



Identification and Characterization of *Lactobacilli* from Rajshahi Traditional Curds

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between all authors. Author MKI was responsible for conducting the experiments. Author AAB designed the study, wrote the protocols for different experiments and the first draft of the manuscript and managed literature searches. Authors AK and MKZ analyzed the data and supported author AAB to write the manuscript. Author AI helped to identify and characterize all bacteria. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

The popular food, dairy products like curds are consumed by many people in its various forms in Bangladesh. Infact, these different types of curds are made without real respect for basic standards of technology and hygiene. This situation will be improved if lactic ferments are well-identified and their synergy taken into consideration. Not much information has been reported about the *Lactobacilli* species responsible for curd production in Bangladesh. In this context, this study was conducted to identify and characterize lactic acid bacteria in curds to provide scientific data needed for improvement of the fermented product. Twenty samples were collected from the producers of curds in the supermarket of Shaheb Bazar, Rajshahi. The culture media used were Czapek Dox (pH 5.3), M17, MRS and nutrient broth and agar for the investigation of lactic acid bacteria. The identified lactic acid bacteria were *Lactobacilli* including *Lactobacillus casei* (sample 1), *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* (sample 3), *Lactobacillus plantarum* (sample 4) and *Lactobacillus helveticus* (sample 6) based on morphological characteristics, catalase activities, milk coagulation, growth at different temperature, growth in medium with different NaCl concentrations, growth at

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different pH, carbohydrate fermentation profiles, exopolysaccharides production, resistance to antibiotics and other biochemical tests. The results of this work will help in the production of dairy products with better quality and longer shelf-life. The isolation of lactic acid bacteria particularly *Lactobacilli* could be a good tool for information to improve the characteristics of curds and hygienic quality of the dairy products.

Keywords: *Doi; Lactobacilli; antibiotic resistance; identification; Rajshahi.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In 1989, Fuller defined the term probiotics as live microbial food supplements, which beneficially affect the host by improving the intestinal microbial balance [1]. Among these microorganisms, lactic acid bacteria are regarded as major groups of probiotic bacteria. Highly nutritious food, milk and dairy products are considered as ideal for humans due to their richness in carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and minerals [2,3]. In addition to their nutritional values, the consumption of probiotics in fermented dairy products is also associated with beneficial effects on health [4]. Lactic acid bacteria in dairy products are used as remedy for the gastrointestinal disorders such as irritable bowel syndrome [5,6], chronic idiopathic constipation [7], controlling blood pressure [8], and breast cancer [9] and colon cancer [10,11], reducing cholesterol level & allergic diseases [10,12] and modulating immune responses [13]. Indeed, the dairy products come in many forms depending on the region and varied tastes. Fermented dairy products in particularly curds are very popular with Bangladeshi consumers because their tastes and flavors. Most studies on traditional fermented dairy products showed that lactic acid bacteria are the main causing agents of these fermentations groups [14]. The presence of lipase in lactic acid bacteria can decompose fat and free fatty acids in milk, resulting in the appearance of rancid odor in the dairy product [15].

The interesting groups of microorganisms, lactic acid bacteria are characterized by their abilities to ferment carbohydrates into lactic acid, a weak acid conducive to the conservation and improvement of the organoleptic quality of food. Lactic acid bacteria comprise diverse groups of Gram-positive, non-spore-forming microorganisms. The interest of lactic acid bacteria in the food industry lies mainly in their ability to convert some sugars into lactate and soto acidify the surrounding environment. Fermentable carbohydrates are used as energy sources and are degraded to lactate (homofermentatives) or to

lactate and additional products such as acetate, ethanol, carbon dioxide, formate, or succinate (heterofermentatives) [16]. The lactic acid bacteria produced as commercial starter cultures are pure culture soramix belonging to the genera *Streptococcus*, *Lactobacillus*, *Enterococcus*, *Leuconostoc*, *Aerococcus*, *Lactococcus*, *Streptococcus*, *Pediococcus* and *Bifidobacterium* [17]. Thus, lactic acid bacteria especially *Lactobacilli* species are widely used in food technology. The manufacture of high-quality dairy products requires close attention to characterization, differentiation, and maintenance of *Lactobacilli* starter culture strains.

