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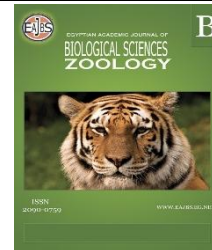
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Effect of Green Silver Nanoparticles Combined with *Moringa oleifera* leaf Extract on the liver and Pancreas in Streptozotocin-Induced Diabetic Rats

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ABSTRACT

Diabetes mellitus (DM) is a global health challenge, with diabetic liver injury being a critical complication driven by oxidative stress, hyperglycemia, and inflammation. This study evaluates the synergistic therapeutic potential of green silver nanoparticles (Ag NPs) synthesized with *Moringa oleifera* leaf extract to mitigate liver dysfunction in streptozotocin (STZ)-induced diabetic rats. Ag NPs were characterized using transmission electron microscopy (TEM) to determine their morphology and size. Fifty adult albino rats were divided into five groups: Group I (control), Group II (diabetic), Group III (diabetic treated with Ag NPs), Group IV (diabetic treated with *M. oleifera*), and Group V (diabetic receiving combination treatment). Biochemical parameters, including glucose, HbA1c, insulin, ALT, AST, albumin, total protein, total bilirubin, GSH, SOD, CAT, and MDA, were assessed alongside histological examinations of the liver and pancreas. STZ-induced diabetic rats exhibited significant hyperglycaemia, elevated HbA1c levels, impaired liver function, and oxidative stress. Treatment with Ag NPs and *M. oleifera* leaf extract improved glucose metabolism, restored antioxidant defences, and normalized liver biomarkers. The combined treatment demonstrated superior efficacy, significantly reducing serum glucose, HbA1c, ALT, and AST levels while enhancing insulin, GSH, and SOD levels. Histological analysis confirmed the amelioration of STZ-induced hepatic and pancreatic structural damage. These findings underscore the therapeutic potential of green silver nanoparticles and *M. oleifera* leaf extract as a novel intervention targeting oxidative stress, inflammation, and liver dysfunction in diabetes.

INTRODUCTION

Diabetes mellitus is a global metabolic disorder that poses significant health challenges due to its chronic implications, affecting multiple organs, including the liver (Mohamed *et al.*, 2016; Chung *et al.*, 2020; Yameny, 2024). Among these complications, diabetic liver injury is a critical concern, driven by persistent hyperglycaemia, oxidative stress, and inflammation (Rohm *et al.*, 2022; Zhang, 2024). These factors lead to structural and functional hepatic impairments, contributing to the progression of diabetes-related complications (Alfieri *et al.*, 2024). Despite advancements in therapeutic strategies, effective treatments targeting both oxidative stress and inflammation in diabetic liver damage remain limited (Bae *et al.*, 2023; Weinberg Sibony *et al.*, 2024).

Nanotechnology has emerged as a promising field in biomedical research, offering innovative solutions for disease management (Reddy Gangadi, 2024). Green silver nanoparticles (Ag NPs), synthesized through eco-friendly and cost-effective methods, have

garnered attention for their potent antioxidant, anti-inflammatory, and antimicrobial properties (Srivastava *et al.*, 2024). Unlike conventionally synthesized nanoparticles, green Ag NPs utilize plant extracts as reducing and stabilizing agents, minimizing toxicity and environmental impact (Villagr n *et al.*, 2024; Zulfiqar *et al.*, 2024).

Moringa oleifera is a medicinal plant widely recognized for its hepatoprotective properties (Pareek *et al.*, 2023). Its leaf extract contains flavonoids, phenolics, and vitamins, which exhibit antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects (Chiş *et al.*, 2023; Chatzimitakos *et al.*, 2024). Combining green Ag NPs with *M. oleifera* extract offers a synergistic strategy to neutralize reactive oxygen species (ROS), reduce inflammation, and protect against diabetic liver injury (Virk *et al.*, 2023; Muhammad *et al.*, 2023). This study investigates the effects of Ag NPs, *M. oleifera* extract, and their combination on liver function and histology in STZ-induced diabetic rats. By exploring this innovative therapeutic approach, this research aims to provide insights into novel strategies for managing diabetic liver complications.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Characterization of Ag NPs:

The morphology and relative dimensions of Ag NPs were analysed using a transmission electron microscope (TEM) (JEOL Ltd., Tokyo, Japan). An aqueous suspension of nanoparticles was applied to a carbon-coated copper grid, dried, and subsequently examined.

