Zataria multiflora and Bunium persicum Essential Oils as Two Natural Antioxidants

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Abstract

Background: Autoxidation is considered to be the main route of edible oil deterioration, which produces undesirable odors and flavors (attributed to primary and secondary products of unsaturated fatty acids) during storage and heating.

Objective: Antioxidant activities of Zataria multiflora (ZMEO) and Bunium persicum (BPEO) essential oils (EOs) in linseed oil (containing higher ω-3 in vegetable sources) were studied with 4 indexes.

Methods: Total phenol content, electropositive potential (by bleaching using violet ethanol solution of DPPH˚), antioxidant capacity (by radical cation of ABTS), scavenging activity of hydrogen peroxide and Fe-reducing power of the EOs were measured. Then ZMEO and BPEO (0.6, 1, 1.4, 1.8 mg/ml) were added to linseed oils; peroxide and thiobarbituric acid in 0th-15th days (at 60 °C) were compared with TBHQ (0.01, 0.02) and BHT (0.1, 0.2).

Results: IC₅₀ of ZMEO and BPEO in mentioned assays were 0.78 and 1.52; 0.11 and 7.50; 0.31 and 0.72 mg/ml and RP₅₀ for reducing power assay was 0.76 and 2.12 mg/ml. Total phenolic compound of ZMEO and BPEO were 322 and 50.6 mg/ml. The best antioxidant levels of reductive oxidation were 600 for ZMEO and BPEO and 20 for TBHQ.

Conclusion: PV and TBA values demonstrated that both of EOs in linseed oil had the same antioxidant activity in 600 ppm (ZMEO>BPEO) in 4 tests, and EOs will be used as natural antioxidants as a good replacement in 600 ppm with BHT (100) and TBHQ (10) as synthetic.

Keywords: Linseed oil, Zataria multiflora, Bunium persicum, Antioxidant activity
Introduction

Oxidative changes of the fatty foods are considered as the major factor in producing undesired odor and taste and reducing their nutrition value [1]. On other hand, peroxidation of fats doesn’t result only in reduction of the quality of foods, but is also seen as leading factor for diseases such as cancer, mutation, aging, and arteriosclerosis [2]. Active oxygen and free radicals are widely believed as disease-bearing and tissue injury factors. Active oxygen, in forms such as superoxide (O$_2^-$), hydrogen peroxide (H$_2$O$_2$), hydroxyl radical (OH$^*$), and singlet oxygen (1O$_2$) produced from natural metabolism, attacks biological molecules and results in cell or tissue injury [2]. In general, antioxidants are defined as compounds which prevent or delay the peroxidation of the fats.

Synthetic antioxidants, such as butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT), butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA), propyl gallate (PG), and tertbutylhydroquinone (TBHQ), are used extensively in food industries. However, there are a lot of questions and suspicions about their safety. The researches has shown that BHA has the potential to express the cancer in animals, and it also has shown that BHT in high concentration can cause bleeding externally and internally and finally death in some species of rat and pig due to its effect on blood coagulation factor [1]. Considering the increasing tendency of consumers to use the additives natural resources and increasing awareness of disadvantages of synthetic additives, utilizing essential oils as additives in foods, beverages, and cosmetics are increasing. Regarding the studies done on the essential oils in terms of odor, flavor they give to foods and beverages, they have the potential of being used with several objects. Many researches have addressed to antimicrobial, antifungal, antioxidative, and radical scavenging properties [3].

The medicinal plant of Zataria multiflora is cultivated in Iran. The essential oil of Zataria multiflora is extracted from the flowered browses of the plant, having the compounds with important pharmaceutical, antimicrobial, and antioxidant effects [4, 5].

The plant of Bunium persicum is considered as the herbal, growing as wild plant in dry lands in Iran. The seed of this plant has oily essence, both its seed and essence has pharmaceutical effects [6].

