The polyphenolic composition and radical scavenging properties of Kenyan tea cultivars

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ABSTRACT

Interest in medicinal and health enhancing properties of functional components in foods continues to arouse a lot of interest. Polyphenolic fractions in tea are potent bioactive molecules. In this study, the polyphenolic composition of 25 different types of Kenyan tea cultivars was determined using the HPLC and the Folins Ciocalteus spectrophotometric methods. Total polyphenols, total catechins, individual catechins and antioxidant activity were significantly ($P < 0.05$) different among tea varieties, with green tea having the highest levels of total polyphenols ranging from 19.70% to 26.12%, TC (8.51% to 17.60%), individual catechins, and AA (86.65% to 94.50%). *In vitro* bioassay carried out using 2, 2'-diphenyl picryl hydrazyl radical showed epigallocatechin gallate was the most potent catechin and the most potent in antioxidant activity ($r = 0.968^{***}$). Epigallocatechin ($r = 0.659^{***}$, $P < 0.001$), epicatechigallate ($r = 0.454^{*}$, $P < 0.001$), and epicatechin (EC) ($r = 0.780^{***}$, $P < 0.001$), showed significant ($P < 0.05$) antioxidant activity. Black tea contained high levels of theaflavins and thearubigins (2.072% to 17.12%), respectively which accounted for its antioxidant activity ($r = 0.803^{***}$ and $r = 0.859^{***}$, respectively). Gallic acid also showed significant ($r = 0.530^{*}$) contribution to the antioxidant activity in black tea. Data obtained from this study reveals that different Kenyan tea cultivars have different polyphenolic composition which imparts on their unique biochemical qualities. Cultivar type is therefore a critical factor in determining the antioxidant potency of tea product and that black tea processed from suitable cultivars could be potent in antioxidant activity when compared to green tea. Green and white tea products are rich in catechins, black tea products are rich in TFs and TRs while purple tea is rich in anthocyanins.

Key words: Anthocyanins, Antioxidant activity, Catechins, DPPH, EGCG, Kenyan tea cultivars, Theaflavins, Thearubigens.

INTRODUCTION

Tea (*Camellia sinensis* L.O. *Kuntze)* is one of the most widely consumed beverages in the world and it was first introduced in Kenya in 1904 by British settlers. The crop has expanded to cover about 157720 ha in the highlands East and West of the Great Rift Valley in Kenya [1]. The tea plant is an evergreen bush that grows to 15 m high in the wild, and 60 – 100 cm under

cultivation. Tea in cultivation forms a table from which the young leaves are harvested through and a cyclic pruning is carried out after every three to four years and commercial harvesting is carried out either by hand or machine [2].

Young leaves of tea are processed into different types of products, the predominant ones being; black, green, white and oolong tea. Green tea is mainly consumed in China, Japan and the Middle East, while black tea is mostly consumed in India, Sri-lanka, European countries and regions of Africa. Popularity of tea is due to its aroma, pleasant taste and medicinal benefit [3]. Tea from Kenya is well-received since it is grown free of agrochemicals in an ideal environment that naturally deters pests and attacks from plant diseases. This pleasant natural condition guarantees the consumer the safest and most refreshing sought-after health drink in the world. Phytochemicals and functional components in tea are receiving a lot of attention due to their potential benefits in health when consumed as part of a varied diet on a regular basis and at effective levels. Many nutraceuticals, functional foods and naturally occurring polyphenols have physiological and pharmacological activities including their well characterized antioxidant properties [4, 5]. Since the scientific community and food industry communities share a common goal of extending the quality of human life by developing viable options for the management of chronic diseases through the use of nutraceuticals, functional foods have become a potential start point. This is because functional foods are fairly affordable, readily available and extremely active, have profound effect on cell metabolism and often demonstrate few side effects [6]. It is evident that nutraceuticals offer a selective advantage over synthetic drugs necessitating need to investigate their usefulness to human health.

Despite the use of tea in food and drinks, it has increasingly been put to many other uses. For example, numerous environmentally friendly industrial cleaning agents, deodorizers and anti-microbial agents have been formulated using tea [7, 8]. However, data to support the view that tea is pharmacologically active has been generated particularly using green tea, which is widely consumed in Asia [9, 10]. As a result, green tea has been widely marketed as a health product since the chemical composition is well characterized. However, the much information on the chemical composition of black aerated or fermented tea, the principle type of tea product consumed in Kenya, is based broadly on the theaflavins and thearubigens but none on the theaflavins fractions. In addition, information on the chemical composition of purple tea, a novel product released recently by the Tea Research Institute (TRI) is lacking. There is need, therefore, to conduct systematic research on the phytochemical composition of Kenyan tea cultivars especially black tea and purple tea in order to generate requisite data which can be used to understand the pharmacological activity of tea.

TEA PRODUCTS AND DETERMINATION OF POLYPHENOLS LEVELS

Tea samples

The tea samples were sourced from TRI, Timbilil Estate, Kericho (Latitude 0° 22' S, Longitude 35° 21'E, Altitude 2180 m above mean sea level and processed at the TRFK miniature factory as described by Karori *et al.* [5].

Biochemical profiling of the tea extracts based on catechins

A modified method of Zuo *et al.* [11] which is based on high performance liquid chromatography was used to assay for the tea catechins of as described by Kerio *et al.* [12].

Determination of total polyphenols in the tea extracts

The Folin-Ciocalteu Phenol Reagent method was used to determine total polyphenols in the tea extracts according to ISO (BS ISO 14502-1: 2005(E)).

Analysis of the content of total theaflavins and individual theaflavin fractions content in the tea samples

Varieties of Black, green, purple and white tea were also assayed for total theaflavins (TFs) using the Flavognost method of Hilton and Palmer Jones [13] whereas individual theaflavins fraction ratio were determined as described by Kilel *et al.* [14].

Spectrophotometric determination of total thearubigins in the tea samples

Total thearubigins (TRs) were determined in the tea samples using the method of Roberts and Smith [15].

Determination of total monomeric anthocyanin content

The total monomeric anthocyanin content in the processed aerated, unaerated purple tea samples was determined in duplicate using the pH differential method (Kerio *et al.)* [12].

Determination of antioxidant activity of tea

The stable DPPH (2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl) radical was used for determination of free radical scavenging of tea extracts using a modified method of Brand-Williams *et al.* [16].

Statistical analysis

All statistical analysis was carried out using MSTAT-C statistical software. ANOVA was used to determine the means, coefficient of variation and any differences in the mineral content among the samples. Least significance difference (LSD) was used to separate means. The probability limit was set at $P \leq 0.05$ significant level. Results of the parameter determined were expressed as a mean of the triplicate determination.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chromatographic and spectrophotometric analysis

Tea polyphenols

This study compared the total polyphenols levels in tea samples processed from Kenyan germplasm using the Folins-Ciocalteus method. The green (unaerated), black (aerated), white and purple varieties of tea samples analyzed differed significantly in the levels of total polyphenols ($P \leq 0.05$). Kenyan green tea was rich in total polyphenols with their levels ranging from the highest amount of 26.1% for cultivar Ejulu-L to the lowest of 19.7% for cultivar TRFK 430/12 as shown in Table 1. Black tea had a lower total polyphenol concentration compared to green tea with cultivar Ejulu-L having 21.2% and cultivar TRFK 301/4, the lowest value of 19.7%. It was however evident, that some black tea from Kenya had a higher polyphenolic concentration than green tea. Cultivar TRFK 6/8, a high quality Kenyan genotype used in this study as an internal standard for black tea quality, recorded a total polyphenol content of 25.13% and 20.72% for unaerated and aerated tea respectively, which was not significantly different ($P \leq 0.05$) from tea cultivar Ejulu-L. Total polyphenol content of aerated and anaerated tea processed from purple coloured leaf cultivars was 20.03% and 21.90% respectively while white tea processed from plucked shoots of cultivar AHP S15/10 was 22.43% (Table 1).

