

IDENTIFICATION OF PHENOLIC COMPOUNDS IN
PIPER SARMENTOSUM ROXB. LEAVES METHANOLIC
EXTRACT AND ITS CYTOTOXICITY STUDIES
AGAINST PATHOGENIC *ACANTHAMOEBA* SPP.

BY

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ABSTRACT

Phenolic compounds are plant secondary metabolites that are beneficial to human health. Previous studies reported that phenolic compounds could lower the risk of heart diseases, occurrence of cancers and many microbial infections. *Piper sarmentosum* or locally known as Kaduk is a tropical herb that has long history in traditional medicines and food. These benefits are significantly dependent on the phenolic content. In this study, the crude methanolic extract of *Piper sarmentosum* leaves were analyzed for phenolic compounds identification and its anti-amoebic properties against two pathogenic *Acanthamoeba* strains namely *Acanthamoeba castelanii* and *Acanthamoeba* sp. of Hospital Kuala Lumpur (HKL) isolate. The total phenolic content in *P. sarmentosum* leaves methanolic extract was first determined by using Folin-Ciocalteu assay. The compounds were further characterized by using gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS), liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry (LC-MS) and reverse phase-high performance liquid chromatography (RP-HPLC) analyses. The cytotoxicity of the plant extract was examined using four assays: determination of IC₅₀ by eosin dye method, cell morphological analysis using inverted light and scanning electron microscopies, cell membrane integrity assessment by acridine orange/propidium iodide (AO/PI) staining, and determination of cell death mode by DNA fragmentation assay. The total phenolic content was found to be 142.72 mg[GAE]/g of the extract. A total of 36 phenolic compounds were identified from the three high-resolution chromatography analyses. The IC₅₀ values obtained were 74.64 µg/mL for *A. castelanii* while 22.13 µg/mL for *Acanthamoeba* sp. (HKL isolate). Microscopy analyses showed that the extract caused cell encystment indicated by distinctive morphological changes on cell shape and organelles, shortening of acanthopodia and disruption on cell membrane integrity. The extract was also discovered to promote apoptosis in both *Acanthamoeba* species. The result provided the evidence that crude methanolic extract of *P. sarmentosum* leaves contains active phenolic compounds contributing to its anti-acanthamoebic properties.

ملخص البحث

إن المركبات الفينولية هي المستقبلات الثانوية النباتية التي لها فوائد مهمة على صحة الإنسان. ذكرت الدراسات السابقة أن المركبات الفينولية يمكن أن تقلل من خطر أمراض القلب، وحدوث السرطان والعديد من الأمراض الجرثومية. إن عشب *Piper sarmentosum* أو ما يعرف محليا باسم Kaduk هو عشبة استوائية لها تاريخ طويل في الأدوية التقليدية ويستعمل أيضا كغذاء. هذه الفوائد تعتمد بشكل كبير على محتوى الفينول. في هذه الدراسة، تم تحليل المستخلص الميثانولي الخام لأوراق *Piper sarmentosum* لتحديد هوية المركبات الفينولية وخصائصها المضادة للأمويك ضد سلالتين من نوع *Acanthamoeba castelanii* وهما *Acanthamoeba castelanii* و *Acanthamoeba sp.* من مستشفى كوالا لامبور (HKL). تم تحديد محتوى الفينول الكلي في المستخلص الميثانولي الخام لأوراق *P. sarmentosum* وذلك باستخدام اختبار Folin-Ciocalteu لأول مرة، وتم تمييز المركبات كذلك باستخدام طيف الكتلة الكروماتوغرافي للغاز (GC-MS)، قياس الطيف الكتلي اللوني السائل (LC-MS) والتحليل الكروماتوغرافي السائل عالي الأداء (RP-HPLC). تم فحص السمية الخلوية للمستخلص النباتي باستخدام أربع فحوصات: تحديد IC_{50} بطريقة eosin dye، تحليل شكل الخلية باستخدام الضوء المقلوب ومسح المجهر الإلكتروني، تقييم سلامة غشاء الخلية بواسطة تلطيخ الأكريدين البرتقالي / البروبيديوم (AO / PI)، وتحديد وضع موت الخلايا عن طريق فحص تجزئة الحمض النووي. تم العثور على محتوى الفينول الكلي ليكون 142.72 mg[GAE]/g من المستخلص. تم تحديد ما مجموعه 36 مركبات فينول من ثلاثة تحليلات لونية عالية الدقة. كانت قيم IC_{50} التي تم الحصول عليها 74.64 ميكروغرام / مل ل *A. castelanii* بينما 22.13 ميكروغرام / مل من *Acanthamoeba sp.* (HKL isolate) أظهرت التحاليل المجهرية أن المستخلص قد تسبب في انسحاب الخلية من خلال تغيرات شكلية مميزة على شكل الخلية والعضيات، وتقصير في *acanthopodi* وانقطاع في سلامة الغشاء الخلوي. كما تم اكتشاف أن للمستخلص قدرة لتعزيز الاستموات في كلا النوعين ل *Acanthamoeba* قدمت هذه النتيجة الدليل على أن مستخلص الميثانول الخام من أوراق *P. sarmentosum* يحتوي على مركبات فينولية نشطة تسهم في خصائصه المضادة للالتهاب.