Various tests have measured the antioxidant capacity of tested samples. The tests used in this study included: azinobis (3-ethyl-benzothiazolin-6-sulfonic acid) (ABTS$^{++}$), 2, 2’-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH$^*$), hydrogen peroxide scavenging, and reducing power. Also the total phenolic contents of the essential oils, was determined by Folin-Ciocalteu.

The purpose of this study, in addition to complete the previous studies, to determine the antioxidant capacity of essential oil of Zataria multiflora and Bunium persicum by ABTS$^{++}$, and DPPH$^*$, hydrogen peroxide scavenging and reducing power. In addition, to determine the antioxidant capacity of these essential oils in linseed oil (containing higher ω-3 fatty acid in vegetable sources [7]) by peroxide and thiobarbitoric acid values.

Material and Methods

Materials

Materials were purchased from various companies as follows: Chloroform, acetic acid, chloridric acid, potassium iodate, starch,
sodium thiosulfate, hexane, TBA, BHT, TBHQ, potassium persulfate, ethanol, dipotassium hydrogen phosphate, potassium dihydrogen phosphate, potassium ferricyanide, trichloroacetic acid, ferric chloride, ascorbic acid, carbonate sodium, H₂O₂, Folin-Ciocalteu (FC) reagent from German Company Merk; α-tocopherol and azinobis (3-ethylbenzothiazoline-6-sulfonic acid) (-ABTS⁺) from Company Fluka; cyclohexane from Company Riedel-dehaen; potassium iodide from German Company Applie Chem.; 2,2-Diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl (DPPH˚) and gallic acid from Company Sigma. To prepare the linseed oil (Linum usitatissimum), the seed were purchased from market and the oil was extracted in laboratory, that the seeds were cleaned and ground and poured in some cartouches, then some cotton soaked in hexane was put upon them, the extraction was done in the room temperature. The essential oil of Zataria multiflora and Bunium persicum was purchased from Iranian Company Plant-Essence Gorgan.

**Determining the antioxidant capacity**

**DPPH˚ test**

The electropositive potential of the essential oils was measured by method of bleaching using violet ethanol solution of DPPH˚. The method was done according to Shahsavari et al. (2008) with some changes in the method as follows [6]:

A preparation of 2 ml in ethanol was made from each various concentrations, for Zataria multiflora (0.1 to 3.0 mg/ml) and for Bunium persicum (0.2 to 4.0 mg/ml), and then it was added to 1 ml of 0.2 molar solution of DPPH˚, and finally it was measured the reductive absorption at 517 nm after 1 hour. Ethanol was used as blank and it was measured as control the absorption of ethanol solution of DPPH˚ with no antioxidant.

Inhibition percentage was calculated by the following formula:

\[ I\% = 100 \times \frac{A_{\text{blank}} - A_{\text{sample}}}{A_{\text{blank}}} \]

Where \( A_{\text{blank}} \) and \( A_{\text{sample}} \) are control absorption (the content of all material but the testing compound) and sample absorption, respectively.

**ABTS⁺ free radical decolorization assay**

Antioxidant capacity was measured by radical cation of ABTS according to Cai et al. 2004 [9]. In order to produce the radical cation of ABTS, a 7 mM ABTS⁺ solution was prepared and then added by 2.45 mM of potassium persulfate and left for 12-16 at room temperature, two reagents react stoichiometrically at a ratio of 1:0.5. After that, subscript this solution was diluted by ethanol until absorbance of 0.7 ± 0.05 absorption at 734 nm. Finally, 0.1 ml of sample was added to 3.9 ml of the ABTS⁺ solution, and the absorption was read
after 15 min. All data are mean of three determinations and IC₅₀ was calculated for each of them. In addition, vitamin C (µg/ml) was applied as reference standard.

