Original research article

Inhibition of α-amylase and α-glucosidase by *Acanthus montanus* leaf extracts

ABSTRACT

Aim: The aim of this study was to determine the *in-vitro* antidiabetic potentials of *Acanthus montanus*. This was done by assessing the inhibitory effect of both methanol and ethyl acetate extracts of the plant on the activities of α-amylase and α-glucosidase

Study design: Extraction of *A. montanus* leaves with methanol and ethanol and evaluation of their hypoglycemic effect.

Place and Duration of Study: The leaves of *A. montanus* were obtained from Badagry Area of Lagos, Nigeria in December 2012. The plant was identified and authenticated by Dr. S. O. Shosanya of the Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN), Ibadan, Nigeria.

Methodology: The powdered leaves were separately extracted with ethyl acetate and methanol for 24 h. The resulting infusions were decanted, filtered and evaporated in a rotary evaporator. Dried extracts were weighed and dissolved in dimethylsulphoxide (DMSO) to yield a stock solution from which lower concentrations were prepared. The inhibitory actions of both extracts against α-amylase and α-glucosidase were determined established procedures.

Results: The results showed that of the two extracts, methanol exhibited more inhibitory action against the two enzymes. Lineweaver-Burk plot also depicted that the methanol extract inhibited both α-amylase and α-glucosidase in a non-competitive and competitive manner respectively.

Conclusion: It can be concluded that the hypoglycemic effect of extracts of *A. montanus* may be as a result of the inhibition of these enzymes (α-amylase and α-glucosidase). This observation may be elicited by the presence of some phytochemicals present in the extracts.

Keywords: Acanthus montanus, α-amylase,α-glucosidase, antidiabetic

1. INTRODUCTION

Diabetes is a metabolic disease which is as old as mankind and its incidence is considered to be high (4–5%) all over the world [1]. It is also a major cause of disability and hospitalization and results in significant financial burden [2]. It is considered a “modern day epidemic” and is rightly recognized as a global public health issue. The number of people suffering from the disease worldwide is increasing at an alarming rate with a projected 552 million people likely to be diabetic by the year 2035 as against 382 million estimated in 2014 [3]. There is need for the discovery of antidiabetic agents from natural sources due to limited efficacy and serious side effects associated with synthetic drugs which include hypoglycaemia, chronic tissue damage and death [4].

Acanthus montanus (Nees) T. Anderson (Acanthaceae) is a small shrub with sparse branches and soft stems. It is commonly known as Mountain Thistle or Bears Breech and is believed to have originated from West Africa [5]. It is used in traditional medicine in the Southern part of Nigeria under the names; ‘Mafowokan omomi’, ‘Agamsoso’ and ‘Agameru’. It is also used in different parts of Africa in the treatment of various illnesses such as cough, epilepsy, pain, dysmenorrhoea, hypertension, false labour, syphilis, skin infections and diabetes mellitus [6, 7]. Several studies have reported the pharmacological properties of this plant which include hepatoprotective [8], tocolytic [9], anti-inflammatory, antimicrobial and immunological properties [5]. Nana et al. [10] reported the safety of this plant in pregnant

rats as well as their offspring while Djami et al. [11] also stated its tolerance in female rats at < 1000 mg/kg body weight. Though, there is a study on the hypoglycemic potential of the methanolic extract of this plant [7], there is dearth of information on the possible mechanism by which it elicits its hypoglycemic action.

It is well known that any antidiabetic agent can act by one or more of the following mechanisms; pancreatic β-cells regeneration, insulin secretion, mimicking the action of insulin, inhibition of carbohydrate metabolizing enzymes as well as slowing down the absorption of sugars from the gut [12]. The aim of this study was to assess the effect of leaf extracts of Nigerian grown *A. montanus* on diabetes-related enzymes (α-amylase and α-glucosidase) as well as its mode of inhibition of these enzymes. Previously the anti-diabetic potentials of some medicinal plants of Nigeria have been reported [13].

