



ETHNOBOTANY, PHYTOCHEMISTRY AND PHARMACOLOGICAL PROFILE OF *VERNONIA GALAMENSIS* (CASS.)LESS: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Vernonia galamensis is an oilseed plant known for the treatment of diabetes mellitus, chest pain, gastrointestinal diseases, malaria, eye infections, skin infections and as an insecticide. Extracts of *V. galamensis* are known to have sedative, analgesic, larvicidal activity, antidiabetic, insecticidal, anti-ulcer and aqueous extracts of the leaves showed no toxicity. The phytochemical constituents of the leaves, roots, flowers and seeds of *V. galamensis* include flavonoids, coumarins, triterpenes, sterols, sesquiterpene lactones, epoxidized fatty acids and adenosine. This review summarizes the ethnobotanical, pharmacological, phytochemical and toxicity studies of *V. galamensis* (Cass.) Less

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INTRODUCTION

In the socio-economic context of developing countries, the valorization of medicinal plants can lead to the obtaining of adequate and inexpensive therapeutic responses. Mali has undertaken efforts in this direction by establishing the Department of Traditional Medicine (DMT), which is conducting studies on for the development of improved traditional medicines. The genus *Vernonia* is one of the largest groups in the family *Asteraceae* and includes more than 1000 species distributed widely in tropical and sub-tropical regions of Africa, Asia and America (Jeffrey and Kew, 1988). A total of 109 *Vernonia* species were reported in the literature to have medicinal properties. One hundred and five (105) plants were linked to the treatment or management of 44 human diseases. Plants of the genus also used in ethnoveterinary and zoopharmacognostic practices. A total of 12 *Vernonia* species are reported to be used in ethnoveterinary medicine while 2 species are used in self-medication practices by chimpanzees and gorillas (Toyang et Verpoorte, 2013). The present study, examined the literature on the medicinal properties of *V. galamensis*. It showed that important ethnobotanical, phytochemistry and pharmacology data exist. Traditional healers are using of subspecies and varieties of *V. galamensis* of the treatment of various diseases including

diabetes mellitus (Autamashih et al.2011), chest pain, gastrointestinal diseases and external wounds (Teklehaymanot and Giday, 2010), malaria (Asres et al.2001, Tarwish, 2015), skin infections (Asres et al.2001; McClory and Atkinson, 2010). Other studies have shown the interest of *V. galamensis* in sedative (Johri et al.1995), analgesic (Johri et al.1995), anti-ulcer (Awaad and Grace, 1999; Johri et al.1995), larvicidal activity (Tarwish, 2015), antidiabetic (Autamashih et al. 2011), insecticide (Favi and Kraemer, 2006) and in the treatment of skin diseases (McClory and Atkinson, 2010). Chemists studied the composition of leaves, flowers, roots and seeds of its sub-species and varieties and isolated an impressive series of molecules including phenolic acids and derivatives (Awaad al.2000), flavonoids (Awaad and Grace,1999; Doucouré et al.2010; Miserez et al.1996; Keita et al. 2016b), coumarins (Awaad al.2000), triterpenes (Perdue et al.1993), sterols (Artaud and Iatrides, 1990), glaucolide-type sesquiterpene lactones (Favi et al.2008; Perdue et al.1993; Zdero et al.1990) and fatty acids epoxidized (Fiseha et al.2010; Thompson et al.1994). The aim of this review is to gather information on traditional therapeutic uses, phytochemistry data and the pharmacological profile of *V. galamensis* (Cass.) Less.

METHODOLOGY

V. galamensis is more known as a plant of commerce for the value of its seed oil than for its medicinal potential (Toyang and Verpoorte, 2013). This work aims to highlight the

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phytochemical, chemical and medicinal potential of *V. galamensis*. The current review was achieved using an organized search of the scientific data published on ethnobotany, pharmacology, phytochemistry and acute toxicity of *V. galamensis*. The search was conducted between October 15, 2016 and March 28, 2017, using the keyword search term *V. galamensis*. The searches were carried out using various databases, including PubMed, Google Scholar (<https://scholar.google.com/>); Science Direct (<http://www.sciencedirect.com/>), Access to Global Online Research in Agriculture (AGORA) (<http://www.fao.org/agora/en/>).