**Hydrogen peroxide scavenging activity**

The scavenging activity of hydrogen peroxide was determined for two essential oils according to the Büyükbalcı and Nehir (2008) with some moditification [10]:

One ml of 0.1- 0.6 and 0.4 - 1.2 mg/ml of ZMEO and BPEO were mixed with 2.4 ml of 0.1 M phosphate buffer (pH= 7.4). Then, 0.6 ml of 43 mM hydrogen peroxide in the same buffer was added and the absorption was read at 230 nm, after 40 min.

**Fe-Reducing power**

Fe-reducing power of the essential oils (EOs) was determined according to the method of Hsu et al. (2006) with some modifications [11]. One ml of various concentrations of sample was mixed with 500 µl of potassium ferricyanide (1% w/w in water) and 500 µl of 0.2 M phosphate buffer, and left for 20 min in water bath at 50 °C. After cooling the solution, it was added 500 µl of trichloroacetic acid (10% w/w) and centrifuged for 10 min. at 3000 rpm. After that, 500 µl of transparent supernatant was separated and then added to 100 µl of ferric chloride and finally, the absorption of solution was read after 30 min at 700 nm. The increase in absorption of reaction mixture indicates the increase in reducing power of essential oils.

**Effect of ZMEO and BPEO on oxidative stability of linseed oil**

Different amount of ZMEO and BPEO at four levels (0.6, 1, 1.4, and 1.8 mg/ml), TBHQ at two levels (0.01, and 0.02 mg/ml) and BHT at two levels (0.1, and 0.2 mg/ml) were added to linseed oils. After that peroxide value and thiobarbituric acid index were measured in 0th, 3th, 6th, 9th, 12th and 15th days (at 60 °C) according to the methods of AOCS and Madson et al. (1998) [12, 13]. All data are mean of triplicate reiteration of the test by three times.

**Statistical analysis**

The data was analyzed statistically by the SPSS software ver 16. It was used the fully randomized statistical design, and the difference among means were compared using Duncan test at p<0.05.

**Results**

Standard curve equation was given as r²=0.9993, Y=0.0012X+0.0254. The results showed that the total phenolic content in ZMEO and BPEO were 322.0± 2.9 and 50.7± 104 mg gallic acid/ml, respectively.

Comparison of DPPH radical scavenging capacity (IC₅₀ value) of ZMEO and BPEO with some natural and synthetic antioxidant was presented in Table 1. The ABTS⁺ scavenging activity of ZMEO vs. and BPEO vs. was showed in Figures 1 and 2. The Table 2 shows IC₅₀ of both studied EOs, compared with TBHQ, α-tocopherol, and vitamin C as reference standard. Figure 3 shows the effect of the EOs concentration (200 and 400 ppm) and TBHQ upon the rate of scavenging activity of hydrogen peroxide. According to this result, BPEO doesn’t show any scavenging activity in concentration of 200 ppm. Table 3 shows IC₅₀ for both studied EOs and TBHQ. Table 4 shows the results of reducing power assay (RP 0.5AU) of ZMEO,
TBEO and Vit C and Figures 4 and 5 indicate the effect of increasing the concentration of essential oils upon the increasing rate of absorption.

Figures 6 - 9 show the changes of PV and TBA values of linseed oil containing ZMEO and BPEO as two natural antioxidants and synthetic antioxidants after heating at 60 °C for 15 days.

Table 1 - Comparison of DPPH radical scavenging capacity (IC50 value) of ZMEO and BPEO with some natural and synthetic antioxidants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>IC50</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zataria multiflora</td>
<td>0.78 ± 0.03^c mg/ml</td>
<td>Present study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunium persicum</td>
<td>1.52 ± 0.05^d mg/ml</td>
<td>Present study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBHQ</td>
<td>0.002 ± 0.00^e mg/ml</td>
<td>Present study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>α-tocopherol</td>
<td>0.006 ± 0.00^f mg/ml</td>
<td>Present study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The other researches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>IC50</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Zataria multiflora</td>
<td>22.4 ± 1.0 µg/ml</td>
<td>[21]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bunium persicum</td>
<td>0.88 ± 0.04 mg/ml</td>
<td>[7]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Origanum</td>
<td>751.5 µg/ml</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinnamon bark</td>
<td>90.63 µg/ml</td>
<td>[16]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocimum basilicum</td>
<td>47057.45 µg/ml</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ocimum canum</td>
<td>8343.19 µg/ml</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red kaprao</td>
<td>343.56 µg/ml</td>
<td>[22]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White kaprao</td>
<td>768.82 µg/ml</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1- ABTS** scavenging activity of ZMEO vs. time plots
Zataria multiflora and …