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

2.1 Chemicals and reagents

Porcine pancreatic α-amylase, rat intestinal α-glucosidase and paranitrophenyl-glucopyranoside were products of Sigma-Adrich Co., St Louis, USA while starch soluble (extra pure) was obtained from J. T. Baker Inc., Phillipsburg, USA. Other chemicals and reagents were of analytical grade and the water used was glass-distilled.

2.2 Plant sample

The leaves of *Acanthus montanus* were obtained from Badagry Area of Lagos in Nigeria in December 2012. It was identified and authenticated by the taxonomist; Dr. S. O. Shosanya of the Forestry Research Institute of Nigeria (FRIN) and voucher specimen (FHI 109720) was deposited in the Institute's herbarium. The leaves were dried, pulverized and kept in airtight plastic bags.

2.2.1 Preparation of extracts

The powdered leaves were divided into two portions of 10 g each and these were extracted with ethyl acetate and methanol respectively. They were left to steep in covered conical flasks for 24 h; the flasks were shaken and kept still to allow the plant material settle at the bottom of the flask. The resulting infusions were decanted, filtered and evaporated in a rotary evaporator (Cole Parmer SB 1100, Shangai, China). Dried extracts were weighed and dissolved in dimethylsulphoxide (DMSO) to yield a stock solution from which lower concentrations were prepared. All extracts were stored at 4 ℃ prior to analysis.

2.3 α-Amylase inhibitory assay

This assay was carried out using a modified procedure of McCue and Shetty [14]. A total of 250 µL of extract was placed in a test tube and 250 µL of 0.02 M sodium phosphate buffer (pH 6.9) containing α-amylase solution was added. This solution was pre-incubated at 25 ℃ for 10 min, after which 250 µL of 1% starch solution in 0.02 M sodium phosphate buffer (pH 6.9) was added at timed intervals and then incubated at 25 ℃ for 10 min. The reaction was terminated by adding 500 µL of dinitrosalicylic acid (DNS) reagent. The tubes were then incubated in boiling water for 5 min and cooled to room temperature. The reaction mixture was diluted with 5 mL distilled water and the absorbance was measured at 540 nm using a

spectrophotometer (Spectrumlab S23A, Globe Medical England). The control and blank were prepared using the same procedure replacing the extract with DMSO and distilled water respectively. The α-amylase inhibitory activity was calculated as percentage inhibition, thus;

$$\% \text{ Inhibition} = [(\Delta A_{control} - \Delta A_{extract})/A\Delta_{control}] \times 100$$

where $\Delta A_{control} = A_{control} - A_{blank}$ and $\Delta A_{extract} = A_{extract} - A_{blank}$

Concentrations of extracts resulting in 50% inhibition of enzyme activity (IC_{50}) were determined graphically.

2.3.1 Mode of α-amylase inhibition

The mode of inhibition of α-amylase by the leaf extract was conducted using the most potent extract according to the modified method described by Ali et al. [15]. Briefly, 250 µL of the (5 mg/mL) extract was pre-incubated with 250 µL of α-amylase solution for 10 min at 25 ℃ in one set of tubes. In another set of tubes α-amylase was pre-incubated with 250 µL of phosphate buffer (pH 6.9). 250 µL of starch solution at increasing concentrations (0.3–5.0 mg/mL) was added to both sets of reaction mixtures to start the reaction. The mixture was then incubated for 10 min at 25 ℃, and then boiled for 5 min after addition of 500 µL of DNS to stop the reaction. The amount of reducing sugars released was determined spectrophotometrically using a maltose standard curve and converted to reaction velocities. A double reciprocal (Lineweaver-Burk) plot (1/v versus 1/[S]) where v is reaction velocity and [S] is substrate concentration was plotted to determine the mode of inhibition.

