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## Original article

Cytotoxic effect of silver nanoparticles synthesized from ethanolic extract of *Allium sativum* on A549 lung cancer cell line

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## ABSTRACT

**Objectives:** The present study was aimed to synthesize Silver nanoparticles (Ag NPs) from ethanol extract of *Allium sativum* to evaluate the *in-vitro* cytotoxicity effect on human lung adenocarcinoma cells (A549). **Methods:** Spectroscopic analysis were performed to determine the formation, stability, nature and the functional groups of the Ag NPs. Microscopic analysis were performed to ascertain the morphology and size of the particles. In-vitro MTT (3-(4,5-Dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-Diphenyltetrazolium Bromide) assay was performed to determine the cytotoxic potential of the Ag NPs on A549 lung cancer cell lines. **Results:** The UV-Visible spectrum confirmed the formation of the particles. Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) spectrum revealed the presence of carbonyl, carboxyl, primary and secondary amine groups. Powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD) established the crystalline nature and FCC structure of Ag NPs. Morphological analysis performed using Field Emission-Scanning Electron Microscopy (FESEM), High-Resolution Transmission Electron Microscopy (HRTEM), Selected Area Electron Diffraction (SAED) pattern showed spherical and rod shaped bio synthesized Ag NPs with variable size ranging from 20 nm to 40 nm. The synthesized Ag NPs showed a significant cytotoxic potential against A549 human lung cancer cells at an IC<sub>50</sub> of 22 µg/ml.

**Conclusion:** The present study revealed a cost-effective, simple and effective method to synthesize Ag NPs using garlic extract and the cytotoxic activity on human adenocarcinoma cells (A549) demonstrated their future application as potential anti-cancer agent.

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## 1. Introduction

Nanotechnology is an interdisciplinary field in which tremendous number of materials were developed for various applications

and found remarkable solutions in the field of medicine, biotechnology, energy conservation and water treatment. The Nanoparticles (NPs) are materials which has at least a dimension sized nanometers from 1 to 100 due to its larger surface area to volume ratio (Murugesan et al., 2017; Bouqellah et al., 2019; El-Refai et al., 2018). Metal NPs are gaining interest at present, due to their applications which include a drug delivery system, diagnostic assays and radiotherapy treatment (Selvan et al., 2010). Among the various metal NPs, Silver (Ag) and its oxides are of special interest owing to their exceptional physiochemical characteristics such as good conductivity, biochemical stability, catalytic activity (Pattanayak et al., 2017; Sevilla, 2013; Burda et al., 2005; Shume et al., 2020) and it is found that Ag NPs show minimal toxicological impacts compared to other noble metals (Susheela et al., 2013). It

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has been reported that Ag NPs show promising cytotoxic activity against several cancer cell lines including MCF-7, A549, HeLa and HT29 cells. These findings suggest that Ag NPs play a remarkable role as an anticancer agent (Castro-Aceituno et al., 2016). Generally, Ag NPs colloidal solutions are obtained from Ag(I), using alcohols and amines as the reducing and/or the capping agents. But, most of the chemicals employed in these procedures are toxic to humans and the environment, and thus, a “green” synthesis method is required for the synthesis (Onitsuka et al., 2019). In this aspect, Senthilkumar et al., 2018 has developed plasmonic Ag NPs by green mediated synthesis using three variety of leaves extracts such as *Eucalyptus globus*, *Azadirachta indica* and *Coriandrum sativum*. Where, flavonoids and phenolic groups of the extracts are used for reducing  $\text{AgNO}_3$  to metal ions compounds. Ocsy et al., 2017 has fabricated Ag NPs from green hydrothermal approach by using reducing agent of red cabbage extract. The prepared Ag NPs showed excellent inhibitory potential against gram positive and gram negative bacteria. The rapid green synthesis of Ag NPs has been developed from *Piper longum* catkin extract and reported by Jayapriya et al., 2019. The reduction of Ag NPs is achieved by exposed sunlight radiation. The phytoconstituents acts as the major role for reduction of  $\text{AgNO}_3$  to Ag NPs. The prepared material has spherical in shape and size ranging from 15 to 40 nm. Philipa et al., 2011 has developed rapid green approach of spherical like Ag and Au NPs at ambient and heat (373 K) conditions from the reducing agent of *Murraya Koenigii* leaf extract. The percolated green approach of Ag NPs prepared via *C. Sativum* leaf, stem, root and seed extracts has superior antimicrobial activity against *Klebsiella pneumoniae* (Senthil et al., 2018). Several studies have also reported the successful synthesis of other nanoparticles using plant extracts such as *Aegle marmelos* leaf extract mediated Nickel oxide nanoparticles (Ezhilarasi et al., 2018), Zinc oxide nanoparticles using *Wattakaka volubilis* (Jeyabharathi et al., 2022) and Titanium dioxide nanoparticles using *Citrus sinensis* (Fall et al., 2020). Ag NPs synthesized using plant extracts are reported to demonstrate excellent antioxidant, antibacterial, antifungal and anti-cancer properties (Thomas et al., 2019; Valsalam et al., 2019). Hence, the recent reports proved that, plant extracts may act as better reducing and stabilizing agents and contribute a better platform for NPs synthesis as they are not harmful (He et al., 2016).

