South Asian Journal of Research in Microbiology

5(2): 1-8, 2019; Article no.SAJRM.52539
ISSN: 2582-1989

Groundnut Shell Infusion Agar as a Culture Medium for Moulds

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration among all authors. Authors WJO and STG designed the study, wrote the protocol and wrote the first draft of the manuscript. Author BG managed the analyses of the study and the literature searches. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Article Information

DOI: 10.9734/SAJRM/2019/v5i230124
Editor(s):
(1) Dr. Luciana Furlaneto-Maia, Lecturer, Department of Microbiology, Federal Technological University of Parana, Brazil.
Reviewers:
(1) Ahmad Gambo, Bayero University Kano, Nigeria.
(2) Oluwole Osinubi, University of Ibadan, Nigeria.
Complete Peer review History: http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/52539

Original Research Article

Received 28 September 2019
Accepted 02 December 2019
Published 12 December 2019

ABSTRACT

Aim: To carry out a Comparative mould analysis using groundnut shell infusion agar (GSA) and potato dextrose agar (PDA), as the control.
Study Design: Laboratory-experimental design was used in this study.
Place and Duration of Study: Soil samples were obtained from three different locations (Garden soil beside Biology Main Laboratory, opposite Faculty of Law and Faculty of Agriculture) in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt Rivers State, Nigeria. The study was carried out for three (3) months at the Microbiology Laboratory, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.
Methodology: Groundnut Shell Infusion Agar (GSA) was prepared by weighing 28 g of blended gari and 15 g of agar powder into 1L of groundnut shells filtrate. Potato dextrose Agar (PDA), a conventional medium was prepared according to the manufacturer's specifications. GSA was prepared by weighing 28 g of blended gari and 15 g of agar powder into 1L of groundnut shells filtrate. Potato dextrose agar, a conventional medium was prepared according to the Manufacturer's specifications.
Results: The mean mould counts from the different locations ranged from 3.7×10^7 cfu/ml to 7.8×10^7 cfu/ml on GSA and 3.7×10^7 cfu/ml to 1.5×10^9 cfu/ml on PDA following incubation at room temperature (27°c ± 2) for 3-5 days. The moulds identified were *Aspergillus niger, Aspergillus flavus, Trichoderma viride, Rhizopus* sp. *Mucor* sp. *Botrytis* sp. *Helminthosporium caryopsidum, and Penicillum* sp.

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Conclusion: From the results obtained, it showed that GSA could be used successfully for quantitative mould counts and other mycological studies. This would proffer solution to the high cost of conventional media used for moulds as well as agro waste pollution in the environment.

Keywords: Groundnut Shell Infusion Agar (GSA); Potato Dextrose Agar (PDA); soil samples; Aspergillus niger; Aspergillus flavus; Trichoderma viride; Rhizopus sp.; Mucor sp.

1. INTRODUCTION

As a legume, groundnut also known as peanut, belongs to the genus, *Arachis,* species, *hypogaea* andof the family Fabaceae (also known as Leguminosaea and commonly known as the bean or pea family) [1]. Like most other legumes, peanuts harbour symbiotic nitrogen-fixing bacteria in root nodules [2]. It is widely grown in the tropics and subtropics and classified both as a grain legume and because of its high oil content, an oil crop [3]. Peanuts are similar in taste and nutritional profile to tree nuts such as walnuts and almonds and are often served in similar ways in western cuisines. It is particularly important that peanuts are dried properly and stored in dry conditions. If they are too high in moisture or if storage conditions are poor, they may become infected by the mould, *Aspergillus flavus.*

The groundnut husks are shells that are discarded after processing or shelling of groundnut seeds. Groundnut is a good protein source and has a high lysine content which makes it a good complement for cereal protein, which is low in lysine [4].

Global peanut production has increased to 35.88 million metric tons in year 2011 [5], which led to concern in Agricultural waste management. One of the best alternatives in curbing agricultural waste problems is to transform agricultural wastes to other utilized materials [6]. Thus, using groundnut shell agar as culture medium for moulds is essential in the reduction of agricultural waste problems as well as cost of purchasing other expensive media.

Gari is rich in carbohydrate therefore, suitable for fungal growth. Moulds such as *Aspergillus, Penicillium, Fusarium, Rhizopus, Cladosporium* and *Mucor*have been associated with gari during storage and distribution [7].

Therefore, groundnut shell infusion agar, when processed by obtaining filtrate from blended groundnut shell and mixed with gari and agar, in some respect is similar to agar media and could be used to isolate and identify microorganisms that utilize it.

