

LC-MS/MS characterization and biological activities of *Morina persica* L. (Caprifoliaceae)

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Received: 3 August 2023 / Revised: 6 November 2023 / Accepted: 7 November 2023

ABSTRACT: The study aimed to comprehensively identify the phenolic fingerprint of *Morina persica* L. (Caprifoliaceae) and evaluate its various biological activities. LC-MS/MS analysis of 70% *Morina persica* methanol extract revealed the presence of 27 phytochemicals, with quinic acid, chlorogenic acid, and rutin being the major phenolics. The antioxidant, antibacterial, antiproliferative, and cytotoxic activities were evaluated for biological screening. The results showed that the methanolic extract of *M. persica* has a moderate DPPH radical scavenging and ferric-reducing capacity, indicating antioxidant activity. *M. persica* was observed to have a sufficient antiproliferative effect against cancer cells and low cytotoxicity against normal cells. Moreover, *M. persica* demonstrated good antibacterial activity against *Clostridium perfringens*, *Enterococcus faecalis*, and *Escherichia coli*. These data suggest that the methanolic extract of *M. persica* could be considered both an industrial source of quinic acid and a potential biologically active ingredient for developing drug formulations.

KEYWORDS: *Morina persica* L.; antibacterial; antioxidant; antiproliferative; LC-MS/MS.

1. INTRODUCTION

Morina L. (Caprifoliaceae) includes 14 species that grow in different locations around the world. Throughout history, plants have been a rich source for developing medicines. Nowadays, plants are widely used for human health in all communities and cultures, and are used not only as food supplements but also as medication [1]. The genus is distributed across Anatolia, Southeast Europe, the Himalayas, the Kashmir Mountains, Syria, Lebanon, Afghanistan, and Iran [1, 2]. In Turkey, the genus is represented by two species, *Morina persica* L. and *Morina subinermis* L. [3]. *Morina* species contain a variety of types of secondary metabolites, including terpenoids [4], saponins [5], flavonoids [6], phenylpropanoids [7], and neolignanes [8]. *Morina persica*, also known as "Merdiven çiçeği," is used to treat colds in Anatolia by preparing an infusion or decoction from the aerial parts of the plant [9]. Due to its melliferous properties, the plant is highly valued in some regions of Turkey [10]. Previous studies have reported the antibacterial [11], antiprotozoal [12], antioxidant [13], antimutagenic [13], and antimycobacterial activities [14] of *M. persica*.

In previous studies, the inhibitory activities of *M. persica* extracts against acetylcholinesterase, α -glucosidase, α -amylase, and tyrosinase were evaluated [13]. While various biological activity profiles of *M. persica* have been studied before, limited data is available on its chemical profile, antioxidant, antibacterial

How to cite this article: Gözcü S, Akşit Z, Şimşek S, Kandemir A, Aydın A, Yılmaz MA, Akşit A. LC-MS/MS Characterization and Biological Activities of *Morina persica* L. (Caprifoliaceae) J Res Pharm. 2024; 28(4): 961-973.

activity, antiproliferative, and cytotoxicity properties [13]. Therefore, in this study, the phenolic profile of the methanolic extract of *M. persica* was first determined by accurate LC-MS/MS. Additionally, *in vitro* antioxidant, antibacterial, antiproliferative, and cytotoxicity activities were evaluated.

2. RESULTS

2.1. Phytochemical analysis by LC-MS/MS

The study used LC-MS/MS system to identify and quantify 56 phenolic acids, organic acids, and flavonoid components in the methanolic extract of *Morina persica* (MP). Out of these, 27 compounds were identified for the first time, providing a more comprehensive chemical profile of the MP extract. The flavonoids detected in the extract included hesperidin, luteolin-7-*O*-glucoside, quercetin-3-*O*-glucuronide, quercetin-3-*O*-glucoside, kaempferol-3-*O*-glucoside, kaempferol-3-*O*-rutinoside, kaempferol, rutin, quercetin, luteolin, naringenin, acacetin, amentoflavone, apigenin-7-*O*-glucoside, apigenin, and chrysin. The extract also contained nine phenolic and organic acids, namely quinic acid, fumaric acid, aconitic acid, gallic acid, protocatechuic acid, chlorogenic acid, caffeic acid, *p*-coumaric acid, and 4-hydroxy benzoic acid. Rutin, kaempferol-3-*O*-rutinoside, and quercetin-3-*O*-glucoside were found to be the major secondary metabolites in the MP extract. The most abundant organic and phenolic acids in the extract were quinic acid and chlorogenic acid, respectively. However, isoflavonoid derivatives daidzin, genistein, and daidzein were not detected in the extract. The quantitative results of the MP methanolic extract are presented in Table 1 and Figure S1.