Induction of Diabetes:

Diabetes mellitus was induced in rats fasted for 24 hours through a single intraperitoneal (IP) injection of STZ (50 mg/kg) dissolved in cold 0.1% M citrate buffer (pH 4.5). Following the injection, the rats were provided with sucrose (15 g/L) in their drinking water for 24 hours to reduce the risk of hypoglycaemia-induced mortality. Diabetes was confirmed by measuring fasting blood glucose (FBG) levels three days after STZ administration. Rats with FBG levels exceeding 300 mg/dL were classified as diabetic and included in the experiment.

Experimental Design:

Fifty rats were obtained from the Animal Section of the King Fahad Medical Research Center at King Abdulaziz University and were classified into five groups (n = 10) as follows:

- **Group I:** Non-Diabetic Control received 0.5 mL citrate buffer intraperitoneally (IP).
- **Group II:** Diabetic Control received STZ (50 mg/kg, IP).
- **Group III:** Diabetic rats received STZ (50 mg/kg, IP) and were treated with Ag NPs (0.2 mg/kg, orally).
- **Group IV:** Diabetic rats received STZ (50 mg/kg, IP) and were treated with *M. oleifera* (0.2 mg/kg, orally).
- **Group V:** Diabetic rats received STZ (50 mg/kg, IP) and were treated with a combination of Ag NPs (0.2 mg/kg, orally) and *M. oleifera* (0.2 mg/kg, orally).

Glucose Metabolism:

Following blood collection, blood glucose levels were measured using the method described by Middleton and Griffiths (1957). Plasma insulin levels were quantified using the ELISA method with an insulin ELISA kit. Glycosylated haemoglobin (HbA1c) levels were determined using the method of Bannon (1982) with a commercial diagnostic kit.

Liver Function Biomarkers Assessment:

Serum alanine aminotransferase (ALT) and aspartate aminotransferase (AST) levels were measured using the method of Reitman and Frankel (1957). Albumin (ALB) levels were determined using the method of Busher (1990). Total protein (TP) was assessed using the method of Peters Jr. (1968). Lactate dehydrogenase (LDH) levels were measured using the method of Stevens *et al.* (1983). Total bilirubin (TB) was determined according to the method of Doumas *et al.* (1985).

Antioxidant Biomarker Assessment:

The antioxidant parameters were examined as follows: blood samples were collected and analyzed using the method of Misra and Fridovich (1972) for SOD and CAT, the method of Draper and Hadley (1990) for MDA, and the protocol of Moron *et al.* (1979) for GSH.

Histopathological Examination:

Liver and pancreatic tissues were fixed in 10% formalin, dehydrated through a graded series of alcohol concentrations, cleared with xylene, and embedded in paraffin wax.

For histological examination, 5 μm sections were cut and stained with Harris' haematoxylin and eosin.

Statistical Analysis:

Data were expressed as the mean \pm standard deviation (SD). Statistical analysis was performed using one-way ANOVA, followed by Tukey's post hoc test for multiple comparisons, with $P < 0.05$ considered statistically significant. All analyses were conducted using GraphPad Prism software (version 9.0; GraphPad, USA).

RESULTS

Transmission Electron Microscopy for Ag NPs:

Figure 1, confirms the successful synthesis of Ag NPs. (A) The low-magnification TEM image reveals uniformly dispersed nanoparticles with a spherical morphology. (B) The high-resolution TEM image shows well-defined lattice fringes, indicating the crystalline nature of the Ag NPs. (C) The line profile analysis highlights distinct interplanar spacings, consistent with the characteristic crystallographic planes of silver nanoparticles. These results validate the structural integrity and crystalline properties of the synthesized Ag NPs.