APPROVAL PAGE

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DECLARATION

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*This thesis is dedicated to my family and friends
for outstanding support and love.*

Thank you Allah

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Approval page.....	iv
Declaration.....	v
Acknowledgements.....	viii
Table of Contents.....	ix
List of Tables.....	xii
List of Figures.....	xiii
List of Equations.....	xv
List of Abbreviation.....	xvi
List of Symbols.....	xviii
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Research Background.....	1
1.2 Problem Statements.....	4
1.3 Research Objectives.....	5
1.4 Significance of Study.....	6
1.5 Research Hypothesis.....	6
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
2.1 Free-living amoeba (FLA): <i>Acanthamoeba</i> spp.	7
2.1.1 Role and Distribution in Environment.....	7
2.1.2 Biology of <i>Acanthamoeba</i> spp.....	8
2.1.3 Identification of <i>Acanthamoeba</i> and Its Pathogenicity.....	11
2.1.4 <i>Acanthamoeba</i> spp. as Causative Agent for Diseases.....	14
2.1.5 Inefficiency in <i>Acanthamoeba</i> Infection Treatment.....	15
2.2 Antimicrobial Properties of Plant Phenolic Compounds.....	17
2.2.1 Plant-derived Phenolic Compounds.....	17
2.2.2 Chemical Properties of Plant Phenolic Compounds.....	18
2.2.3 Antimicrobial Properties of Plant Phenolic Compounds.....	22
2.3 Medicinal Plant: <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> roxb.....	23
2.3.1 Plant Description.....	23
2.3.2 Pharmacological Benefits of <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Roxb.....	24
2.3.3 Phytochemical Constituents in <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Roxb.....	26
2.4 Phenolic compoundS extraction from plant.....	33
2.5 Qualitative and quantitative analysis of phenolic content in plant.....	36
2.6 Cytotoxicity effects of <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> on parasitic.....	38
protozoa.....	38
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	40
3.1 Overview of Methodology.....	40
3.2 Plant Material.....	42
3.3 Extraction of Phenolic Compounds From <i>Piper Sarmentosum</i> Leaves....	43
3.4 Identification of phenolic compounds in <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> leaves	
methanolic extract.....	44