Table 1. Phytochemicals of methanol extract of *Morina persica* (mg/g extract) by LC-MS/MS

No	Analytes	mg analyte/g extract	No	Analytes	mg analyte/g extract
1	Quinic acid	42.54	29	Salicylic acid	<LOD
2	Fumaric acid	0.23	30	Luteolin-7- <i>O</i> -glucoside	0.31
3	Aconitic acid	1.57	31	Quercetin-3- <i>O</i> -glucuronide	0,01
4	Gallic acid	0.01	32	Rutin-D3-IS ^h	NA
5	Epigallocatechin	N.D.	33	Rutin	8.97
6	Protocatechuic acid	0.13	34	Quercetin-3- <i>O</i> -glucoside	2.82
7	Catechin	ND	35	Hesperidin	3.83
8	Gentisic acid	<LOD	36	<i>o</i> -Coumaric acid	ND
9	Chlorogenic acid	28.73	37	Genistein	ND
10	Protocatechuic aldehyde	0.03	38	Rosmarinic acid	<LOD
11	Tannic acid	<LOD	39	Ellagic acid	<LOD
12	Epigallocatechin gallate	ND	40	Apigenin-7- <i>O</i> -glucoside	1.28
13	1,5 -dicaffeoylquinic acid	<LOD	41	Quercetin-3- <i>O</i> -rhamnoside	<LOD
14	4-hydroxy benzoic acid	0.05	42	Kaempferol-3- <i>O</i> -glucoside	2.70
15	Epicatechin	ND	43	Kaempferol-3- <i>O</i> -rutinoside	6.20
16	Vanillic acid	<LOD	44	Fisetin	ND
17	Caffeic acid	0.16	45	Daidzein	ND
18	Syringic acid	ND	46	Quercetin-D3-IS ^h	NA
19	Vanillin	0.03	47	Quercetin	0.03
20	Syringic aldehyde	<LOD	48	Naringenin	0.08
21	Daidzin	ND	49	Hesperetin	ND
22	Epicatechin gallate	ND	50	Luteolin	0.08
23	Piceid	ND	51	Genistein	ND
24	<i>p</i> -Coumaric acid	0.06	52	Kaempferol	0.04
25	Ferulic acid-D3-IS ^h	NA	53	Apigenin	0.22
26	Ferulic acid	ND	54	Amentoflavone	0.81
27	Sinapic acid	ND	55	Acacetin	0.10
28	Coumarin	ND	56	Chrysin	0.01

ND: Not determined, NA.: Not Applicable, IS: Internal Standard, <LOD: Below limit of detection

2.2. Antioxidant activity of *M. persica* extract

Phenolic compounds, which are a diverse group of phytochemicals found in medicinal plants, exhibit a wide range of biological properties. Among these compounds, flavonoids constitute a significant portion of phenolics and are abundantly present in various foods and medicinal plants, providing not only taste, color, and aroma but also various biological effects [15]. In this study, the total phenolic (TPC) and flavonoid (TFC) contents of the MP extract were determined by spectrophotometric techniques and are presented in Table 2. The TPC and TFC of the MP extract were found to be 39.87 ± 0.98 mg GAE (gallic acid equivalent) and 10.12 ± 0.55 mg QE (quercetin equivalent) per gram extract, respectively. The DPPH test is a commonly used method for evaluating the antioxidant activity of natural or synthetic substances due to their crucial role in scavenging free radicals from biological processes. The present study investigated the dose-dependent DPPH radical scavenging activity of MP and compared it with the positive control Trolox. The results are presented in Table 2 as IC₅₀ values. MP demonstrated moderate radical scavenging activity with an IC₅₀ value of 87.07 ± 0.74 µg/ml, while Trolox showed an IC₅₀ value of 8.25 ± 1.16 µg/ml.

The ability of a compound to reduce ferric ions can be considered a valuable parameter for assessing its antioxidant capacity, as it involves the donation of electrons to radicals, resulting in the formation of stable and less reactive species [16]. In the present study, the ferric ion reducing power of MP was determined and the results were given in terms of Trolox equivalent (TE) in Table 2. The extract has a reducing power of 56.27 ± 2.01 mg TE, indicating its capacity to reduce Fe³⁺ to Fe²⁺ (Table 2).