Table 1: Total Polyphenols (TP) (%) and Total Catechins (TC) (%) levels of different tea products used in this study.

Clone	Green Tea (TP)	Black Tea (TP)	Green Tea (TC)	Black Tea (TC)
TRFK 301/4	22.64^{def}	14.96^{h}	16.14^{cdef}	2.650^{kl}
TRFK 301/5	22.07^{defg}	15.91^{gh}	16.42^{bcde}	3.515^{hijkl}
TRFK 303/216	21.42^{def}	16.41^{fgh}	15.78^{fgh}	2.635^{l}
TRFK 303/231	25.61^{ab}	18.85^{cde}	15.41^{ghi}	3.680^{hijkl}
TRFK 303/577	23.21^{def}	23.21^{def}	16.60^{bc}	7.215^{ab}
TRFK 303/745	20.85^{ghi}	18.35^{de}	11.26^{m}	4.305^{efgh}
TRFK 337/138	20.85^{ghi}	19.76^{abcd}	17.60^{a}	6.335^{bc}
TRFK 371/3	24.75^{ab}	20.38^{abc}	14.93^{i}	4.25^{efghi}
TRFK 430/3	22.74^{de}	18.22^{def}	14.20^{j}	3.820^{ghij}
TRFK 430/4	19.98^{hi}	17.56^{efg}	9.52^{n}	3.225^{ijkl}
TRFK 430/12	19.70^{i}	16.15^{gh}	11.90^{l}	3.900^{fghij}
TRFK 430/63	21.26^{fgh}	15.98^{gh}	15.31^{hi}	3.700^{ghijk}
TRFK 430/90	23.25^{cd}	19.65^{abcd}	15.89^{efg}	8.115^{a}
TRFK 524/170	21.84^{defg}	17.56^{efg}	11.90^{l}	3.82^{ghij}
TRFK 524/48	22.70^{de}	17.52^{efg}	16.39^{bcde}	3.665^{hijkl}
BBK35	24.55^{bc}	21.03^{a}	16.04^{def}	3.760^{ghij}
EPKC12	22.03^{defg}	20.38^{abc}	12.14^{l}	5.215^{de}
EPK D 99/10	21.59^{efg}	17.39^{efg}	14.15^{j}	3.150^{jkl}
EJULU-L	26.12^{a}	21.22^{a}	16.53^{bcd}	5.850^{cd}
AHPS 15/10	22.43^{def}	18.94^{bcde}	15.99^{ef}	5.000^{de}
EPK TN 14/3	21.92^{defg}	17.94^{efg}	10.82^{m}	3.565^{hijkl}
TRFK 6/8	25.13^{ab}	20.72^{ab}	16.85^{b}	6.775^{bc}
TRFK 31/8	21.94^{defg}	20.73^{ab}	14.31^{j}	4.755^{efg}
TRFK 31/11	22.85^{de}	20.68^{abc}	12.77^{k}	4.890^{def}
TRFK 100/5	23.07^{d}	19.09^{bcde}	15.91^{efg}	3.555^{hijkl}
TRFK 306/1	21.90^{defg} LSD = 1.436 CV = 3.07% Mean = 22.7	20.03^{abcd} LSD = 1.871 CV = 4.87% Mean =18.6	8.51^{o} LSD = 1.436 CV = 1.80% Mean =14.3	5.235^{de} LSD = 1.871 CV = 11.46% Mean = 4.48

Means within a column followed by the same letter are not significantly different at $P \leq 0.05$ according to DMRT. Purple tea; TRFK 306/1; White tea; AHPS 15/10.

Polyphenols, which are constituents of secondary metabolism in plants, play a role in plant defence mechanism against insects, birds and animals. This study revealed that these chemicals are retained almost intact in unaerated processed tea. Unaerated green tea is made without enzymatic auto-oxidation of polyphenols, since the enzyme polyphenol oxidase is inactivated by heat during the early stages of processing [17]. This process ensures that polyphenols present in green tea are nearly the same as those found in fresh tea leaves. In a broad sense, green tea polyphenols consist of simple and complex compounds, the large majority of which are the flavonoid monomers catechins, catechin gallates and flavonols [18, 19].

Polyphenols occurring in black tea usually consist of residual green tea polyphenols such as catechins flavonols and oxidation products of green tea polyphenols such as theaflavins and thearubigins [19]. Some catechins and catechin gallates may be epimerized or degallated during the processing of black tea. Most of the catechins and their gallates undergo known enzymatic oxidation to form more polymeric polyphenols that are characteristic of black tea, namely theaflavins and thearubigins [19, 20]. Therefore, the amount of polyphenols in green tea is higher than that of black tea since the auto-oxidation process results in a significant conversion of green tea polyphenols to highly polymerized substances such as theaflavins which contribute to the characteristic bright orange colour of black tea and thearubigens which are more chemically heterogeneous and tend to be brownish-red [20, 21]. However, despite this observation, the exact contribution of inter-flavonoid linkages and the general structure of thearubigins to the above quality parameters remain ambiguous and their structures speculative. There is need therefore to elucidate the thearubigins structure to help in optimizing the tea processing parameters which might contribute to the customer's needs.

Total catechin content

Results of the total catechins levels in green, black and white tea products processed from the 25 tea cultivars assayed in this study are presented in Table 1. The tea cultivars produced tea products that differed significantly ($P \leq 0.05$) in total catechin content. Non-aerated (green) tea contained significantly ($P \leq 0.05$) higher amounts of total catechins of 17.60% to 8.51% than aerated (black) tea which ranged from 8.115% to 3.150%. These results demonstrated clearly that the degree of auto-oxidation "fermentation" during the manufacturing process had an influence on the catechin content of the final product. During this processing, the polyphenol oxidase enzyme catalyzes the oxidation of catechins into quinones by molecular oxygen [20, 22]. The quinones generated from the oxidation of the B-ring in the dihydroxylated catechins condense with the quinones from the B-ring of the trihydroxyalated catechins to form theaflavins. Since there is a difference in the reduction potential, quinones will also take part in the redox equilibrium at fermentation and this explains the depletion of catechins at different rates [19, 20]. White tea comes from the same plant *C. sinensis* as the case of green and black tea. It is processed from the young buds and/or young leaves and the descriptive term "white" stems from the high proportion of silvery buds harvested from the plants to produce the tea. The buds to manufacture this type of tea are picked then rapidly steamed and dried, without fermentation, rolling or roasting. Minimal processing not only protects the delicate, light and slightly sweet flavour of white tea, but also enables the retention of high levels of phytochemicals [18, 19]. This explains why white tea had high levels of total catechins despite only the bud being processed. The composition of tea leaves varies significantly with shoot maturity and season. Young leaves are composed of polyphenols in the following order EGCG > EGC > ECG > EC. As for mature leaves, it is EGC > EGCG > ECG > EC, while old leaves composition is EGC > EGCG > EC > ECG. It is therefore important to use young leaves and obey plucking standards to achieve optimum quality especially for black tea. However, since mature and old tea leaves possess high amounts of EGC, it would be advisable to research more on ways they can utilized for further applications.