Figure 2- ABTS$^\bullet^+$ scavenging activity of BPEO vs. time plots

Table 2- IC$_{50}$ of both studied EOs and other antioxidants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>IC$_{50}$ (mg/ml)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ZMEO</td>
<td>0.11 ± 0.00$^c$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPEO</td>
<td>7.5 ± 0.14$^d$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBHQ</td>
<td>0.04 ± 0.00$^a$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>α-tocopherol</td>
<td>0.07 ± 0.01$^b$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vit C</td>
<td>0.05 ± 0.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3- Antioxidant activity of ZMEO and BPEO at different concentrations determined by hydrogen peroxide scavenging method
Table 3- IC₅₀ of both studied EOs and TBHQ in hydrogen peroxide scavenging method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>IC₅₀ (ppm)</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ZMEO</td>
<td>312.6 ± 10.8ᵇ</td>
<td>Present study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPEO</td>
<td>716.1 ± 21.4ᶜ</td>
<td>Present study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBHQ</td>
<td>130.9 ± 6.0ᵃ</td>
<td>Present study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The other researches

- Extract of *Gmelina arborea* 73.6 ± 0.03 [28]
- Extract of *Lagerstroemia reginae* 2121.73 ± 1.5 [29]
- Extract of *Excoecaria agallocha* 134.29 [30]
- *Mentha longifolia* essential oil 476.3 [31]

Table 4- RP₅₄₅ₐ₅ values of ZMEO, BPEO, TBHQ and Vit C

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>RP₅₄₅ₐ₅ (ppm)</th>
<th>Reference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ZMEO</td>
<td>757.7±27.9ᶜ</td>
<td>Present study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPEO</td>
<td>2120.0±9.8ᵈ</td>
<td>Present study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TBHQ</td>
<td>23.2±1.1ᵇ</td>
<td>Present study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vit C</td>
<td>12.6±0.3ᵃ</td>
<td>Present study</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The other researches

- Extract of Doum fruit 978 [11]
- Extract of *Garcinia Mangostana* 84.35 [32]
- Extract of *Syzygium cumini* 5.6 [33]

![Figure 4- Antioxidant activity of ZMEO in Fe-reducing power assay](image1)

![Figure 5- Antioxidant activity of BPEO in Fe-reducing power assay](image2)

![Figure 6- Changes of PV of linseed oil containing ZMEO and BPEO as natural antioxidant after heating at 60°C for 15 days](image3)
Figure 7 - Changes of PV of linseed oil containing synthetic antioxidants after heating at 60°C for 15 days

Figure 8 - Changes of TBA value of linseed oil containing ZMEO and BPEO as natural antioxidant after heating at 60°C for 15 days

Figure 9 - Changes of TBA of linseed oil containing synthetic antioxidants after heating at 60°C for 15 days
Discussion

Total phenolic content

The total phenolic content of essential oils was determined by using spectrophotometric method and the reagent Folin-Ciocalteu and gallic acid was used as standard. In a study by Cao et al., (2009), the phenol content for essential oil of *Mosla chienesis* was determined as 105.1 µg gallic acid/mg [14]. In 2004, Wangenstein et al. showed that the phenol content for coriander was 0.14 g/100g gallic acid [15]. Lin et al. (2009) showed in a study on 42 oily essences that the highest phenolic content is seen for origanum, cinnamon bark, and thyme wild by 1107.2, 658.4, 275.5 µg/ml, respectively [16].

