

**Cytogenotoxicity of Aqueous *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss Extracts on Nile Tilapia – *Oreochromis niloticus* (Linnaeus, 1758) Under Static Exposure**Akinjogunla V. Folakemi^{1*}, Muazu T. Abubakar², Ajeigbe S. Olawale³, Usman M. Dahiru⁴, Ibrahim Halima-Sadiya⁵¹Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Faculty of Agriculture, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria²Department of Veterinary Anatomy, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria³Department of Veterinary Anatomy, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Federal University of Agriculture, Zuru Kebbi State, Nigeria⁴Department of Veterinary Teaching Hospital, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria⁵Department of Plant Biology, Faculty of Life Sciences, Bayero University, Kano, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

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The indiscriminate use of plant extracts as anti-microbial agent on culturable fish (catfishes and the Cichlids) in confinement is alarming, especially the use of neem leave extracts. Neem (*Azadirachta indica*) is a medicinal plant containing active biological and chemical properties. The effects of aqueous *Azadirachta indica* (neem) extract on the cytology and genome composition of hundred post juvenile *Oreochromis niloticus* with mean length and weight of 9.37±0.67cm and 8.99±1.84 g respectively was investigated in a tank culture system to determine the median lethal concentration (LC₅₀) at 96 h of exposure. Five graded concentrations of 1.2, 1.4, 1.6, 1.8 and 2.0 L of the aqueous extract and control were diluted in 15 L of water in triplicate. The control group and group exposed to 1.2 L concentration of neem extract showed normal behaviour while group exposed to 1.6 and 1.8 L concentrations showed abnormal behavioural changes such as rolling movement, gulping of air, weakness, swimming on the back and eventually death was observed. There was significant difference (p<0.05) in the toxicity effects of neem extract at 14th and 28th day of exposure. Cytotoxic effect was evident by cellular apoptosis which increases with increase concentration of the extract while genotoxic effect was manifested by formation of nuclear aberrations within the erythrocytes. The results obtained in this study revealed that neem extract has clastogenic and apoptotic effects on the erythrocytes of *Oreochromis niloticus*.

Keywords: *Azadirachta indica*, Cytogenotoxicity, LC₅₀, *Oreochromis niloticus*.

Introduction

According to Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO),¹artificial rearing of fishes in ponds and tanks is one of the rising sources of food production sectors in the world, worldwide production is expected to increase from 179 million tonnes in the year 2018 to 204 million tonnes in the year 2030. In Nigeria, aquaculture helps to provide an appropriate and affordable replacement for nutritional and digestible protein. With this production rise, aquaculture services are progressively depending on the input of formulated feeds and disease- resistant drugs for increased production.²Fish is a principal supply for humans, especially as source of animal protein, digestible minerals, commercial (profit-making) or subsistence (survival) farming.^{3,4} Fin (Tilapia, Catfishes) and Shell (Oysters, Clams, Mussels) fishes serve as effective genetic replica for the evaluation of effluence in aquatic ecosystems⁵ and can play major roles in assessing imminent vulnerability allied with contagion in aquatic ecosystem since they are directly exposed to chemicals (trace or heavy) resulting from agricultural production via surface overflow or tactfully, through the food chain of the ecosystem.⁶

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Neem plants with the botanical name *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss are grown worldwide in various continents like Africa, Asia and Australia.⁷Neem has been extensively used by humans since primeval times to treat diverse illnesses.⁸ The Neem plants have various names amongst which are "Twenty-first-century trees" and "a-tree-for-solving-global-problems" because of its extraordinarily natural properties (anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-inflammatory, immunomodulatory, anti-hyperglycemic, anti-ulcer, anti-mutagenic, anti-cancer, anti-malarial, anti-viral, anti-oxidant,⁹ anti-fertility,^{10,11} in treating various diseases and has many benefits to humans and animals.¹²