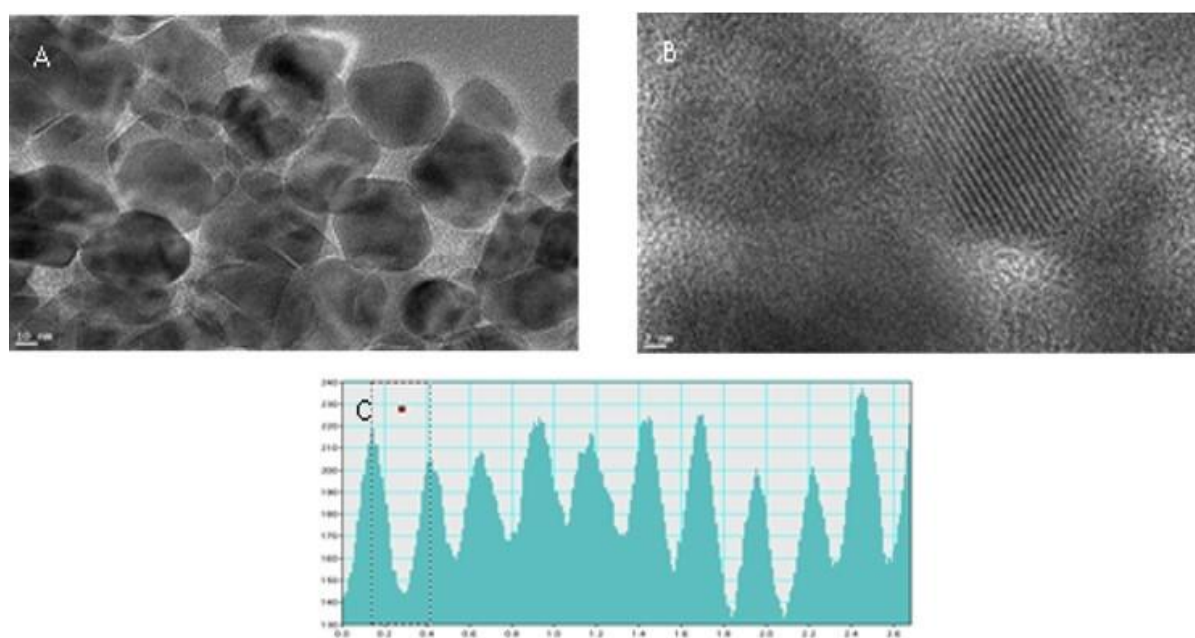


Fig. 1. Transmission Electron Microscopy (TEM) characterization of Ag NPs. (A) TEM image showing the morphology and uniform distribution of Ag NPs. (B) High-resolution TEM image revealing lattice fringes, confirming the crystalline structure of Ag NPs. (C) Line profile analysis illustrating the interplanar spacing characteristics of Ag NPs.

Moringa. Oleifera Attenuates Glucose Metabolism Disorders Caused by DM:

Figure 2, illustrates the effects of Ag NPs, *M. oleifera* leaf extract, and their combination treatments on serum glucose, insulin, and HbA1c levels in diabetic and control groups. The STZ-induced diabetic group exhibited a significant increase in glucose and HbA1c levels, accompanied by a sharp decrease in insulin levels compared to the control group ($P < 0.001$). Treatment with *M. oleifera* leaf extract significantly reduced glucose and HbA1c levels while restoring insulin levels compared to the diabetic group ($P < 0.001$). The combination of *M. oleifera* and Ag NPs further enhanced these effects, showing a superior reduction in glucose and HbA1c levels and an increase in insulin levels compared to individual treatments. Treatment with Ag NPs alone demonstrated significant improvements, although less pronounced than the combination treatment. These findings suggest that *M. oleifera* and Ag NPs synergistically mitigate hyperglycemia and improve glucose metabolism in diabetic rats.