Hydrogen - donating activity

The inhibitory activity for DPPH˚ is used as general for assessing the antioxidant potential in inhibiting the free radicals. The free radical DPPH˚ is a useful method in assessing the effect of antioxidants, because the DPPH˚ is more stable than hydroxyl and superoxide radicals [19]. To inhibit the radicals is very important in eliminating the harmful effects of existing radicals in foods and biological systems. In DPPH˚ test, antioxidants can reduce the stable radical of DPPH to yellowish diphenilpicrylhydrazine. The test is based on reduction of alcoholic solution of DPPH˚ at presence of antioxidant with hydrogen donating and formation of DPPH-H. The molecule has the absorption at 517 nm in radical state, and turns into a diamagnetic stable molecule after receiving electron or radical of hydrogen [20].

As it is obvious from Table 1, ZMEO and BPEO have relative good antioxidant activities and the inhibitory activity of these two essential oils for DPPH radical, even though lower than TBHQ and α-tocopherol, is more than *Ocimum basilicum* and *Ocimum canum*, and ZMEO has the activity similar to white kaparo and origanum [7, 16, 21, 22].

Measurement of radical cation ABTS scavenging activity

Reactivity of ABTS○+ is more than DPPH° but its mechanism is different. Also, it has more solubility in water. The ABTS○+ can be prepared using various antioxidants, but the results showed that using K2S2O8 as an oxidant increases the rate of ABTS○+ [23]. This test is applied for determination of antioxidants activity (AOA) that soluble in water and fat [24].

As it is obvious, the following Figures (1 and 2), by increasing in the EOs concentrations results more intensive increasing in absorption reduction. In addition ZMEO shows better antioxidant activity at low concentration than BPEO. On the other hand, gradient of electron giving during the test in ZMEO was smoother than BPEO.

The results (Table 2) showed that both studied EOs have lower antioxidant activity than TBHQ and α-tocopherol. ZMEO has more antioxidant activity than BPEO. Considering that free radicals are major factor in peroxidation of fats in chain reactions, inhibiting the free radicals directly can enhance the quality of nutrition materials;
therefore it is common to make use free radicals of DPPH and ABTS$^{●+}$ in order to recognize the efficiency of inhibitory activities. The results of ABTS$^{●+}$ test showed that TBHQ and α-tocopherol have more AOA than both studied essential oils. Considering the more activity of ABTS$^{●+}$ and the differences between their mechanisms, it can be concluded that the BPEO has lower potential for eliminating the free radicals than ZMEO [23].

Hydrogen peroxide scavenging activity

Hydrogen peroxide has a key role in biological beings, because it can enter the cell membrane and therefore it can be toxic for cells, and it may increase hydroxyl radicals in cells [25]. Also, hydrogen peroxide can be formed in vivo by most of enzymes such as superoxide dismutase [24].

Hydrogen peroxide can be decomposed into water and phenolic compounds can accelerate the conversion reaction $\text{H}_2\text{O}_2$ to $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ by their electron donating properties. On the other hand, hydrogen peroxide can produce the very active hydroxyl radicals in presence of iron ions [26].

As it is obvious from Table 3, both studied EOs have lower antioxidant activities than TBHQ, and again ZMEO showed more antioxidant activity than BPEO. In general, antioxidants can inhibit hydrogen peroxide through three ways: inhibiting peroxide directly, reacting with intermediate compounds formed by enzymes and peroxides, and inhibiting the activity of peroxidase enzyme by binding peroxide to itself [27].