Purple leaf coloured cultivar TRFK 306/1 recorded a very low concentration of total catechins of only 8.51% for processed green tea. an analysis of the total monomeric anthocyanin content and a fractionation of anthocyanin by HPLC were carried out to establish why the purple tea recorded low levels of catechins. Results from this experiment revealed that purple tea was instead rich in anthocyanins which are important phytochemicals found in the novel purple-pigmented cultivars and not catechins as earlier thought (Figure 1). Anthocyanins are a sub-class of flavonoids synthesized via the phenylpropanoid pathway and are wide spread in the animal kingdom where they present diverse biological and biochemical interests [23]. The

anthocyanidin fractions in the processed unaerated and aerated tea products from the purple coloured tea cultivar 306/1 were identified and quantified by HPLC using pure anthocyanidin/anthocyanin standards. The order of elution of the anthocyanidin/anthocyanin was cyanidin-3-O-galactoside < cyanidin-3-O-glucoside < delphinidin < cyanidin < pelargonidin < peonidin < malvidin with malvidin being the most predominant anthocyanin as shown in a representative HPLC chromatogram of aerated tea from a purple tea cultivar (Figure 1). The results obtained from this study collaborated with those of Kerio *et al.* [12].

KEY:
X-axis = Retention time (min) Y-axis = Peak area

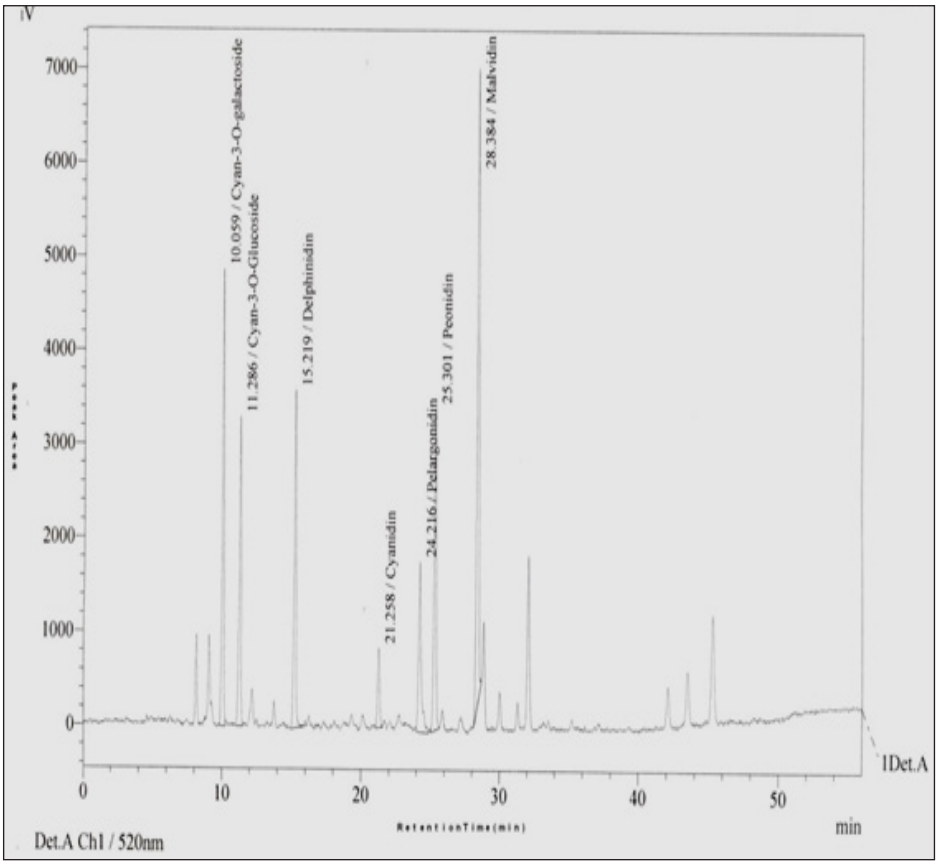

Figure 1: A representative HPLC chromatogram of processed black tea sample from purple coloured cultivar TRFK 306/1.

However, it was noted that anthocyanidins levels were significantly ($P \leq 0.05$) higher in unaerated than in aerated tea. This can be attributed to the tea processing procedures where conversion of fresh tea leaf to the aerated tea decreases the total monomeric anthocyanins. Kerio *et al.* [12] observed similar results while characterizing anthocyanins in Kenyan tea and attributed this to anthocyanin degradation during the manufacture of black tea. Although no mechanism has been developed so far on the anthocyanin degradation, studies in other plants such as strawberry have been attempted [24]. In their work, Liu *et al.* [24] found out that anthocyanins were rapidly degraded by PPO in the presence of other polyphenol compounds such as catechins. For example, cyaniding-3-O-rutinoside is degraded by PPO in the presence of (-) epicatechin and this is responsible for the formation of dehydroepicatechin A [12, 24]. The coupled oxidation reactions can be used to explain the sudden reduction of anthocaynins in the aerated tea. However, this is not the case in the unaerated tea since PPO is deactivated

by steaming freshly plucked tea leaf and therefore the formation of the reactive O-quinones is stopped and subsequently, anthocyanins are not degraded. This is a hypothesis which needs further studies to establish the exact cause of degradation.

Catechin fractions

The catechins identified in tea cultivars were EC, EGC, ECG and EGCG. The two main gallated catechins present were EGCG and ECG while the others were non-gallated. Beside the main peaks identified, several minor peaks were also detected, which indicated that other unidentified catechin compounds existed in the tea extracts (Figure 2). There was, however, great similarity in the HPLC chromatographic pattern which indicated the close similarity in catechin profiles in the tea studied.