Garlic (*Allium sativum* L) contains an abundance of chemical compounds, which has been used for many decades, both as a flavoring and as folk herbal medicine. It also aids in the prevention of fatal disease such as cancer (Fleischauer and Arab, 2001). Garlic exhibits combined actions with other compounds that can inhibit proliferation of cancerous cells. Various studies have reported that garlic has an enhanced activity in cancer prevention owing to the sulphur containing biometabolites such as S-allyl cysteine, Diallyl sulfide and Allicin (Rahman and Billington, 2000). These bioactive compounds are involved in various mechanisms which include inhibition of incidence of cancer, inhibition of proliferation and free radical scavenging activities (Jin et al., 2013). In the recent decade, various metal NPs like Ag, Au and Pt have been used in carcinoma therapy against several types of cancer especially adenocarcinoma. Adenocarcinoma is a prevalent type of lung cancer which arises in the type II alveolar cells in smokers and non-smokers which includes men, women and children. Though it has a slow rate of progress the possibility of metastasis is high in this type of cancer (Zappa and Mousa, 2016). Hence, the present study focused to develop green synthesis of Ag NPs using ethanol extract of fresh garlic powder and also study about the anticancer activity using A549 lung cancer cell line.

## 2. Materials and methods

### 2.1. Materials for synthesis of Ag NPs

The plant was collected from Kodaikanal, Dindigul district of TamilNadu. The garlic bulbs were identified and authenticated by Prof. P. Jayaraman, Plant Anatomy Research Center, Tambaram, Chennai. The garlic bulbs were thoroughly cleaned and cut into small pieces, dried in open air atmosphere and crushed into fine powder. After that, obtained garlic powder was extracted using ethanol at boiling temperature for 48 h by Soxhlet extractor (Lin et al., 1999). Whatman No 1 filter paper was used to filter the extract and the solvent was removed using rotary vacuum evaporator and stored for further analysis.

### 2.2. Synthesis of Ag NPs via green approach

Initially, 1 mM of silver nitrate ( $\text{AgNO}_3$ ) was added into 50 ml of double distilled (DD) water under constant stirring. After that, 5 ml of ethanol extract of fresh garlic powder was mixed with above mentioned solution. During the reaction process, the solution colour gradually changed light brown to dark brown at 3 hrs constant stirring which indicates the NPs formation. However, the polyphenols present in the garlic extracts act as reducing agent and cause the formation of Ag NPs. The formation of dark brown color (Fig. 1) demonstrates the synthesis of  $\text{Ag}_2\text{O}$ . The synthesized  $\text{Ag}_2\text{O}$  were centrifuged and the pellet was collected. The collected product was kept in a lyophilizer for 24 h, to obtain powdered form of a NPs. The obtained powder was stored at 4 °C for further characterization studies and cytotoxicity analysis (Selvan et al., 2018).

### 2.3. Characterization

The structure-based properties of Ag NPs was analyzed by powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD) pattern carried out by X' Pert Pro instrument with  $\text{Cu K}\alpha$  radiation. Molecular analysis of the Ag NPs was analysed by Fourier-Transform Infrared (Nicolet b6700) spectrometer using KBr pellet technique in the range from 4000 to  $450\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . The characteristic absorption peak of Ag NPs was examined using UV- 2450 (Shimadzu) from 300 to 600 nm. By this measurement, reduction of  $\text{AgNO}_3$  to  $\text{Ag}^+$  ions was monitored. Morphological analysis of nanoparticles was carried out by Hitachi S-4500 FESEM analyzer. A drop of the sample was coated on to carbon film and dried for the analysis. Energy-dispersive X-ray spectroscopy (EDAX) was used to examine the metals and materials present in the synthesized material using Hitachi S-4500 instrument equipped with a Thermo EDAX attachments. High Resolution Transmission Electron Microscopy (HRTEM) analysis was done in



Fig. 1. Biosynthesis of Ag NPs.

order to determine the process of formation of Ag NPs and to study their size and shape. The analysis was performed by Jeol/JEM 2100, operating at 200 Kv. Samples for HRTEM grid was arranged through coating a drop of Ag NPs solution on carbon-coated copper grids. Dynamic Light Scattering is a method is performed to measure the particle size distributions in the range of 2–500 nm using the instrument Nanophox, Germany. It measures the particle size using the scattered light, which is passed from a laser source and it depends on the Rayleigh scattering from the suspended NPs.

