



Effect of Ultrasonic Extract of *Capparis spinosa* Fruits Against *E. coli* O157:H7

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A B S T R A C T

E. coli O157:H7, is one of the main causes of diarrhea and the most prevalent bacterial infection that causes serious illnesses. This research was conducted to investigate the effect of *Capparis spinosa* fruit ultrasonic extract against resistant *E. coli* O157:H7 was isolated from stools of calves that were suffering from diarrhea; the bacteria were identified by the Vitek 2 system and a latex agglutination test. *C. spinosa* was extracted by ultrasonic waves water bath. The phytochemicals were carried out on *C. spinosa* fruit extract to detect the secondary metabolites. The MIC of the extract was calculated with concentrations of 400, 800, 1600, 3200, 6400, 12800 and 25600 51200 µg/mL by microdilution method (checkerboard). While using a field-emission scanning electron microscope to observe the morphological alterations in *E. coli* O157:H7 sample. The findings of this study revealed that the extract contains some biologically active compounds like alkaloids, flavonoids, steroids, glycosides, tannins, coumarins, saponins, quinones, and amino acids. That extract of *C. spinosa* had a MIC of 6400 µg/mL and had a perfect action against *E. coli* O157:H7 by forming vacuoles within the cells and that internal content had seeped out as pore formation. This finding could potentially provide an explanation for the traditional utilization of this plant material as an antibacterial agent.

Keywords: *Capparis spinosa*, fruit, methanolic, agglutination test, *E. coli* O157:H7

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INTRODUCTION

Escherichia coli (*E. coli*) is commonly found in the intestinal flora of both animals and humans. While many strains are harmless, certain serotypes, such as the enterohemorrhagic *E. coli* O157, are pathogenic and can cause illnesses ranging from moderate to fatal (1, 2). *E. coli* O157:H7 is a predominant bacterial infection responsible for severe conditions like hemolytic uremic syndrome, kidney failure, abdominal pain, and bloody diarrhea (3). Cattle serve as the primary reservoir for *E. coli* O157:H7, making it a significant global foodborne zoonotic pathogen (4, 5). The prevalence of *E. coli* O157:H7 in dairy components can be attributed to inadequate sanitation, insufficient post-milking teat dipping, improper labor practices, and inconsistent milking schedules for cows of

different ages. Moreover, its presence is often noted on dairy farms that lack proper therapeutic measures (6). Factors such as lactation stage, weather conditions, feed quality, and the bacteria's environmental persistence contribute to the risk of *E. coli* O157:H7 infection in animals (7). Infectious calf diarrhea is a major concern for newborn calves, impacting their growth, morbidity, mortality, and causing significant economic losses globally (7, 8). *E. coli* O157:H7 belongs to the broader category of Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli*, which can produce Shiga toxin types 1, 2, or both, along with their variants (7, 9).

Capparis spinosa L. (Caper) is a spiny annual shrub from the Capparidaceae family. Its ripe fruits, known for their spicy and pungent flavor, have been traditionally used to address gastrointestinal issues, urinary infections, and cardiovascular discomforts (10). *C. spinosa* thrives in

regions like Italy, South Europe, Madagascar, North and East Africa, Greece, Southwest and Central Asia, Australia, Oceania, Iraq, and Iran (11, 12). Chemical studies have identified numerous beneficial compounds in *C. spinosa*, including glucocaperin, lipids, flavonoids, alkaloids, saponins, tannins, lignin, and hydroxy-3-oxo-ionolglucosides (13-15). Traditionally, various parts of the plant have been used to treat gastrointestinal issues, skin ailments, earaches, and liver and kidney problems (16). Recent research highlights its antibacterial and antifungal properties (17). Notably, *C. spinosa* exhibits stronger antimicrobial activity against Gram-negative bacteria like *E. coli*, *Salmonella typhi*, and *Shigella dysenteriae* than against Gram-positive bacteria such as *Staphylococcus aureus* and *Bacillus panis* (18). Aerial parts of *C. spinosa* are believed to contain antibacterial compounds, with extracts showing efficacy against multiple bacterial strains, especially antibiotic-resistant ones such as *E. coli* (12). This study aims to investigate the efficacy of *C. spinosa* fruit ultrasonic extract against *E. coli* O157:H7, given its role as a primary cause of diarrhea and economic losses, especially in calves.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

E. coli O157:H7

The *E. coli* O157:H7 strain was isolated from stool samples of calves exhibiting diarrhea. The bacterial strain was identified as *E. coli* O157:H7 using the Vitek 2 system, which employs a fluorogenic methodology for the swift and precise identification of both gram-negative and gram-positive bacteria. Additionally, a latex agglutination test was conducted on the bacterial isolate as per the manufacturer's instructions (Wellcolex *E. coli* O157:H7, Remel).