2.4 α-Glucosidase inhibitory assay

The effect of the plant extracts on α-glucosidase activity was determined according to the method described by Kim et al. [16]. The substrate solution, p-nitropheynyl glucopyranoside (pNPG) was prepared in 20 mM phosphate buffer, pH 6.9. 100 µL of α-glucosidase (E.C. 3.2.1.20) was pre-incubated with 50 µL of the different concentrations of the extracts for 10 min. Then 50 µL of 3.0 mM pNPG dissolved in 20 mM phosphate buffer (pH 6.9) was added to start the reaction. The reaction mixture was incubated at 37 ℃ for 20 min and stopped by adding 2 mL of 0.1 M Na_2CO_3. The α-glucosidase activity was determined by measuring the yellow coloured para-nitrophenol released from pNPG at 405 nm. The control and blank were prepared using the same procedure by replacing the extract with DMSO and distilled water respectively. Percentage inhibition was calculated thus;

$$\% \text{ Inhibition} = [(\Delta A_{control} - \Delta A_{extract})/A\Delta_{control}] \times 100$$

where $\Delta A_{control} = A_{control} - A_{blank}$ and $\Delta A_{extract} = A_{extract} - A_{blank}$

Concentrations of extracts resulting in 50% inhibition of enzyme activity (IC_{50}) were determined graphically

2.4.1 Mode of α-glucosidase inhibition

The mode of inhibition of α-glucosidase by the extracts was determined using the extract with the lowest IC_{50} according to the modified method described by Ali et al. [15]. Briefly, 50 µL of the (5 mg/mL) extract was pre-incubated with 100 µL of α-glucosidase solution for 10 min at 25 ℃ in one set of tubes. In another set of tubes, α-glucosidase was pre-incubated with 50 µL of phosphate buffer (pH 6.9). 50 µL of pNPG at increasing concentrations (0.63 –

2.0 mg/mL) was added to both sets of reaction mixtures to start the reaction. The mixture was then incubated for 10 min at 25 ℃ and 500 µL of Na_2CO_3 was added to stop the reaction. The amount of reducing sugars released was determined spectrophotometrically using a para-nitrophenol standard curve and converted to reaction velocities. A double reciprocal (Lineweaver-Burk) plot (1/v versus 1/[S]) where v is reaction velocity and [S] is substrate concentration was plotted to determine the mode of inhibition.

2.5 Statistical analysis

Statistical analysis was performed using GraphPad Prism 5 statistical package (GraphPad Software, USA). The data were analysed by one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by Bonferroni test. All the results were expressed as mean ± SEM for triplicate determinations.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Figure 1 showed the percentage inhibition of α-amylase by methanol and ethyl acetate extracts of *A. montanus*. There were no significant differences between the extracts at low concentrations (0.32 - 0.63 mg/mL). However at higher concentrations, ethyl acetate extract exhibited significantly higher percentage inhibition of the enzyme. The higher percentage inhibition displayed by the ethyl aceate extract was corroborated by its lower IC_{50} value compared to that of methanol extract (Table 1).

Table 1: IC_{50} values for α-amylase and α-glucosidase inhibitory potential of *A. montanus* leaf extracts

Extracts	**IC_{50} (mg/mL)**	
	α-Amylase	**α-Glucosidase**
Methanol	2.87 ± 0.02^{a}	1.65 ± 0.02^{a}
Ethyl acetate	2.39 ± 0.04^{b}	7.10 ± 0.15^{b}
Acarbose	2.60 ± 0.01^{a}	0.63 ± 0.00^{c}

