possessed good free radical scavenging activity. The inhibition of free radical formation could protect against oxidative damage by suppressing the formation of active ROS/RNS. These fractions could act as antioxidants, and serving possibility as scavengers or free radical inhibitors. Furthermore, antioxidants might have contributed to the different medicinal properties of this plant as reported.

Those results could be explained by the fact the antioxidant activity is greatly determined by the chemical structure and electron donation/reception capability of those polyphenols. Moreover, polyphenols due to the presence of a hydroxyl group are more soluble in polar organic solvents; therefore the extraction procedures and solvents could explain our results.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the assessment of antioxidant activity has indicated that all parts of this plant had phenolic and flavonoid contents to varying degrees. This plant could be a source of natural antioxidants against several animal’s diseases. The quantification of antioxidant activity could serve as indicators for the use of these parts of Nauclea latifolia against many human and animals diseases. Further works are necessary to better understand their ability to control animals infectious diseases.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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