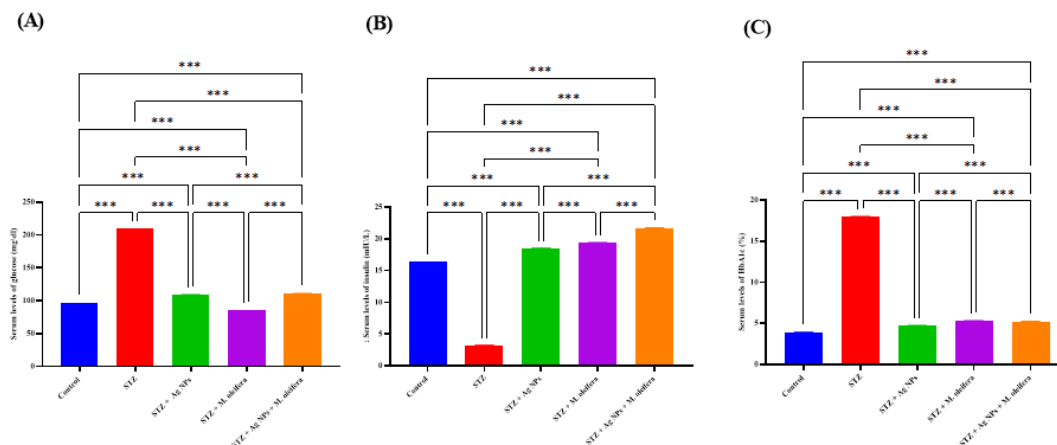


Fig. 2. Effects of *M. oleifera* and Ag NPs on serum glucose, insulin, and HbA1c levels in STZ-induced diabetic rats. (A) Serum glucose levels, (B) insulin levels, and (C) HbA1c levels. Results are expressed as the mean \pm standard deviation (SD). Statistical significance was set at $P < 0.05$.

M. oleifera ameliorates Hepatic Impairment Caused by DM:

Figure 3, demonstrates that the diabetic group exhibited significant liver damage, as indicated by elevated serum levels of ALT and AST and decreased levels of albumin, total protein, and total bilirubin compared to the control group ($P < 0.001$). Treatment with Ag NPs, *M. oleifera* leaf extract, and their combination showed substantial improvements, with the combined Ag NPs + *M. oleifera* treatment demonstrating the most pronounced normalization of biomarker levels, suggesting synergistic hepatoprotective effects.

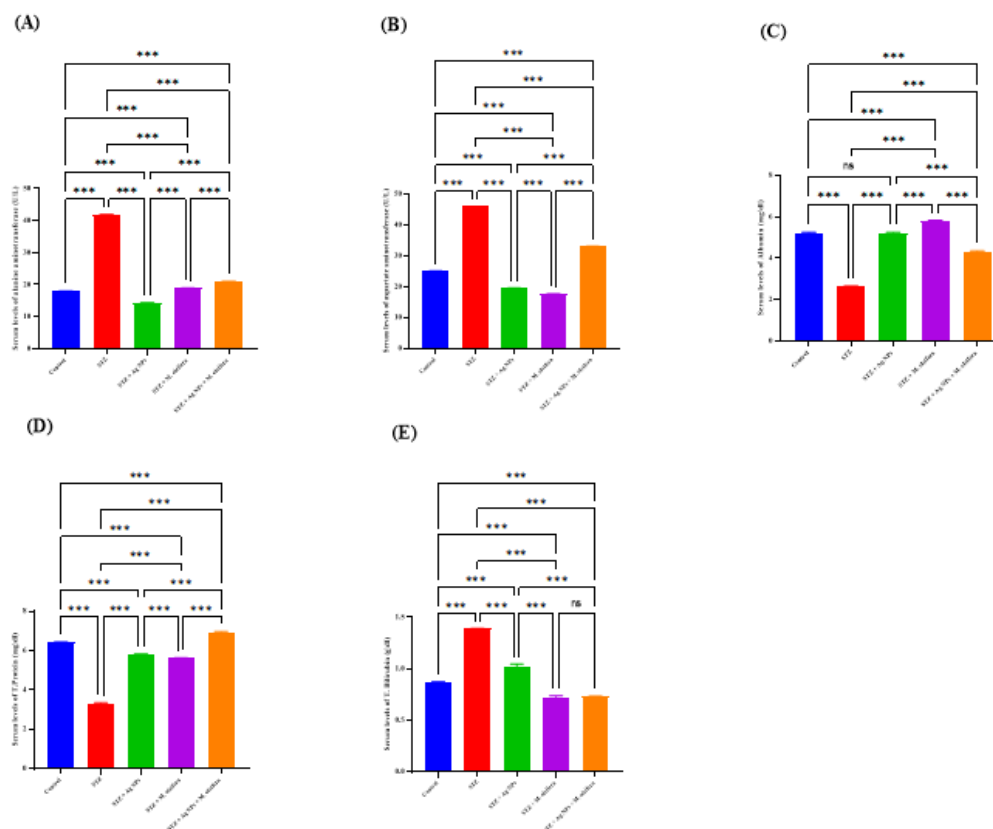


Fig. 3. Effect of Ag NPs, *M. oleifera*, and their combination on liver function biomarkers in STZ-induced liver damage. The graphs illustrate the serum levels of liver function biomarkers, including (A) ALT, (B) AST, (C) albumin, (D) total protein, and (E) total bilirubin across experimental groups. Results are expressed as the mean \pm standard deviation (SD). Statistical significance was set at $P < 0.05$.