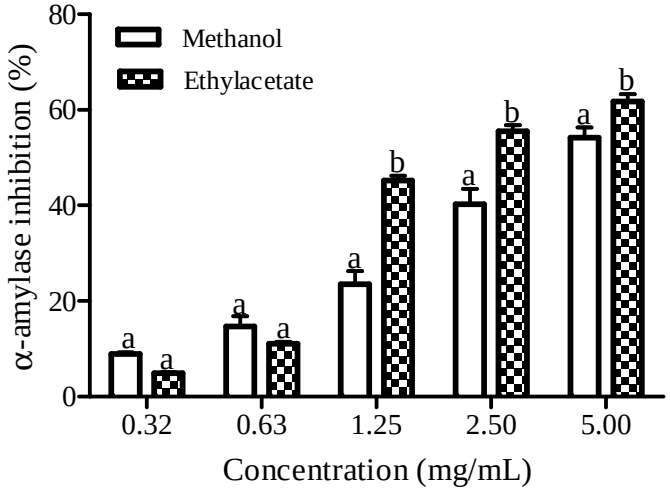

Fig 1: Inhibitory potency of *A. montanus* leaf extracts against α-amylase activity. The values are expressed as means ± SEM of triplicate determinations. Means not sharing a common letter at the same concentration are significantly different (P = .05)

However, the Lineweaver-Burk plot of the mode of inhibition of α-amylase by the methanol extract of this plant showed that it is a non-competitive inhibitor of the enzyme (Figure 2).

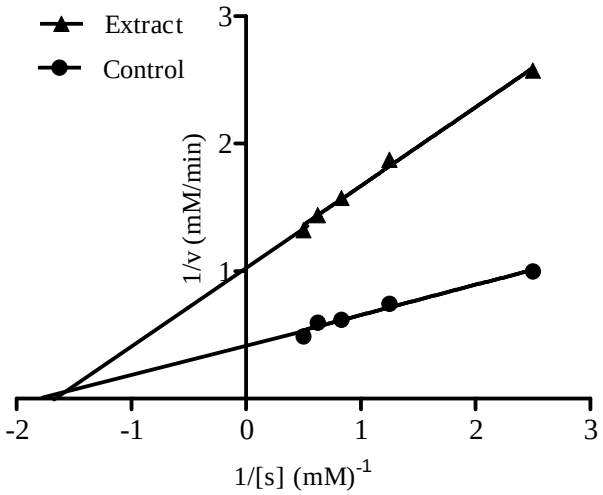

Fig 2: Mode of inhibition of α-amylase by methanol extract of *A. montanus*

The percentage inhibition of α-glucosidase by the extracts of *A. montanus* is shown in Fig 3. At all concentrations tested, methanol extract exhibited significantly higher (P=.05) percentage inhibition of this enzyme compared to ethyl acetate extract. However, the inhibition of the enzyme by both extract was dose-dependent. This is supported by its lower IC_{50} value compared to methanol extract. Kinetic analysis of the mode of inhibition of the enzyme with the aid of Lineweaver-Burk plot showed that it inhibited the enzyme in a competitive manner (Figure 4).

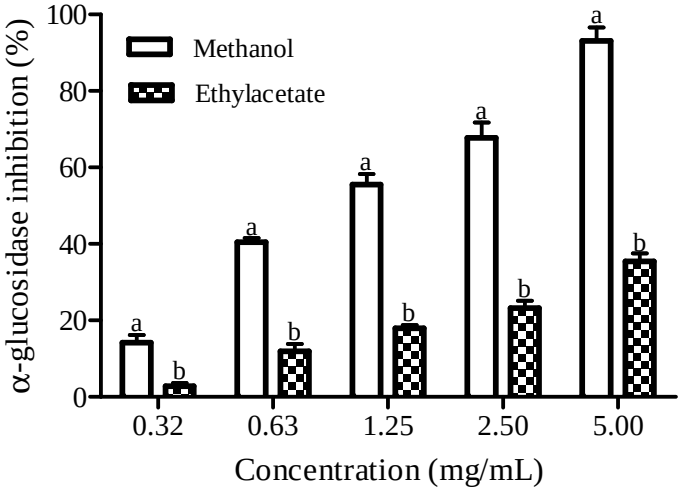

Fig 3: Inhibitory potency of *A. montanus* leaf extracts against α-glucosidase activity. The values are expressed as means ± SEM of triplicate determinations. Means not sharing a common letter at the same concentrations are significantly different (P = .05)