3.4.1	Determination of Total Phenolic Content	44
3.4.2	Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometry (GC-MS) Analysis	46
3.4.3	Reverse Phase - High Performance Liquid Chromatography (RP-HPLC) Analysis	47
3.4.3.1	Sample and Standard Solution Preparation	47
3.4.3.2	RP-HPLC Instrumentation System.....	48
3.4.3.3	Statistical Analysis of HPLC Quantitative Data	50
3.4.4	Liquid Chromatography Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS) Analysis	50
3.4.4.1	LC-MS Instrumentation System.....	50
3.4.4.2	Mass Spectrometer Analysis	52
3.5	Cytotoxicity Studies of <i>Piper Sarmentosum</i> Leaves Methanolic Extract on <i>Acanthamoeba</i> spp.....	52
3.5.1	<i>Acanthamoeba</i> Strains and Cell Culture Conditions.....	52
3.5.2	Determination of Half-maximal Inhibition Concentration (IC ₅₀) Value of <i>Piper Sarmentosum</i> Leaves Methanolic Extract.....	53
3.5.2.1	Extract Sample Solution Preparation.....	54
3.5.2.2	Eosin Dye Method Procedure.....	55
3.5.2.3	Statistical Analysis of IC ₅₀ Values	56
3.5.3	Microscopy Observation of <i>Acanthamoeba</i> Cells Morphology	57
3.5.3.1	Inverted Light Microscopy	57
3.5.3.2	Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM).....	59
3.5.4	Assessment of Cells' Membrane Integrity by Acridine Orange/Propidium Iodide (AO/PI) Staining.....	61
3.5.4.1	<i>Acanthamoeba</i> Cells Harvesting	61
3.5.4.2	Acridine Orange/Propidium Iodide (AO/PI) Cell Staining ...	62
3.5.4.3	Cell Quantification Analysis	62
3.5.5	Determination of Mode of Cell Death by DNA Fragmentation assay	63
3.5.5.1	DNA Extraction from <i>Acanthamoeba</i> Cells.....	63
3.5.5.2	Gel Electrophoresis	64
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS		66
4.1	Identification of Phenolic Compounds in <i>Piper Sarmentosum</i> Roxb. Leaves Methanolic Extract.....	66
4.1.1	Determination of Total Phenolic Content.....	66
4.1.2	Gas Chromatography Mass Spectrometry (GC-MS) Analysis	67
4.1.3	Reverse Phase - High Performance Liquid Chromatography (RP-HPLC) Analysis	70
4.1.4	Liquid Chromatography Mass Spectrometry (LC-MS) Analysis	74
4.2	Cytotoxicity Studies of <i>Piper Sarmentosum</i> Leaves Methanolic Extract on <i>Acanthamoeba</i> spp.....	80
4.2.1	Determination of Half-maximal Inhibition Concentration (IC ₅₀) Value of <i>Piper Sarmentosum</i> Leaves Methanolic Extract.....	80
4.2.2	Microscopy Observation of <i>Acanthamoeba</i> Cells Morphology	83
4.2.2.1	Inverted Light Microscopy	83
4.2.2.2	Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM).....	90
4.2.2.3	Changes of <i>Acanthamoeba</i> Morphology in Axenic Culture .	93
4.2.3	Assessment of Cells' Membrane Integrity by Acridine Orange/Propidium Iodide (AO/PI) Staining.....	96

4.2.3.1 Fluorescence Microscopy	96
4.2.3.2 Quantitative classification of Acanthamoeba cell membrane intactness	100
4.2.4 Determination of Mode of Cell Death by DNA Fragmentation assay	102
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	105
CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE WORK.....	135
6.1 Conclusion	135
6.2 Future Work	136
REFERENCES.....	138
APPENDIX A	163
APPENDIX B	164
APPENDIX C	165
APPENDIX D	166
APPENDIX E	168
APPENDIX F	169
APPENDIX G.....	171
APPENDIX H.....	176

LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1	Categories of Phenolic Compounds and Their Respective Antimicrobial Mechanism.	23
Table 2.2	Phytochemical Constituents in <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Methanolic Extract from GC-MS analysis	30
Table 2.3	Phenolic Compositions in <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Crude Methanolic Extract from HPLC analysis	32
Table 3.1	The Isocratic Condition of HPLC Analysis with Respect to Target Compounds	49
Table 3.2	The Condition of LC-MS Analysis in Gradient Mode	51
Table 3.3	<i>Acanthamoeba</i> Strains Used for The Evaluation of <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Leaves Methanolic Extract Cytotoxicity Assays.	52
Table 4.1	Chemical Constituents Detected in Methanolic Extract of <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Leaves from GC-MS Analysis	69
Table 4.2	Composition of Phenolic Compounds in Methanolic Extract of <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Leaves Detected from HPLC Analysis	71
Table 4.3	The List of Phenolic Compounds Identified in <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Leaves Methanolic Extract from LC-MS Analysis	75
Table 4.4	IC ₅₀ Values of <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Leaves Extract and Chlorhexidine on <i>Acanthamoeba castelanii</i> (CCAP 1501/2A) and <i>Acanthamoeba</i> sp. (HKL isolate).	81
Table 5.1	The List of Biological Properties of Phenolic Compounds Identified from Chromatography Analyses	113