In Aquaculture, it is common management practice to get rid of fish diseases which cause enormous economic losses in productivity and are mainly controlled with noxious chemicals which are usually applied erratically.¹³ Thus, the use of pesticides to eradicate fish diseases and parasites leads to elevated levels of residues in the animals and thus affect their performance.¹⁴ In view of the ecological harms arising from the use of synthetic chemicals and the urgent need for other methods that will help minimize this damage, there has been massive researches on controlling fish diseases using plants extracts.¹⁵ The organic and chemical activities of neem extracts have been investigated in various countries.^{16,17}stated that varieties of neem leave extracts have been broadly used in fish-farms as substitutes to monitor fish parasites and predators such as dragon-fly larvae. Aqueous extracts of the bark of the neem plant caused respiratory problems in *Coptodon zillii*¹⁸ even though its toxicity is low to non-target aquatic biota while prolonged exposure to minimal concentrations of the crude extract of *A. indica* can prolong the development of this Cichlid fish.¹⁹ Nile Tilapia is one of the principal fish species that is widely cultivated in Nigeria because of its profitability and to meet up with the increasing demand for protein intake. Nile tilapia is commonly

found in lakes and rivers with ample flora across Africa, Middle East, Coastal India, Central and South America.²⁰

Several studies have been done on feed intake and body mass gain activity of Neem in Poultry birds;²¹ ruminants;²²⁻²⁴ Fish;^{25, 26} rats^{27, 28} and on Human.^{29, 12}

Meanwhile, majority of species of fishes available and consumed in the Northern region of Nigeria are from dams, rivers and aquaculture (nursery, ponds and culture tanks) because of the arid nature of the region. Yet, there is dearth of information on control or prevention of fish diseases on freshwater fish species from aquaculture sector in the Northern region of Nigeria.

This present study is therefore undertaken to investigate the effects of Neem leaves (*Azadirachta indica* A. Juss) extract on the Nile Tilapia, *Oreochromis niloticus* also known as “*Karfasa*” in Hausa language and to also examine the cytology and genome composition of the extracts on the erythrocytes. The fish species was selected for this research because of the availability all year round^{30, 31} and its consumption by Northern inhabitants.

Materials and Methods

Experimental animals

One hundred (100) Nile Tilapia (*Oreochromis niloticus*) were identified by their vertical stripes on the caudal fin with brownish to grayish overall coloration and indistinct banding on their body from a fish farm in Kano State, Nigeria and were conveyed in open troughs containing water from the pond to the Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture, Bayero University (BUK), Kano State, Nigeria. They were allowed to acclimate for 14 days in 400L tanks filled with dechlorinated water (temperature 20–21°C, pH 7.5–7.7 and hardness 80–90 mg/L, CaCO₃). They had 12 h of dark and 12 h light phase with stable ventilation and were fed with extruded feed (1.5 mm in size) twice daily except the day preceding the experiments.

Preparation of Aqueous Neem Leaf Extract

Dry Neem leaves with voucher number BUK0211 were obtained from the Department of Plant Biology herbarium, Faculty of Life Sciences, Bayero University Kano, Nigeria on Wednesday, 24th November, 2021. Fifty grams (50 g) of the Neem powder was dissolved in 1litre of dechlorinated water for a whole day (24 h) at 32±2°C (Standard room temperature).³² The blend was sieved by 25-mesh diameter sieve and the extract (50g/L) was used at various concentrations.

Acute toxicity test

The definitive test was conducted for 96 h to ascertain the acute toxicity effect (LC₅₀) after the range finding test. The following concentrations of neem extract (1.2, 1.4, 1.6, 1.8 and 2.0L) were used in 15 L of water in triplicate and control. 95% confidence limits were derived for the toxicity indices (LC₉₅, LC₅₀ and LC₅) using this formula: $TF = LC_{50} \text{ at } 24\text{hours} / LC_{50} \text{ at any other exposure time.}^{33}$

Sublethal Analysis for the Determination of Genotoxicity and Cytotoxicity Effects

The fish were exposed to sublethal concentrations of Neem extract at 1/10th, 1/20th and 1/50th of the LC₅₀ (Lethal concentration) for 28 days. *Oreochromis niloticus* were selected at random from each concentration of the triplicate including control.

Slide preparation

Blood sample was collected from each of the selected fish via the tail vein and were smeared on a glass slide at Fishery Department Culture Laboratory Bayero University Kano-Nigeria. The glass slides were air dried and fixed in 10% methanol for 40 minutes. They were removed and air dried and then stained with 3% Giemsa (sigma) stain, rinsed with water and allowed to dry.

The slides were examined using light microscope at magnification of x1000 (oil immersion). The method of³⁴ was adopted for scoring the micronuclei.

Statistical analysis

One-way parametric ANOVA (Kruskal-Wallis) test was used for significance differences between groups exposed to different concentrations of Neem extract while the differences were identified using the Student–Newman–Keuls (SNK) multiple-range test. Values of $p \leq 0.05$ were considered significant.