Potato dextrose agar is a general purpose medium for yeasts and moulds that can be supplemented with acid or antibiotics to inhibit bacterial growth. It is used in plate count methods when testing food, dairy products and cosmetics [5].

The United States Pharmapeia (USP) lists PDA as one of the recommended media for use in the Microbial Enumeration. Test when testing non-sterile pharmaceutical products.

In addition, this medium is used to stimulate sporulation (slide preparations), maintain stock cultures of certain dermatophytes and differentiate atypical varieties of dermatophytes by pigment production [8]. The uses of groundnut are diverse; all parts of the plant can be used. The nut (kernel) is a rich source of edible oil containing 36-54% oil and 25-32% protein [9].

Non-food products such as soaps, medicines, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, emulsions for insect control, lubricant and fuel for diesel engines can be made from groundnut. The haulms are excellent high protein hay for horses and ruminant livestock. Groundnut shells may be used for fuel (fireplace “logs”), as a soil conditioner, for building trade as blocks or hardboard and as a raw source of organic chemicals [10].

According to analysis by the Animal Science Department, Aidabase, Zimbabwe, groundnut shells contain an average of 68% organic matter, 6.8% crude protein, 18.2% crude fibre and 7.1% ash. Another nutritional composition analysis of groundnut shells indicate that the shells contain 65.7% cellulose, 21.2% carbohydrate, 7.3% protein, 4.5% minerals and 1.2% lipids. Since the processed shells contain bits and skins of nuts, the actual protein and lipid contents of this waste material are probably much higher.

Previous studies have shown the feasibility of using agricultural products such as gari as

culture medium for moulds [11]. The present study is to investigate the growth characteristics of moulds on groundnut shell infusion agar, which might serve as an inexpensive but also effective alternative culture medium in comparison to potato dextrose agar.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Study Location

The study was carried out in the Microbiology laboratory, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt Rivers State, South-South Nigeria.

2.2 Media Used

The media used in this study were Potato dextrose agar (PDA) and Groundnut shell infusion agar (GSA).

2.3 Collection of Samples

2.3.1 Garden soil sample

The garden soil sample was collected in sterile closed containers from three different locations (beside Biology Main Laboratory, opposite Faculty of Law and Faculty of Agriculture) in Rivers State University, Port Harcourt Rivers State, Nigeria. The study was carried out for three (3) months at the Microbiology Laboratory, Rivers State University, Port Harcourt.

2.4 Groundnut Shells Sample

Groundnut was purchased from hawkers in Rivers State University (RSU). The nuts were sorted and the shells were recovered. Some grams were weighed and dried in an oven to a constant weight. These were then blended with distilled water and sieved to obtain the filtrate. The filtrate was stored in a refrigerator prior to analysis.

2.5 Gari Sample

Gari was bought from Mile 1 market in Port-Harcourt, Rivers State, Nigeria. The gari was ground with a blender to give very fine particles. It was then meshed to obtain the fine and smooth particles.

2.6 Media Preparation

2.6.1 Potato dextrose agar

Potato dextrose agar was prepared according to Manufacturer's specifications. The method used was the 10-fold dilution method of Harrigan and McCance [12]. Ten grams (10 g) of soil samples from different locations were aseptically transferred into 90 ml of sterile saline in 150 ml conical flasks. The flasks were shaken vigorously to dislodge the microbial flora. Further 10-fold dilutions were carried out by adding 1.0 ml of the penultimate dilution to 9 ml of fresh diluents.

2.6.2 Groundnut shell infusion agar

Groundnut shell infusion agar was prepared by weighing 15 g of agar powder into 1000 ml of the groundnut shell filtrate and 28 g of gari was also added to the mixture and then shaken for proper mixing before being sterilized. The composition of the groundnut filtrate is as follows:

Dried groundnut shells – 100 g.

Distilled water-500 ml

Filtrate-1000 ml (500 ml water was added to increase volume)

2.7 Analysis of Samples

After preparation of the groundnut shell infusion agar, analysis of the soil sample was carried out. A set-up for serial 10 fold dilutions was done, in which 10 g of garden soil was mixed with 90 ml of sterile distilled water in an Erlenmeyer flask. This was agitated thoroughly in order for the microorganisms present in the sample to be dislodged into the water. This was labelled as stock, from which serial dilutions up to 10^{-8} were made.