Table 2. Total phenolic (TPC), flavonoid (TFC), DPPH, and FRAP values of methanolic extract of *M. persica*

Test sample	^a TPC	^b TFC	DPPH IC ₅₀ (µg/mL)	^c FRAP
MP	$39.87 \pm 0,98$	$10.12 \pm 0,55$	$87.07 \pm 0,74$	$56.27 \pm 2,01$
Trolox	-	-	$8.25 \pm 1,16$	-

^a TPC was expressed as gallic acid equivalents (mg GAE), ^b TFC was expressed as quercetin equivalents (mg QE), ^c DPPH activity was expressed as IC₅₀(µg/mL), ^dFRAP value was expressed as Trolox equivalents (mg TE/g extract)

2.3. Evaluation of the antiproliferative activity of *M. persica* extract

Many anticancer medications in current chemotherapy still do not have the desired therapeutic properties due to cancers' ever-changing mutational burdens [17]. Furthermore, the benefits of usage are diminishing day by day due to mechanisms of resistance and undesirable side effects against chemotherapeutic medicines for a variety of causes [18]. As a reason, research into the discovery of novel anticancer drugs for use in cancer treatment is continuing [19]. To check whether this MP extract was able to affect human cells, the cell proliferation test was studied by MTT dye together with NCI-60 screening methodology. Accordingly, when the lethal concentration (LC₅₀) values of the MP extract on Beas2B, RPE, and HSF control cells were examined, it is seen that the extract has a high LC₅₀ value (>1000 µg/mL) than the control anticancer drug, 5FU, indicating that MP extract does not have undesirable toxicity (Table 3-4). As stated in the NCI-60 screening methodology, high LC₅₀ values indicate that the cytotoxic effects of the test substances are less, and it is desirable. Considering the Total Growth Inhibition (TGI) and Inhibitory Concentration (IC₅₀) values of the MP extract for control cells, this extract was not toxic against normal cells as it showed lower IC₅₀ and TGI values in Beas2B ($86.83- 745.01$ µg/mL, respectively) normal cells, and RPE ($77.21- 78.73$ µg/mL, respectively) normal cells than the anticancer control drug, 5FU (Table 3). However, since the IC₅₀ and TGI values of MP extract for HSF ($75.60- 411.58$ µg/mL, respectively) normal cells were slightly higher than the control drug, 5FU, the toxic values of the extract were not within safe limits. Considering the Growth Inhibition (GI₅₀) values, the GI₅₀ values of MP extract for Beas2B and RPE control cells (1.12 and 1.28 µg/mL, respectively) were similar to the control anticancer drug 5FU, while it was observed slightly higher GI₅₀ (2.27 µg/mL) values for HSF control cells (Table 3-4). Low GI₅₀ and TGI values show that the cytostatic effects of the test substances are more, and this is also a desirable situation. These viability indicators, when evaluated together, show that the tested MP extract has a wide range of chemotherapeutic uses that allow safe regulation of their use doses. When the antiproliferative effect of the MP extract on glioblastoma (A172 and C6), gynecological (HeLa and A2780), and colon (SW620 and HT29)

cancer cell lines were examined, it was seen that GI₅₀ growth inhibitions (1.06-2.33 µg/mL) were close to the control anticancer drug 5FU (1.27-1.59 µg/mL) (Table 3). The TGI (77.48 – 237.70 µg/mL) values of the MP extract for the HT29, C6, and HeLa cell lines indicated that it shows similar inhibition values as the 5FU control anticancer drug (Table 3-4). However, IC₅₀ (83.34 – 105.35 µg/mL) values of the MP extract for the glioma, gynecological, and colon cancer cells implied that it displays the same effect as this, 5FU (Table 3-4). Since the LC₅₀ (>1000 µg/mL) values caused by the MP extract on glioma, gynecological, and colon cancer cells were higher than the control anticancer drug 5FU, it can be said that the safety intervals for the use of these extracts were wide (Table 3-4). The emergence of such a result in different cancer cell lines may have been effective in the different cellular mechanisms that cells exhibit against the MP extract.

Table 3. Antiproliferative activity of *Morina persica* extract

Cell lines	<i>Morina persica</i> extract			
	GI ₅₀	TGI	LC ₅₀	IC ₅₀
A172 ^a	1.11	>1000	>1000	92.70±3.5
A2780 ^b	1.57	>1000	>1000	105.35±2.9
SW620 ^c	2.33	>1000	>1000	101.85±3.3
HT29 ^c	2.27	206.81±5.3	>1000	97.01±3.1
C6 ^a	1.13	77.48±2.7	>1000	91.32±2.8
HeLa ^b	1.06	237.70±3.8	>1000	83.34±3.0
RPE ^d	1.28	78.73±3.4	>1000	77.21±2.9
Beas2B ^d	1.12	745.01±21.6	>1000	86.83±4.0
HSF ^d	2.27	411.58±13.2	>1000	75.60±2.9