Ultrasound-Assisted Extraction of *C. spinosa* Fruit

One hundred mL of 99.8% methanol (Fluka, Switzerland) was combined with 10 g of powdered *C. spinosa* fruit in a flask. The *C. spinosa* fruit, sourced from a local Iraqi market, was authenticated by the Iraqi National Herbarium, Directorate of Seed Testing and Certification, Iraqi Ministry of Agriculture, in Abu-Ghraib, Baghdad, Iraq (Certification No. 2861 on 11/11/2021). The mixture underwent ultrasonic treatment in a water bath (Sinobakr, China) for an hour at 60 kHz frequency, in the dark, and at room temperature. This procedure was repeated ten times under identical conditions. Subsequently, the mixture was filtered using filter paper (Sartorius, Germany). The filtrate was concentrated under reduced pressure using a rotary evaporator (Buchi, Switzerland). The resulting extract was stored at -18 °C until further use (21).

Preliminary Qualitative Phytochemical Screening

Standard methods were employed to detect secondary metabolites in the *C. spinosa* fruit extract as follows:

Alkaloids Detection (Mayer Test)

Mayer's reagent was added to 1 cm³ of the extract. The formation of a white or pinkish-white precipitate indicates the presence of alkaloids (23).

Flavonoids Detection (Shinoda's Test)

A few drops of concentrated hydrochloric acid were added to 1 cm³ of the extract, then a small piece of magnesium tape or its powder was added, which would have a red color indicating the presence of flavonoids (24).

Steroids Detection (Salkowski's Test)

To 1 cm³ of the extract, a few drops of concentrated sulfuric acid (H₂SO₄) were added slowly and over the walls. A bright red color indicates the presence of steroids (25).

Glycoside Detection (Keller-Kilini Test)

1 cm³ of glacial acetic acid was added to 1 cm³ of the extract, then cooled it in a water bath and two drops of ferric chloride solution were added to it, then the contents of the test tube were poured into another tube containing 2 cm³ of concentrated sulfuric acid. A red ring indicates the presence of sugars (glycosides) (26).

Phenolic Compounds and Tannins Detection (Ferric Chloride Test)

A few drops of 0.1% ferric chloride were added to 1 cm³ of the extract. A green or blackish-green color indicates the presence of tannins or phenolic compounds, while a brown color suggests a false positive for tannins (27).

Coumarins Detection (Sodium Hydroxide Test)

One cm³ of the extract was combined with 1 cm³ of distilled water in a test tube. The tube was sealed with filter paper soaked in 7% sodium hydroxide and placed in a boiling water bath. A phosphorescent greenish-yellow color indicates the presence of coumarins (28).

Saponins Detection (Mercuric Chloride's Test)

A mixture of 1 cm³ of extract and 1 cm³ of HgCl₂ at 1% was created. The emergence of a white precipitate suggests the presence of saponins (29).

Quinones Detection (Potassium Chloride's Test)

The extract was sprayed with an alcoholic potassium hydroxide solution, prepared by dissolving a trace amount of potassium hydroxide in alcohol. A color transition from red to blue indicates the presence of quinones (30).

Amino Acids and Protein Detection (Ninhydrine's Test)

Drops of 0.2% ninhydrine reagent were added to 1 cm³ of the extract, which was subsequently heated in a water

bath. A blue hue signifies the presence of free amino acids (31).

Determination of Minimum Inhibitory Concentration (MIC) of *C. spinosa* Fruit Extract

A stock solution of *C. spinosa* fruit extract was formulated in Mueller-Hinton broth (MHB, HiMedia, India). Concentrations of 400, 800, 1600, 3200, 6400, 12800, 25600, and 51200 µg/mL of the extract were prepared in a 96-well microtiter plate with a U-shaped bottom. Each well received an inoculation of 100 µL of 10⁶ CFU/mL *E. coli* O157:H7 and was incubated at 37 °C for 22 h (30). For the negative control, 200 µL of MHB was added to blank wells, which were devoid of microorganisms. To colorimetrically identify bacterial growth, 20 µL of 2,3,5-triphenyltetrazolium chloride (TTC) indicator (0.125% w/v) was introduced. This solution, prepared at a concentration of 0.125% w/v in sterile deionized water, was added to each test well and re-incubated for an additional 2 h (31).

