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Phytochemical Evaluation and GC-MS Profiling of the Dichloromethane and Ethanol extracts of *Ocimum gratissimum* L. and *Lasianthera africana*. BEAUV

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ABSTRACT

The study was designed to investigate the bioactive constituents in the dichloromethane (DCM) and ethanol (ETOH) extracts of *Ocimum gratissimum* and *Lasianthera africana* which are commonly used in the treatment of diverse kinds of ailments especially in the southern part of Nigeria. Qualitative phytochemical screening was carried out on the extracts of the plants following documented procedures and gas chromatography-mass spectrometry (GC-MS) was also conducted comparing the mass spectra of the identified compounds with those of the National Institute of Standards and Technology database library. The preliminary phytochemical screening revealed the presence of secondary metabolites such as saponin, tannins, alkaloids, flavonoids and steroids in the extracts of both plants. The GC-MS analysis revealed the presence of both aliphatic and aromatic hydrocarbons as well as the terpenes and fatty acids in the DCM and ETOH extracts of *O. gratissimum* and *L. africana*. Some of these compounds are phenol; phytol and phytol acetate; squalene; caryophyllene; carmigrene; vitamin E; hexanedecanoic acid; 9, Octadecanoic acid (Z)-2-hydroxy-1-(hydroxymethyl)ethyl ester; 9,12,15-octadecatrienoic acid; 1-heptatriacotanol; tert-butylhydroquinone; methyl (Z)-5,11,14,17-eicosatetraenoic acid; benzene; decahydro-4a-methyl-1 methyl-7-(1-methyl ethenyl)-naphthalene. The presence of these multifunctional bioactive compounds in *O. gratissimum* and *L. africana* explains the diverse usage of these plants in ethnomedicine.

Key words: Phytochemical evaluation, GC-MS profiling, *Ocimum gratissimum*, *Lasianthera africana*, dichloromethane extract, ethanol extract.

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INTRODUCTION

The use of medicinal plants to manage and treat different ailments predates modern history. Herbal medicine or alternative medicine has enjoyed renewed interest in recent times due to the rising cost of orthodox medicine and its accessibility to rural dwellers. It has been estimated that more than 80% of the world population rely on medicinal herbs for their primary health care needs [1]. Moreover, several medicines in clinical use today are directly derived from exploration of medicinal plants [2, 4, 5]. As such, medicinal plants would continue to play a bigger role in disease management even in distant future. Medicinal plants are present in all parts of the globe. However, the tropical climates are known to be home to vast majority of them [3]. The pharmacological properties of medicinal plants have been linked to the abundant presence of different types of secondary metabolites such as the terpenoids, alkaloids, flavonoids, steroids etc. [4, 5]. In the southern part of Nigeria, some herbs with known medicinal properties are used on routine basis for the preparation of soups and spices for their health benefits [3]. *Ocimum gratissimum* and *Lasianthera africana* are two of such herbs.

O. gratissimum, L. family; Lamiaceae, is used extensively in many cultures for several purposes. The essential oil of this plant is often used to treat different kinds of infectious diseases [6]. Its effectiveness has been linked to the presence of copious amount of eugenol [7-9]. The Igbos in south-east Nigeria uses the

plant to manage baby's cord [10]. In Brazil, the leaves decoction is used as a mild sedative for children [11]. The leaf extracts of *O. gratissimum* have shown activity against different causative agents of diarrhoea, including *Shigellae* [12, 13]. Some chemical compounds previously isolated from *O. gratissimum* include beta selinene, bisabololine, alpha humelene, ocimene, oleanolic acid, terpinolene, farnesene [14 - 17].

L. africana, BEAUV a glabrous medicinal plant of the family, Icacinaceae reaches to the height of 61-136 cm [18]. In the southern part of Nigeria where it is used as one of the top six vegetables in the preparation of soup, it is called by different local names. The Ibibios and Efiks of Akwa Ibom and Cross River states call it "Editan" [18]. The plant, in addition to its culinary uses has been reported to be used in the treatment of various ailments including high fever, diarrhoea and candidiasis [19]. The following secondary metabolites were reported in the extracts of *L. africana* viz; alkaloids, terpenes, saponins, tannins, flavonoids, anthraquinones, and cardiac glycosides [20]

The workhorse of contemporary plant metabolite profiling is no doubt gas chromatography coupled to mass spectrometry (GC-MS) [21]. Though information abounds as to the usefulness of the aforementioned plants, their chemical compositions have not been exhaustively reported. Therefore, the preliminary phytochemical screening and GC-MS analyses of the dichloromethane and

ethanol extract of these two important medicinal plants were carried out to profile the chemical constituents in the plants that are responsible for their medicinal properties.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Chemicals

The solvents (dichloromethane and ethanol) used for the extraction were purchased from QauliChem (India). All other reagents used were of analytical standard.