The human lung cancer (A549) cell line was achieved from the National Centre for Cell Science (NCCS), Pune and facilitated to grow in Eagles Minimum Essential Medium (EMEM) and 10% Fetal Bovine Serum (FBS). The obtained cells were sustained at 37 °C, 100% relative humidity, 5% CO<sub>2</sub> and 95% air. By the inverted microscope, cell culture was continuously viewed to determine the absence of bacterial and fungal contaminants as well as quantity of confluence.

#### 2.4. In- vitro cytotoxic activity

The cell viability test was made with the 3-(4, 5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl) -2, 5-diphenyltetrazolium bromide (MTT) assay to demonstrate the cytotoxic effect of Ag NPs and garlic extract. MTT is a tetrazolium salt which was used to investigate mitochondrial function. The enzymatic reduction of MTT was catalyzed by the mitochondrial succinate dehydrogenase enzyme, which breaks the tetrazolium ring, transforming it to a purple formazan which is not soluble (Mosmann, 1983). Consequently, the quantity of formazan formed is proportionate to the quantity of viable cells. A549 cells were taken in a 96-well plate at the density of  $5 \times 10^3$  cells/well. The cells were grown in a 96-well plate for 24 hrs, in 200  $\mu$ l of EMEM with 10% FBS. After 24 hrs, cells were

exposed to Ag NPs at a different dose (1–20 mg/ml) for a period of 48 hrs. Each well in the plate containing the cells were then subjected to 15  $\mu$ l of MTT (5 mg/ml) and incubated for 4 hrs at 37 °C. EMEM was then removed, and 100  $\mu$ l of DMSO was added to each well and then measured using the microplate reader at 570 nm. EMEM without samples was served as control.

$$\% \text{ Cell viability} = 100 - \text{Abs (sample)} / \text{Abs (control)} \times 100$$

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. PXRD analysis

Fig. 2a shows the PXRD pattern of Ag NPs synthesized from ethanol extract of garlic powder. From the Figure, the primary diffraction peaks at  $2\theta$  values of 28.05°, 32.41°, 38.31°, 46.38°, 55.01°, 57.62°, 67.68° and 77.61° respectively for (100), (110), (111), (200), (211), (211), (220) and (311) planes belonging to AgNP, which are well matched with standard JCPDS: 76–1393. The average size of the Ag NPs was determined from the PXRD pattern, according to the peak and line width of the plane, using Scherer's equation (Parikh et al., 2011).

$$D = K\lambda / \beta \cos(\theta)$$

Where, 'D' denotes diameter, 'K' represents the shape factor (0.94), ' $\lambda$ ' denotes the wavelength of the X-ray, ' $\beta$ ' represents angular width at FWHM of the X-ray diffraction peak at Bragg's diffraction angle ' $\theta$ '. The results revealed that the average size of the Ag NPs was found to be 12 nm. Table 1 shows the PXRD parameters along with the particle size of each  $2\theta$  values. The Table revealed that, the obtained particle size in the present work is better than Ag NPs synthesized from aqueous Garlic extract (Theivasanthi