^aA172 and C6 brain cancer cell lines, ^bA2780 and HeLa gynecological cancer cell lines, ^cSW620 and HT29 colon cancer cell lines, ^dBeas2B, RPE, and HSF normal cell lines, respectively lung, retinal, and skin

Table 4. Antiproliferative activity of 5-Fluorouracil

Cell lines	5-Fluorouracil			
	GI ₅₀	TGI	LC ₅₀	IC ₅₀
A172 ^a	1.38	45.67±2.0	336.86±9.4	45.88±2.1
A2780 ^b	1.29	48.77±2.0	386.42±8.5	49.94±1.9
SW620 ^c	1.59	47.12±1.9	391.24±10.1	53.41±2.7
HT29 ^c	1.29	35.36±1.9	411.54±9.2	43.18±2.1
C6 ^a	1.39	39.87±1.5	348.65±9.1	46.11±2.4
HeLa ^b	1.27	37.18±1.4	393.06±9.5	32.74±1.7
RPE ^d	1.54	55.37±3.6	423.82±8.3	65.30±2.1
Beas2B ^d	1.43	33.08±1.8	417.72±10.8	34.62±1.7
HSF ^d	1.39	39.87±1.5	348.65±9.1	46.11±2.4

^aA172 and C6 brain cancer cell lines, ^bA2780 and HeLa gynecological cancer cell lines, ^cSW620 and HT29 colon cancer cell lines, ^dBeas2B, RPE, and HSF normal cell lines, respectively lung, retinal, and skin

2.4. Cytotoxic activity of *M. persica* extract

In this study, cytotoxicity induced by the extract was measured using IC₅₀ concentrations. Accordingly, the extract that was found to be effective in the MTT proliferation test showed different cytotoxicity values varying between about 9.7-12.4% against normal cell lines (Beas2B, RPE, and HSF) at IC₅₀ concentration (Table 5). When the cytotoxic effects of the tested MP extract on cancer cells (A172, C6, HeLa, A2780, SW620, and HT29) were examined, the MP extract displayed different cytotoxicity values, varying in the range of about 10.3-12.4% against cancer cell lines at IC₅₀ concentration (Table 5).

2.5. Antibacterial activity of *M. persica* extract

According to the data presented in Table 6, *Clostridium perfringens*, *Enterococcus faecalis*, and *Escherichia coli* displayed the highest sensitivity to the tested microorganisms, with a minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) value of 7.81 µg/ml, 31.25 µg/ml, and 31.25 µg/ml, respectively. The antimicrobial activity of *M. persica* extract against *Listeria monocytogenes*, *Staphylococcus aureus*, and *Salmonella enteritidis* was moderate, with a MIC value of 250 µg/ml, 125 µg/ml, and 125 µg/ml, respectively. However, the extract showed weak antibacterial activity against *Bacillus cereus* and *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, with a MIC value of 500 µg/ml for both.

Table 5. Cytotoxicity of *Morina persica* extract at IC₅₀ concentrations against the cell lines

Cell Lines	<i>Morina persica</i> extract	5FU
A172 ^a	10.3±0.9	10.8±1.0
A2780 ^b	11.4±1.1	10.1±1.0
SW620 ^c	12.4±1.1	11.0±1.3
HT29 ^c	10.3±1.0	10.9±1.2
C6 ^a	11.1±1.0	11.5±1.1
HeLa ^b	10.9±1.0	11.9±1.1
RPE ^d	11.4±1.0	10.7±1.0
Beas2B ^d	12.4±1.0	10.1±1.0
HSF ^d	9.7±0.6	10.9±1.1

^aA172 and C6 brain cancer cell lines, ^bA2780 and HeLa gynecological cancer cell lines, ^cSW620 and HT29 colon cancer cell lines, ^dBeas2B, RPE, and HSF normal cell lines, respectively lung, retinal, and skin