Plant materials

The leaves of *O. gratissimum* and *L. africana* were obtained from Elele, Rivers state and Uyo, Akwa Ibom state respectively in the month of September, 2019. They were authenticated at the Department of Pharmacognosy, Faculty of Pharmacy, Madonna University. The leaves were then washed, dried and pulverized. The voucher specimen of *O. gratissimum* was prepared and deposited at the Forest Research Institute of Nigeria, Ibadan; with number FHI 113333.

Extraction

The powdered leaves material; 150g of each of the plant was first exhaustively extracted with dichloromethane and subsequently with ethanol by cold maceration procedure. The extracts were filtered using Whatman number 1 filter paper. The resulting filtrate was evaporated to dryness with the aid of rotary evaporator at room temperature. The extracts were stored in a desiccator for further use.

Phytochemical screening

The test was carried out based on procedures outlined by Harbourne, [22] and Sofowora [23]. Preliminary phytochemical screening was performed on the dichloromethane and ethanol extracts for tannins, flavonoids, anthraquinones, saponins, terpenoids, steroids, and alkaloids.

GC-MS analyses

GC- MS analysis was conducted using GC/MS- QP 2010SE SHIMADZU JAPAN with injector temperature of 250°C and carrier gas pressure of 144.4 kPa. The column length was 30 m with a diameter of 0.25 mm and the flow rate of 38.7ml/min. The temperature program was used as follows: initial temperature of 60°C (hold time: 2min) programmed at a rate of 12°C/min to a final temperature of 300°C (hold time: 2min). The samples were dissolved in dichloromethane and 1 µL volumes were injected into the machine. Nitrogen was used as carrier gas at a flow of 3ml /min, split ratio 10:1. The eluates were automatically passed into a mass spectrometer with a detector voltage set at 1.38 kV and sampling rate of 0.5 sec. The mass spectra was recorded over 45 – 700 amu and revealed the Total Ion Current chromatograms. The temperatures of injector and transfer line were kept at 250°C and that of the ion source at 230°C.

RESULTS

Phytochemical Screening

The results of the phytochemical screening of the dichloromethane and ethanol extracts of *O. gratissimum* and *L. africana* are shown in table 1. It revealed the presence of carbohydrate, saponin, tannins, alkaloids, flavonoids and steroids. Anthraquinone and

protein were absent in the extracts of the two plants. Mayer's reagent revealed absence of alkaloid in the extracts of the two plants. The compounds revealed by the GC-MS are shown in table 2-5.

Table 1: Phytochemical screening of the dichloromethane and ethanol extracts of *Ocimum gratissimum* and *Lasianthera Africana*

| Phytochemical Constituents of Dichloromethane extract | Type of Test | <i>Ocimum gratissimum</i> | | <i>Lasianthera africana</i> | |
|---|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------------|-----------------|
| | | Dichloro-methane extract | Ethanol Extract | Dichloro-methane extract | Ethanol Extract |
| Carbohydrate | Molisch's | + | + | + | + |
| Saponin | Frothing | + | + | + | + |
| | Emulsion | + | + | - | + |
| Tannins | Ferric chloride | + | + | + | + |
| | Lead acetate | - | + | + | + |
| Alkaloids | Mayer's | - | - | - | - |
| | Dragendorff's | + | + | + | + |
| | Wagner's | - | + | + | + |
| | Picric | + | + | + | + |
| Protein | Million's | - | - | - | - |
| Flavonoid | Ammonium | - | + | + | + |
| Steroids | Salkowski's | + | + | + | + |
| Anthraquinone | Borntrager's | - | - | - | - |

(+ present; - absent)