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Life Cycle of <i>Acanthamoeba</i> spp.	10
Figure 2.2	Microscopy Image of <i>Acanthamoeba castelanii</i>	10
Figure 2.3	Chemical Structure of Simple Phenol; the First Member of Phenolic Family	19
Figure 2.4	Basic Chemical Structures of Flavonoids	20
Figure 2.5	Structural Backbone of Some Phenolic Acids in Plants.	21
Figure 2.6	Picture of Mature <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Roxb. Leaves	24
Figure 2.7	Chemical Structure of Identified Compounds from <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Leaves Hexane Extract	27
Figure 2.8	Chemical Structures of 14 Phytochemicals Isolated from <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Methanol and Hexane Extracts	28
Figure 2.9	Chemical Structures of Four Phenylpropanoids Isolated from <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Leaves	30
Figure 2.10	Flowchart of Standard Procedure for Medicinal Plant Study	34
Figure 3.1	Flowchart of Research Methodology	41
Figure 3.2	The Set Up for Phenolic Compounds Extraction from <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Leaves under Nitrogen Atmosphere	44
Figure 3.3	Schematic Drawing of Cardboard Cover Fitted to the Bottom Surface of T-25 Culture Flask	59
Figure 4.1	The Linear Calibration Curve of Gallic Acid Standard for Total Phenolic Content	66
Figure 4.2	GC-MS Chromatogram of Phenolic Compounds Detected in Methanolic Extract of <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Leaves	68
Figure 4.3	Representative Chromatograms of Standard Solution (Gallic Acid and Tannic Acid) and <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Leaves Methanolic Extract from HPLC Analysis	72
Figure 4.4	Representative Chromatograms of Standard Solution (Quercetin and Naringenin) and <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Leaves Methanolic Extract from HPLC Analysis	73

Figure 4.5	Total Chromatogram of Phenolic Compounds Detected in <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Leaves Methanolic Extract from LC-MS Analysis	79
Figure 4.6	Non-linear Dose Response Curves of <i>Piper sarmentosum</i> Leaves Methanolic Extract on <i>Acanthamoeba castelanii</i> (CCAP 1501/2A) and <i>Acanthamoeba</i> sp. (HKL isolate)	80
Figure 4.7	Inverted Light Microscopy Images of <i>Acanthamoeba castelanii</i> (CCAP 1501/2A)	85
Figure 4.8	Inverted Light Microscopy Images of <i>Acanthamoeba</i> sp. (HKL Isolate)	86
Figure 4.9	Measurement of <i>Acanthamoeba castelanii</i> (CCAP 1501/2A) Cell Confluency	88
Figure 4.10	Measurement of <i>Acanthamoeba</i> sp. (HKL isolate) Cell Confluency	89
Figure 4.11	Scanning Electron Micrograph of <i>Acanthamoeba castelanii</i> (CCAP 1501/2A) Single Cell	91
Figure 4.12	Scanning Electron Micrograph of <i>Acanthamoeba</i> sp. (HKL isolate) Single Cell	92
Figure 4.13	Zoomed-in Microscopy Image of <i>Acanthamoeba castelanii</i> (CCAP 1501/2A) Morphology in Axenic Culture	94
Figure 4.14	Zoomed-in Microscopy Image of <i>Acanthamoeba</i> sp. (HKL isolate) Morphology in Axenic Culture	95
Figure 4.15	Fluorescence Micrographs of <i>Acanthamoeba castelanii</i> (CCAP 1501/2A) Stained with AO/PI Dyes	98
Figure 4.16	Fluorescence Micrographs of <i>Acanthamoeba</i> sp. (HKL isolate) Stained with AO/PI Dye	99
Figure 4.17	Percentage of Membrane Intactness of <i>Acanthamoeba castelanii</i> (CCAP 1501/2A)	101
Figure 4.18	Percentage of Membrane Intactness of <i>Acanthamoeba</i> sp. (HKL isolate)	101
Figure 4.19	Internucleosomal of DNA Fragmentation in <i>Acanthamoeba castelanii</i> (CCAP 1501/2A)	103
Figure 4.20	Internucleosomal of DNA Fragmentation in <i>Acanthamoeba</i> sp. (HKL isolate).	104