Plant Description

Taxonomy According to Gilbert's concept of *V. galamensis*, this widely distributed species includes six sub-species: *afromontana*, *gibbosa*, *lushotoensis*, *mutomoensis*, *nairobensis*, *galamensis* (Gilbert, 1986). The subspecies *V. galamensis* Ssp. *galamensis* M. Gilbert is widely distributed, with 4 botanical varieties: *galamensis*, *petitiana*, *australis* and *ethiopica* (Burkill, 1985; Gilbert, 1986; Perdue *et al.*, 1986).

Geographical distribution

The greatest diversity is found in East Africa, whereas in West Africa only one variety is present: *V. galamensis* Ssp. *galamensis* Var. *galamensis* M. Gilbert or *V. galamensis* (Cass.) Less or *Centrapalus pauciflora* (Willd.) H. Rob. Or *V. pauciflora* (Willd) (Perdue *et al.*, 1986).

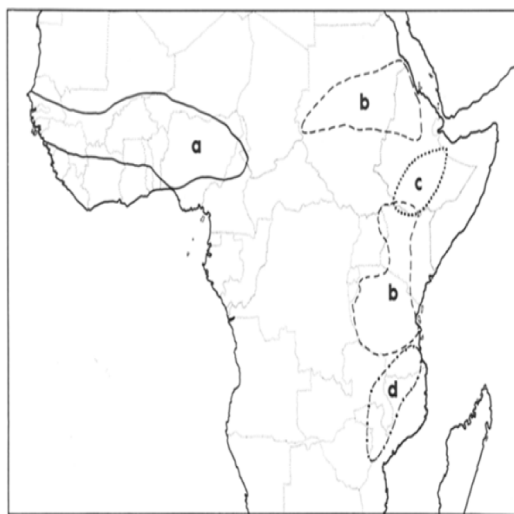


Fig.1 The general distribution of *V. galamensis* Ssp. *galamensis*. a = Var. *galamensis* (West Africa region (Extending from Guinea through Ivory Coast, Mali, Burkina Faso, Ghana to Nigeria) b = Var. *petitiana* (Sudan, Kenya and Tanzania region); c = Var. *ethiopica* (central-southern Ethiopia); d = Var. *australis* (Malawi, Mozambique and eastern Zimbabwe region) (Perdue *et al.*, 1986).

Botanical description

Herbaceous, usually annual, rarely persisting for more than one growing season; varying from small ephemerals 20 cm tall with a single flower head, to robust, rather diffusely branching, somewhat shrubby plants to 5m tall with many flower heads; stems are never branching from the base, they are branching only after the first flower head is formed; the inflorescence consisting of a terminal flower head with lateral flower heads from the uppermost axils, subsequently, if moisture is sufficient for continued growth, the lateral branches of the inflorescences overtopping the first

established inflorescence. Leaves alternate, sessile, membranous, 0.6 -5.0 cm wide, up to 25 cm long, acuminate at the tip, cuneate at the base, margins toothed, surface puberulous to pilose (Gilbert, 1986).



Fig.2 A photograph showing flowers of *V. galamensis* (Cass.) Less.

Ethnobotany

Chest-pain and gastrointestinal diseases In Tanzania and Kenya, the leaves of *V. galamensis* Ssp. *galamensis* Var. *petitiana* are eaten, boiled, or infused to treat chest-pain and gastrointestinal diseases (Baye *et al.* 2007; Burkill, 1985).

Diabetes mellitus

The decoctions of leaves of *V. galamensis* have been used in folk medicine for ages in the treatment of diabetes mellitus in Tanzania and Nigeria (Autamashih *et al.* 2011; Chhabra *et al.* 1989).