3. DISCUSSION

The methanolic extract of *Morina persica* (MP) was subjected to LC-MS/MS analysis in negative ion mode, which is highly sensitive for the detection of various polyphenols [20]. A previous study, which provided a limited chemical profile, qualitatively identified 15 compounds including organic acids and flavonoids in MP extracts using the HPLC-UV method with different solvents [13]. In this study, the LC-MS/MS system was used to quantitatively analyze 56 phenolic acids, organic acids, and flavonoid components in the MP methanolic extract. Interestingly, 27 of these compounds were identified for the first time. Quinic acid has been shown to have a variety of biological activities, including anti-inflammatory [22], antioxidant [22], antibacterial [23], antiviral [24], antinociceptive [25], antidiabetic [26], and anticancer [27, 28] in the previous study. Similarly, chlorogenic acid has been shown to have a variety of pharmacological properties, including antibacterial [29], anti-hypertension [30], antioxidant [31], antiulcer, hepatoprotective [32], and anti-inflammatory [33] properties. As for flavonoids in the MP extract. Rutin, which has a quercetin core has been showed that anticonvulsant [34], anti-Alzheimer [35], antinociceptive [36], antidiabetic [37], antiarthritic [38], antiplatelet aggregatory [39], antiulcer [40], antiasthmatic [41], anticancer [42], antibacterial [43], antiviral [44], hepatoprotective [45] activity. Being an important flavonoid hesperidin and was reported to display numerous pharmacological actions such as cardioprotective [46], antihyperlipidemic [46], antidiabetic [46], antihypertensive activities [46], anticancer [47], antioxidant [48, 49], anti-Alzheimer's [50] activities. The molecule quercetin-3-O-glucoside, which has another quercetin aglycone, has many pharmacological effects such as anticancer [51], antibacterial [52], antiviral [53] activities. Various pharmacological effects of kaempferol-3-O-glucoside include antioxidant [54], hepatoprotective [55], antibacterial [54], antiviral [56], anti-inflammatory [57] activities. Kaempferol-3-O-rutinoside has been found to have various biological effects, including antidiabetic [58], hepatoprotective [59], antihypertensive [60], antioxidant [61], and anti-inflammatory [62,] activity.

According to the antioxidant activity were compared with the literature, it was determined that there were minor differences. The current study examined the MP's dose-dependent DPPH radical scavenging activity and compared it with the positive control Trolox (Table 2). MP was shown to be a moderate radical scavenger, with an IC₅₀ value of 87.07± 0.74 µg/ml. Moreover, the ferric ion reducing power of MP was determined and the results were given in terms of Trolox equivalent (TE) in Table 2. The extract has a reducing power of 56.27± 2.01 mg TE, indicating its capacity to reduce Fe³⁺ to Fe²⁺. Mocan et al. reported DPPH radical scavenging activity of MP methanolic extract as 48.09 mg TEs/g extract and FRAP experiment as 82.85 mg TEs/g extract [13]. These minor differences in antioxidant activity; can be explained by the fact that they are collected from different locations and their phytochemical contents are different [63]. These results provide confirmatory evidence that MP methanolic extract has moderate antioxidant activity.

In general, when NCI-60 survival parameters were examined, the fact that the MP extract has low GI₅₀ values and high LC₅₀ ratios against cancer cell lines shows that it was a suitable candidate for advanced pharmacological tests. In previous studies, Depending on the concentration of *M. persica* methanolic extracts, inhibitory activities were increased [13]. Moreover, quinic acid was tested on human oral cancer cells [27] and C6 rat glioma cells [64]. It has been determined that it has cytotoxic activity on both cell lines. In

addition, Rutin has been tested on several leukemic cell lines and has been observed to exhibit high antiproliferative activity [65]. All these secondary metabolites have reported effects as chemopreventive agents via several mechanisms [66-68] This finding indicates that the tested MP extract was cancer specific.

By evaluating the effects of the extract on membrane integrity. information about their cytotoxic activities can be obtained. For this, the activity of cytoplasmic lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) leaking from the damaged plasma membrane to the environment is measured with the help of a kit. LDH activity indicates the amount of leakage implied indirect membrane damage. The MP extract displayed different cytotoxicity values, varying in the range of about 10.3-12.4% against cancer cell lines at IC₅₀ concentration (Table 5). Thus, the MP extract could potentially be used as a candidate antiproliferative agent due to its optimal cytotoxic activity.

Many studies have summarized the correlations between MIC and activity as follows: An extract was considered to have good antibacterial activity if its MIC was less than 100 µg/ml, moderate antibacterial activity if it was between 100 and 500 µg/ml, weak antibacterial activity if it was between 500 and 1000 µg/ml, and inactive antibacterial activity if it was over 1000 µg/ml [69]. Based on the results given in Table 6, the most sensitive tested microorganisms were *Clostridium perfringens*, *Enterococcus faecalis*, and *Escherichia coli* with a MIC value of 7.81 µg/ml, 31.25 µg/ml, and 31.25 µg/ml MIC value respectively. In a study conducted by Bai et al., it was determined that quinic acid disrupts the oxidative phosphorylation pathway and alters glycerophospholipids and fatty acids to interfere with membrane fluidity [70]. In addition, in a study by Rigano et al., determined that Rutin has high antibacterial activity on both gram positive and gram negative bacteria [71]. Previous studies revealed sufficient data to support the link between certain bacteria and cancer [72]. Various bacteria, including *Escherichia coli* [73] and several *Streptococcus sp.*[74], have been associated to chronic colon infections and an increased risk of colon cancer. In another studies, it has been found that the staphylococcal *a*-toxin can simultaneously activate the production of various cytokines linked to all stages of tumor development and nuclear factor κB, the known tumor promoter, in the progression of hepatocellular carcinoma [75]. Considering all these, MP extract can be used in bacterial infections and cancer prophylaxis due to rich secondary compounds.