Table 2: Chemical constituents of dichloromethane extract of *O. gratissimum*.

| Peak No | % Area | Retention Time | Compounds | Biological activity |
|---------|--------|----------------|--|---|
| 15 | 7.94 | 10.975 | Benzene | The bio-oxidation gives carcinogenic by-products. It has no useful biological activity. |
| 22 | 6.85 | 12.538 | Caryophyllene | Anti-inflammatory, antibiotic, antioxidant, anticarcinogenic and local anaesthetic activities |
| 29 | 18.99 | 13.312 | Decahydro-4a-methyl-1-methyl-7-(1-methylethenyl)-naphthalene | Responsible for the biosynthesis of lovastatin |
| 30 | 5.86 | 13.364 | Chamigrene | Antibacterial activity |
| 33 | 6.09 | 13.927 | Hydroquinone tert-Butyl | Prevents oxidative injury |
| 34 | 2.61 | 14.298 | Methyl (Z)-5,11,14,17-eicosatetraenoic acid | Relax smooth muscle |
| 49 | 3.90 | 18.912 | Phytol | anxiolytic, metabolism-modulating, cytotoxic, antioxidant, autophagy- and apoptosis-inducing, anti-nociceptive, anti-inflammatory, immune-modulating, and antimicrobial effects |
| 55 | 3.82 | 19.950 | Phytol acetate | Same as phytol |
| 68 | 3.27 | 25.085 | Squalene | Reduces free radical oxidative damage to the skin |

Table 3: Chemical constituents of Ethanol extract of *O.gratissimum*.

| Peak No | %Area | Retention time | Compound | Biological activity |
|---------|-------|----------------|--|---|
| 4 | 23.75 | 10.977 | 2,3,5,6-Tetramethyl phenol | Antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory, antioxidant |
| 35 | 12.45 | 18.920 | Phytol | anxiolytic, metabolism-modulating, cytotoxic, antioxidant. |
| 36 | 3.92 | 19.268 | 5alpha-Pregn-16-en-20-one, 12.beta.-hydroxy-, acetate | Precursor/intermediate in the synthesis of most steroid hormones. |
| 39 | 2.98 | 19.943 | Phytol acetate | Same as phytol |
| 45 | 3.42 | 22.806 | Cholestan-7-one, cyclic 1,2-ethanediyl acetal, (5-alpha) | A key intermediate in the synthesis of the steroidal moiety of oogoniols. |
| 48 | 3.34 | 24.142 | 1-Heptatriacotanol | Antimicrobial, anticonvulsant, antidepressant, anti-inflammatory, |
| 49 | 6.56 | 24.375 | 9-Octadecenoic acid (Z)-, 2-hydroxy-1-(hydroxymethyl)ethyl ester | Antibacterial activity. |

Table 4: Chemical constituents of Dichloromethane extract of *L. africana*.

| Peak No | % Area | Retention time | Compound | |
|---------|--------|----------------|--|--|
| 1 | 4.32 | 10.977 | 2-Methyl-5-(1-methylethyl)-phenol | Precursor in the biosynthesis of diverse polyphenolic compounds. |
| 16 | 2.37 | 16.396 | 3,7,11,15-Tetramethyl-2-hexadecane-1-ol | No beneficial biological activity recorded. |
| 20 | 7.27 | 17.161 | Hexadecanoic acid methylester | Moderate antimicrobial activity |
| 21 | 5.51 | 17.531 | n-Hexadecanoic acid | Anti-inflammatory, anticancer, and antioxidant. |
| 24 | 7.45 | 18.807 | 9,12,15-Octadecatrienoic acid methylester | Antibacterial and anticandidal Antiinflammatory, hypocholesterolemic, cancer preventive. |
| 25 | 2.66 | 18.911 | 2-Hexadecen-1-ol, 3,7,11,15-tetramethyl | Food additive |
| 27 | 7.53 | 19.290 | 9,12, Octadecadienoic acid | Used in the synthesis of prostaglandin and cell membrane. |
| 28 | 4.34 | 19.499 | 9,12,15-Octadecatrienoic acid, 2,3-dihydroxy propyl ester | Inhibition of 5-lipoxygenase. |
| 34 | 6.57 | 22.804 | Vitamin E | Antioxidant, gene expression, cell signaling. |
| 35 | 8.48 | 24.244 | 9,Octadecanoic acid (Z)-2-hydroxy-1-(hydroxymethyl)ether ester | Antimicrobial activity. |
| 36 | 4.16 | 24.931 | 9,12,15-Octadecatrienoic acid, | Antimicrobial activity. |
| 37 | 11.73 | 25.085 | Squalene | Reduces free radical oxidative damage to the skin |
| 38 | 3.22 | 25.483 | 1-Octadecanesulphonyl chloride | Not reported |