LIST OF EQUATIONS

Equation 3.1	Equation formula: $Y = 3.679x$	45
Equation 3.2	Percentage of cell growth inhibition (%) $= 100 - \text{Percentage of cell survival (\%)}$	56
Equation 3.3	Percentage of cell survival (%) $= \frac{\text{Abs sample} - \text{Abs blank}}{\text{Abs negative control} - \text{Abs blank}} \times 100$	56

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

AF	Area fraction
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
AK	<i>Acanthamoeba</i> keratitis
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
AO	Acridine orange
ARB	Amoeba resistant bacteria
CCAP	Culture Collection of Algae and Protozoa
CCS	Collision cross-section
CNS	Central nervous system
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
ESI	Electron Spray Ionization
FLA	Free-living amoeba
FTA	Forsythoside A
GAE	Gallic acid equivalents
G.A.E	Granulomatous amoebic encephalitis
GC-MS	Gas chromatography mass spectrometry
GNC	Glasshouse and Nursery Complex
HKL	Hospital Kuala Lumpur
HMDS	Hexamethyldisilazane
HPLC	High performance liquid chromatography
HSD	Honestly significant difference
IC ₅₀	Inhibition concentration for 50% of cell population
IIUM	International Islamic University Malaysia

LC-MS	Liquid chromatography mass spectrometry
MDR	Multi-drug resistance
MRSA	Methicillin resistant <i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>
NIST	National Institute of Standards and Technology
OD	Optical density
PBS	Phosphate buffered saline
PHMB	Polyhexamethylene biguanide
PI	Propidium iodide
PSLME	<i>Piper sarmentosum</i> leaves methanolic extract
PYG	Peptone-yeast-glucose
QToF	Quadrupole Time-of-Flight
RP-HPLC	Reverse phase-high performance liquid chromatography
rRNA	Ribosomal ribonucleic acid
S.E.M	Standard error of mean
SEM	Scanning electron microscopy
TBE	Tris/Borate/EDTA
TPC	Total phenolic content
UKM	National University of Malaysia
UPLC	Ultra performance liquid chromatography
UV	Ultraviolet

LIST OF SYMBOLS

μm	Micrometre
mm	Milimetre
cm	Centimetre
cm^2	Square centimetre
nm	Nanometre
μL	Microlitre
mL	Mililitre
L	Litre
μg	Microgram
mg	Milligram
g	Gram
%	Percentage
$^{\circ}\text{C}$	Degree celcius
μM	Micro molar
M	Molar
molar	Molar mass
mbar	Milibar
kPa	Kilopascal
eV	Electronvolt
kV	Kilovolt
m/z	Mass-to-charge ratio
h	Hour
psi	Pound per square inch
rpm	Revolutions per minute
kbp	Kilo basepairs

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

Acanthamoeba is a free-living amoeba that could be found ubiquitously in the normal environment especially water, soil and air. As *Acanthamoeba* typically lives as bacterial consumer in natural environment, its distribution is based on the availability of bacterial supply, which are most commonly found in seawater, river, lakes and contaminated water sources (Lorenzo-Morales et al., 2005; Tsvetkova et al., 2004). The reputation of *Acanthamoeba* as an opportunistic human pathogen has been acknowledged in medical history. Primarily, *Acanthamoeba* could cause many diseases primarily by disseminating infections to skin, eyes, lungs, sinuses, and extra-cerebral organs. Upon pathogenicity in humans, *Acanthamoeba* can easily enter through lower respiratory tract, or ulcerated and broken skins which then it could produce toxins that can constitute a lethal dose. These infections could progress to chronic diseases such as *Acanthamoeba* keratitis as well as the fatal encephalitis known as granulomatous amoebic encephalitis (G.A.E) although in seldom occurrences. Many reports showed that approximately 85% of all amoebic keratitis cases were associated with contact lens users (Verani et al., 2009). In fact, commercial contact lens solutions were frequently reported to have lack of proper disinfectants against *Acanthamoeba* species. Without appropriate treatment, *Acanthamoeba* keratitis could result in permanent blindness. Meanwhile, G.A.E is a fatal infection of the central nervous system that occurs upon the entrance of *Acanthamoeba* through skin and lungs. The pathogen toxins gradually spread to the brain through the bloodstream causing some