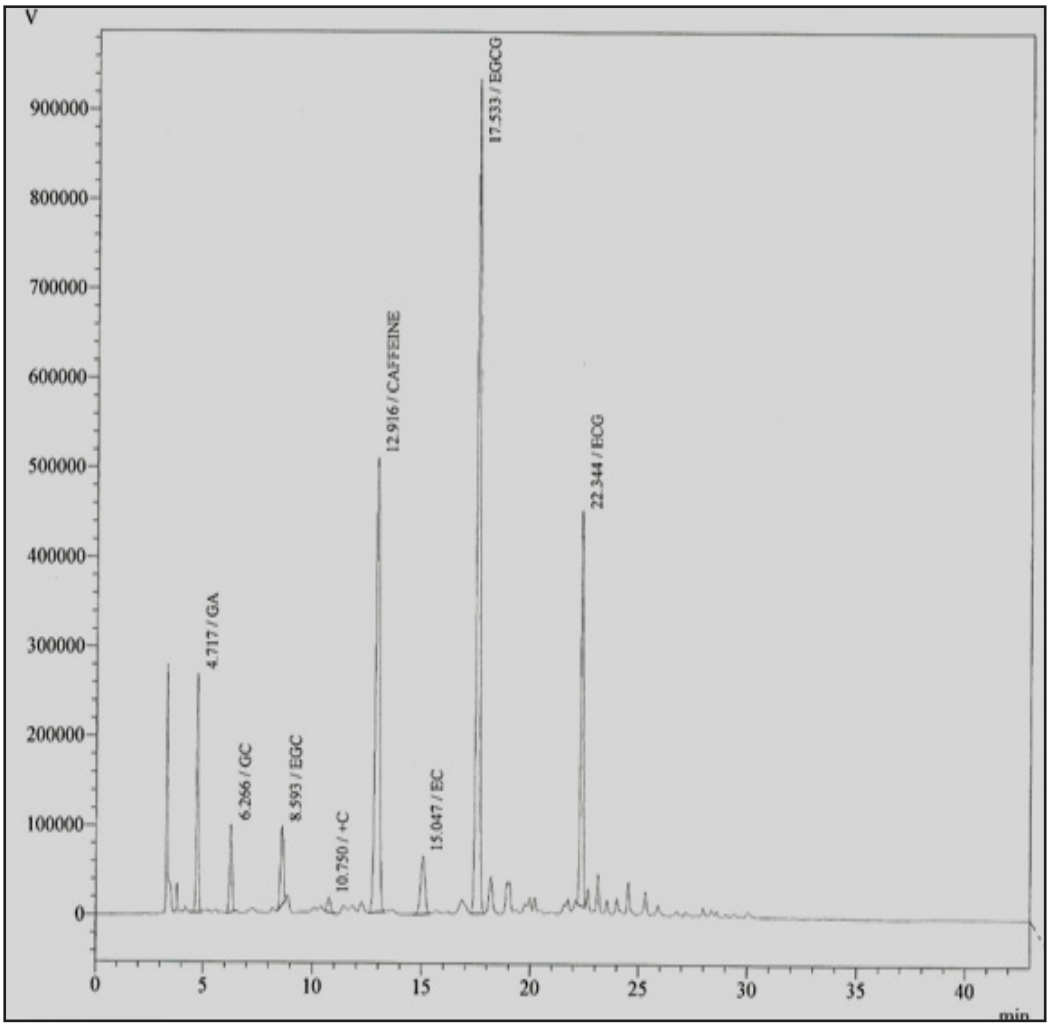

Figure 2: A representative high performance liquid chromatogram of green tea cultivar.

Catechin fractions assayed in this study were statistically different ($P < 0.05$) as shown in Table 2. The results obtained reveal that black (aerated) tea has lower catechin levels than the green and white (non-aerated) tea (Table 2 and Table 3). Individual catechins varied significantly ($P < 0.05$) among the tea with EGCG, GC and EGC levels being the highest and +C, ECG and

EC being less abundant. These results are similar to those of Karori *et al.* [5]. The reduction in the catechin content in black tea compared to the green tea due to the monomeric flavan-3-ols undergoing polyphenol oxidase-dependent polymerization. This results in the formation of theaflavins, thearubigins, bisflavanols and other complex oligomers [25, 26 and 27].

Table 2: Individual catechin (%) levels of different green tea products analyzed.

Individual Catechins					
Clone	EGCG%	EGC%	EC%	ECG%	C%
TRFK 301/4	3.800^{m}	2.725^{j}	2.745^{b}	4.585^{ab}	2.690^{a}
TRFK 301/5	3.105^{n}	4.000^{fg}	3.280^{a}	4.180^{c}	1.850^{b}
TRFK 303/216	4.870^{hi}	5.770^{bc}	1.960^{cde}	2.035^{ijkl}	1.075^{de}
TRFK 303/231	5.555^{def}	4.410^{ef}	1.485^{fghij}	2.465^{ef}	0.5150^{hij}
TRFK 303/577	5.185^{fgh}	3.695^{gh}	1.775^{cdefg}	7.215^{ab}	1.240^{cd}
TRFK 303/745	3.830^{lm}	3.370^{hi}	1.355^{ghijk}	1.455^{n}	1.250^{cd}
TRFK 337/138	5.725^{cde}	4.040^{fg}	1.440^{fghijk}	2.275^{fghi}	1.280^{cd}
TRFK 371/3	5.525^{def}	4.585^{e}	1.770^{cdefg}	1.990^{kl}	0.9600^{ef}
TRFK 430/3	4.990^{ghi}	5.130^{d}	1.725^{cdefg}	3.820^{ghij}	0.3200^{j}
TRFK 430/4	3.000^{n}	2.600^{j}	1.275^{hijkl}	1.665^{mn}	1.295^{cd}
TRFK 430/12	3.920^{klm}	3.225^{i}	1.460^{fghij}	2.650^{e}	0.6400^{ghi}
TRFK 430/63	5.040^{ghi}	5.790^{bc}	1.695^{defg}	2.275f^{fghi}	0.5100^{hij}
TRFK 430/90	5.305^{fg}	3.215^{i}	1.870^{cdef}	2.185^{ghijk}	0.7250^{fgh}
TRFK 524/170	3.660^{m}	3.470^{hi}	1.600^{efghi}	2.380^{fg}	0.785^{fg}
TRFK 524/48	6.030^{bc}	5.715^{bc}	1.935^{cde}	2.295^{fgh}	0.4200^{ij}
BBK35	5.825^{cd}	6.075^{ab}	1.835^{cdef}	3.400^{d}	0.7050^{fgh}
EPKC12	4.235^{kl}	3.250^{i}	1.555^{efghij}	2.385^{fg}	0.7100^{fgh}
EPK D 99/10	4.305^{jk}	5.530^{cd}	1.475^{fghij}	1.992^{l}	0.9150^{ef}
EJULU-L	6.625^{a}	5.800^{bc}	2.145^{c}	4.775^{a}	1.310^{cd}
AHPS 15/10	5.855^{cd}	5.540^{cd}	1.635^{efghi}	2.380^{fg}	0.5800^{ghij}
EPK TN 14/3	3.755^{m}	3.560^{hi}	1.225^{ijkl}	1.915^{l}	0.3650^{j}
TRFK 6/8	6.420^{ab}	6.255^{a}	2.120^{cd}	4.415^{bc}	1.1495^{c}
TRFK 31/8	5.350^{efg}	5.710^{bc}	1.025^{kl}	1.865^{lm}	0.3600^{j}
TRFK 31/11	4.885^{hi}	4.005^{fg}	1.135^{jkl}	2.350^{fg}	0.4250^{ij}
TRFK 100/5	4.695^{ij}	5.405^{cd}	1.365^{ghijk}	2.025^{jkl}	0.4900^{hij}
TRFK 306/1	2.58^{o}	1.490^{k}	0.8450^{l}	0.975^{o}	0.4750^{hij}
	LSD = 0.4119	LSD = 0.4119	LSD = 0.432	LSD=0.2437	LSD = 0.2605
	CV= 4.18%	CV = 4.56%	CV =12.41%	CV=4.61%	CV=14.20%
	Mean= 4.771	Mean = 4.398	Mean = 1.682	Mean=2.601	Mean=0.899

Means within a column followed by the same letter are not significantly different at $P \leq 0.05$ according to DMRT.

Table 3: Individual Catechin (%) levels of different black tea products analyzed.