Table 5: Chemical constituents of Ethanol Extract of *L. africana*.

| Peak No | %Area | Retention time | Compound | Activity |
|---------|-------|----------------|--|---|
| 7 | 3.37 | 16.396 | Phytol acetate. | Same as phytol |
| 12 | 3.39 | 17.534 | n-Hexadecanoic acid. | Anti-inflammatory, anticancer, and antioxidant. |
| 13 | 5.09 | 17.747 | Hexadecanoic acid ethyl ester. | Moderate antimicrobial activity |
| 16 | 18.99 | 18.918 | Phytol. | anxiolytic, metabolism-modulating, cytotoxic, antioxidant. |
| 19 | 12.06 | 19.502 | 9,12,15-Octadecatrienoic acid, ethyl ester. | Inhibition of 5-lipoxygenase. |
| 23 | 3.13 | 22.451 | Z,Z-3,13-Octadecadien-1-ol | cytotoxic , , antifungal , and analgesic |
| 25 | 6.99 | 22.804 | Vitamin E. | Antioxidant, gene expression, cell signaling. |
| 28 | 8.75 | 24.244 | 9-Octadecanoic acid (Z)-2-hydroxyl-1-(hydroxymethyl)ethyl ester. | Has been reported to inhibit the proliferative effect in keloid fibroblasts |
| 30 | 4.66 | 24.931 | 2,6,10,14,18-Pentamethyl-2,6,10,14,18-eicosapentaene | Antibacterial, antifungal, antitumor. |
| 31 | 3.94 | 25.082 | Squalene. | Reduces free radical oxidative damage to the skin |

LIST OF TITLES FOR FIGURES

1. GC-MS Spectrum of the dichloromethane extract of *Ocimum gratissimum*
2. GC-MS Spectrum of the ethanol extract of *Ocimum gratissimum*
3. GC-MS spectrum of the dichloromethane extract of *Lasianthera africana*
4. GC-MS spectrum of the ethanol extract of *Lasianthera africana*