Scanning Electron Microscope

The methodology, adapted from Bajpai et al. (32), was utilized to examine morphological changes using a field-emission scanning electron microscope (Fe-SEM, Alkora, FEI Co., Inspect S50, Holland). Two tubes were prepared, each containing 100 µL of bacterial suspensions (1×10⁸ CFU/mL) inoculated onto MHB. One tube was supplemented with the MIC value of *C. spinosa* fruit extract, while the other, serving as the positive control, contained only the bacterial suspension. Both tubes were incubated at 37 °C for 4 h. Subsequently, 600 µL of each aliquot was dispensed onto glass coverslips (1×1 cm). Post-incubation, the coverslips were rinsed thrice with 0.1 M phosphate buffer saline. This was followed by the addition of 1 mL each of 3% glutaraldehyde (Sigma, USA) and 2% paraformaldehyde (Sigma, USA) in 0.1 M potassium phosphate buffer. After three buffer washes, the samples underwent a graded dehydration process using increasing ethanol concentrations (50%, 60%, 70%, 80%, 90%, and 100%, Merck, UK). The dehydrated samples were then stored in a silica desiccator (Labbox, UK) for 72 h to ensure thorough drying. Prior to SEM analysis, the samples underwent a 2-minute gold sputtering process in an ion coater. The samples were then examined under the Fe-SEM. The primary objective of using the Fe-SEM was to elucidate the mechanism of action of the *C. spinosa* fruit extract against *E. coli* O157:H7. This included observing alterations in bacterial size, shape, and overall morphology post-extract treatment.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Phytochemical Analysis

The phytochemical tests of *C. spinosa* fruit that extracted by methanol showed that several compounds were present

in fruit. results showed, the fruit containing alkaloids, flavonoids, steroids, glycosides, carbohydrates, tannins, phenolic compounds, saponins and absent of terpin (Table 1).

Table 1. Phytoconstituent of methanolic extract *C. spinosa* fruit

Compounds	Results
Alkaloids	++++
Amino acids	+++
Cumarines	Trace
Flavonoids	+
Glycoside	+++
Quinones	+
Saponins	++
Steroids	Full
Tannins	+

This result of phytochemical screening agreed with those obtained by (34). Large amounts of phenolics and flavonoids, particularly quercetin-3-O-rutinoside (rutin), a glycoside of the flavonoid quercetin, were found in plant extracts after in vitro examination. According to the already published literature, rutin was the main flavonoid (35). Phytochemical analysis of caper extracts by Tagnaout et al. (36) revealed the presence of numerous bioactive chemicals from a variety of chemical families, including, alkaloids, flavonoids, fatty acids, esters, aldehydes and glucosinolates.

Recent studies indicated phenols and flavonoids as significant bioactive natural compounds obtained from medicinal plants (37). The findings were consistent with those reported in earlier studies by Wojdyo et al. (39), showing the plant's therapeutic and vital importance as a result of the compounds' potency in physiologic processes and defense mechanisms against bacterial and fungal pathogens that infect living organisms. The results are also in agreement with Hamad et al (40) that reported that could be seen several organic compounds, including tannins, terpins, alkaloids, flavonoids, resins, glucosides quinones, steroids, saponin sides, and phenolic compounds were presented in all the parts of the *C. spinosa* plant. Quinones are derivatives of phenols, which are present in all parts of the *C. spinosa* plant. They were ubiquitous in nature and were characteristically highly reactive (42).

The existence of active compounds including flavonoids, alkaloids, glycosides, phlobatannins, and saponins in natural fruit demonstrated their great significance and reveals their medicinal importance that was once used and is currently used. The plant is powerful against numerous bacterial infections since it was a great antioxidant (43) functional groups of tannins in the crude *C. spinosa* extract could form hydrogen bonds with proteins and carbohydrates in the bacterial cells. If this happens, they may inhibit essential enzymes for bacterial growth (35).