Ag NPs and *M. oleifera* mitigate the Diabetic impairments in Antioxidant Biomarkers:

Figure 4, illustrates the effects of Ag NPs and *M. oleifera* on STZ-induced oxidative stress and antioxidant biomarkers. The STZ-treated group exhibited a significant depletion in serum reduced GSH levels and decreased activities of SOD and CAT, along with a marked increase in MDA, a lipid peroxidation marker. These changes indicate elevated oxidative stress and impaired antioxidant defense. Treatment with Ag NPs and *M. Oleifera*, particularly in combination, reversed these effects by significantly increasing GSH levels, restoring SOD and CAT activities, and reducing MDA levels. The combination of Ag NPs and *M. oleifera* was more effective than individual treatments, demonstrating a synergistic effect in mitigating oxidative damage and enhancing antioxidant capacity.

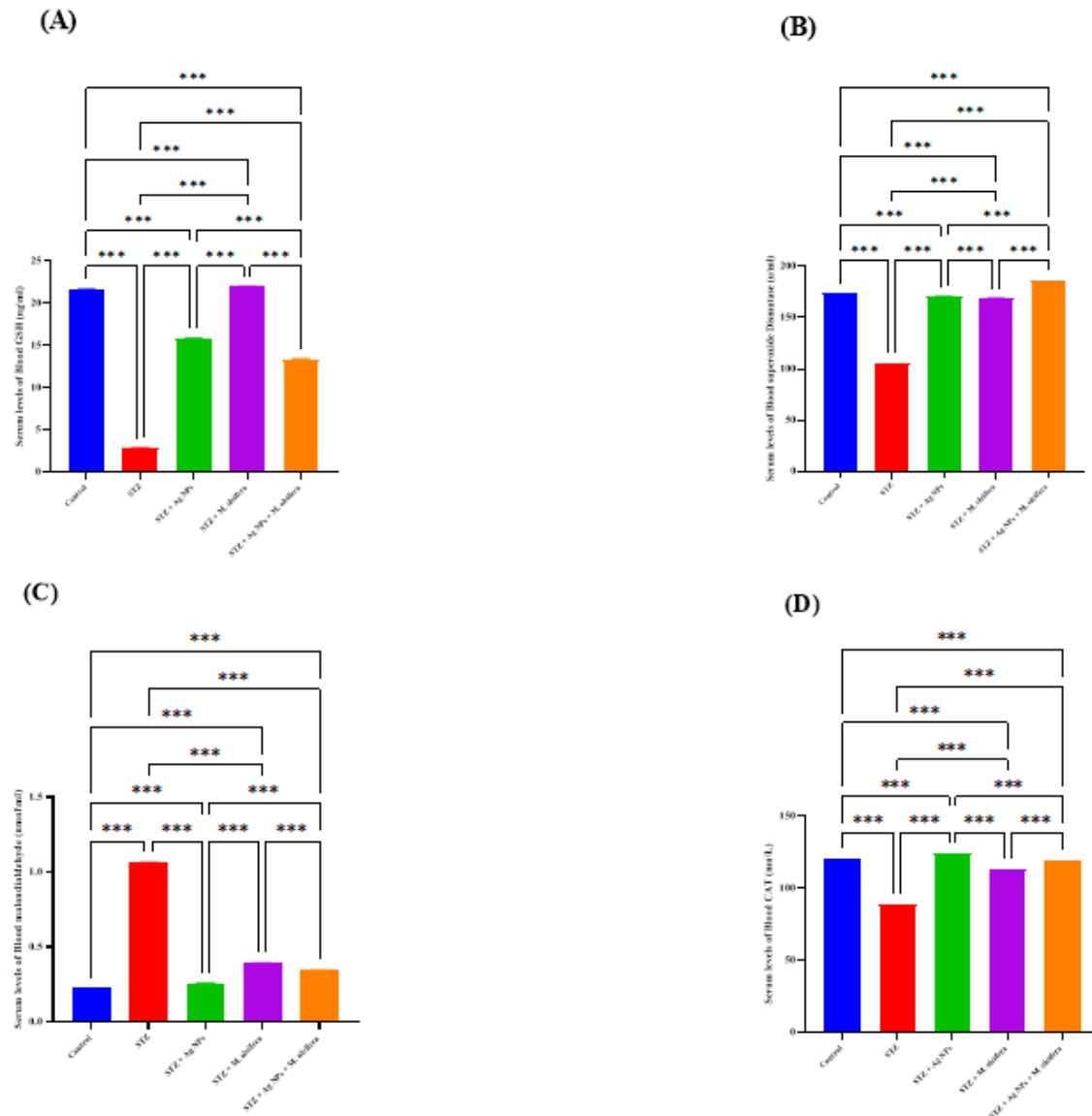


Fig. 4. Effect of Ag NPs, *M. oleifera*, and their combination on antioxidant biomarkers in STZ-induced liver damage. The graphs illustrate the serum levels of antioxidant biomarkers, including (A) GSH, (B) SOD, (C) MDA, and (D) CAT. Results are expressed as the mean \pm standard deviation (SD). Statistical significance was set at $P < 0.05$.

Histological Examination:

Figure 5, illustrates the histological examination of pancreatic sections, showing distinct variations across experimental groups. (A) The control group exhibits normal pancreatic architecture with well-organized acinar cells and intact connective tissue. Meanwhile, the islets of Langerhans (IL) appear lightly stained. (B) Diabetic rats show severe degeneration, including islet atrophy, necrosis, vacuolation, and loss of α - and β -cells, along

with widened interlobular ducts. (C) Diabetic rats treated with silver nanoparticles (Ag NPs) display mild structural improvements, although some vacuolation and cell atrophy persist. (D) Treatment with *M. oleifera* extract results in better islet preservation, reduced acinar atrophy, and improved distinction between endocrine and exocrine regions. (E) The combination of Ag NPs and *M. oleifera* leads to significant islet regeneration and reduced vacuolation, suggesting enhanced pancreatic recovery.