Ethical statement

The experimental procedures were approved by the Institutional Animal Ethics Committee of Bayero University Kano-Nigeria

Results and Discussion

Range Finding Tests and Behavioral Observation at 1.2L concentration of Neem Extract

Table 1 shows the total mortality rate observed when *Oreochromis niloticus* was exposed to neem extract concentration above 1.2 L in 12.5 L of water. After the introduction of the above concentration, an erratic movement was observed among the exposed fish and total mortality was recorded in less than 24 hours. Aggressive behaviors were observed with the Nile tilapia juveniles on contact with *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss extract. Fish from the control group and the group exposed to 1.2 L of neem extract showed normal body colour with a change in fin colour. Their behavior ranges from dynamically active, motionless symmetry, energetic swimming, normal gill movement and lying horizontally in water. Those from the group exposed to 1.6L and 1.8 L of neem extract showed abnormal behavior characterized by agitation, sudden and quick movement, air gulping, rolling movements and swimming on the back. There was an increase in the amount of mucus with widespread pigmentation mainly on the dorsum in the group exposed to 1.8 L neem extract. Weakness, swift movement and eventually death are reactions observed during excitation. There was an increment in the mortality rate at 24 hours intervals between the groups treated with different concentrations of neem extract.

These erratic and aggressive behaviors of the Nile Tilapia observed in this work agrees with the report of Ajani and Ayoola (2010)³⁵ who worked on *Sarotherodon gallilaeus* using *Adenia cissampeloides* extract and also Akinbulumo *et al* (2004)³⁶ who worked on *Clarias gariepinus* using *Derris elliptica* roots. The observed behaviors (abnormal movement, high respiration rate, restlessness) in the fish samples were due to the effect of the toxic substances from the neem extract. These rapid, aggressive and erratic behavioral changes as well as mucus secretion on gills prior to death were also reported by.³⁷

Definitive Test with Neem Extract

The definitive test was carried out using 12.5L of dechlorinated water with the following concentrations of neem extract: 1.2L, 1.4L, 1.6L, 1.8L, 2.0L and a control. It was observed that mortality increases with increase in concentration and longer duration (Table 2).

Table 1: 96 h Mortality rate of *Oreochromis niloticus* for the range test

Concentrations (Litres)	MORTALITY (HRS)				
	Test fishes	24hrs	48hrs	72hrs	96hrs
1.2	5	0	0	0	2
1.4	5	0	2	2	2
1.6	5	1	2	4	4
1.8	5	1	1	1	2
2.0	5	1	1	3	3

Table 2: 96 h of Mortality rate of *Oreochromis niloticus* during definitive test

Concentrations (Litres)	MORTALITY (HRS)				
	Test fishes	24hrs	48hrs	72hrs	96hrs
0.0	30	0	0	0	0
1.2	30	2	4	5	6
1.4	30	2	4	8	9
1.6	30	3	9	12	13
1.8	30	13	16	23	26
2.0	30	14	23	27	30

Bioaccumulation of Neem Extract

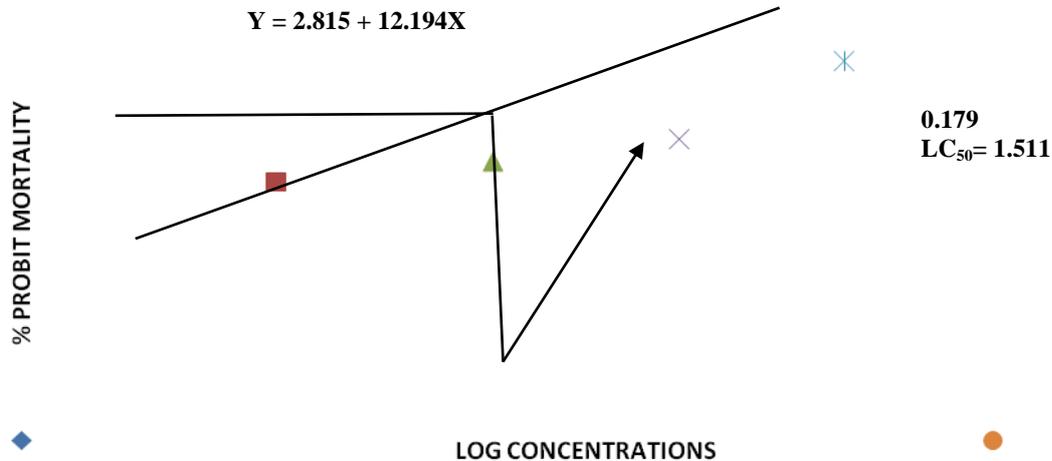
The result showed that the concentration of the exposure dose had effect on the bioaccumulation of neem extract at day 14 of the experiment. The mean neem extract point in the serum of fish and water media exposed to neem extract was found to be concentration-dependent at day 14th of the experiment.