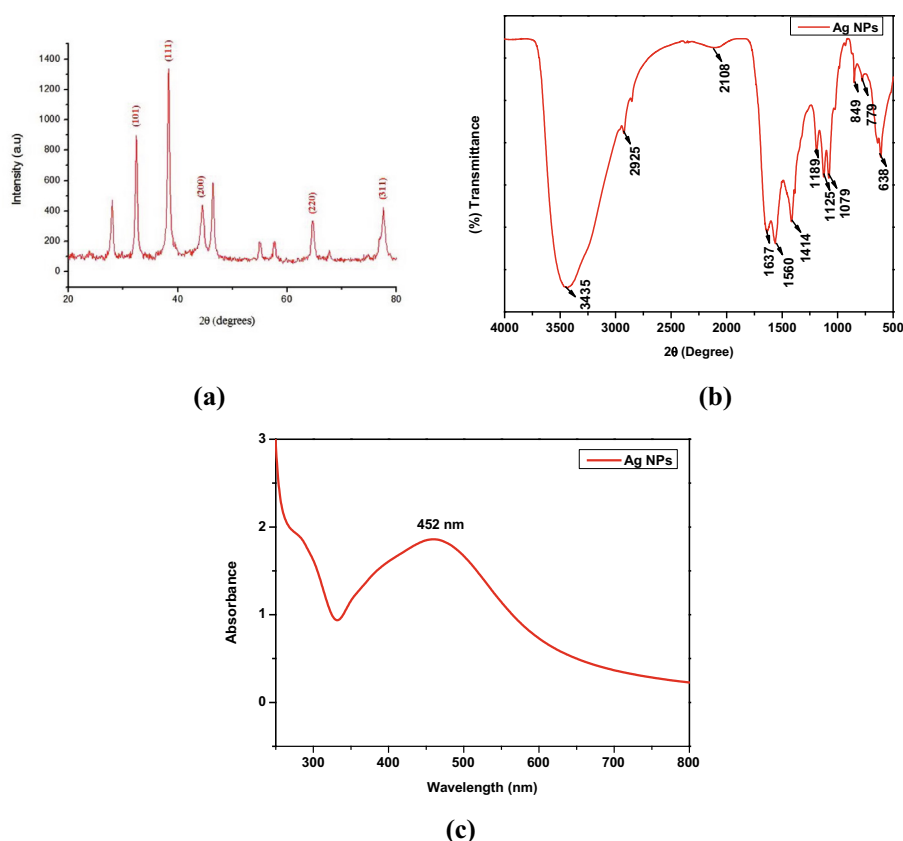


Fig. 2. (a) XRD pattern, (b) FTIR spectrum and (c)Uv–Visible spectrum of AgNPs.

**Table 1**Powdered XRD data and particle size of AgNPs synthesized using *A. sativum* extract.

| Pos. [°2Th.]                                  | Height [cts] | FWHM Left [°2Th.] | d-spacing [Å] | Rel. Int. [%] | Particle size in nm |
|---|--------------|-------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 32.1484                                       | 16.74        | 0.5904            | 2.78435       | 22.67         | 14.63               |
| 38.1740                                       | 73.87        | 0.5904            | 2.35758       | 100.00        | 14.87               |
| 44.2981                                       | 13.41        | 1.5744            | 2.04483       | 18.16         | 15.60               |
| 64.3723                                       | 23.48        | 0.7872            | 1.44730       | 31.79         | 12.46               |
| 77.6489                                       | 21.55        | 0.9840            | 1.22969       | 29.18         | 10.83               |
| <b>Average size of the nanoparticles 11.7</b> |              |                   |               |               |                     |

and Alagar, 2012). The defects that occurred in the nanoparticles was calculated by the dislocation density ( $\delta$ ), as follows (Logeswari et al., 2015).

$$\delta = 1/D^2$$

Where D = crystallite size.

The dislocation density ( $\delta$ ) of Ag NPs was calculated as  $6.94 \times 10^{-3} \text{ (nm)}^{-2}$ . Table 2 shows the comparative dislocation density ( $\delta$ ) of Ag NPs prepared from aqueous Garlic extract. From the Table, the dislocation density of Ag NPs synthesized from *Allium sativum* has lesser defects owing to its better Surface Plasmon Resonance (SPR) properties and larger surface area compared to previous reports.

### 3.2. FT-IR spectroscopy

The FT-IR spectrum for Ag NPs synthesized using garlic extract, showed a variation in the intensity of bands in different regions (Fig. 2b). The peak at  $3434 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  was assigned to the –O–H stretching vibrations indicating the presence of hydroxyl groups. The peaks at  $2925 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  and  $2108 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  were due to the strong intensity of alkyl (–CH<sub>2</sub>–) group. The peak at  $1637 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  and  $1560 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  was assigned to aryl aromatic ring. The O–H band corresponds to the peak at  $1414 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ . The peaks arise at 1385, 1189, 1125 and  $1079 \text{ cm}^{-1}$  indicate the C–N stretch, which contributes to the presence of amine group in the synthesized material. The presence of sulfur compounds was primarily confirmed by the bands formed at 849, 779 and  $638 \text{ cm}^{-1}$ . The analysis confirmed the available functional groups may act as reducing and stabilizing agents for Ag NPs, either by carbonyl groups or sulfur containing groups (Saha et al., 2017).

### 3.3. UV-Vis spectral analysis

UV-Visible absorption spectroscopy is an important tool to identifying the formation and stability of metal NPs in an aqueous solution. The extracellular synthesis of Ag NPs using *A. sativum* extract involved in the reduction was identified by the UV-Visible spectroscopy and shown in Fig. 2c. The dark brown colour was observed from the synthesized Ag NPs which indicates the reduction of pure Ag<sup>+</sup> ions due to its SPR properties (Varshney et al., 2009). The surface plasmon absorption band is observed at 452 nm in UV-Visible spectrum for *A. sativum* extract due to electronic transitions from the valence band to the conduction band, which indicates the formation of Ag NPs (Paul et al., 2015).