Table 6. Antibacterial activity of *Morina persica* extract

Microorganisms	MIC (µg/mL)	Tetracycline (µg/mL)
Gram positive		
<i>Clostridium perfringens</i>	7.81	7.81
<i>Listeria monocytogenes</i>	250	3.91
<i>Bacillus cereus</i>	500	7.81
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>	125	1.95
<i>Enterococcus faecalis</i>	31.25	1.95
Gram negative		
<i>Escherichia coli</i>	31.25	7.81
<i>Pseudomonas aeruginosa</i>	500	7.81
<i>Salmonella enteritidis</i>	125	3.91

4. CONCLUSION

The present study investigated the chemical composition, antioxidant activity, antibacterial activity, and proliferative/cytotoxic activity of *M. persica*. The aerial parts of *M. persica* were found to be a significant source of phenolic compounds, including quinic acid and rutin, which exhibited antioxidant activity. The extract demonstrated antiproliferative effects against cancer cells and low cytotoxicity towards normal cells. Moreover, *M. persica* exhibited potent antibacterial activity against *Clostridium perfringens*, *Enterococcus faecalis*, and *Escherichia coli*. Therefore, *M. persica* holds potential for use as both an industrial source of quinic acid and as a functional food with health-promoting effects. Nonetheless, further research is required to understand the mechanisms of *in vivo* action, bioavailability, and related metabolic pathways before *M. persica* can be utilized as a functional food.

5. MATERIALS AND METHODS

5.1. Chemicals

For all biological activity studies and LC-MS/MS analyses, including chemicals, solvents, and enzymes, all materials were obtained from Sigma Aldrich, Fluka, and Biological Industries (BI, USA).

5.2. Plant material

Morina persica L. (Caprifoliaceae) was collected from the 8th km of Erzincan-Kelkit Road, Erzincan Turkey in July 2019. The plant material was authenticated by Prof. Dr. Ali KANDEMİR, and a voucher specimen (Kandemir 5089) was deposited at EBYU Herbarium, Erzincan, Turkey.

5.3. Extraction

The aerial parts of *Morina persica* (Herba) were dried at room temperature in a shady area, and then ground into a fine powder using a laboratory mill. 15 grams of the powdered material were macerated in 70% methanol. The resulting extract was then concentrated under vacuum at 40 °C using a rotary evaporator. All samples were stored in the dark at +4 °C until they were used.

5.4. LC-MS/MS Quantification of Phenolic

LC-MS/MS analysis was conducted to quantitatively determine the presence of 56 components in the *Morina persica* extract using a previously validated method developed by a previous study [76]. The extract was first diluted with ethanol to a concentration of 250 mg/L and then filtered through a 0.2 µm microfiber filter prior to injection into the LC-MS/MS. The LC-MS/MS data was processed using Shimadzu Lab Solutions software. More information on the validation method and LC-MS/MS chromatogram can be found in Figure S1-S2 and Tablo S1.

A Shimadzu-Nexera model ultrahigh performance liquid chromatograph (UHPLC) coupled with a tandem mass spectrometer was used to accomplish quantitative evaluation of 56 phytochemicals. The reversed-phase UHPLC was equipped with an autosampler (SIL-30AC model), a column oven (CTO-10ASvp model), binary pumps (LC-30AD model), and a degasser (DGU- 20A3R model). Consequently, the chromatographic separation was performed on a reversed phase Agilent Poroshell 120 EC-C18 model (150 mm×2.1 mm, 2.7 µm) analytical column. The column temperature was set to 40°C. The elution gradient was composed of eluent A (water+5 mM ammonium formate+0.1% formic acid) and eluent B (methanol+5 mM ammonium formate+0.1% formic acid). The following gradient elution profile was used: 20-100% B (0-25 min), 100% B (25-35 min), 20% B (35-45 min). Furthermore, the solvent flow rate and injection volume were settled as 0.5 mL/min and 5 µL, respectively.