Probit analysis at 96 h LC₅₀

Table 3 shows the percentage mortality from the definitive test which was subjected to probit analysis to generate the probit value of the response and to determine the LC₅, LC₅₀ and LC₉₅ respectively. The log concentration and probit values observed in the definitive test at 96 hours was used to generate the lethal concentration at 96hours LC₅₀ (Figure 1). The fish samples became inactive with longer exposure to the extract and at higher concentration. The lethal toxicity values of the neem extracts obtained in this study indicates its potent toxic effects on *Oreochromis niloticus*.

Table 3: Probit analysis data

Concentrations (Litres)	Log Concentrations	Number of fishes	Observed responses	Percentage mortality	Probit
0.0	30	0	0	0	0
1.2	30	2	4	5	6
1.4	30	2	4	8	9
1.6	30	3	9	12	13
1.8	30	13	16	23	26
2.0	30	14	23	27	30

**Figure 1:** Lethal Concentrations (LC₅₀) at 96hours**Table 4:** Mean and standard deviation of nuclear abnormalities

Conc. (Litres)	MN	BN	LB	BL
0.0	1.00 ± 1.0 ^a	0.00 ± 0.5 ^a	0.0 ± 0.0 ^a	0.00 ± 0.0 ^a
0.60	2.0 ± 1.0 ^{ab}	0.33 ± 0.6 ^a	1.0 ± 1.0 ^a	0.00 ± 0.0 ^a
0.80	2.3 ± 1.5 ^{ab}	0.67 ± 1.2 ^a	3.0 ± 1.0 ^b	3.00 ± 1.7 ^{ab}
1.00	3.7 ± 2.1 ^{ab}	1.67 ± 1.2 ^a	2.7 ± 0.6 ^b	5.00 ± 1.7 ^b
1.20	5.0 ± 1.0 ^b	1.67 ± 0.6 ^a	5.0 ± 1.0 ^c	5.67 ± 2.5 ^b

*MN – micro-nucleated cell; BN – binucleated cell; LB – lobbed cell; BL – blebbed

**Mean with the same superscript in the same vertical column are not significantly different at (p>0.05) from each other.

This is in line with the findings of ³⁸ who reported that neem plants contain active compounds that are potentially lethal to fish. The LC₅₀ (1.511g⁻¹) of neem extract expressed at 96 hours was higher than that reported by ¹³ in *Cirrhinus rigala* (1.035 g/L) and lower than that reported by ²⁴ in *Prochilodus lineatus* (4.80 g/L). However, the result obtained is in conformity with the findings of ³⁸ who reported that differences in lethal toxicity could be as a result of differences in fish species, age, sex, size, water quality and even methodology or the origin and part (s) of the neem tree used. ²⁰

Cytotoxicity and Nuclear abnormality on Blood Serum of *Oreochromis niloticus* Exposed to Neem extract at Day 14 and 28

The Neem extract induced significant increase in percentage frequency of micro-nucleated erythrocytes in peripheral blood of *Oreochromis niloticus* at the different exposure durations while at 0.00ml, the nucleus cells are normal (Plate 1).

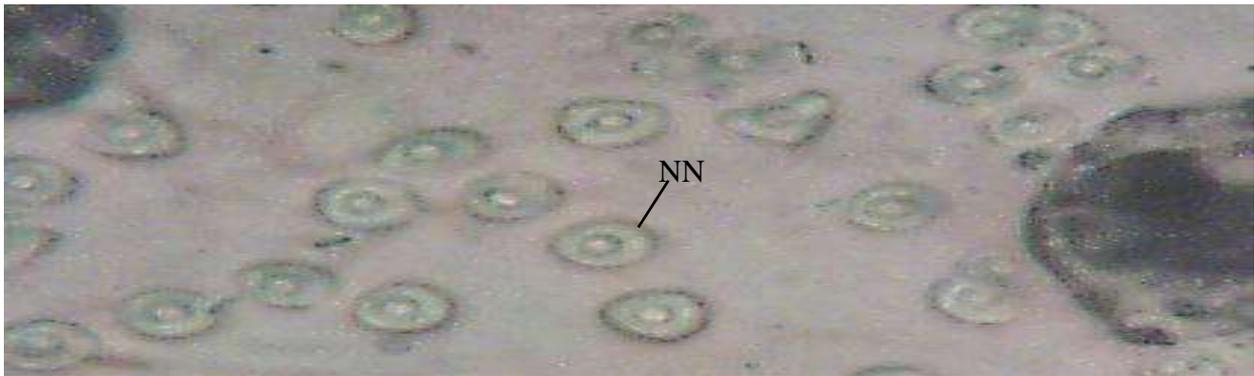
Table 5: Mean and standard deviation of nuclear abnormalities