early symptoms include skin sores, headache, blurred visions, confusion, seizures and ultimately death if left untreated (Ertabaklar et al., 2006).

Moreover, this microorganism is also capable of being a reservoir for numerous microbial pathogens such as *Campylobacter jejuni*, *Legionella pneumophila* and the genus *Pseudomonas* spp. (Axelsson-Olsson et al., 2005; Marciano-Cabral & Cabral, 2003). Since the *Acanthamoeba* feed on bacteria, fungi and algae through phagocytosis as their main food sources, some of these microorganisms have successfully evolved and gained resistance to the predation, thus are able to survive, increase the rate of growth and development and easily escape from the host (Marciano-Cabral & Cabral, 2003). Cumulatively, this facilitates for the increased occurrences of microbial infections in humans, animals and plants not only caused by the pathogenicity factors of the amoeba, also by the internalized microorganisms.

Plant secondary metabolites are becoming central players as the basic sources for modern medicines in curing numerous diseases in humans, animals and plants. Phenolic compounds constitute major secondary metabolites in plants as they play important roles for the plant protection against physical pressures such as microbial pathogens, insects and harsh environment condition (Khoddami et al., 2013). Over decades, phenolic compounds are discovered to closely associate with health benefits to humans through consumption of vegetables and fruits. Most frequently, the compounds are found to exhibit strong antioxidant properties, hence are capable of preventing many diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, occurrence of cancers and mutagenesis in human cells, and reducing the risk of diabetes (Khoddami et al., 2013). Apart from that, they are also molecules with wide range of pharmacological properties including anti-inflammatory, anti-allergenic, anti-thrombotic, anti-

atherogenic, and anti-microbial against bacteria, fungi and microalgae (Hussain et al., 2012; Zakaria et al., 2010; Dykes & Rooney, 2007).

The basic structure of phenolic compound is an aromatic or benzene ring bearing one or more hydroxyl groups (Khoddami et al., 2013). Plant phenolics comprise of many groups or subclasses such as simple phenols, coumarins, lignins, lignans, tannins, benzoic acid, cinnamic acid, phenolic acids and flavonoids (Khoddami et al., 2013; Soto-Vaca et al., 2012). Acknowledging the benefits of phenolic compounds to human health, substantial number of studies that focus on the extraction and identification of the compounds from various types of plants has increased over the last 25 years (Khoddami et al., 2013).

Numerous discoveries of plant as a source for diseases management led to execution of many researches that focus on the effectiveness of plant-based antimicrobial agents to combat the harm caused by microbial pathogens on human, plant and animal. *Piper sarmentosum* Roxb. or locally known as “Kaduk” is a terrestrial herb plant that has been used as traditional food and medicines. It is widely distributed in tropical regions including Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines and Malaysia. The plant leaves are commonly consumed as vegetable whilst the whole plant is an effective remedy to treat minor ailments such as coughs, tooth-ache, influenza and feet fungoid dermatitis (Atiay et al., 2011). Previous phytochemical studies of *P. sarmentosum* have led to isolation of several classes of physiologically active compounds especially phenolics such as flavonoids, tannins, lignan and phenylpropanoids.

Recent researches proved that some solvents-based extracts of the plant showed antimicrobial properties against wide ranges of microorganisms especially bacteria, microalgae, protozoa and fungi (Rahman et al., 2014a; Rukachaisirikul et al.,

2004). These findings reported that the demonstrated antimicrobial properties of the plant associate with high amount of phenolic content. However, the specific potential of phenolic compounds from *P. sarmentosum* against *Acanthamoeba* species has not yet been investigated. This research aimed to identify the phenolic substances present in the *P. sarmentosum* leaves crude methanolic extract (PSLME) and to evaluate the cytotoxicity effects of the extracted phenolic compounds on pathogenic *Acanthamoeba*.