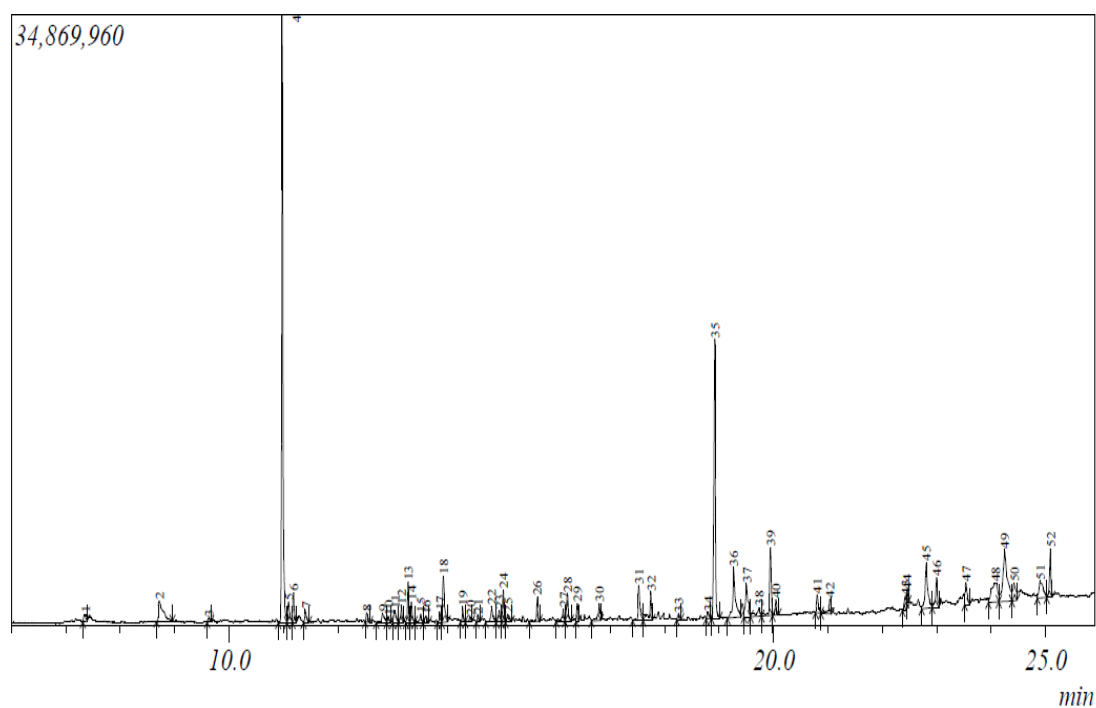


Figure 1: GC-MS Spectrum of the dichloromethane extract of *Ocimum gratissimum*

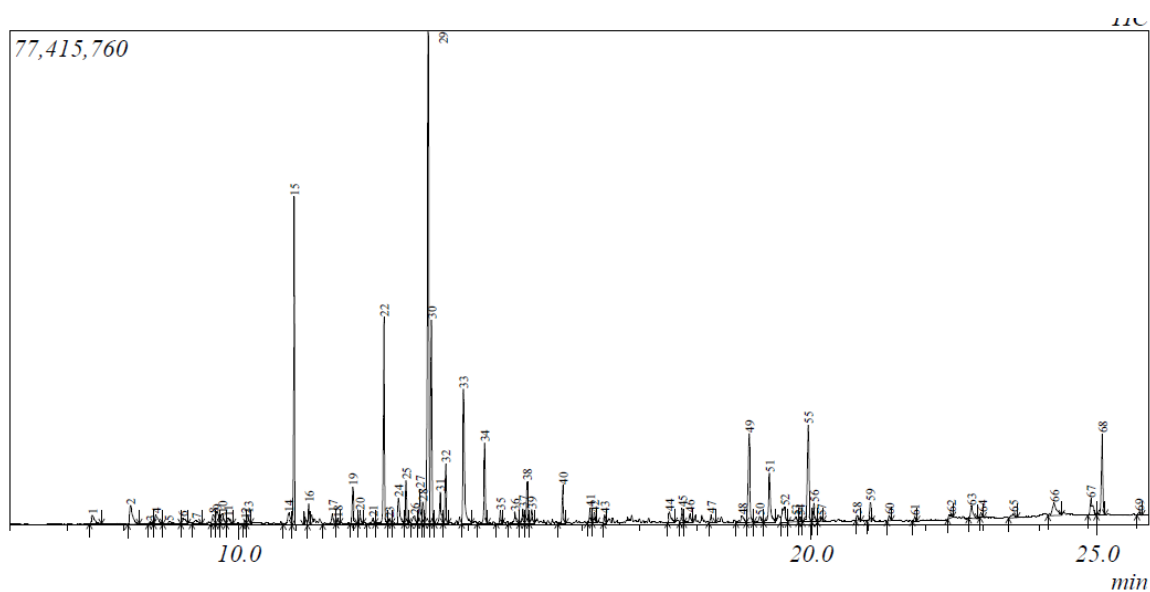