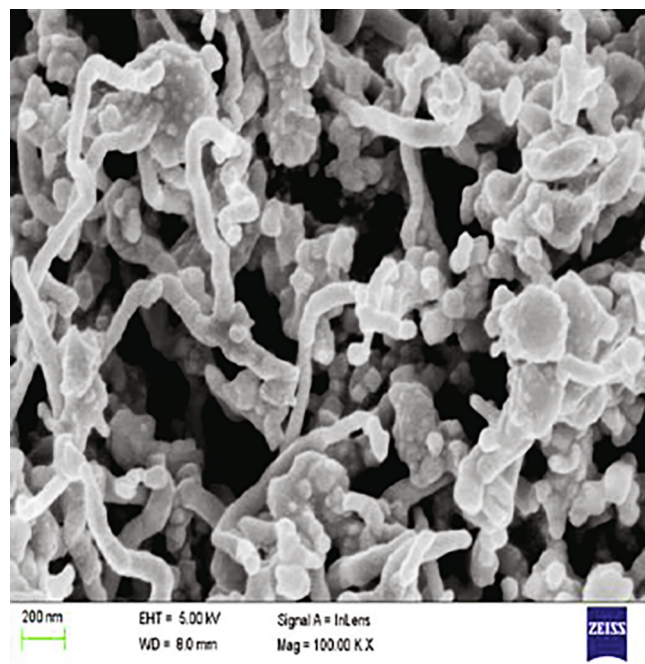
**Table 2**

Comparison of dislocation density of Ag NPs synthesized from various extracts.

| Material                             | Dislocation density ( $\delta$ )        | Ref   |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| Ag NPs ( <i>Eucalyptus globus</i> )  | $7.18 \times 10^{-3} \text{ (nm)}^{-2}$ | Senthilkumar et al., 2018a;<br>Senthilkumar et al., 2018b<br>[Present work] |
| Ag NPs ( <i>Azadirachta indica</i> ) | $9.07 \times 10^{-3} \text{ (nm)}^{-2}$ |   |
| Ag NPs ( <i>Coriandrum sativum</i> ) | $7.30 \times 10^{-3} \text{ (nm)}^{-2}$ |   |
| Ag NPs ( <i>Allium sativum</i> )     | $6.94 \times 10^{-3} \text{ (nm)}^{-2}$ |   |

### 3.4. FESEM and EDAX

Fig. 3 depicts the typical FESEM image of green synthesized Ag NPs. The image depicts that the particles are spherical and rod shaped with an average size around 70 nm. EDAX spectrum of Ag NPs synthesized from ethanol extract of garlic is presented in Fig. 4. Figure shows the signal at 3 keV in the EDAX spectrum revealed that the existence of silver, which is a unique feature for the absorption of metallic silver nanocrystallites owing to their SPR property (Mahendran and Ranjitha Kumari, 2016). Also, the spectrum exhibits Ag, C and O elements only and no other impurities were present in the prepared Ag NPs. Also, Figure shows the weight percentage of elemental constituents such as silver 58.34%, carbon 12.79% and oxygen 28.87%. According to the findings of Otunola et al., 2017 the weight percentage of Ag NPs synthesized from aqueous extract of garlic was 57.16% which showed that better yield was obtained in the present investigation.

**Fig. 3.** FESEM of Ag NPs.



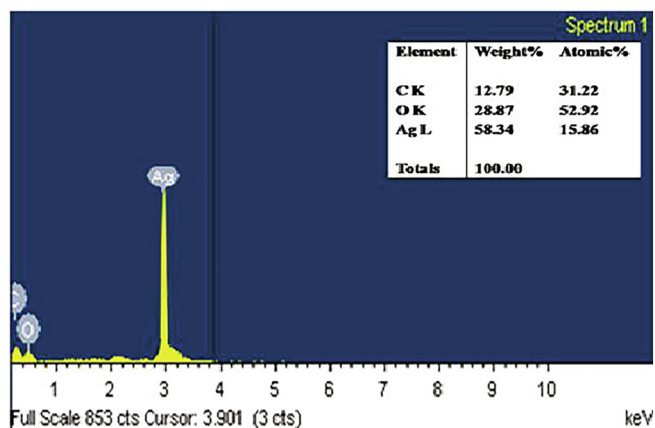


Fig. 4. EDAX spectrum of Ag NPs.