VITEK® 2 System identification of *E. coli* O157:H7

The isolated bacteria have achieved an excellent identification level with a probability of 98% based on the manufacturers' technical datasheet (Figure 1). The findings

showed that *E. coli* O157:H7 was identified with excellent ID message confidence levels (probability percentages between 93 and 98%). For the majority of infectious disease pathogens, bacterial identification done automatically in a clinical laboratory offers a quick and accurate diagnosis with a very high level of identification accuracy (45).

bioMérieux Customer:		AL-QIMMA LAB		Microbiology Chart Report		Printed February 23, 2022 2:35:31 PM CST											
Lab ID: 2447		Organism Quantity:		Isolate Number: 1													
Selected Organism : <i>Escherichia coli</i> O157																	
Comments:																	
Identification Information		Analysis Time: 4.88 hours		Status: Final													
Selected Organism		98% Probability		<i>Escherichia coli</i> O157													
ID Analysis Messages		Bionumber: 0405611150527210															
Biochemical Details																	
2	APPA	-	3	ADO	-	4	PyrA	-	5	IARL	-	7	dCEL	-	9	BGAL	-
10	H2S	-	11	BNAG	-	12	AGLTp	-	13	dGLU	+	14	GGT	-	15	OFF	-
17	BGLU	-	18	dMAL	+	19	dMAN	+	20	dMNE	+	21	BXYL	-	22	BAIap	-
23	ProA	+	26	LIP	-	27	PLE	-	29	TyrA	+	31	URE	-	32	dSOR	-
33	SAC	+	34	dTAG	-	35	dTRE	+	36	CIT	-	37	MNT	-	39	SKG	-
40	ILATk	+	41	AGLU	-	42	SUCT	+	43	NAGA	-	44	AGAL	+	45	PHOS	-
46	GlyA	+	47	ODC	+	48	LDC	+	53	IHISa	-	56	CMT	+	57	BGUR	-
58	O129R	+	59	GGAA	-	61	IMLTa	-	62	ELLM	-	64	ILATa	-			

Figure 1. VITEK®2 system identification of *E. coli* O157:H7

Serotyping Test (Wellcolex *E. coli* O157:H7, Remel) Latex Agglutination Test

The O157 and H7 antigens of *E. coli* colonies were identified using the wellcolex *E. coli* O157:H7, remel. O157:H7-reactive isolates were sub cultured overnight on blood agar to detect flagellar antigen (H7). Red color agglutination revealed a positive result for (O antigen), when compared to the obvious red color of the control. whereas blue color agglutination suggested a positive result for (H antigen), (Figure 2).

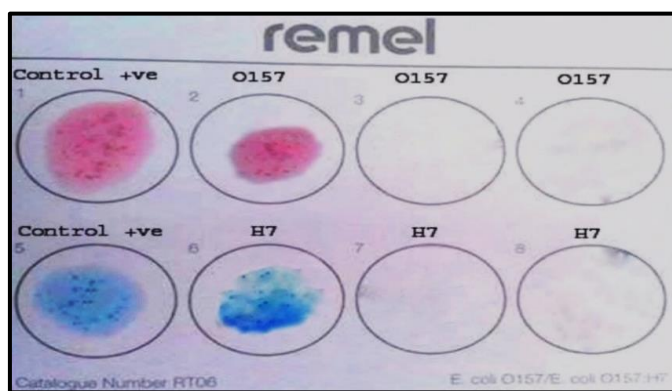


Figure 2. Positive results of O157 and H7 antigens with latex agglutination test

This result was in agreement with Al-Taae (46), who used the latex agglutination test to identify *E. coli* O157:H7 and showed that this test was specific and sensitive in recognizing *E. coli* O157:H7 isolates. It was also easy and rapid to perform and interpret. This test was used by Khalaf (47) as a quick way to identify *E. coli* O157:H7 and separate it from other pathogenic *E. coli* serotypes. Fesseha et al. (48)

also isolated *E. coli* O157:H7 from calves' fecal samples and confirmed the isolates using the latex agglutination test.

MIC

Based on the test of latex agglutination that confirmed the identity of *E. coli* O157:H7 isolate was challenged against different concentrations of *C. spinosa* fruit extract to determine the minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC). The results showed that the concentration 6400 µg/ml of *C. spinosa* fruit extract was active against *E. coli* O157:H7 isolate. The tested MIC in micro-dilution assay is shown in Figure 3. Similarly. Based on visual readings Veiga et al. (31) carried out by seeing whether or when the red color that results from the reductions of TTC (colorless) to formazan (red) develops. The MIC was determined using the lowest concentration and without any color development, confirming the results shown in the experiment. Many methods were used to determine the MIC, but the European Committee on Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing and Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute both consider the microdilution assay to be the most widely used and accredited method for determining the MIC (49). This result was in agreement with Abu-Shama (50) which reported the MIC of *C. spinosa* fruit extract against *E. coli* O157:H7 640 µg/100 mL.