The interest in microorganisms occurring in foods is primarily due to the biotechnological potential of new bacterial species and strains. Here, we selected the dairy product, curd, as a potential source of new species or types of lactic acid bacteria because curd, which is a low-pH product, also provides an added carbohydrate source. The study supported the predominance of lactic acid bacteria in curd. In Bangladesh, especially in Rajshahi, no study has so far been reported on this subject. This lack of scientific information led us to seek and identify these bacteria in different varieties of traditional dairy food curds (locally called '*doi*'), which is very well consumed by the population.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Sampling and Isolation

Twenty samples of curds were procured randomly from retail market in the Shaheb Bazar area of Rajshahi, aseptically and in sterile conditions. The collected samples were stored in a refrigerator to stop the growth of microorganisms. Total viable lactic acid bacteria counts in each sample were analyzed by spread plating the serially diluted samples onto nutrient agar. After incubation at 15-37°C for 72 hours, colonies with clear zones were counted. Some of these colonies were selected and purified on nutrient agar medium and preserved the slants for a long time.

2.2 Identification of Bacterial Strains

For morphological identification of lactic acid bacteria, at first all isolates were used for microscopic observations such as colony characteristics (spore formation, elevation margin, surface, pigmentation, opacity, whether grown inside, at the bottom or on the surface of the medium and the rate of growth). The cultures were identified according to their physiological and biochemical characteristics up to genetic level [18,19]. The biochemical tests used were Gram reaction; production of catalase; growth at different temperatures (10°C, 15°C, 37°C, 40°C and 45°C) for 3 days; growth resistance to 60°C for 30 min (Sherman test); growth in the presence of 2, 3, 4 and 6.5% NaCl and different pHs (4.5 and 6.5); fermentation profile of different sugars (such as arabinose, fructose, galactose, glucose, lactose, mannose, mannitol, maltose, sorbitol, sucrose or xylose in 1% w/v) [20], lactic acid production from 1% w/v lactose and motility. For catalase test, in brief, growth from an overnight culture of the microbe was smeared on a microscope slide. A drop of 3% hydrogen peroxide was added. If copious bubbles were observed, the microbe was positive for catalase otherwise negative. Colonies were characterized on nutrient, MRS and M17 agar. Strains with gram positive and catalase negative reactions were finally used for further identification [21].

2.3 Testing for Resistance to Antibiotics

Bacterial antibiotic resistance was determined on solid nutrient agar by the use of 11 different antibiotic discs (Table 1). The results (average of 3 reading) were expressed as sensitive (S) or resistant (R) by following the standard disc diffusion method [22]. Antibiotics such as penicillin G (10 µg), amoxicillin (30 µg), cefixime (5 µg), ceftazidime (30 µg), Kanamycin (30 µg), tetracycline (30 µg), streptomycin (10 µg), erythromycin (15 µg) and ciprofloxacin (5 µg) were used for this study [23].

2.4 Exopolysaccharides (EPS) Production

The procedure used consisted of revealing the presence of diffuse capsules surrounding bacteria cells. The strain producing capsules were also tested for slime formation. Exopolysaccharide production was evaluated as reported by Azadnia et al. [24]. Briefly, on a clean slide, a loop of broth culture was mixed with a drop of India ink, covered with a cover

glass and examined under a microscope. For slime production, strains were streaked on the suitable media and incubated at 37°C for 24h. Ropiness of colonies on agar surfaces was tested with a loop to observe the formation of slimy filaments.

3. RESULTS

Here, we isolated lactic acid bacteria which were potential for lactic acid production in nutrient agar. Lactic acid bacterial colonies were marked on the surface of nutrient agar plates. Most of the cases more than one colony was recognized. With the help of a microscope, bacterial cultural and morphological characteristics were examined. A wide variety of microorganisms were distinguished, majority of them associated with the Gram positive rods and cocci shaped bacteria. The purification step of bacteria was performed by shifting Gram positive rods shaped bacteria to the plates of nutrient agar media separately and repetitively. These processes were continued until pure cultures of bacteria were obtained. After initial identification of lactic acid bacteria, the representative family, *Lactobacillaceae* was determined and the genus, *Lactobacillus* was confirmed and segregated from other referred genus *Lactococcus*, *Streptococcus*, *Pediococcus*, *Leuconostoc* and some of *Bifidobacteria*, *Staphylococcus* etc. [25,26]. Here we investigated to identify rod shaped lactic acid bacteria only. Finally, four strains of pure cultures were selected for various biochemical and physiological tests and the results were given in Table 1. These tests displayed that all the four strains were Gram positive, non-spore rods, and motility negative. Moreover, there were no strains presented any catalase activity. Sample 3 showed proper growth at low level of NaCl concentration (2%). It was observed that samples 1 and 4 could survive in presence of up to 4% but not 6.5% NaCl concentration. Sample 3 could grow only at 2% NaCl concentration. Sample 6 showed a moderate growth in 6.5% NaCl solution in media. Four selected strains were characterized further by sugar fermentation tests and the results were appeared in Table 1. These results indicated that sample 1 showed positive reactions for fructose, galactose, glucose, lactose, mannose, mannitol, maltose, sorbitol, sucrose and xylose, except arabinose. The results for sample 3 indicated that the strain fermented lactose, glucose and fructose only but not other sugars (Table 1). Sample 4 showed positive reactions with all tested sugars while sample 6 showed negative