### 3.5. HRTEM analysis

A typical HRTEM image of biologically synthesized Ag NPs suggests that the particles were well segregated and distributed without any agglomeration. The stabilization of the category of Ag NPs is due to the domination of carbonyl and hydroxyl groups which give weak electrostatic interactions between Ag NPs and functional groups from garlic extract. Also, most of the particles were spherical shaped with varying size of 10–40 nm which is shown in Fig. 5a. The crystalline nature of the synthesized NPs was characterized by Selected Area Electron Diffraction (SAED) pattern and shown in Fig. 5b. The SAED pattern clearly shows the characteristic polycrystalline ring pattern for a FCC structure which exactly coincide with results of PXRD pattern (Mehmood et al., 2014). The sizes

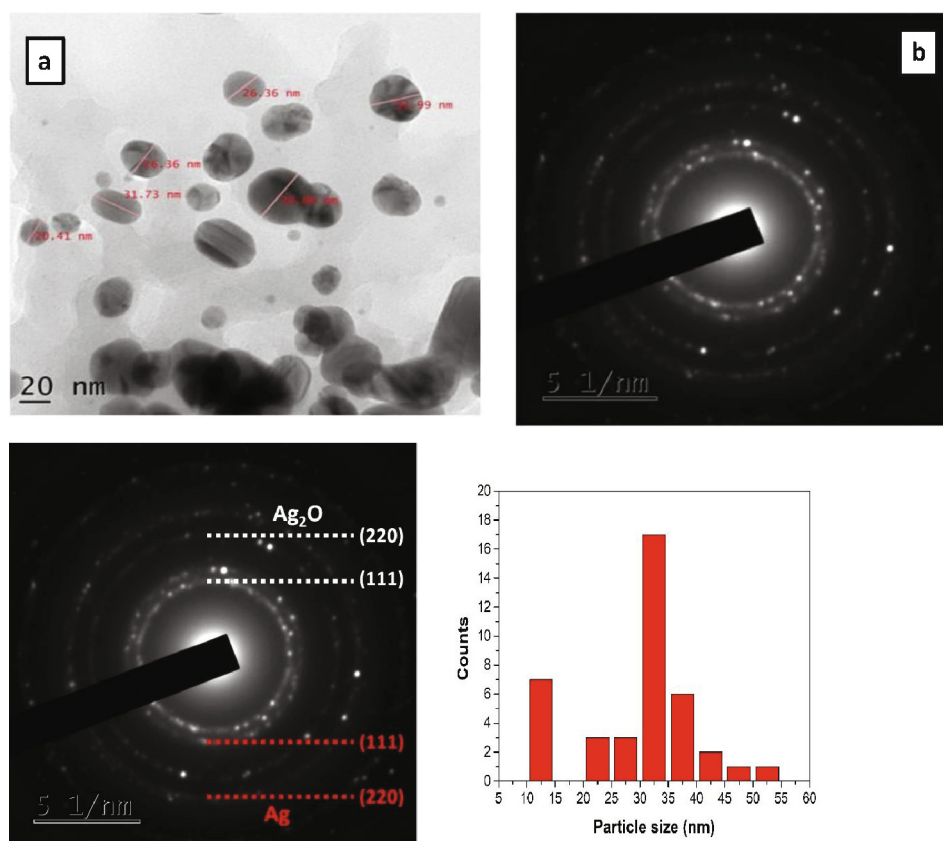


Fig. 5. (a) HRTEM and (b) SAED pattern of Ag NPs.

of the Ag NPs have been determined and the distribution of Ag NPs is shown in Fig. 5c. It indicated that the distribution with an average mean size of 30 nm. Green synthesized biocompatible nanoparticles synthesized using citrate and stabilized with garlic extract showed increase in size and polydispersity in TEM analysis (White et al., 2012). In another study, TEM micrograph of Ag NPs synthesized using *A. sativum* extract showed quasi spherical particles with an average size of 170 nm (Mohamed et al., 2022).

### 3.6. Dynamic light scattering (DLS)

Fig. 6 shows the DLS analysis which depict the Ag NPs particle size. From the analysis, the mean particle size of Ag NPs was observed between 3 nm and 10 nm. The comparison table of previously reported distribution of Ag NPs based on size is shown in Table 3. From the Table, the size of the synthesized NPs are very

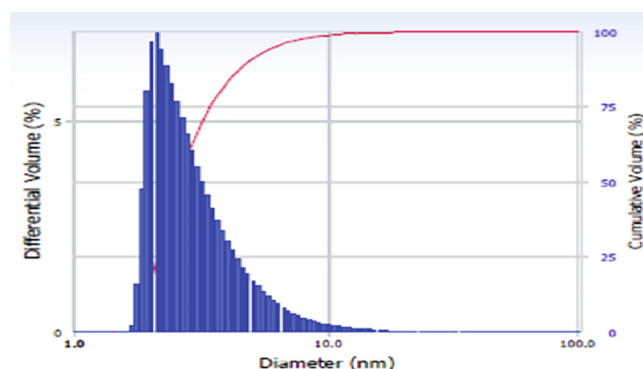


Fig. 6. DLS spectrum of Ag NPs.