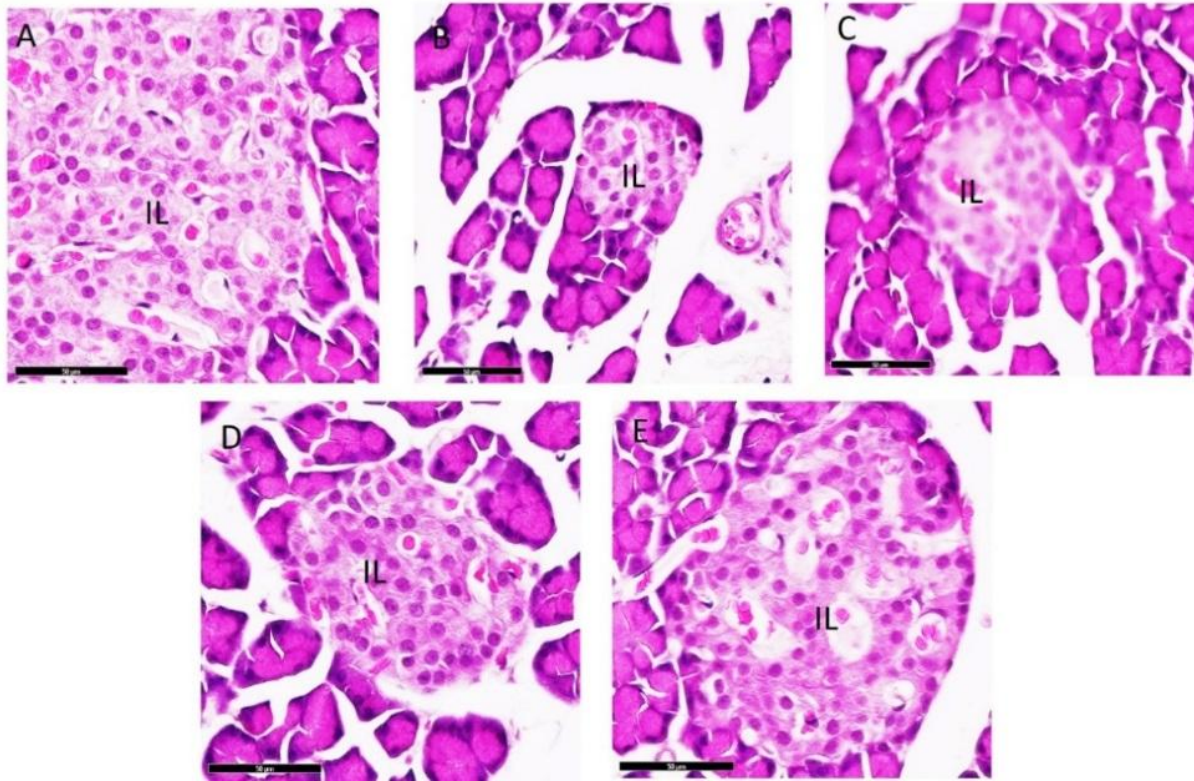


Fig. 5. Photomicrograph of pancreatic tissues stained with H&E (scale bar: 50 μ m, 400 \times magnification). (A) Control group, (B) Diabetic group (received STZ), (C) Diabetic + Ag NPs, (D) Diabetic + *M. oleifera* leaf extract, (E) Diabetic + Ag NPs + *M. oleifera* leaf extract. IL: Islet of Langerhans.

Figure 6, illustrates the histological analysis of liver tissues stained with hematoxylin and eosin, revealing significant differences among the experimental groups. The control group (A) exhibits normal hepatic architecture, with intact central veins (CV), sinusoidal spaces (S), and well-organized hepatocytes (HC). The diabetic group (B) shows severe structural damage, including disrupted sinusoidal spaces, swollen hepatocytes, and inflammation. Treatment with Ag NPs (C) and *M. oleifera* leaf extract (D) demonstrates partial restoration of liver architecture, with reduced hepatocyte swelling and improved sinusoidal spaces. Treatment with the combination (E) displays a near-normal hepatic structure, highlighting a synergistic effect in restoring liver histology.