Normal saline was dispensed into test tubes (9 ml each). These were sterilized by autoclaving for 15minutes and then allowed to cool. Some of the stock (1 ml) was pipetted into the first test tube (10^{-2}), containing 9ml of normal saline. Further serial 10 fold dilutions up to 10^{-8} were made, using a 1 ml sterile pipette for each dilution.

2.7.1 Mould count

Moulds in the samples were enumerated by pipetting aliquots (0.1 ml) of each dilution (10^{-2} - 10^{-8}) into already prepared acidified potato dextrose agar containing streptomycin (1 mg / 100 ml) and GSA plates without antibiotics in triplicate. A sterile bent glass spreader was used to spread the sample evenly on the plate, and it was then incubated at 25°C for 3-5 days.

Colonies which appeared on the plates were counted and expressed as colony forming units per gram (cfu/g). The moulds were isolated and sub cultured to obtain pure cultures [13].

2.7.2 Isolation of pure cultures

Mixed colonies of isolates were observed after about 5days of inoculation of fungi at 25°c and the respective plates were further examined morphologically and individual distinct colonies were sub cultured for further characterization. Distinct colonies of fungal isolates were isolated using inoculating needle and inoculated into freshly prepared GSA and PDA plates.

2.7.3 Identification of moulds: Gari slide culture

Gari granules were placed in a glass petri dish and sterilized by autoclaving at 121°c for 15 mins. Individual fairly large grains of the sterile gari were transferred using flamed forceps onto clean microscope slides and then placed in different petri dishes, cushioned with moistened cotton wool. Pure isolates of moulds were inoculated using inoculating needle onto separate grains and covered with cover slips then the petri dishes were covered and incubated at ambient temperature for 2-3 days. The slide cultures obtained were stained with lactophenol cotton blue to enhance structures of growth and then viewed under the microscope. These were observed under the low power first and then the high power of the microscope and the observations were recorded. Isolates were identified by standard methods [14].

2.8 Physiochemical Parameter

2.8.1 Hydrogen concentration (pH)

The pH of the media was determined using multi-parameter measurement meter (U=10, Horiba, LA-920. Kyota, Japan). After adequate calibration, the probe was rinsed with distilled water before being dipped into each sample and the display allowed to stabilize before the values for the respective parameters were recorded [15].

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Microbiological Analyses

In this study, it was observed that both GSA and PDA supported the growth of moulds as indicated in the mould counts from Tables 1, 2 and 3. The results of the study also revealed that GSA supported only the growth of moulds and not that of bacteria. This could be due to the high percentage of cellulose contained in the shells.

Quantitative counts on GSA showed discrete colonies as is the case with conventional media, PDA, that was used. As indicated in Table 1, the mould count was greater on PDA (5.0×10^6- 4.0×10^9) than on GSA (2.0×10^5- 1.0×10^8). This might be due to insufficient carbohydrate content in the GSA medium as this medium was not enriched with gari, a rich source of carbohydrate when it was used for the sample from the first location. However, the mould counts in tables 2 and 3 (4.0×10^5 – 2.0×10^8) showed that the growth of moulds had increased on GSA, probably because of the gari that was used to enrich the medium.

The growth of moulds was impressive on PDA, although this medium was found to support the growth of bacteria when no antibiotic was added. According to [11], proximate analysis of gari showed 1% crude protein, 2% fats, 1% ash, 3% fibre, 12% moisture content and 81% carbohydrate while that of groundnut shells according to [16] showed 4.43% crude protein, 0.50% lipids, 2.50% ash, 59.0% fibre, 8.0% moisture content and 25.57% carbohydrate. This revealed that GSA is nutritious and has all it takes to support the growth of fungi.

Total viable mould counts on the media from sample location 1 (Garden soil beside Biology Main Laboratory) are shown on Table 1. On GSA, the counts were within the range of 1.0×10^7 and 2.0×10^6 cfu/g while PDA had counts between 3.0×10^7 and 5.0×10^6 cfu/g. Here, PDA supported growth better than GSA.