Fe-reducing power assay

In order to qualifying the antioxidant activity in spectrometry, it is dedicated some period of reaction to forming or disappearing special spectrum in an especial concentration, and the rate of absorption reduction is determined in all tests defining the antioxidant activities unless the reducing power test. The percentage of inhibition or eliminating the probe is determined by the following formula:

$$\left(1 - \frac{A_{\text{Sample}}}{A_{\text{Control}}}\right) \times 100$$

Where $A$ is absorption and $\lambda$ Activity assay wavelength.

As it was stated, it is measured the rate of increase in absorption in this test, and the index of $\text{RP}_{0.5} \text{ AU}$ is used to determine the reducing power which is equal to the rate of concentration by mg/ml or µg/ml, that is 0.5 absorption unit at 700 nm [11].

Fe-reducing power of a compound may be considered as an important index for evaluating the AOA of activity compounds. Presence of reducing agents result in reduction of complex $\text{Fe}^{3+}$/ferricyanide to ferrous form that is recognizable at 700 nm. In this test, the yellow color of solution will turn into green and blue [14].

As it is obvious from Table 4 and Figures 4 and 5, both essential oils showed lower reducing activity than TBHQ, and the essential oil of ZMEO showed more antioxidant activity than BPEO, like other results in pervious assays.

Effect of ZMEO and BPEO on oxidative stability of linseed oil

In order to study the effect of two EOs on the stability of linseed oil (containing higher ω-3 fatty acid in vegetable sources) at 60˚, two indices of PV and TBA values were measured (after heating at 60˚ for 15 days). In general,
the PV indicates the total content of hydroperoxide and oxygen peroxide in fats or materials having fat.

TBA test is used since 40 years ago to detect the oxidation of fats. In this method, the amount of malondialdehyde (MDA) which is formed by secondary oxidation of initial carbonyl compounds such as non-2-enal is measured. MDA can react with thiobarbitoric acid results a pink pigment with the maximum absorption at 532-535 nm [34].

According to the Figures 6 and 7 all treatments had good effects in reducing the peroxide value compared to the control. But, all treatments selected for both essential oils had lower antioxidant activities as compared with BHT and TBHQ in concentrations of 200 and 20 ppm, respectively. On the other hand, all treatments of ZMEO 600 (ppm), ZMEO 1000 (ppm), BPEO 600 (ppm) had better antioxidant activity than BHT100 and showed such activity as the activity of TBHQ100 and all treatment except BPEO 1800 (ppm) did not show remarkable effect and follow that peroxidation peroperties.

The statistical results in TBA value test in 15th day (Figures 8 and 9) showed that TBHQ20 (ppm) had the best effect on reducing of TBA value, then BPEO600 and BHT200 had the same effect and ZMEO after these treatments contained the best effect. In a study by Van Ruth et al., (2001) showed that methanolic extracts of soybean seeds reduced formation of primary oxidation products up to 30% and secondary lipid oxidation products up to 99%, resulting in significantly increased oxidative stability of linseed oil [35]. Bera et al., (2004) used ethanolic extract of ajowan (Carum copticum) for stabilizing linseed (flaxseed), the results in this study indicated this extract with 0.025 g/g of oil concentration could be prevented peroxide formation [36].

In the present study, antioxidant activity of ZMEO and BPEO was investigated by 5 tests. The results from the tests showed that both essential oils showed good potential in antioxidant activities. The considerable point is that even though ZMEO had better activity than BPEO in first 4 tests, both essential oils showed the same effect in oil stability for linseed oil in same concentration of 600 ppm.

**Conclusion**

The results obtained in this work indicated that ZMEO and BPEO are good sources of natural antioxidants however antioxidant activity of ZMEO was higher than BPEO in 4 first tests, but our study in linseed oil by measurement of PV and TBA values demonstrated that both of EOs had the same antioxidant activity in concentration of 600 ppm, both of EOs will be used as natural antioxidants in linseed oil as a good replacement in concentration of 600 ppm with BHT (100 ppm) and TBHQ (10 ppm) as synthetic antioxidants.

**Acknowledgments**

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