In this study, the phenolic compounds were characterized by using gas chromatography mass spectrometry (GC-MS), reverse phase-high performance liquid chromatography (RP-HPLC) and liquid chromatography mass spectrometry (LC-MS) analyses. Meanwhile, the cytotoxicity studies consisted of determination of half-maximal inhibition concentration (IC₅₀) values, microscopic morphological analyses, assessment of cells' membrane integrity and determination of mode of cell death.

1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENTS

The vision threatening keratitis in human involving *Acanthamoeba* has becoming a serious problem worldwide including in Malaysia. This disease is closely related to contact lens prescribing since few decades ago. Worse still, people with normal eye health are also at the risk of *Acanthamoeba* keratitis especially those who are exposed to contaminated water sources. Current administrations for amoebic eye infections using chlorhexidine and propamidine or polyhexamethylene biguanide (PHMB) were shown as ineffective and adverse side effects were reported in patients (Clarke et al., 2012; Khan, 2008). The prescriptions are monotonous and repetitive, as the patients are required to apply the relevant drugs within interval hours per treatment. Although this topical treatment may progressively reduce the symptoms, complete recovery is

scarcely achieved (Aqeel et al., 2017). Apart from that, in the case of the central nervous system disease of G.A.E caused by *Acanthamoeba*, most of the infected people die as early as 7 to 120 days after symptoms begin (McNeil & Singh, 2012). According to Parija et al. (2015), there is no single drug is effective in treating G.A.E, hence, combination of drugs and antibiotics targeting various proteins are required. More insidiously, successful treatments often require combination of surgical and interventions from multiple medical specialists to initiate appropriate management for G.A.E cases.

It is becoming a mainstream in modern clinical researches that highlight the value of botanical medicine in treating and preventing many diseases, often without significant side effects. Therefore, there is always necessity to discover new candidate materials based on phytochemicals properties, which could be employed as new alternatives for effective drugs in preventing and treating these acanthamoebic diseases.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research focused on the *P. sarmentosum* leaves crude methanolic extract potential as anti-amoeba agent against pathogenic *Acanthamoeba* spp. The objectives of this study are listed as below:

1. To identify the phenolic compounds in crude methanolic extracts of *P. sarmentosum* leaves.
2. To evaluate the cytotoxicity of *P. sarmentosum* leaves methanolic extracts on pathogenic *Acanthamoeba* spp.

1.4 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

Although *P. sarmentosum* leaves extracts had shown effective antimicrobial properties against wide range of microorganisms primarily bacteria, fungus as well as protozoa, in our best of knowledge, this is the first study that discovers the potential of *P. sarmentosum* as anti-amoeba agent against *Acanthamoeba*. The aim of identifying the phenolics composition in the plant extract could facilitate in understanding the relationship between phenolic compounds with the exhibited anti-acanthamoebic properties.

Moreover, this fundamental study could provide the preliminary data needed to formulate and further develop improvised version of commercial contact lens disinfectant solution as well as medicines to treat *Acanthamoeba* infections primarily *Acanthamoeba* keratitis and G.A.E. The formulation of using phenolic compounds from *P. sarmentosum* as the foundation ingredient would further promote the incorporation of the herb in pharmaceutical industry although this requires more comprehensive subsequent studies. From this, national consumption of contact lens solution and medicines for *Acanthamoeba* infections will be less dependence on the imported products. This ingredient could also be marketed to global pharmaceutical companies to improve the efficiency of medicines for *Acanthamoeba* infections, in which potentially will avoid the occurrence of *Acanthamoeba* keratitis and disseminated infections caused by the pathogenic amoeba nationwide.

1.5 RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

Piper sarmentosum leaves methanolic extract contains phenolic compounds that are active to inhibit the proliferation of pathogenic *Acanthamoeba* spp.