Eye infections

The juice of *V. galamensis* Ssp. *nairobensis* is applied in the eyes to treat eye infections (Bussmann, 2006).

Larvicidal activity

Larvicidal trials against larvae of the third larval stage of *Anopheles gambiae*, the most active extract recorded was that of acetone root extract of *V. galamensis* with an LC50 of 22.85 (Tarwish, 2015).

External injuries, infections and wounds

In Ethiopia, *V. galamensis* is used to treat external injuries, infections and wounds (Baye and Oyen, 2007; Teklehaymanot and Giday, 2010).

Insecticidal properties

In Senegal, it is used, especially against termites, to protect palisades and timber (Burkill, 1985).

Pharmacology

Some pharmacological interests of the species are given in the following sections:

Sedative Activity

The non-polar fractions of *V. galamensis* leaves revealed sedative properties at 200 mg/kg in rats (Johri *et al.* 1995).

Analgesic activity

Analgesic activity was detected at 200 mg/kg in rats in leaf and seed extracts of *V. galamensis* (Johri *et al.* 1995).

Gastric and duodenal ulcers

Leaf and seed extracts of *V. galamensis* had antiulcerogenic effects when tested using either hydrochloric acid or ethanol

as the necrotising agent in rats (Dahanukar *et al.*, 2000; Johri *et al.* 1995)

Anti-dermatitis

Epoxidized oil from the seeds of *V. galamensis* provides topical medicinal preparations that are effective in the prevention and treatment of various forms of skin diseases, skin lesions and wounds (McClory and Atkinson, 2010).

Anti-diabetic

The antidiabetic properties of the aqueous extract of the leaves of *V. galamensis* were confirmed at a dose of 700mg/kg (Autamashih *et al.* 2011). The tablet formulation based on the crude aqueous extract of leaves of *V. galamensis*, carried out according to the wet granulation method, is now commercially available in Nigeria for the treatment of diabetes mellitus (Autamashih *et al.* 2011).

Insecticide activity

The test volatiles from the leaves of *V. galamensis* is used as an alternative to methyl bromide, a fumigant rescheduled to phase out by 2010 due to its capability to deplete atmospheric ozone. Plant volatiles from leaf extract of *V. galamensis* were released at room temperature and tested against adult whiteflies and confused flour beetles. One and two hundred microliters of our extract significantly killed adult whiteflies within an hour ($F = 7.86$, $df = 7$, $p = 0.0022$) and continued to be active for twenty hours ($F=10.60$, $df = 5$, $p = 0.0010$). There was significant mortality of confused flour beetles fumigated with 3 mL of plant extract within twenty hours ($F = \text{infinity}$, $df = 4$, $p = \text{infinity}$) whether they were under one gram or ten grams of flour. However, no mortality was observed by the same quantity of plant extract when beetles were under 500 g of flour (Favi and Kraemer, 2006).

Antibacterial activity

A study (Carlos, 2015) of the fixed oil of the seeds isolated unsaturated fats, subsequently converted into aminated fats, vernolamide, tested the antimicrobial activity against the bacteria *Escherichia coli*, *Bacillus subtilis* and *Saccharoyces aureus*, and the fungi *Staphylococcus cerevisiae*, *Microsporium gypseum* and *Trichophyton mentagrophytes*. The authors used the disk diffusion method and the results showed activity against strains of *Escherichia* and *Bacillus subtilis*, but not against the yeast and dermatophyte fungi tested.

Membrane stabilizers

The leaf and root extracts of *V. galamensis* demonstrated prominent *in vitro* membrane stabilising property as determined by the percentage inhibition of RBC lysis (Johri *et al.* 1995).

Acute toxicity

At an oral dose of 5000 mg/kg in rats, no toxicity or adverse effects were observed for extracts of the leaves from *V. galamensis*. LD50's greater than 5000 mg/kg body weight are of no practical interest, therefore the crude extract is considered relatively safe (Autamashih *et al.* 2011).