Figure 2: GC-MS Spectrum of the ethanol extract of *Ocimum gratissimum*

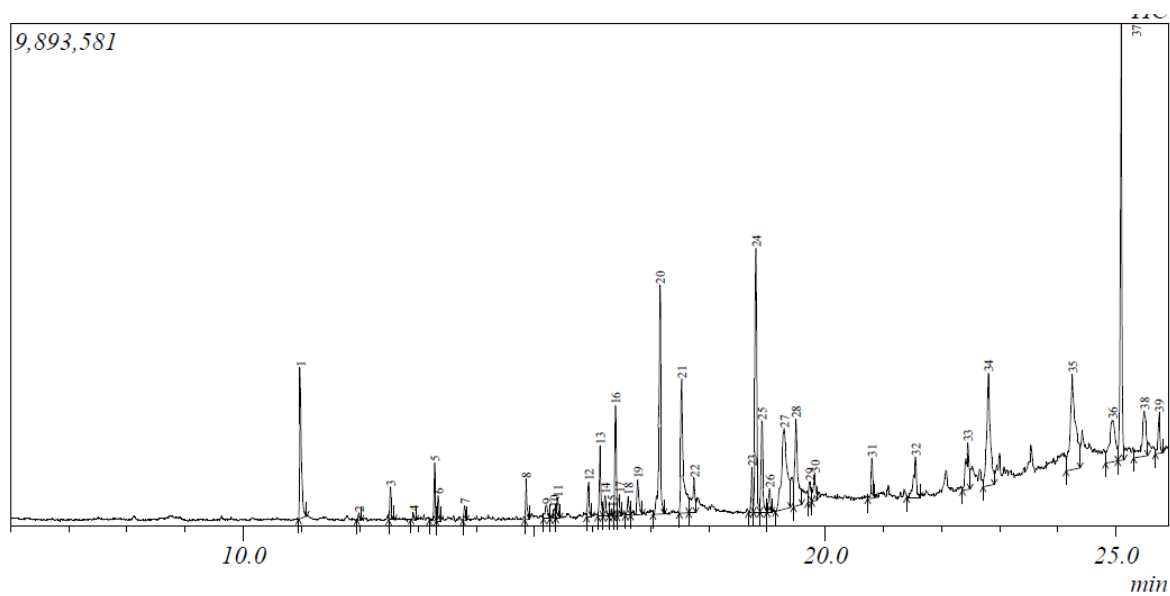


Figure 3: GC-MS spectrum of the dichloromethane extract of *Lasianthera africana*