reactions with all tested sugars except lactose, glucose and galactose. Table 1 showed the results obtained for antibiotic susceptibility of the 11 different antibiotics tested. All strains were susceptible to amoxicillin, kanamycin, tetracycline, streptomycin, erythromycin and ciprofloxacin. Most strains showed resistance to 3 of the 11 antibiotics tested that is, to penicillin G (3 out of 4 strains), cefixime (all strains) or ceftazidime (all strains) (Table 1). Exopolysaccharides (EPS) are extracellular polymeric substances that are found either attached to the cell walls as capsular forms or secreted by bacteria into the extracellular environment as slimes. For EPS-production, lactic acid bacteria have gained a great attention in food research because of the interesting protection properties of these polymers from pathogenic bacteria and the Generally Recognized as Safe (GRAS) status. The presence of EPS-polymers, lactic acid bacteria improve the quality and texture of the curds and prevent the syneresis [27,28]. Finally, all of the four strains showed exopolysaccharide positive reaction indicating that the strains were safe for curd fermentation.

4. DISCUSSION

Curd is one of the most popular fermented dairy products of diet in the Indian subcontinent. It is formed by fermentation of milk with the help of lactic acid bacteria. Curdis reported to have a greater therapeutic value and digestibility than milk [29]. Probiotic foods, including dairy products like curds, have been classically defined as food containing live microorganisms believed to active lyenhance health benefit to the host [30]. The beneficial effects of lactic acid bacteria with probiotic properties are suggested to be due to a number of factors including regulation of intestinal microbial homeostasis, maintenance of the gastrointestinal barrier function that prevents pathogens from adhering, interference with the ability of pathogens to colonize, changes in total enzyme activity in the colon contents, changes in the availability of nutrients and finally modulation of local and systemic immune responses [11,31-35]. Most of the probiotic microorganisms were lactic acid bacteria which have a long history in preserving foods from spoilage microorganisms through inhibition of pathogenic bacteria and preservation of nutritive qualities of raw food material for an extended shelf life [36]. Therefore, it is important to identify and characterize lactic acid bacteria in order to improve the technological and hygienic quality of

the dairy products as well as the extension of shelf life.

The results showed in Table 1 that all the four strains were non spore-forming rods, gram positive, non-motile and non-catalase activity. So, these stains were fallen in the family *Lactobacillaceae* and genus *Lactobacillus*. The results of growths at different NaCl concentrations suggested that sample 3 showed proper growth at low level of NaCl concentration (2%). However, samples 1 and 4 showed proper growth in 4% NaCl while no growth was observed in 6.5% NaCl except sample 6. Based on the sugar tests, sample 1 showed positive reactions for fructose, galactose, glucose, lactose, mannose, mannitol, maltose, sorbitol, sucrose and xylose, except arabinose. The results for sample 3 indicated that the strain gave positive reactions with lactose, glucose and fructose while negative reactions were observed with other sugars. Sample 4 gave positive reactions with all tested sugars while sample 6 gave negative reactions with all tested sugars except lactose, glucose and galactose. The results obtained from antibiotic susceptibilities of different antibiotics tested indicated that all strains were susceptible most of the antibiotics including (amoxicillin, kanamycin, tetracycline, streptomycin, erythromycin and ciprofloxacin). However, the strains showed resistance to antibiotics such as penicillin G (3 out of 4 strains), cefixime (all strains) or ceftazidime (all strains). As the widespread antibiotic resistance could be attributed to excessive or indiscriminate use of antibiotics in this part of the world or due to chromosomal resistance, all the lactic acid bacteria isolated were susceptible for different antibiotics except penicillin G, ceftazidime or cefixime. The major results obtained from our group are consistent with the reports of Azadnia et al. [24]. The *Lactobacilli* group of bacteria was divided into three subgroups, mesophilic facultative heterofermentative, thermophilic obligate homo-fermentative and mesophilic obligate hetero-fermentative bacteria. Our morphological, biochemical and physiological results were consistent with some observations in reports of [25,37,38]. All the isolated strains were further confirmed by sugar tests and the results are presented in Table 1. These results indicate mesophilic facultative heterofermentative *Lactobacillus casei* (sample 1) and *Lactobacillus plantarum* (sample 4) and thermophilic obligate homo-fermentative *Lactobacillus delbrueckii* (sample 3) and *Lactobacillus helveticus* (sample 6).