Individual Catechins					
	Clone	EGCG%	EGC%	EC%	ECG% C%
TRFK 301/4	0.2950^{j}	0.5050^{j}	0.4250^{bcdefg}	0.8900^{defgh}	0.0650^{d}
TRFK 301/5	0.6050^{ghij}	0.9450^{hij}	0.6050^{b}	0.9700^{defg}	0.3900^{cd}
TRFK 303/216	0.8600^{efgh}	0.6700^{ij}	0.2600^{fg}	0.6850^{fghij}	0.1650^{cd}
TRFK 303/231	0.8100^{efgh}	1.590^{efghi}	0.1750^{g}	0.9650^{defg}	0.2400^{cd}
TRFK 303/577	1.330^{ab}	4.065^{a}	0.5050^{bcdef}	1.095^{cde}	0.4150^{cd}
TRFK 303/745	0.9000^{defgh}	2.530^{cde}	0.2^{efgh}	0.4950^{ij}	0.1150^{d}
TRFK 337/138	1.010^{bcdef}	2.965^{bcd}	0.5550^{bcde}	1.020^{def}	0.3950^{cd}
TRFK 371/3	1.010^{bcdef}	1.260^{ghij}	0.3400^{cdefg}	1.100^{cde}	4.25^{efghi}
TRFK 430/3	0.9150^{cdefgh}	1.515^{fghi}	0.4200^{bcdefg}	0.8350^{efghi}	0.1350^{d}
TRFK 430/4	0.5550^{hij}	1.655^{efgh}	0.3200^{defg}	0.4250^{j}	0.2500^{cd}
TRFK 430/12	0.8450^{efgh}	1.695^{efgh}	0.5800^{bcd}	0.6900^{fghij}	0.2200^{cd}
TRFK 430/63	0.7050^{fghi}	1.955^{efg}	0.4350^{bcdefg}	0.4350^{j}	0.3250^{cd}
TRFK 430/90	1.295^{abcd}	3.805^{ab}	1.300^{a}	1.210^{bcd}	2.235^{a}
TRFK 524/170	0.3450^{ij}	1.150^{ghij}	0.5200^{bcdef}	0.9850^{defg}	0.7300^{bcd}
TRFK 524/48	0.7250^{fghi}	1.450^{fghij}	0.5100^{bcdef}	0.6900^{fghij}	0.8900^{abcd}
BBK35	0.5700^{hij}	1.975^{efg}	0.2950^{efg}	0.8750^{defg}	1.045^{abcd}
EPKC12	1.010^{bcdef}	2.055^{defg}	0.4850^{bcdef}	1.105^{cde}	5.215^{de}
EPK D 99/10	0.7950^{efgh}	1.130^{ghij}	0.4850^{bcdef}	0.6900^{fghij}	0.7450^{bcd}
EJULU-L	1.315^{ab}	3.190^{abc}	0.5900^{bc}	1.810^{a}	1.545^{abc}
AHPS 15/10	1.000^{bcdefg}	2.065^{defg}	0.2750^{fg}	0.5350^{hij}	1.415^{abcd}
EPK TN 14/3	0.7900^{efgh}	1.550^{fghi}	0.3200^{defg}	0.6300^{ghij}	0.9000^{abcd}
TRFK 6/8	1.315^{ab}	3.830^{ab}	0.6050^{b}	1.405^{bc}	1.900^{ab}
TRFK 31/8	1.485^{a}	4.755^{efg}	0.3400^{cdefg}	0.8250^{efghi}	1.450^{abcd}
TRFK 31/11	1.170^{abcde}	2.375^{cdef}	0.4700^{bcdef}	0.8750^{defgh}	1.255^{abcd}
TRFK 100/5	0.8150^{efgh}	1.730^{efgh}	0.4700^{bcdef}	0.6900^{fghij}	0.8900^{abcd}
TRFK 306/1	1.300^{abc}	5.235^{de}	0.4300^{bcdefg}	1.505^{ab}	1.185^{abcd}
	LSD = 0.3962	LSD = 0.9682	LSD = 0.2605	LSD = 0.3684	LSD = 1.401
	CV = 21.15%	CV = 24.02%	CV= 27.2$^{9\%}$	CV = 19.71%	CV = 15.59%
	Mean = 0.914	Mean =1.956	Mean = 0.461	Mean = 0.901	Mean = 0.795

Means within a column followed by the same letter are not significantly different at $P \leq 0.05$ according to DMRT.

White tea which is predominantly manufactured from the young apical hairy bud only, showed high levels of EGCG and ECG that are present in higher amounts in fresh young leaves. This result corroborates the findings of Saijo *et al.* [28] who determined the chemical constituents of young tea leaves and the change occurring during leaf development. The decrease in the gallic acid esters of catechin such as EGCG and ECG during leaf development means that there is a slow biosynthesis of gallic acid moiety in each catechin gallate compared with dry matter production. Since catechin biosynthesis is slower than dry matter production from young leaves

to the less young leaves, it is apparent that there is no weight increase in the less young and mature leaves and as a result catechin moves to other young leaves or are metabolized to other products. This accounts for the change in catechin levels in various leaf developmental stages and hence the levels of residual catechins in tea manufactured from different leaf ages as exemplified in the differences in catechin levels between white tea and the other types of tea in this study. As a result of the different rates of growth among different cultivars, clones will accumulate varying amounts of catechins in their leaves [4]. Cultivar AHP S15/10, from which white tea is processed, is a fast growing clone compared to cultivar TRFK 6/8 from which green and black varieties of tea were produced [29]. The lower total polyphenol content in the white tea than in the green tea in our assay can be ascribed to the fast growth of cultivar AHP S15/10 compared to other cultivar such as TRFK 6/8.

Gallic acid

The results on gallic acid (3, 4, 5-trihydroxybenzoic acid) are presented in Table 4. They show significant ($P \leq 0.05$) differences in gallic acid content between the black (aerated), green (non-aerated) and white (non-aerated) varieties of tea. This can be attributed to the fermentation reaction where considerable quantities of EGC, EC, EGCG and ECG are oxidized to form theaflavins and their gallates and gallic acid is an important molecule in this reaction. Despite the formation of free gallic acid during fermentation through the process of degallation of EGCG, the enhanced utilization of gallic acid in the formation of TFs and TRs contributes to the decline of gallic acid, though Muthumani and Kumar [30] argued that the decline is not significant. The formation pathways of gallic acid have been shown to include the hydration of epigallocatechin gallate and degradation from the dimer of epigallocatechin gallate [31]. However, since these catechins are vital in black tea formation, the hydration that leads to the formation of gallic acid is therefore suppressed at the expense of theaflavins and thearubigen formation. The levels of gallic acid and individual catechins in the black tea have been shown to decrease with an increase in fermentation temperature and time for different clones [19, 20 and 27].

Table 4: Gallic Acid (GA) (%) levels of different tea products analyzed.