The mass spectrometric detection was carried out using a Shimadzu LCMS-8040 model tandem mass spectrometer equipped with an electrospray ionization (ESI) source operating in both negative and positive ionization modes. LC-ESI-MS/MS data were acquired and processed by LabSolutions software (Shimadzu). The MRM (multiple reaction monitoring) mode was used for the quantification of the phytochemicals. The MRM method was optimized to selectively detect and quantify phytochemical compounds based on the screening of specified precursor phytochemical-to-fragment ion transitions. The collision energies (CE) were optimized in order to generate optimal phytochemical fragmentation and maximal transmission of the desired product ions. The MS operating conditions were applied as: drying gas (N₂) flow, 15 L/min; nebulizing gas (N₂) flow, 3 L/min; DL temperature, 250°C; heat block temperature, 400°C, and interface temperature, 350°C.

5.5. Antioxidant activity assays

The antioxidant capacity of *M. persica* extract was evaluated using spectrophotometric techniques to measure the in vitro free radical scavenging activity (DPPH[·]), ferric ion reducing antioxidant power (FRAP), total phenolic content (TPC), and total flavonoid content (TFC).

5.5.1. Total phenolic content

The total phenol content (TPC) of the extract was measured and the results were reported in milligrams of gallic acid equivalents per gram of extract (mg GAE/g extract), as described by GÖZCÜ et al. [77]. The stock solutions of both gallic acid and extract were prepared (1 mg/mL). 0.1 mL of the stock solution of the extract was diluted with 4.5 mL of distilled water. It was made up to 5 mL with 0.3 mL of Na₂CO₃ (2%) and 0.1 mL of Folin-Ciocalteu reagent. After 10 minutes at room temperature, it was vortexed and kept in the dark for 120 minutes for incubation. The absorbance at 760 nm of the solution was recorded.

5.5.2. Total flavonoid content

Aluminum chloride was used to determine the TFC in the extract with the spectrophotometric method [78]. Quercetin was used as a standard. Stock solutions of the extract and quercetin (1 mg/mL) were prepared in methanol. 0.1 mL of the stock solution of the extract, 4.7 mL of methanol, 0.1 mL of AlCl₃ (10%), and 0.1 mL of 1 M ammonium acetate solution were added to a cuvette and vortexed. The mixture was incubated for 45 min. at room temperature. After incubation, the absorbance at 415 nm was recorded using a spectrophotometer. A calibration curve was generated for quercetin using different concentrations (1-800 µg/mL). The total flavonoid content (TFC) of the extract was calculated using the calibration curve and expressed as mg quercetin equivalent (QE) per g extract. The mean and standard deviation of the TFC were determined.

5.5.3. DPPH· Free Radical Scavenging Ability

The free radical scavenging activity was tested using a modified version of the procedure described by Liyana et al. technique [79]. In this experiment, a 0.26 mM DPPH· solution was prepared along with stock solutions of the extracts at 1 mg/mL. The stock solutions were then taken at various amounts ranging from 20-400 µL and the final volume was adjusted to 3 mL with MeOH. Next, 1 mL of the DPPH· solution was added to each solution, which was then vortexed and incubated at room temperature for 30 minutes. At the end of the incubation period, the absorbance of each reaction mixture was measured at 517 nm. This procedure was repeated six times, and the mean±standard deviation of the results was calculated. The absorbance values were then converted to % DPPH· scavenging activity, and the IC₅₀ (µg/mL) for each extract was determined.

5.5.4. FRAP· Free Radical Scavenging Ability

Ferric reducing antioxidant power (FRAP) study was conducted by Oyaizu et al. with a few minor changes [80]. To measure the total antioxidant capacity of the MP, 250 µL of the MP was mixed with 1.25 mL of 0.2 M phosphate buffer (pH 6.6) and then combined with 1.25 mL of K₃Fe(CN)₆ solution. The resulting mixture was incubated at 50 °C in a water bath for 20 min and allowed to cool to room temperature. After adding 1.25 mL of TCA (10 %) and 0.25 mL of FeCl₃ (0.1 %) to the cooled mixture, it was mixed, and the absorbance was measured at 700 nm. The absorbance values were then converted to mmol Trolox equivalent (TE) activity/g using a calibration curve consisting of various Trolox concentrations ranging from 10-100 µmol/L. All measurements were performed in triplicate, and mean values and standard deviations were calculated.