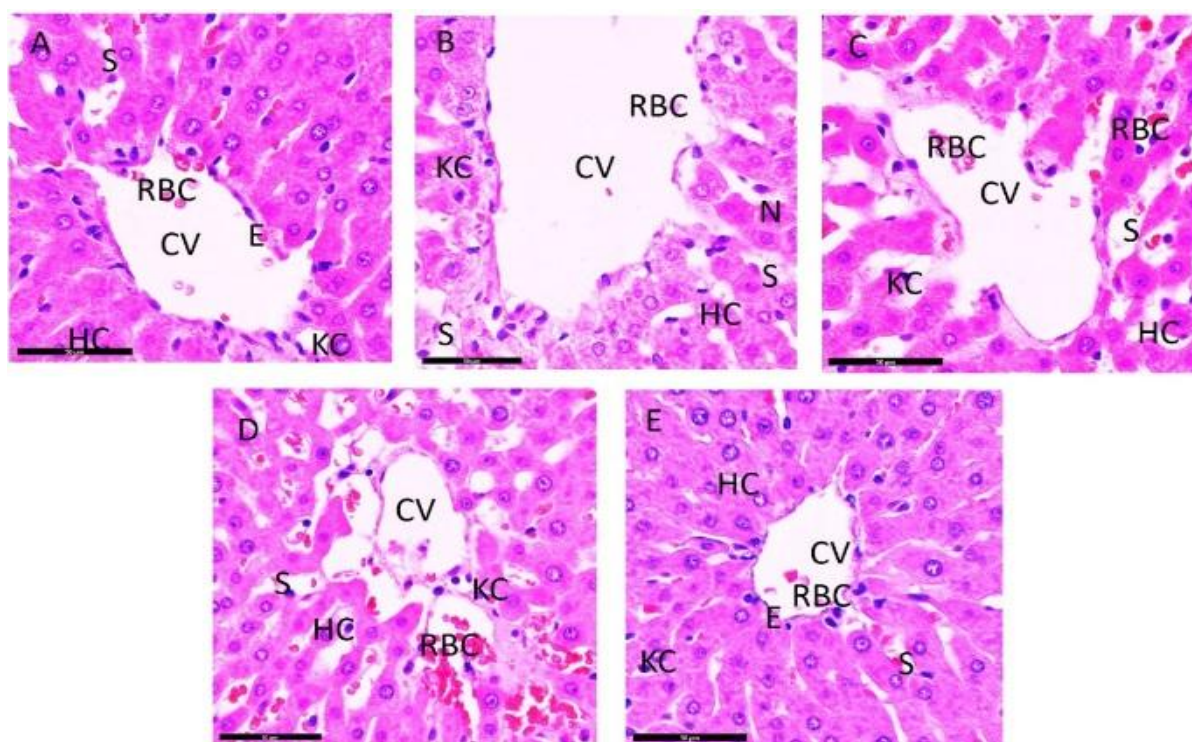


Fig. 6. Photomicrograph of liver tissues stained with H&E (scale bar: 50 μ m, 400 \times magnification). (A) Control group, (B) Diabetic group (received STZ), (C) Diabetic + Ag NPs, (D) Diabetic + *M. oleifera* leaf extract, (E) Diabetic + Ag NPs + *M. oleifera* leaf extract. CV: Central vein; RBC: Red blood cell; HC: Hepatic cell; KC: Kupffer cell; S: Sinusoid; Black arrow: Binucleated hepatocyte; E: Endothelial cell.

DISCUSSION

This study elucidates the synergistic therapeutic potential effects of green silver nanoparticles (Ag NPs), *M. oleifera* leaf extract, and their combination in alleviating hepatic dysfunction and oxidative stress in STZ-induced diabetic rats. The finding highlights their combined efficacy in reducing hyperglycemia, restoring liver function biomarkers, and ameliorating histopathological changes in hepatic tissue. Diabetic liver injury is primarily driven by hyperglycemia-induced oxidative damage, leading to increased ALT, AST, and MDA levels and impaired antioxidant defenses such as reduced GSH, SOD, and CAT (Zeng *et al.*, 2021; Zhang *et al.*, 2022).

In this study, the administration of Ag NPs and *M. oleifera* leaf extract significantly improved glucose metabolism, indicated by reduced serum glucose and HbA1c levels and elevated insulin levels. Notably, the combined treatment exhibited superior efficacy compared to individual treatments, demonstrating a synergistic effect in mitigating hyperglycemia (Kalakotla *et al.*, 2022; Zeng *et al.*, 2021).

Furthermore, the restoration of liver function biomarkers, including albumin, total protein, and total bilirubin levels, suggests a pronounced hepatoprotective effect, particularly in the combined treatment group (Zeng *et al.*, 2021). Histopathological analysis further validated these biochemical improvements, revealing that the combined treatment more effectively preserved hepatic and pancreatic architecture than individual therapies. The therapeutic benefits are likely attributed to the bioactive compounds in *M. oleifera*, such as flavonoids and phenolics, which possess potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory properties (Arora & Arora, 2021; Chiş *et al.