**Table 3**

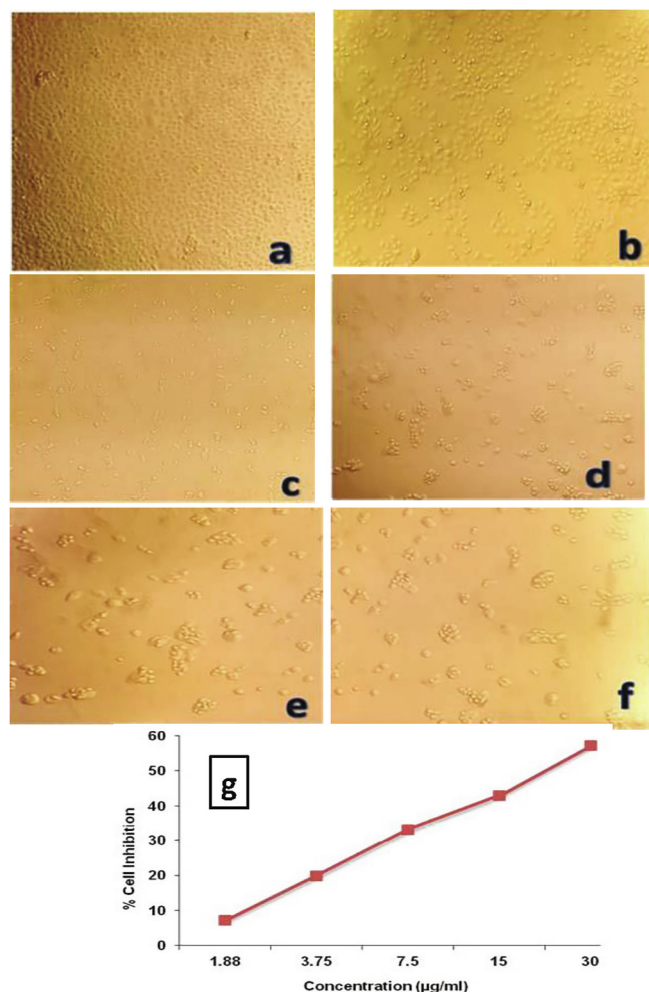
Comparison of particle size distribution of Ag NPs synthesized from various extracts.

| Sl.No | Material | Particle Size                    | Extract   | Reference                 |
|-------|----------|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------|
| 1     | Ag NPs   | 37.44, 40.06, 46.65 and 53.37 nm | <i>Coriandrum sativum</i> leaf, stem, seed and root                                       | Senthikumar et al., 2018a |
| 2     | Ag NPs   | 44, 53 and 85 nm                 | <i>Eucalyptus globus</i> , <i>Azadirachta indica</i> and <i>Coriandrum sativum</i> leaves | Senthikumar et al., 2018b |
| 3     | Ag NPs   | 3–10 nm                          | <i>Allium sativum</i>   | [Present work]            |

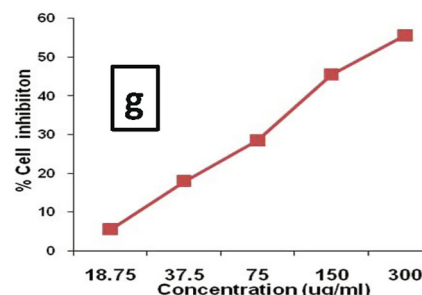
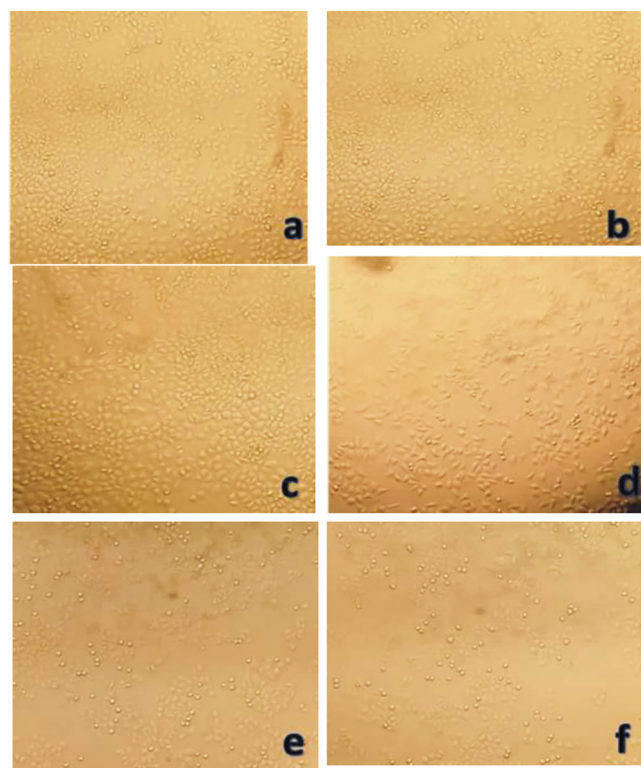
less when compared to previously reported size values, which confirms the prepared Ag NPs from garlic extract has hydrodynamic size and polydispersity in nature.