Table 1. Total viable mould count from location 1 on GSA and PDA

Sample code	Viable count (Cfu/g)
L1 GSA 4	2.0×10^5
L1 GSA 5	2.0×10^6
L1 GSA 6	1.0×10^7
L1 GSA 7	1.0×10^8
L1 PDA 4	5.0×10^6
L1 PDA 5	3.0×10^7
L1 PDA 6	4.0×10^8
L1 PDA 7	4.0×10^9

Key: L1 GSA 4= Dilution 10^{-4} on groundnut shell infusion agar from location 1
L1 PDA 4= Dilution 10^{-4} on potato dextrose agar from location 1

Total viable mould counts on the media from sample location 2 (Garden soil opposite the Faculty of Law) are shown on Table 2. On GSA, the counts were within the range of 1.0 x 10^7 and 2.0 x 10^8 cfu/g while PDA had counts between 1.0 x 10^6 and 1.0 x 10^8 cfu/g. GSA supported growth better than PDA n this location.

Table 2. Total viable mould counts from location 2 on GSA and PDA

Sample code	Viable counts (Cfu/g)
L2 GSA 4	4.0×10^5
L2 GSA 5	4.0×10^6
L2 GSA 6	1.0×10^7
L2 GSA 7	2.0×10^8
L2 PDA 4	3.0×10^5
L2 PDA 5	1.0×10^6
L2 PDA 6	1.0×10^7
L2 PDA 7	1.0×10^8

Key: L2 GSA 4= Dilution 10^{-4} on groundnut shell infusion agar from location 2
L2 PDA 4= Dilution 10^{-4} on potato dextrose agar from location 2

Total viable mould counts on the media from sample location 3 are shown on Table 3. On GSA, the counts were within the range of 4.0 x 10^5 and 2.0 x 10^8 cfu/g while PDA had counts between 4.0 x 10^5 and 2.0 x 10^8 cfu/g.GSA supported growth in location 3 (Faculty of Agriculture Garden soil) better than PDA.

Table 3. Total viable mould count from location 3 on GSA and PDA

Sample code	Viable counts (Cfu/g)
L3 GSA 4	4.0×10^5
L3 GSA 5	5.0×10^6
L3 GSA 6	3.0×10^7
L3 GSA 7	2.0×10^8
L3 PDA 4	4.0×10^5
L3 PDA 5	4.0×10^6
L3 PDA 6	1.0×10^7
L3 PDA 7	2.0×10^8

Key: L3 GSA 4= Dilution 10^{-4} on groundnut shell infusion agar from location 3
L3 PDA 4= Dilution 10^{-4} on potato dextrose agar from location 3

Mean mould counts on the media from different sample locations are shown on Table 4. On GSA, the counts were within the range of 3.7 x 10^7 and 7.8 x 10^7 cfu/g while PDA had counts between 3.7 x 10^7 and 1.5 x 10^9 cfu/g.

The morphological and microscopic characteristics of isolates obtained from groundnut shell infusion agar are presented on Table 5. They were identified by standard methods [14]. Some of the isolates were *Aspergillus niger, Trichoderma viride, Rhizopus* sp.

Table 4. Mean mould counts from the different locations on GSA and PDA

Media	Location (Cfu/g)		
	1	2	3
GSA	3.7×10^7	7.1×10^7	7.8×10^7
PDA	1.5×10^9	3.7×10^7	7.1×10^7

The morphological and microscopic characteristics of isolates obtained from potato dextrose agar are presented on Table 6. They were identified by standard methods [14]. Some of the isolates were *Penicillium* sp., *Botrytis* sp., *Muco*r sp., *Aspergillus niger*, *Rhizopus* sp.

The moulds isolated from the soil include *Aspergillus niger, Rhizopus sp, Aspergillus flavus, Mucor* sp, *Penicillium* sp, *Botrytis* sp, *Helminthosporium caryopsidum, Trychoderma viride*. The growth of *Trichoderma* and *Aspergillus* were impressive on the both media. Although *Mucor* sp. did not grow on GSA, it did on PDA, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7 shows the frequency of occurrence of mould isolates from GSA and PDA media with *Aspergillus niger* having the highest % frequency of occurrence of 14 on PDA and *Aspergillus flavus* and *Botrytis* sp. having the least % frequency of occurrence of 3.5 on GSA.

Plate 1 shows a 3-4-day old *Aspergillus niger* (mould) culture grown on GSA while plate 2, a 6-7-day old *Aspergillus niger* grown on PDA.

3.2 Physicochemical Analysis

Hydrogen concentration (pH): The pH of the media could also be the reason why bacteria were not able to grow on the media since GSA has a pH of 4.3-5.6 which is acidic, thus, prevents bacterial growth while supporting that of moulds. In this study, pH value of 4.4 was obtained for GSA as shown on Table 8. Groundnut shell infusion agar mixed with gari produced healthy moulds probably because of additional nutrients from the gari, and it also aided in making the pH of the medium acidic, since it has a pH that lies within 3.5-4.2 and it supports the growth of fungi but inhibits the growth of bacteria which concurs with the pH value (3.9) obtained in this study [11].