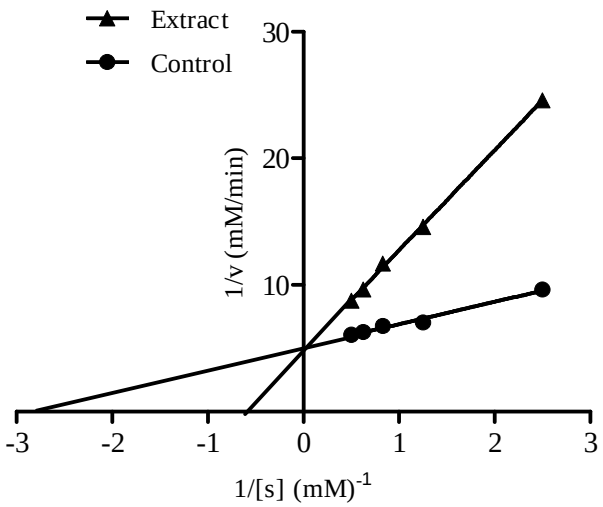

Fig 4: Mode of inhibition of α-glucosidase by ethyl acetate extract of *A. montanus*

The management of hyperglycemia is the hallmark of treatment in diabetes and one of the therapeutic approaches for decreasing postprandial hyperglycemia is to retard the digestion and absorption of carbohydrates. This is done through the inhibition of carbohydrate hydrolyzing enzymes, α-amylase and α-glucosidase, in the digestive tract [17]. Though, synthetic α-glucosidase inhibitors such as acarbose and voglibose are presently in use but are bedeviled by undesirable side effects such as nausea, hypoglycaemia, diarrhoea and liver failure [14], which necessitated this study.

Our study showed that ethylacetate extract of *A. montanus* produced stronger inhibition of α-amylase than methanol extract. However, methanol extract will be more suitable to be used as antidiabetic agent because of its mild inhibition, having higher IC_{50} than ethylacetate extract and acarbose. Previous studies have shown that any prospective antidiabetic agent should be a mild inhibitor of α-amylase so as to prevent the drawback of synthetic drugs (like acarbose), which occur due to the excessive inhibition of the enzyme resulting in the abnormal bacterial fermentation of undigested carbohydrates in the colon [18, 19]. Therefore, the Lineweaver-Burk plot of the inhibition depicted that methanol extract of *A. motanus* inhibited the enzyme in a non-competitive manner. This implies that the active components in the extract binds to a site other than the active site of the enzyme and combines with either free enzyme or the enzyme-substrate complex, possibly interfering with the action of both [20].

The stronger inhibition of α-glucosidase by the methanol extract of *A. montanus* at all concentrations tested compared to ethylacetate extract, culminated into having low IC_{50} which also desirable of a good antidiabetic drug. The competitive inhibition of the enzyme by methanol extract of *A. montanus* suggest that the inhibitory component(s) in the plant binds reversibly to the active site of the enzyme and occupies it in a mutually exclusive manner with the substrate [21, 22]. This may due to structural similarity between the inhibitor and the normal substrate (disaccharides), thereby slowing down the production of glucose and reducing hyperglycemia.

Tannins are phenolic compounds which have been found to induce phosphorylation of insulin receptors and translocation of glucose transporter, thereby helping in the reduction of

blood glucose level [23]. Studies have also shown the antioxidant and antidiabetic properties of saponins from different medicinal plants [24, 25]. Therefore, it is probable that the inhibitory effect of *A. montanus* extracts on the activities of α-amylase and α-glucosidase may be due to the presence of these kinds of phytochemicals present in the extracts.

4. CONCLUSION

This study showed that methanol extract of *A. montanus* is a more potent inhibitor of α-amylase and α-glucosidase than ethyl acetate extract. However, this methanol extract proved to be a non-competitive and competitive inhibitor of both α-amylase and α-glucosidase respectively. It can therefore be concluded that the hypoglycemic action of this plant may be due to the inhibition these diabetes-related enzymes studied.

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