Clone	Green Tea	Black Tea
TRFK 301/4	1.075^{a}	0.1350^{n}
TRFK 301/5	0.4500^{jkl}	0.1550^{mn}
TRFK 303/216	0.5300^{ghi}	0.2350^{jlk}
TRFK 303/231	0.5250^{ghi}	0.2900^{hij}
TRFK 303/577	0.5900^{efg}	0.3450^{fgh}
TRFK 303/745	0.4650^{ijkl}	0.3050^{ghi}
TRFK 337/138	0.6250^{def}	0.4250^{de}
TRFK 371/3	0.4850^{hijk}	0.2750^{ijk}
TRFK 430/3	0.4900^{hij}	0.2750^{ijk}
TRFK 430/4	0.4100^{l}	0.1700^{lmn}
TRFK 430/12	0.4500^{jkl}	0.1850^{lmn}
TRFK 430/63	0.8650^{b}	0.5350^{bc}
TRFK 430/90	0.4800^{hijk}	0.4600^{d}
TRFK 524/170	0.7600^{c}	0.4800^{cd}
TRFK 524/48	0.7750^{c}	0.3600^{efg}
BBK35	0.8000^{bc}	0.6050^{a}
EPKC12	0.6650^{d}	0.6250^{a}
EPK D 99/10	0.4250^{jkl}	0.1650^{mn}
EJULU-L	0.8200^{bc}	0.4750^{cd}
AHPS 15/10	0.6750^{d}	0.4600^{d}
EPK TN 14/3	0.5650^{fg}	0.210^{klm}
TRFK 6/8	0.7800^{c}	0.5950^{ab}
TRFK 31/8	0.5450^{gh}	0.3800^{ef}
TRFK 31/11	0.5700^{fg}	0.2800^{hijk}
TRFK 100/5	0.6400^{de}	0.3150^{fghi}
TRFK 306/1	0.4200kl LSD = 0.05613 CV = 4.20% Mean = 0.353	0.4200de LSD = 0.05613 CV=7.18% Mean = 0.611

Means within a column followed by the same letter are not significantly different at $P \leq 0.05$ according to DMRT.

Total Theaflavins and Total Thearubigens levels of black, green and white tea products

There was a significant difference in the total TFs and TRs levels for Kenyan tea. Black tea had the highest levels of total TFs and total TRs which ranged from 2.072% to 17.12%, respectively (Table 5). However, results from the present study clearly show that TRs were present in green tea products and black and white (unaerated) tea products from the purple coloured leaf tea clones. Further observations reveal that in green tea and white tea, TRs were formed in the presence of low levels of TFs unlike in black tea where the TFs levels were slightly higher. Black tea therefore has high levels of TFs and TRs that are the main fermentation products (Table 5).

Table 5: Total Theaflavins and Total Thearubigins (%) levels of black, green, purple and white tea products processed from different cultivars.

Clone	Green Tea		Black Tea	
	TF%	TR%	TF%	TR%
TRFK 301/4	0.8500^{cde}	9.705^{def}	0.96^{kr}	13.11^{hij}
TRFK 301/5	0.6750^{defghij}	10.02^{cde}	1.555^{jklm}	15.55^{bcd}
TRFK 303/216	0.5950^{efghij}	9.775^{cdef}	1.275^{qr}	14.59^{cdef}
TRFK 303/231	0.6500^{efghij}	8.700^{hi}	1.665^{defg}	13.680^{hijkl}
TRFK 303/577	1.025^{bc}	11.48^{b}	1.525^{klmn}	15.16^{bcde}
TRFK 303/745	0.8000^{cdefgh}	9.835^{cdef}	1.655^{efgh}	13.41^{fghij}
TRFK 337/138	0.6800^{defghij}	8.880^{hi}	1.800^{b}	16.26^{ab}
TRFK 371/3	0.5750^{fghij}	12.15^{a}	1.685^{cdef}	15.54^{bcd}
TRFK 430/3	0.6550^{defghij}	6.935^{k}	1.280^{q}	14.12^{efgh}
TRFK 430/4	1.685^{a}	9.74^{def}	1.750^{bc}	16.02^{ab}
TRFK 430/12	0.8450^{cde}	8.865^{ij}	1.395^{p}	12.35^{j}
TRFK 430/63	0.5500^{ghij}	8.68^{hi}	1.475^{no}	12.74^{ij}
TRFK 430/90	0.6850^{defghij}	9.280^{fgh}	1.605^{ghij}	13.22^{ghij}
TRFK 524/170	0.4800^{ij}	9.800^{cdef}	1.21^{qr}	14.07^{efghi}
TRFK 524/48	0.5350^{hij}	10.14^{cde}	1.415^{op}	14.00^{efghi}
BBK35	0.6200^{efghij}	8.980^{ghi}	1.590^{hijk}	13.30^{fghij}
EPKC12	0.8100^{cdefg}	10.18^{cd}	1.725^{cd}	14.56^{cdefg}
EPK D 99/10	0.9200^{bcd}	12.00^{ab}	1.695^{cde}	17.12^{a}
EJULU-L	1.135^{b}	10.37^{c}	1.735^{bc}	16.03^{ab}
AHPS 15/10	0.7200^{defghi}	10.17^{cd}	1.505^{mn}	13.40^{fghij}
EPK TN 14/3	0.8250^{cdef}	10.15^{cd}	1.515^{lmn}	12.72^{ij}
TRFK 6/8	1.150^{b}	12.28^{a}	2.072^{a}	16.13^{ab}
TRFK 31/8	0.6750^{defghij}	9.600^{def}	1.470^{no}	14.28^{defgh}
TRFK 31/11	0.7350^{defghi}	9.535^{efg}	1.625^{fghi}	13.90^{efghi}
TRFK 100/5	0.4450^{j}	8.05^{j}	1.580^{ijkl}	13.86^{efghi}
TRFK 306/1	0.5350hij	8.865hi	1.240^{qr}	15.68^{bc}
	LSD = 0.2685	LSD = 0.6144	LSD = 0.0651	LSD =1.372
	CV = 3.43%	CV = 3.06%	CV = 2.25%	CV = 4.61%
	Mean = 0.764	Mean= 9.767	Mean = 1.538	Mean = 14.48

Means within a column followed by the same letter are not significantly different at $P \leq 0.05$ according to DMRT.

The variation in the polyphenolic composition of the different tea products resulted from the leaf maceration during manufacturing. The rolling and cutting of the tea shoots in non-orthodox manufacture causes a release of polyphenol oxidase which interacts with phenolic compounds, one simple catechin and one gallocatechin, to produce, theaflavins and thearubigins that possess a benzotropolone skeleton [32, 33]. Owuor and Obanda [34] investigated the use of green

tea flavan-3-ols in predicting black tea quality potential and revealed that a correct balance of the trihydroxylated flavan-3-ols and dihydroxylated flavan-3-ols was necessary to ensure maximum formation of the theaflavins. The trihydroxylflavan-3-ols are oxidized faster during the fermentation phase of black tea processing explaining the high levels of EGCG and EGC in green tea and the subsequent reduction in black tea. Theaflavins are further oxidized to form thearubigins that are heterogeneous in nature and contribute significantly towards taste, colour and body of tea [13, 19 and 35].

Results from the present study however, clearly show that TRs are present in green tea. Further observation reveals that in green tea, TRs were formed in the presence of low levels of TFs unlike in black tea where the levels were almost similar. This may suggest that theaflavins are not the only source of thearubigins. Wilson and Clifford [36] explained the factors affecting the formation and degradation of theaflavins and thearubigins in black tea and observe that maximum synthesis of theaflavins occurs when oxygen is in excess to support benzotropolone ring formation. However, under limiting oxygen concentration, polyphenol oxidase, which has a high affinity for the substrate, has a preferential demand for oxygen and theaflavins formation is suppressed at the expense of catechin quinone formation. This competition for oxygen is particularly noticeable during the early stages of fermentation when the concentration of the catechins is at its highest and enzyme turnover is unimpeded by substrate availability. This occurs during green tea manufacture since the enzyme is active before deactivation through steaming. For this reason, high enzyme activity in an already low oxygen concentration creates almost total anaerobiosis, which suppresses benzotropolone ring formation. Consequently, thearubigens are formed, mainly from gallocatechins since the simple catechins are unable to react in benzotropolone ring formation. Moreover, it might be possible to minimize thearubigins formation by deactivating the enzyme immediately after plucking through a steaming procedure, although this is hardly achievable during commercial tea processing. Further research is desirable to explain the existence of these thearubigins in green tea and the importance of steaming during tea processing [14, 19, 26, 37, 39 and 40].