Conc. (Litres)	MN	BN	LB	BL
0.0	1.67 ± 1.2 ^a	0.00 ± 0.0 ^a	0.00 ± 0.0 ^a	0.00 ± 0.0 ^a
0.60	3.00 ± 1.0 ^{ab}	2.67 ± 1.5 ^{ab}	3.67 ± 1.2 ^b	2.00 ± 1.0 ^a
0.80	4.00 ± 1.0 ^{ab}	5.00 ± 2.7 ^{bc}	5.33 ± 1.2 ^b	3.67 ± 1.2 ^a
1.00	6.67 ± 2.1 ^{ab}	5.33 ± 1.2 ^{bc}	7.0 ± 1.0 ^b	6.00 ± 3.0 ^a
1.20	11.0 ± 6.9 ^b	7.67 ± 2.5 ^c	7.0 ± 2.7 ^b	10.67 ± 4.5 ^b

*MN – micro-nucleated cell; BN – binucleated cell; LB – lobbed cell; BL – blebbed

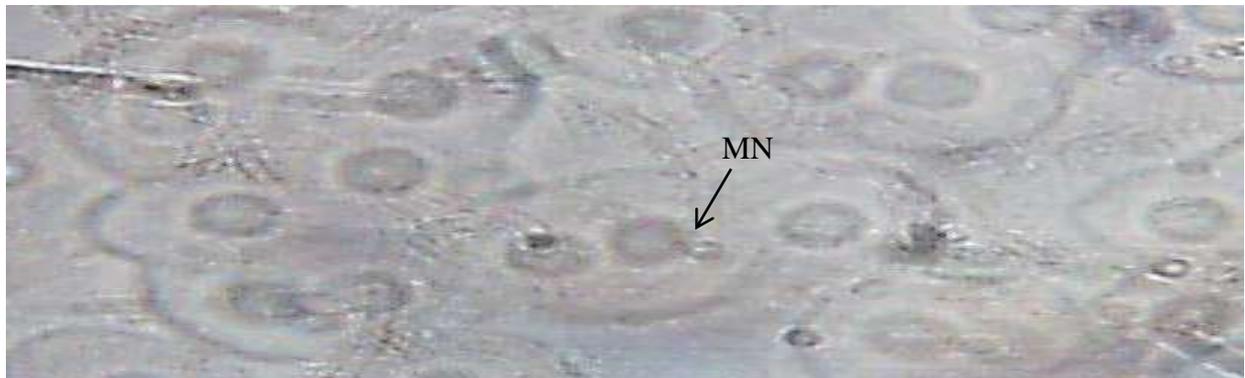
**Mean with the same superscript in the same vertical column are not significantly different at (p>0.05) from each other.

The micronucleus aberration (Plate 2) and lobbed aberration (Plate 3) recorded the highest range at concentration of 1.2L and the lowest range at concentration of 0.00ml (control). The analysis of variance indicated a significant difference (day 14 = 0.041; day 28 = 0.048) in the toxic effect of Neem extract on *Oreochromis niloticus* (Table 4). While the Student–Newman–Keuls analysis showed significant difference between the control and the test media. The clastogenic effect of neem extract observed in this study is in line with the report of ²⁵ in the root tip meristems of *Alium cepa* and also agrees with the findings of ³³ who reported the effects of *Pendimethalin* on maize and onion. The aberrations produced by neem extract on the erythrocyte nucleus of *Oreochromis niloticus* could be used as a biomarker in water pollution. The increased cellular apoptosis observed in this study is in support with the findings of ²⁵ who reported that silver nano-particles induce endoplasmic reticulum stress response in Zebrafish.