*, 2023). Additionally, the crystalline structure of Ag NPs, as confirmed by TEM, contributes to their efficacy by enhancing antioxidant defense mechanisms and reducing lipid peroxidation (Hassan Afandy *et al.*, 2023; Wypij *et al.*, 2021). While these findings are interesting, several limitations should be addressed. The study duration was relatively short, and further long-term studies are necessary to determine the safety, optimal dosage, and molecular mechanisms underlying these effects.

Conclusion

The current study highlights the combined treatment of Ag NPs and *M. oleifera* leaf extract as a promising therapeutic strategy for diabetic liver complications. By addressing oxidative stress, hyperglycemia, and inflammation, this novel approach demonstrates superior efficacy in restoring liver function, reducing oxidative damage, and improving pancreatic and hepatic histology compared to individual treatments. These findings provide a strong foundation for further research into the molecular mechanisms and clinical applications of Ag NPs and *M. oleifera* in diabetes management.

Declarations:

Ethical Approval: The experiments were processed using the animal ethical rules of King Abdulaziz University's Animal Care and Use Committee (ACUC). Furthermore, all tests adhered to the Arrive standards and EU Directive 2010/63/EU regarding animal research.

Competing interests: The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Author's Contributions: Mohammed F. Al Khuzaei and Muhamed A. El Nobey contributed equally to this work and share the first authorship. Muhamed A El Nobey wrote the manuscript, and Salim M El Hamidy revised it.

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Availability of Data and Materials: All data sets are available in the manuscript and supplementary file.

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