### 3.7. In-vitro cytotoxicity

Assessment of cytotoxicity plays a major role for evaluation in toxicology when assessing its effectiveness as a drug that elucidate the cellular response to a toxicant. In the present study, the cytotoxicity impact on cell inhibition was examined by a dose-dependent approach at different concentration. Figs. 7a and 7b respectively shows the efficiency of synthesized Ag NPs and *A. sativum* extract alone in inhibiting cancer cells. From the Figures, it is evident that the percentage of cell viability was reduced by increasing concentration of Ag NPs and extract. Also, it is confirmed that, the required concentration of Ag NPs required was



**Fig. 7a.** In-vitro cytotoxic activity of the biosynthesized Ag NPs against A549 cell line. (a) Untreated A549 cell line, (b) Ag NPs – 1.88 µg/ml, (c) Ag NPs – 3.75 µg/ml, (d) AgNPs – 7.5 µg/ml (e) Ag NPs – 15 µg/ml, (f) Ag NPs – 30 µg/ml (g) Percentage of cell inhibition of Ag NPs against A549 cell line.



**Fig. 7b.** In-vitro cytotoxic activity of the ethanol garlic extract against A549 cell line. (a) Untreated A549 cell line (b) 18.75 µg/ml (c) 37.5 µg/ml (d) 75 µg/ml (e) 150 µg/ml (f) 300 µg/ml (g) Percentage of cell inhibition of *A. sativum* extract against A549 cell line.

minimum when compared to the concentration of the extract (*A. Sativum*). This increasing cell inhibition activity with a higher concentration of Ag NPs indicated that more number of Ag NPs can penetrate into the cancer cells and finally leading to cell death. For the comparison, a plot has been drawn between concentration and the percentage of cell inhibition and shown in Figure 9a (g) and Figure 9b (g). From the Figures, it is observed that, 50% of cell inhibition was observed by adding 22 µg/ml of Ag NPs fabricated from ethanol extract of *A. sativum*. At the same time, the same cell inhibition was achieved by adding 177 µg/ml of pure *A. Sativum* extract, which shows the better cytotoxicity effect attained from

the biologically synthesized Ag NPs due to ROS prompting and leads to cellular impairment and cell death (Jacob et al., 2012; Sankar et al., 2013). The cytotoxic effects of Ag NPs are higher in cancer cells when compared to normal cells. The small size and the large surface to volume ratio help in penetrating the cells easily. The major mechanism of cancer cell inhibition by metallic nanoparticles includes Reactive oxygen species generation, Caspase-3 activation, modification of mitochondrial membrane potential and DNA damage (Andleeb et al., 2021). Hence, from the observations, it was confirmed that the material proposed in the present work shows good inhibition activity against A549 cancer cell line.

#### 4. Conclusion

An efficient biomediated Ag NPs was synthesized from an ethanol extract of *A.sativum* for the first time. The observed changes in the colour and the peak observed due to SPR at 345 nm in UV–Vis–NIR spectrum confirms the formation of material. The morphology of the material was also correlated from FESEM and HRTEM images. FTIR analysis shows the possible functional groups present in the synthesized material. The results revealed that Ag NPs were crystalline in nature and were spherical shaped with an average size of 30 nm. The efficiency of cytotoxicity effect has been showed the promising cytotoxicity activity against A549 cell line from synthesized Ag NPs using *A. sativum* extract when compare to pure extract. It is concluded that the prepared Ag NPs via *A.sativum* has good efficiency to possess high cytotoxicity due to induce reactive oxygen species and cause cellular damage leading to cell death, which suggests the potential therapeutic use of Ag NPs synthesized from ethanol extract of *A.sativum*.

#### Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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