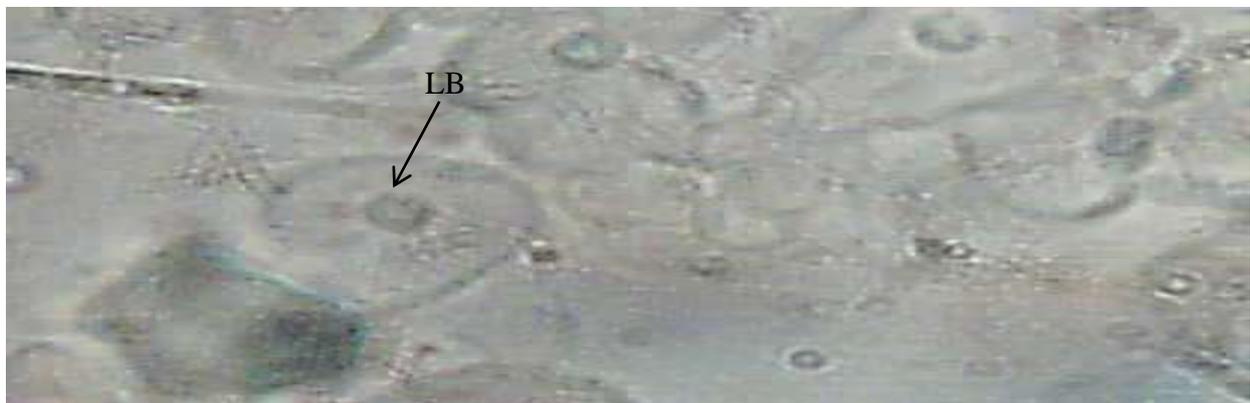
Mg: x1000 (Oil Immersion)

Plate 1: Erythrocytic of *O. niloticus* (normal nucleus - NN) cells at 0.00ml concentration of *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss extract.



Mg: x1000 (Oil Immersion)

Plate 2: Erythrocytic of *O. niloticus* cell (micro-nucleated - MN) at 1.2L concentration of *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss extract



Mg: x1000 (Oil Immersion)

Plate 3: Erythrocytic cell of *O. niloticus* (lobbed cell- LB) at 1.2L concentration of *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss extract.



Mg: x1000 (Oil Immersion)

Plate 4: Erythrocytic cell of *O. niloticus* (binucleated cell - BN) at 1.2L concentration of *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss extract

The highest mortality rate was recorded at 2.0L concentration of neem extract; this is in line with that reported in Nile Tilapia by³⁷ and³⁹ in juvenile of Atlantic salmon exposed to neem leaf extracts. The nuclear aberrations observed in this study signifies that neem leaf extract is a potential mutagen, this is in agreement with the findings of^{11, 28} who reported that electro-negativity of neem leaf extract is of the same magnitude with DNA-reactive molecules, which implies that neem extract is a potential mutagen. The highest range of bi-nucleated aberration (Plate 4) was recorded at a concentration of 1.2L and the lowest range at concentration of 0.00ml (control). The analysis of variance indicated that there was no significant difference at day 14 (0.096); while day 28 (0.005) showed significant difference in the toxicity effect of Neem extract on *Oreochromis niloticus*. Student–Newman–Keuls analysis showed no significant difference between the control and the test media. The highest range of blebbed aberration was recorded at a concentration of 1.2L and the lowest range at concentration of 0.00ml (control). The analysis of variance indicated that there was a significant difference (day 14=0.003; day 28= 0.004) in the toxicity effect of Neem extract on *Oreochromis niloticus* and the Student–Newman–Keuls analysis showed significant difference between the control and the test media.

The results reported above are imperative to evaluate the functional and morphological responses in fishes exposed to sub-lethal concentrations of plant extracts used in aquaculture.

Conclusion

The results obtained in this study revealed that *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss (neem leaf) extract has clastogenic effects on the erythrocytes of *Oreochromis niloticus* (*O. niloticus*) post juveniles. Neem extract equally has cellular apoptotic effect on the erythrocytes of *Oreochromis niloticus* and increases mortality rate of *Oreochromis niloticus* within 96 hours of exposure. Neem extract causes morphological, functional and histopathological changes in the fish. Therefore, the use of *Azadirachta indica* A. Juss extracts at the experimented concentrations for the treatment of fish diseases should be discouraged. However, Further works are suggested to be carried out in order to provide information for appropriate methods of application and to determine patent criteria for its cautious use in fish-farming for future use particularly in aquaculture facilities.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Authors' Declaration

The authors hereby declare that the work presented in this article is original and that any liability for claims relating to the content of this article will be borne by them.

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