Table 1. Physiological and biochemical characteristics of isolated strains

Characteristics		Strain			
		Sample 1	Sample 3	Sample 4	Sample 6
Morphology		Rods pairs	Rods pairs	Rods pairs	Rods pairs
Gram stain reaction		+	+	+	+
Catalase activity		-	-	-	-
Motility		-	-	-	-
Glucose fermentation		+	-	+	+
Milk coagulation		+	+	+	+
	10	+	-	+	-
	15	+	-	+	-
Growth at temperature (°C)	37	±	+	+	+
	40	-	+	-	+
	45	-	+	-	-
	2	+	+	+	+
	3	+	-	+	+
Growth in a medium with NaCl (%)	4	+	-	+	+
	6.5	-	-	-	+
Growth at pH	4.5	+	+	+	+
	6.5	+	+	+	-
Heat resistance 63.5°C for 30 min		-	-	-	+
Sugar fermentation profile					
Arabinose		-	-	+	-
Fructose		+	+	+	-
Galactose		+	-	+	+
Glucose		+	+	+	+
Lactose		+	+	+	+
Mannose		+	-	+	-
Mannitol		+	-	+	-
Maltose		+	-	+	-
Sorbitol		+	-	+	-
Sucrose		+	-	+	-
Xylose		+	-	+	-
Production of CO ₂ from Glucose		-	-	-	-
Production of lactic acid		+	+	+	+
Production of H ₂ O ₂		+	+	+	+
Production of diacetyl		+	+	+	+
Exopolysaccharides (EPS) production		+	+	+	+
Resistance to antibiotics (µg/dl)					
Penicillin G	10	R	S	R	R
Cefixime	5	R	R	R	R
Ceftazidime	30	R	R	R	R
Kanamycin	5	S	S	S	S
Tetracycline	30	S	S	S	S
Streptomycin	10	S	S	S	S
Erythromycin	15	S	S	S	S
Ciprofloxacin	5	S	S	S	S
Amoxicillin	30	S	S	S	S

+: positive reaction; -: negative reaction; R: resistance and S: sensitive

Traditional probiotic dairy strains of lactic acid bacteria have a long history of safe use. There is considerable interest in extending the range of foods incorporating probiotic organisms from dairy foods to infant formulae, baby foods, fruit juice based products and cereal-based products and pharmaceuticals [39-41] due to the ability of antimicrobial compound production by lactic acid bacteria. Thus, understanding the interactions between the involved microorganisms, in different food systems, is very important in successful application of lactic acid bacteria to control other pathogenic microorganisms. This information is important in identification and selection of lactic acid bacteria for mix cultures as well as in the selection of stimulant bacteria in antimicrobial compound production using lactic acid bacteria.

5. CONCLUSION

This work has identified and characterized lactic acid bacteria specifically *Lactobacilli* in curds available in the supermarket of Shaheb Bazar, Rajshahi. The identified lactic acid bacteria include *Lactobacillus casei*, *Lactobacillus delbrueckii*, *Lactobacillus plantarum* and *Lactobacillus helveticus* based on carbohydrate fermentation profiles, catalase activities and other biochemical tests. The total number of identified bacteria especially lactic acid bacteria in curds still remains to be investigated because the super market of Rajshahi is too large and the agro-ecological zones of curd productions are varied in tastes, flavors and appearances. However, the knowledge gained from this study will help in the production of dairy products with longer shelf-lives and pleasant delicious food. Other studies, including the characterization of molecular biology of lactic acid bacteria are necessary to provide sufficient information to improve the technological and hygienic quality of dairy products. This study provides a first time investigation of isolation and characterization of lactic acid bacteria from Rajshahi traditional curds. Because of an increased demand for traditional curds, the results of the present study might be able to improve the hygienic quality and retain the characteristic delicious taste in curds.

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COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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