Phytochemical screening

Leaves

Phytochemical studies show that the aqueous extract of *V. galamensis* contains saponins, glycosides, carbohydrates, flavonoids and alkaloids (Autamashih *et al.* 2011).

Flowers

As regards, the flowers of *V. galamensis* Ssp. *galamensis* Var. *galamensis* phytochemical screening has shown that they contain flavonoids, tannins, sterols and triterpenes, coumarins, saponosides, reducing compounds, oses and holosides (Doucouré *et al.* 2010).

Roots

A phytochemical screening has highlighted the presence of triterpenes, sterols, flavonoids and alkaloids in the roots of *V. galamensis* Ssp. *nairobensis* (Mwaura, 1997).

Extracts

Phytochemical screening revealed presence of steroids, saponins, flavonoids, terpenoids and cardiac glycosides in Hexane, chloroformic, ethyl acetate, acetone, methanol and water extracts of leaves and roots of *V. galamensis*. Tannins were present in methanol, water and in acetone extracts of the leaves of *V. galamensis* (Tarwish, 2015).

Phytochemistry

The different classes of compounds isolated from subspecies and varieties of *V. galamensis* are categorized as: Phenolic acids and derivatives

Four (04) molecules of the series of phenolic acids and derivatives were isolated from the alcoholic extract of the leaves of *V. galamensis* Ssp. *galamensis* Var. *Petitiana*: caffeic acid (1), 4-hydroxy-3-methoxy cinnamic acid (2), 3-O-methyl methylgallate (3) et 1-(3, 5- dihydroxyphenyl) propene (4) (Fig.3) (Awaad *et al.* 2000).

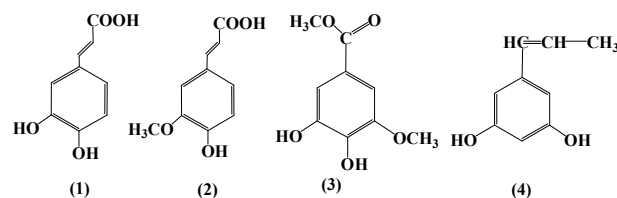


Fig 3 Molecular structures of phenolic acids and derivatives isolated from the leaves of *V. galamensis* Ssp. *galamensis* Var. *Petitiana*.

Flavonoids and Favonoid glycosides

Flavonoids and their glycosides have been reported from many subspecies and varieties of *V. galamensis*. The typical flavonoid aglycones like oriented quercetin and isorhamnetin. The fractionation of the methanolic extract from the leaves of *V. galamensis* Ssp. *nairobensis* allowed to isolate four molecules of the series of flavonols of type 3-O-glycosides: quercetin 3-O-β-D-galactopyranoside (5), quercetin 3-O-β-D-apio-D-furanosyl (1→2) galactopyranoside (6), quercetin 3-O-α-L-rhamnosyl (1→6) galactopyranoside (7) et isorhamnetin 3-O-β-D-apio-D-furanosyl (1→2)-β-D-galactopyranoside (8) (Fig.4) (Miserez *et al.* 1996).

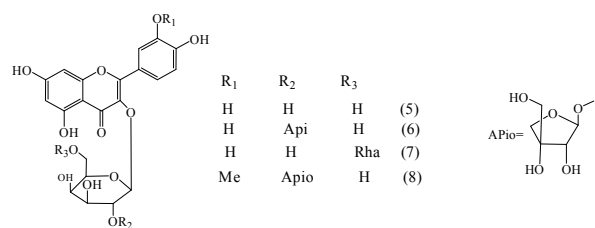


Fig.4 Molecular structures of flavonoids isolated from The leaves of *V. galamensis* Ssp. *nairobensis*.

Six flavonols, including also five 3-O-glycosides, was were detected from the alcoholic extract of the leaves of *V. galamensis* Ssp. *galamensis* Var. *petitiana*: quercetin 3-O-β-D-galactopyranoside (5), isorhamnetin 3-O-β-D-apio-D-furanosyl (1 → 2) β-D-galactopyranoside (8), quercetin (9), quercetin 3-O-β-D-glucoside (10), isorhamnetin 7-O-α-L-rhamnoside (11) and isorhamnetin 3-O-α-L-rhamnosyl (1→6) β-D-glucopyranoside (12)(Fig.5) (Awaad and Grace, 1999).