5.6. Antiproliferative activity and Cytotoxicity test

The inhibition of cell proliferation and cytotoxicity was evaluated in various cancer cell lines, including A172 (ATCC, CRL-1620) and C6 (ATCC, CCL-107) brain cancer cell lines, HeLa (ATCC, CCL-2) and A2780 (RRID, CVCL-0134) gynecological cancer cell lines, SW620 (ATCC, CCL-227) and HT29 (ATCC, HTB-38) colon cancer cell lines, and normal cell lines, including Beas2B (ATCC, CRL-9609), RPE (ATCC, CRL-4000), and HSF (ATCC, CRL-7449) skin, lung, and retinal cell lines, respectively. The MTT assay was used to evaluate cell proliferation, while the LDH cytotoxicity assay was used to evaluate cytotoxicity. The *M. persica* extract was used in these evaluations [81]. Cell preparation procedures were carried out in a sterile environment in a laminar cabinet. The cell lines were used after reaching confluence in DMEM or RPMI1640 medium containing 10% FBS and 2% PenStrep solution, under 37°C and 5% CO₂ conditions. Measuring plates were seeded with 10,000 cells per well for the MTT cell proliferation assay and 5,000 cells per well for the LDH cytotoxicity assay. After approximately 16 hours of pre-incubation, test extracts were added and measurements were performed after 24 hours of incubation. The MTT test results were reported as % cell inhibition, with the optical density of the solvent (DMSO) treated cells assumed to be 100%. The

measurement of NCI-60 survival parameters (GI50, TGI, and LC50) was analyzed using a logarithmic function on the logarithmic curve prepared from the absorbance values obtained after the following formulas: Cell proliferation: $[(Ti-Tz)/(C-Tz)] \times 100$ if $Ti \geq Tz$ (cytotoxic effect) or $[(Ti-Tz)/Tz] \times 100$ if $Ti < Tz$ (cytotoxic or cytotoxic effect) (Tz; zero point, C; control growth, Ti; inhibition by test substance). GI50: Concentration value that reduces growth by 50% ($[(Ti-Tz)/(C-Tz)] \times 100 = 50$), TGI: Concentration value that reduces growth by 100% ($Ti = Tz$), LC50: concentration value that by 50% kill cells in the medium ($[(Ti-Tz)/Tz] \times 100 = 50$) [81, 82]. The LDH test results determined the change in the amount of formazan formed as a result of LDH enzyme activity was measured and evaluated according to the formula below; % Cytotoxicity = $[(\text{Substance Absorbance} - \text{Low Control} / \text{High Control} - \text{Low Control}) \times 100]$ [81, 82].

5.7. Antibacterial activity

To determine the antibacterial properties of *Morina persica* extract, a microdilution technique was used as described by Elshikh et al. [83]. The test was conducted on five gram-positive bacteria including *Staphylococcus aureus* (ATCC 6538), *Listeria monocytogenes* (ATCC 51774), *Bacillus cereus* (ATCC 10876), *Clostridium perfringens* (ATCC 13124), *Enterococcus faecalis* (ATCC 8459), and three gram-negative bacteria; *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* (ATCC 15442), *Salmonella enteritidis* (ATCC 15442), *Escherichia coli* (ATCC 25922). Test material was serially diluted (from 1000 to 1.95 µg/ml) in 10% w/v DMSO and added to the first row of a 96-well plate. The other wells were filled with 50 µL of sterile Muller Hinton broth (MHB), then 50 µL of the first well was transferred to the latter wells. 10 µL of bacterial suspension (1×10^8 CFU/ml) was added to the corresponding well and incubated at 37°C for 18 hours. Then, 30 µL of resazurin solution (0.02%) was added to each well, and the plates were incubated for 6 hours. A sterile control well was set up by adding 50 µL of DMSO solution (10% w/v), 10 µL of MHB, 30 µL of indicator solution, and 10 µL of bacterial solution for each bacterium. Negative control was prepared by adding 30 µL of indicator solution and 60 µL of MHB. The minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) values in µg/mL for each bacterial strain were noted as the concentration level at which a color change from purple to pink was observed, indicating a non-inhibited bacterial action.

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Acknowledgements: -

Author contributions: Concept - S.G., Z.A., S.S., H.A.; Design - S.G., Z.A., S.S., H.A.; Supervision - S.G.; Resources - S.G., Z.A., S.S., A.A. A.A., M.A.Y., H.A.; Materials - S.G., Z.A., S.S., H.A.; Data Collection and/or Processing - S.G., Z.A., S.S., A.A. A.A., M.A.Y., H.A.; Analysis and/or Interpretation - S.G., Z.A., S.S., A.A. A.A., M.A.Y., H.A.; Literature Search - S.G., Z.A., H.A.; Writing - S.G., H.A.; Critical Reviews - S.G., H.A.

Conflict of interest statement: The authors declared no conflict of interest in the manuscript.

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