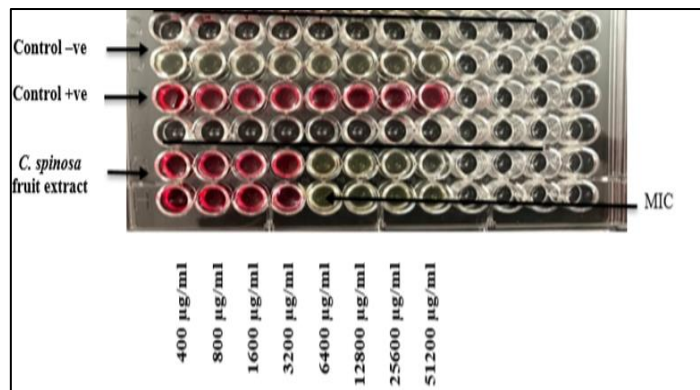


Figure 3. Checkerboard assay for minimum inhibitory concentration of *C. spinosa* fruit extract against *E. coli* O157:H7 isolate (white: no growth, red: growth)

FE-SEM

To describe the size, shape, and morphology of the bacteria after treatment with antibacterial substances, field-emission scanning electron microscopy (FE-SEM) analysis is used. FE-SEM analysis was used to detect changes in the surface morphology and integrity of the cell membrane of *E. coli* O157:H7 cells after exposure to several antibacterial agents. The results of FE-SEM showed the bacterial cells of the positive control group appeared to be of normal size and had, a typical rod-like shape with intact and smooth cell surfaces. We noticed through an image of bacteria (*E. coli* O157:H7), which was considered without treatment, that the (Figure 4) shows the growth of the

bacteria in a dense manner in the form of active growth clusters. The length of these micro clusters (1.0 micrometers) was considered a positive control to study the effect of antibacterial additives. The live bacterial system is considered free of therapeutic additives from *C.*

spinosa fruit extract. While the cell walls of the bacteria that were treated with $1\times$ MIC (6400 $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$) of *C. spinosa* fruit extract showed that there were vacuoles within the cells and that internal contents had seeped out as pore formation and *E. coli* O157:H7 cell lysis (Figure 5).

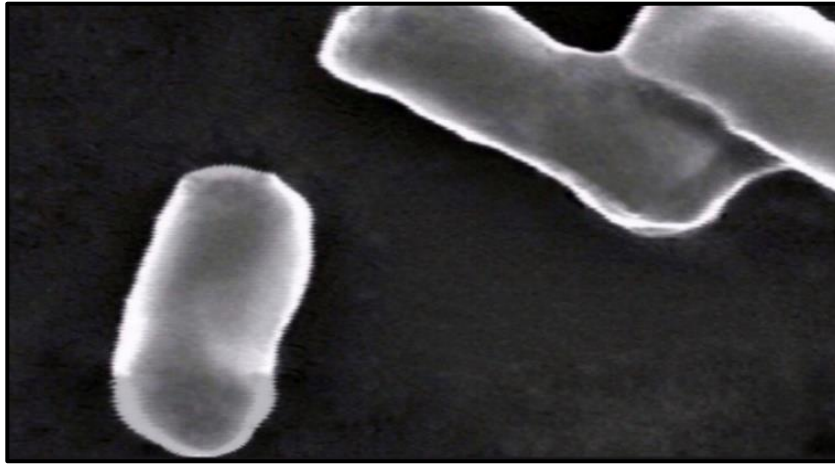


Figure 4. Field emission scanning electron microscopy photographs in micrometers of positive control *E. coli* O157: H7 shows normal sizes, a typical rod-like shape with smooth cell surfaces of bacterial cells, mag: 50000 \times , pressure: 1.10e-2pa, Inspect F50 FE-SEM: 1 μm