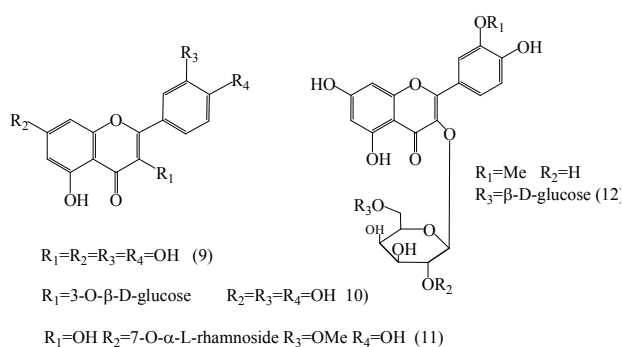


Fig 5 Molecular structures of flavonoids isolated from the leaves of *V. galamensis* Ssp. *nairobensis*.

We report the isolation of 3-O-methylquercetin (13) from the chloroform phase and three monoglycosylated flavonols from the acetate, butanol phases of the hydromethanolic extract of the flowers of *V. galamensis* Ssp. *galamensis* Var. *galamensis*: kaempferol-3-O-α-rhamnoside (14), quercetin 3-O-rhamnoside (15) and 3-O-methylquercetin 4'-O-β-D-glucoside (16) (Fig.6) (Doucouré *et al.*2010; Keita *et al.*2016a).

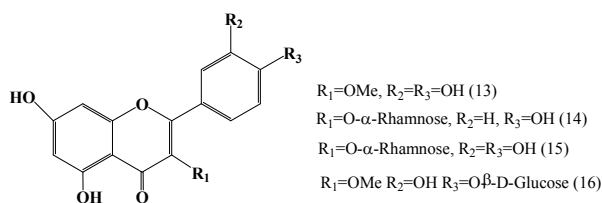


Fig 6 Molecular structures of flavonoids isolated from the flowers of *V. galamensis* Ssp. *galamensis* Var. *galamensis*.

Coumarins

Of the variety *V. galamensis* Ssp. *galamensis* Var. *Petitiana*, coumarins scopoletin (17) and ombelliferone (18) widely distributed in higher plants, have been isolated (Fig. 7) (Awaad *et al.*2000).

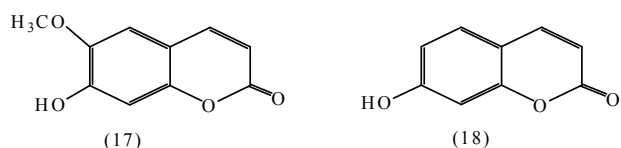


Fig 7 Molecular structures of coumarins isolated from *V. galamensis* Ssp. *galamensis* Var. *petitiana*.
 Sesquiterpene lactones

The chemical investigation of the MeOH/Et₂O/petroleum ether (1: 1: 1) extract of the aerial parts of two varieties of *V. galamensis*: *V. galamensis* Ssp. *galamensis* Var. *Petitiana*; *V. galamensis* Ssp. *galamensis* Var. *ethiopica* and two subspecies: *V. galamensis* Ssp. *gibbosa*; *V. galamensis* Ssp. *afromontana* identified six compounds consisting of five sesquiterpene lactones of type and benzyl senecioate: prevernocistifolide-8-O-senecioate (19), 14-O-Prevernocistifolide-8-O-senecioate (20), 2α,3α-epoxyprevernocistifolide-8-O-senecioate (21), 14-O-prevernocistifolide-8-O-isobutyrate (22), prevernocistifolide-8-O-isobutyrate (23) and benzyl senecioate (24) (Perdue *et al.*1993), from *V. galamensis* Ssp. *galamensis* Var. *ethiopica*; the prevernocistifolide-8-O-isobutyrate (23) (Fig.8) was isolated (Favi *et al.*2008).