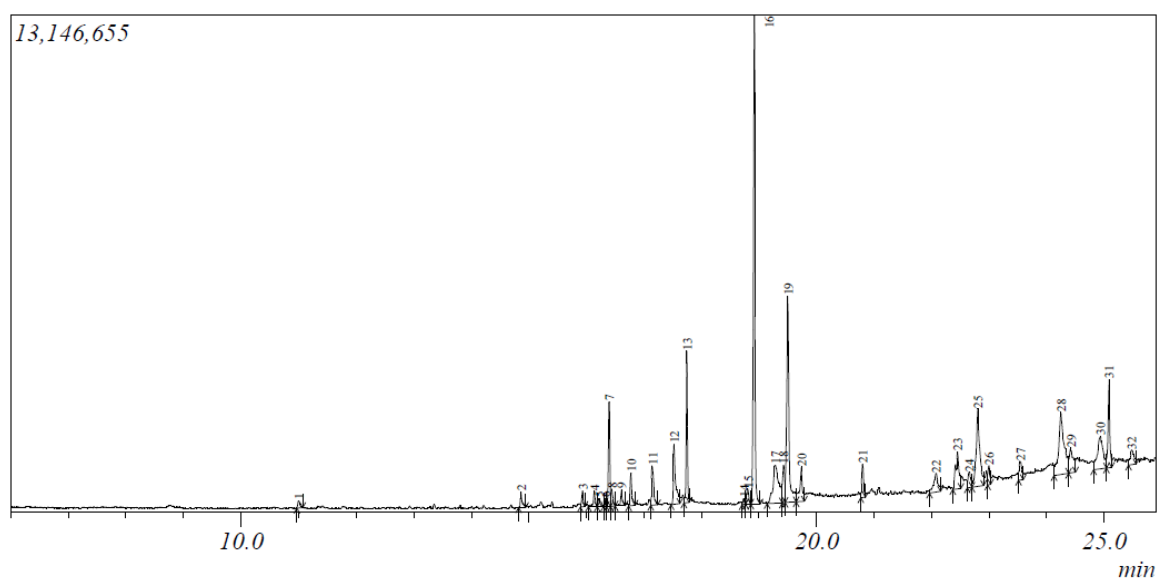


Figure 4: GC-MS spectrum of the ethanol extract of *Lasianthera Africana*

DISCUSSION

The phytochemical screening of these two important herbs revealed the presence of carbohydrate, saponin, tannins, alkaloids, flavonoids and steroids. Plant secondary metabolites are known to possess various bioactivities; which are responsible for their usefulness as medicinal plants. The presence of alkaloids confers on the plant the following activities; antimicrobial, antifungal, anthelmintics, antidiarrheal, anti-inflammatory, antihypertensive, antimalarial, antidepressant, anaesthetic and amoebicide [24-26]. Flavonoids on the other hand are known for their antioxidant activity, hypolipidemic, antimicrobial, antiviral, tumor inhibitory, vasoprotective, anti-thrombotic and anti-allergic activity [27]. Plants containing saponin could be useful as immune boosters, anti-inflammatory, cholesterol lowering, anti-cancer and as antidiarrheal [28]. Tannins are responsible for anti-microbial, anti-inflammatory and anti-diarrheal properties among others [29]. Steroids are useful as cardiogenic, insecticidal and antimicrobial agents [30]. The aforementioned properties of the secondary metabolites found in the extracts of *O. gratissimum* and *L. africana* could be responsible for the wide applicability of these two medicinal herbs. The GC-MS analysis further unveiled some important chemical constituents in *O. gratissimum* and *L. africana*. Prominent among them is phytol; a diterpene alcohol and its acetate which are reported to have many important biological functions such

as anxiolytic, metabolism-modulating, cytotoxic, antioxidant, autophagy- and apoptosis-inducing, anti-nociceptive, anti-inflammatory, immune-modulating, and antimicrobial effects [32,35]. Caryophyllene, a natural bicyclic sesquiterpene detected in the dichloromethane extract of *O. gratissimum* is known for anti-inflammatory, antibiotic, antioxidant, anticarcinogenic and local anaesthetic activities [31]. Other terpenes in the same extract are chamigrene and squalene. While chamigrene exhibits certain level of antimicrobial activity, squalene reduces free radical oxidative damage to the skin [33, 36]. Fatty acid was equally detected by the GC-MS analysis. One of such is eicosatetraenoic acid; which is known to have smooth muscle relaxing property [34]. It is interesting to note that the terpenes which were found in the dichloromethane extract were not detected in the ethanol extract of the plant. This would serve as a useful guide in plant extraction when certain hydrocarbons are to be avoided. Less polar solvent such as dichloromethane could be used to remove the unwanted hydrocarbons. The major constituents of the ethanol extract detected by the GC-MS analysis are: phenols, diterpene alcohol (phytol), fatty acids and steroids. Phenols are known to have some useful biological activities including; antimicrobial, anti-inflammatory and antioxidant property [37, 38]. 1-Heptatriacotanol ($C_{37}H_{76}O$) which was also found in the ethanol extract of *O. gratissimum* is known to exhibit the following

activities; antimicrobial, anticonvulsant, antidepressant, anti-inflammatory, analgesic, antiplatelet, antimalarial, anticancer, antifungal, antitubercular, antiviral and cardio protective [39].

The GC-MS analysis of the dichloromethane extract of *L. africana* contains some vital compounds such as 2-Methyl-5-(1-methylethyl)-phenol, 3,7,11,15-Tetramethyl-2-hexadecane-1-ol, Hexadecanoic acid methylester, n-Hexadecanoic acid, 9,12,15-Octadecatrienoic acid methylester, 2-Hexadecen-1-ol, 3,7,11,15-tetramethyl, 9,12, Octadecadienoic acid, 9,12,15-Octadecatrienoic acid, 2,3-dihydroxy propyl ester, Vitamin E, 9-Octadecanoic acid (Z)-2-hydroxy-1-(hydroxymethyl) ether ester, 9,12,15-Octadecatrienoic acid, squalene, 1-Octadecanesulphonyl chloride. The phenols and fatty acids are known to prevent neurodegeneration, and also function as food additives [40-44]. This could explain the use of the plants in preparation of soups and spices [3]. Vitamin E found in both the dichloromethane and ethanol extracts is a known antioxidant [45]; and the usefulness of the vitamin cannot be over emphasized. In addition to these, the ethanol extract of *L. africana* contains some aliphatic alcohols fatty acids and branched chain hydrocarbons which are indicated for various important functions in the body [46-48]

CONCLUSION

The presence of the diverse multifunctional compounds in *O. gratissimum* and *L. africana*

could explain the wide spread use of these two medicinal plants to treat and manage various kinds of health complaints in so many rural and even urban communities in Nigeria.

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