Theaflavin fractions

Theaflavins present in the assayed samples were fractionated and found to contain the following fractions; theaflavin-3-monogallate, theaflavin-3'-monogallate b, theaflavin-3, 3'-digallate and theaflavin-3, 3-digallate. These fractions were significantly different ($P < 0.0001$) in all tea cultivars. The fractions differ in structure and previous studies have elucidated them as shown in Figure 3.

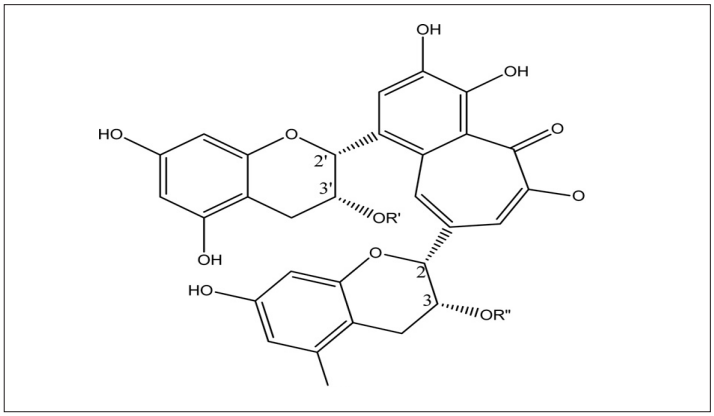

Figure 3: Molecular structure of theaflavins. Theaflavin (TF): R' = R" = OH, theaflavin-3-gallate (TF-3-G): R' = H, R" = galloyl; theaflavin-3'-gallate (TF-3'-G): R' galloyl, R" H; theaflavin-3, 3'-digallate (TF–dG): R' = R" = galloyl.

Green tea catechins are oxidized and dimerized during the manufacture of black tea to form orange red pigments namely theaflavins (TFs), which is a mixture of theaflavins (TF1), theaflavin-3-gallate (TF2A), theaflavin-3'-gallate (TF2B) and theaflavin-3,3'-digallate (TF3). These molecules have recently aroused a lot of interest since they are thought to have stronger biological properties than free theaflavins due to the presence of gallic acid residues. In this study, the theaflavin fractions correlated significantly well with each other (Table 6) and this might explain why the activity of black tea observed could not be entirely attributed to the presence of theaflavins alone. The strong correlation of the digillate fractions is a clear indication that they synergize with other polyphenols to enhance the bioactivity. Obanda *et al.* [20] observe that theaflavin gallate is the most astringent and has been estimated to be 6.4 times more astringent than simple theaflavin, and 2.88 times more astringent than either theaflavin-3-monogallate or theaflavin-3'-monogallate. The formation of a single theaflavin molecule requires a dihydroxy and a trihydroxy flavan-3-ol, as follows: Epicatechin (EC) + Epigallocatechin (EGC) = simple theaflavin (TF); EC + Epigallocatechin gallate (EGCg) = Theaflavin-3-gallate (TF-3-g); Epicatechin gallate (ECG) + EGC = Theaflavin-3'-gallate (TF-3'-g); ECG + EGCg = Theaflavin-3, 3'-digallate (TF dg) [14]. Since theaflavin fractions are proving to be essential biologically active molecules, it is important to understand how the correct ratio of dihydroxyl flavan-3-ols to trihydroxyl flavan-3-ols can be utilized to produce value added tea with enhanced quality and biological use.

Table 6: Correlation coefficient matrix analyses between various theaflavin fractions.

TF3MG	TF3'MG	TF33DG	TF33'DG	
1.000	0.962***	0.873***	0.961***	TF3MG
	1.000	0.823**	0.908***	TF3'MG
		1.000	0.937***	TF33DG
			1.000	TF33'DG

**-Correlation significant at the $P < 0.01$ level
***-Correlation significant at the $P < 0.001$ level

Antioxidant activity of green, black, purple and white tea products

The polyphenolic composition of tea and especially its catechins has aroused interest in their potential as radical scavenging compounds. Data on antioxidant capacity is presented in Table 7. Overall, green tea and white tea had significantly ($P < 0.05$) higher antioxidant activity compared to black tea. However, some black tea from cultivars such as Ejulu-L, TRFK 6/8 and TRFK 306/1 had a higher antioxidant activity compared to some unaerated green tea.

Table 7: Percent Antioxidant Capacity (AA) of green, black and white tea products analyzed.

Clone	Green Tea	Black Tea
	AA	AA
TRFK 301/4	89.80^{defgh}	87.55^{de}
TRFK 301/5	88.30^{h}	84.10^{f}
TRFK 303/216	90.55^{cdefgh}	88.90^{cd}
TRFK 303/231	90.75^{cdefgh}	89.15^{bc}
TRFK 303/577	90.85^{cdefg}	89.65^{abc}
TRFK 303/745	90.55^{cdefgh}	88.75^{cd}
TRFK 337/138	91.25^{cdef}	90.00^{abc}
TRFK 371/3	91.35^{cdef}	88.85^{cd}
TRFK 430/3	91.70^{bcde}	88.45^{cd}
TRFK 430/4	89.10^{fgh}	88.70^{cd}
TRFK 430/12	92.05^{abcde}	88.80^{cd}
TRFK 430/63	88.65^{gh}	86.00^{e}
TRFK 430/90	89.60^{efgh}	89.10^{bcd}
TRFK 524/170	91.90^{abcde}	89.55^{abc}
TRFK 524/48	91.15^{cdefg}	89.60^{abc}
BBK35	91.70^{bcde}	89.15^{bc}
EPKC12	91.90^{abcde}	88.90^{cd}
EPK D 99/10	91.90^{abcde}	88.55^{cd}
EJULU-L	94.05^{ab}	91.10^{a}
AHPS 15/10	92.50^{abc}	89.80^{abc}
EPK TN 14/3	89.00^{fgh}	89.60^{abc}
TRFK 6/8	94.30^{a}	91.05^{a}
TRFK 31/8	92.20^{abcd}	88.90^{cd}
TRFK 31/11	92.45^{abc}	89.30^{bc}
TRFK 100/5	91.40^{cdef}	89.70^{abc}
TRFK 306/1	92.35^{abc}	90.65^{ab}
	LSD = 2.505	LSD = 1.871
	CV = 1.33%	CV = 11.46%
	Mean = 91.21	Mean = 88.94

[+]Data has been arcsine transformed.
Means within a column followed by the same letter are not significantly different at $P \leq 0.05$ according to DMRT.