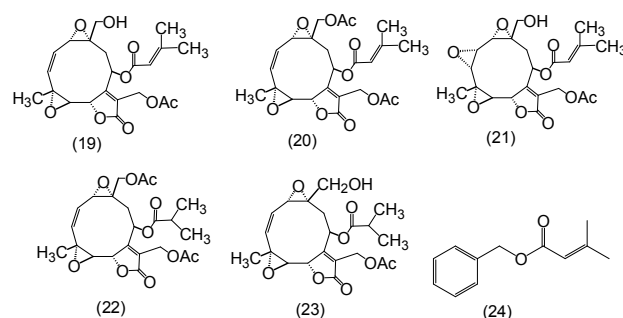


Fig.8 Molecular structures of sesquiterpene lactones and benzyl senecioate (24) isolated from Var. *petitiana* et Var. *petitiana* and (Ssp. *gibbosa* and Ssp. *afromontana*) of *V. galamensis*.

Treatment of the (Et₂O / MeOH (9: 1) of the extract MeOH / Et₂O / Petroleum ether (1: 1: 1) of the aerial parts of *V. galamensis* Ssp. *nairobensis* gave two new glaucolides: glaucogalamensolide isovalerate (25) and glaucogalamensolide isobutyrate (26) (Fig.9) (Zdero *et al.*1990).

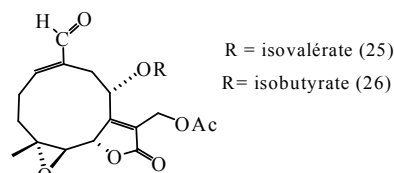


Fig 9 Molecular structures of sesquiterpene lactones isolated from *V. galamensis* Ssp. *nairobensis*.
 Triterpenes and sterols

Four triterpenes including: taraxasteryl acetate (27), taraxasterol (28), friedelane (29), friedelan-3 β-ol (30) (Fig.9), and two sterols: β-sitosterol (31) and stigmast-5,22-dien-3-ol (32) were isolated and identified hexane extract (Fig.10) (Mwaura, 1997).

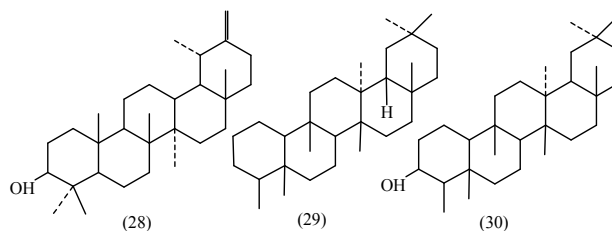


Fig 10 Molecular structures of triterpenes and sterols isolated from the roots of *V. galamensis* sp. *nairobensis*.

The presence of triterpenes and sterols were demonstrated by GC / MS identification in the leaves, roots and aerial parts of

DISCUSSIONS

This review certifies the richness as well as the structural diversity in secondary metabolites of the sub-species and varieties of *Vernonia galamensis*. It highlights the role of the species in the prevention and treatment of various pathologies in traditional medicine. Data from the literature on the chemical composition of the leaves, roots, flowers and seeds of sub-species and varieties of *V. galamensis* indicate a wide variety of secondary metabolites including sesquiterpene lactones, coumarins, phenolic acids, flavonoids, triterpenes, sterols and fatty acids with natural epoxidation and their derivatives. This work constitutes a valuable source of information for the African medicinal flora. It could be a database for further research in the fields of phytochemistry and pharmacology and for the purpose of seeking new natural substances.

CONCLUSION

This review constitutes a source of information which contributes to knowledge of the African medicinal flora and to a safeguard of the local popular knowledge. The approach used clearly identified all uses of *V. galamensis*. It may also constitute a database for the valorization of the species *V. galamensis* in order to discover active principles which can be used in pharmacology.

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