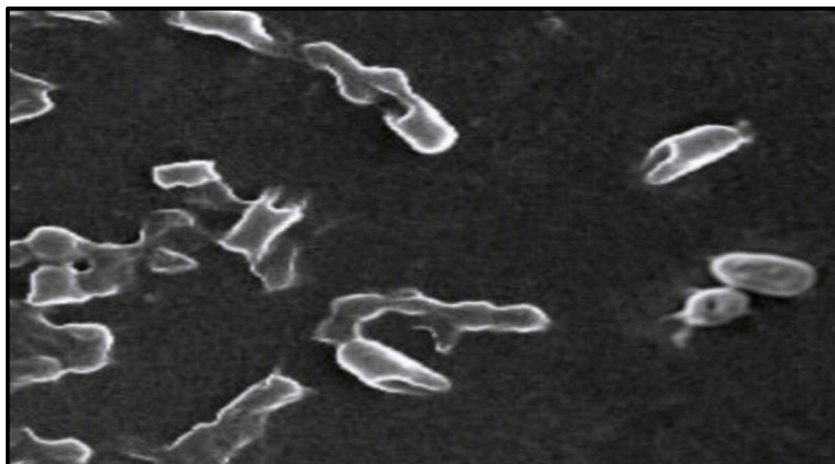


Figure 5. Field emission scanning electron microscopy photographs of reveal the antibacterial effect of *C. spinosa* fruit extract on *E. coli* O157: H7 shows vacuoles within the cells and that internal contents are seeped out as pore formation, mag: 7000 \times , pressure: 8.36e-3pa, Inspect F50 FE-SEM: 10 μm

To explore how an agent affects the shape and size of the bacteria, Fe-SEM photos needed to be recorded (51). Hamad et al. (40) indicated that the activity of crude *C. spinosa* extracts was greatest at its maximum concentration (400 mg/mL). This activity might result from its chelating nature or its ability to dissolve the lipid layer of bacterial cell walls, causing the destruction of bacterial liquids and likely leading to the formation of hydrogen bonds with hydroxyl and nitrogen groups of the crude *C. spinosa* extracts, with water molecules being found in the bacterial cells (52). The antibacterial effect of *C. spinosa* fruit extract on *E. coli* O157:H7 may be attributed to the compound present in extract that helps in the formation vacuoles

within the cells and that internal contents had seeped out as pore formation.

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N/A

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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تأثير المستخلص بالموجات فوق الصوتية لفاكهة الشفاح ضد الإيشيريشيا القولونية O157:H7

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الخلاصة

الإيشيريشيا القولونية O157: H7 أحد الأسباب الرئيسية للإسهال حيث تعتبر العدوى البكتيرية الأكثر انتشاراً التي تسبب أمراضاً خطيرة، وقد تم إجراء هذا البحث لمعرفة آلية عمل مستخلص فاكهة الشفاح بالموجات فوق الصوتية ضد الإيشيريشيا القولونية المقاومة O157: H7 (المعزولة من براز العجول التي تعاني من الإسهال)، تم التعرف على البكتيريا بواسطة نظام Vitek 2 واختبار تراض اللانكس الذي يعتمد على تفاعل الأجسام المضادة للمستضد، وتم استخلاص ثمرة الشفاح بالموجات فوق الصوتية. تم إجراء التحليل الكيميائي النباتي للكشف عن المستقلبات الثانوية. تم حساب التركيز المثبط الأدنى للمستخلص بتركيز (٤٠٠، ٨٠٠، ١٦٠٠، ٣٢٠٠، ٦٤٠٠، ١٢٨٠٠، ٢٥٦٠٠ و ٥١٢٠٠ ميكروغرام/مل) بطريقة التخفيف الدقيق. استخدم المجهر الإلكتروني الماسح Fe-SEM لمراقبة التغيرات الشكلية في عينة الإيشيريشيا القولونية O157: H7. كشفت نتائج هذا البحث أن المستخلص يحتوي على العديد من المركبات النشطة بيولوجياً مثل الفلويات والفلانويدات والستيرويدات والجليكوسيد والعفص والكومارين والصابونين والكينون والأحماض الأمينية. هذا المستخلص من ثمرة الشفاح سجل تركيز تثبيط أدنى ضد الإيشيريشيا القولونية (٦٤٠٠ ميكروغرام/مل) وله آلية عمل مثالية ضد الإيشيريشيا القولونية O157: H7 عن طريق تكوين فجوات داخل الخلايا وقد تسرب هذا المحتوى الداخلي على شكل تشكيل مسام. يمكن أن توفر هذه النتيجة تفسيراً للاستخدام التقليدي لهذه المادة النباتية كعامل مضاد للبكتيريا.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشفاح، فاكهة، ميثانول، اختبار التلازن، الإيشيريشيا القولونية O157:H7