Table 8 presents data on the correlation between tea polyphenols contents and the antioxidant activity of different types of tea products. Total catechins significantly ($P < 0.001$) correlated with antioxidant activity ($r = 0.909^{***}$). EGCG was identified as the most potent antioxidant ($r = 0.968^{***}$, $P < 0.001$). EGC ($r = 0.659^{***}$), EC ($r = 0.780^{***}$), ECG ($r = 0.454^{*}$) and GA ($r = 0.530^{*}$) contents also showed significant influence on the antioxidant activity. Therefore, the

antioxidant activity was higher in tea extracts containing high levels of EGCG, EGC, and ECG. These results are similar to those of Gramza *et al.* [41] and Karori *et al.* [5].

Table 8: Correlation coefficient matrix analyses between various tea chemical parameters.

TP	TFs	TRs	EGC	EGCG	ECG	+C	GA	AA	TC	EC	
1.00	0.818***	0.663***	0.718***	0.803***	0.715**	0.520**	0.626**	0.895***	0.830***	0.681***	TP
	1.00	0.791***	0.732***	0.852***	0.632*	0.452*	0.584*	0.803***	0.808***	0.689***	TFs
		1.00	0.686**	0.843***	0.619**	0.393*	0.378*	0.859***	0.826***	0.733***	TRs
			1.00	0.847***	0.505**	0.291*	0.552**	0.659***	0.856***	0.688***	EGC
				1.00	0.719**	0.444***	0.656**	0.968***	0.956***	0.777***	EGCG
					1.00	0.744*	0.637***	0.454*	0.8300***	0.814***	ECG
						1.00	0.472	0.232*	0.608***	0.690***	+C
							1.00	0.530*	0.685**	0.628**	GA
								1.00	0.909***	0.780***	AA
									1.00	0.895***	TC
										1.00	EC

1. **-Correlation significant at the $p < 0.05$ level*
2. ***-Correlation significant at the $p < 0.01$ level*
3. ****-Correlation significant at the $p < 0.001$ level*

This antioxidative effect of polyphenols has been attributed to the phenolic hydroxyl groups in their structures that make them potent free radical scavengers [42]. The antioxidative properties of catechins are marked particularly by their ability to inhibit free radical generation, scavenging free radicals and chelate transition metal ions mainly iron and copper [43]. Nakagawa and Yokozawa [44] showed in their study that green tea extracts significantly impaired nitrogen oxide production in a concentration dependent manner and showed a direct scavenging activity against super oxide anion. On the basis of these results, it appears that the most effective radical scavengers are catechins with a 3' 4' and 5'-trihydroxylated substitution pattern on the B ring and/or hydroxyl group at C-3 position of the catechin structure (Figure 3). This hydroxylation confers a higher degree of stability on the catechin phenoxyl radical by participating in electron delocalisation that is an important feature of the antiradical potential. A study using electron spin resonance showed that the presence of 3', 4', and 5'-trihydroxyl groups attached to the B-ring of the flavan skeleton enhanced the radical scavenging efficiency displayed by catechins, compared to those with 3', 4'-dihydroxyl groups. At the same time, the insertion of a galloyl moiety into three positions of the C-ring exerted a synergistic impact on superoxide anion scavenging activity [43, 45]. This explains why radical scavenging is high in the gallocatechins namely EGCG and EGC that are potent antioxidants [42, 46 and 47].

To support this observation that EGCG and ECG were potent antioxidants, the findings correlated well with a study conducted in the Republic of Korea that showed that EGC has the highest specific total oxy-radical scavenging capacity against peroxyl radicals, hydroxyl radicals and peroxynitrite, while ECG was the least effective among other catechins [48]. Raza and John [49] reported that tea catechins prevent molecular degradation in oxidative stress conditions by directly altering the subcellular ROS production, glutathione metabolism and cytochrome P_{450} 2E1 activity. These results are promising for the chemo-therapeutic use of tea catechins in oxidative stress-related diseases.

Black tea analyzed in this study exhibited some antioxidant activity with a high DPPH radical scavenging activity though less than that of green, white and purple tea. During black

tea manufacture, the gallocatechins are first to be oxidized and dimerised to TFs and TRs because of their high oxidation potential and high concentration in the leaves. These major phenolic compounds in black tea also contributed significantly to the radical scavenging activity, namely TFs ($r = 0.803^{***}$, $P < 0.001$), TRs (0.859^{***}, $P < 0.001$) and GA ($r = 0.530^{*}$, $P < 0.05$). Interestingly, TFs, which are the major phenolic products in black tea, had a higher radical scavenging activity compared to some of its precursors ECG, EGC and EC (Table 8). This confirms that conversion of catechins to TFs during black tea process did not affect the radical scavenging potency. These observations are consistent with those of Leung *et al.* [21]; Karori *et al.* [5] and Wachira *et al.* [12] who showed that black tea possess more or less the same antioxidant potency as catechins present in green tea. EGCG and EGC contribute significantly to the formation of TFs. These are B ring trihydroxylated catechins, which are oxidized at a much faster rate than the B ring dihydroxylated catechins including EC, ECG and +C due to their lower oxidation potential [24]. TFs formed from this reaction have hydroxyl groups (OH) considered necessary for free radical scavenging activity. These additional groups increase the total number of phenyl hydroxyl groups and make the gallate containing catechins and TFs more able to donate protons due to resonance delocalization thereby expressing the observed antioxidant activity of black tea. Similarly, gallic acid contributed significantly to the radical scavenging activity in black tea because it is a potent hydrogen donator to DPPH.

Additionally, the present study provided evidence of the contribution of TRs towards the antioxidant activity of black tea ($r = 0.803^{***}$, $P < 0.001$). The antioxidant activity of TRs can be explained by the presence of 3-OH groups, which are more or less esterified by gallic acid in the TRs structure. However, this is a highly speculative hypothesis since to date there is no definite data on TRs structures [21, 50].

Thearubigins are assumed to be formed by the tea plant as a defence mechanism [35]. Plants are thought to utilize the strategy of plant browning as a defence tool. Therefore, the action of a polyphenol oxidase enzyme on phenolic secondary metabolites to produce a brownish coloration is aimed at deterring pest organisms. The tea plant uses a similar process to oxidize flavan-3-ols to thearubigins using tea polyphenol oxidase to gain an evolutionary advantage by deterring pest organisms [51]. Thearubigins account for around 60% to 70% of the dry weight of a typical black tea infusion, and any attempt to understand the numerous beneficial health effects of this beverage must take this class of compounds into consideration. However, only a few studies on the biological effects of thearubigins are available. The reason for this lack of knowledge is because TRs have been mysterious for decades, with no clear structural picture and only vague and sometimes contradictory knowledge available. Therefore, there are no defined compounds from the TR fractions that can be used for biological testing, hence no standardized method for obtaining extracts for biological testing. Despite these limitations, TRs are useful molecules that need a detailed study to establish their role in disease prevention. An attempt so far made in this field has established that TRs extracts lowered the expression of superoxide dismutase, a free radical scavenger, in contrast to theaflavins, TR extracts were able to inhibit DNA synthesis in U-937 leukemia cell lines, giving a rationale for the anti-cancer activity of TRs [52]. Lin *et al.* [3] showed that TR extracts were able to block nitric oxide synthase in macrophages and therefore suppress the anti-inflammatory response and multiple stages of carcinogenesis. Data obtained from this study reveals that different tea cultivars have different polyphenolic composition which impacts on their unique biochemical qualities.

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