Table 8 shows the pH of GSA and GSA enriched with Gari used for the study. GSA had a pH of 4.4 while GSA enriched with gari had a pH of 3.9.

Table 5. Morphological and microscopic characteristics of moulds isolated from groundnut shell infusion agar medium

Isolate code	Cultural morphology	Microscopic observation	Probable organism
GSA M1	White Scattered, greenish Patches on the surface	Septate hyphae with coni diophores and globose conidia	*Trichoderma viride*
GSA M2	Dark colony with compact white and yellow on the reverse	Smooth-walled erect conidiophores with globose conidia	*Aspergillus niger*
GSA M3	Powdery masses of yellow-green spores on the upper surface	Septate hyphae with rather rather long conidiophores. Conidia are globose	*Aspergillus flavus*
GSM4	Dense cotton white growth becoming grey with sporulation	Non-septate unicellular sporangiophores	*Rhizopus* sp.

Table 6. Morphological and microscopic characteristics of moulds isolated from potato dextrose agar medium

Isolate code	Cultural morphology	Microscopic observation	Probable organism
PDA M1	Grey-greenish colony	Slender phialides with cylinderical conidia and septate hyphae	*Penicillium* sp
PDA M2	Dark colony with compact white yellow on the reverse	Smooth-walled erect conidiophores globose conidia	*Aspergillus niger*
PDA M3	Dense cotton white growth Becoming grey with sporulation	Non-septate unicellular sporangiophores	*Rhizopus* sp.
PDA M4	Very dark mycelium	Septate hyphae with tall conidiophores inclusters and porospores	*Helminthosporium caryopsidum*
PDA M5	Hyaline mycelium becoming grey to greyish brown	Abundant short conidiophores with septate hyphae	*Botrytis* sp.
PDA M6	Fluffy white appearance	Non-septate or sparsely septate with short erect sporangiophores	*Mucor* sp

Table 7. Frequency of occurrence of mould isolates from GSA and PDA media

Isolates	No. of occurrence	On GSA (%)	On PDA (%)
Trichoderma viride	5	7.0	1.7
Aspergillus niger	14	10.5	14
Aspergillus flavus	4	3.5	3.5
Rhizopus sp	9	7.0	8.7
Mucor sp	4	0	7.0
Helminthosporium caryopsidum	9	12.0	3.5
Botrytis sp	4	3.5	3.5
Penicillium sp	8	7.0	7.0

Plate 1. A 3-4-day old *Aspergillus niger* grown on GSA

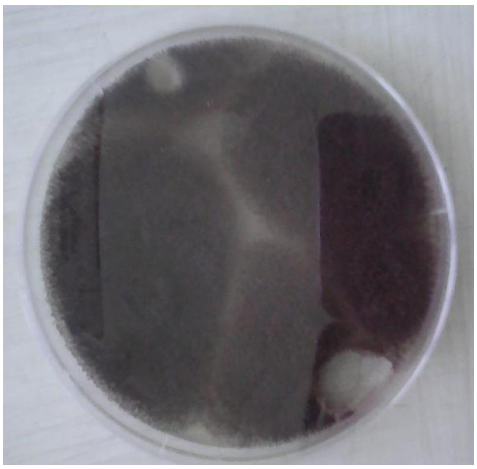

Plate 2. A 6-7-day old *Aspergillus niger* grown on PDA

Table 8. Concentration of pH for GSA and GSA enriched with Gari

Media	pH value	pH range (Okorondu et al. [11])
GSA	4.44	3-5.6
GSA enriched with gari	3.9	3.5 - 4.2

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

From the results of this study, it can be concluded that groundnut shell infusion agar possesses the ability to support the growth of moulds and it also inhibited the growth of bacteria. Growth characteristics compared favourably with that on potato dextrose agar (a conventional media). Hence, GSA could be used successfully for quantitative mould counts in any laboratory experiment and it has provided a less expensive alternative to other expensive conventional media used to culture moulds.

It is therefore recommended that for the quatitative count of moulds and other mycological studies, GSA could be employed. Further studies on the use of groundnut shell infusion agar as culture medium should be carried out.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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Peer-review history:
The peer review history for this paper can be accessed here:
http://www.sdiarticle4.com/review-history/52539