

Salicylic Acid Accumulation in Tomato Root Induced by Endopytic Bacteria and Exogenous Salicylic Acid Response to *Ralstonia syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis* Infection

Triwanto Nababan^{1*}, Lisnawita², Irda Safni²

¹ Magister Program of Agrotechnology, Faculty of Agriculture, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia.

² Program Study of Agrotechnology, Faculty of Agriculture, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Medan, Indonesia.

Article Info

Article history:

Received : May 09, 2024

Revised : Jul 13, 2024

Accepted : Sept 20, 2024

Keywords:

Arthrobacter sp;
Bacillus thuringiensis;
Bacterial wilt;
Induce resistance.

ABSTRACT

Ralstonia syzygii subsp. *indonesiensis* causes bacterial wilt disease is a soil-borne pathogen that causes serious damage and major losses in tomato production. To overcome this, the use of *Arthrobacter* sp. and *Bacillus thuringiensis* as biological elicitors and salicylic acid as a chemical elicitor were tested their capacity to induce tomato plants to become resistant. Experiments were carried out on the susceptible tomato cultivar "Servo F1" in sterilized soil to test the elicitor's effectiveness in triggering plant defense mechanisms in response to salicylic acid accumulation in afflicted roots. *Arthrobacter* sp. and salicylic acid treatments significantly reduced the disease severity due to bacterial wilt compared to control treatment within three weeks after inoculation. Tomato with once week application intensity was also better than every two weeks application intensity. The AUDPC value showed by *Arthrobacter* sp. was 1449.7 with an application intensity every two weeks and 148 with an application intensity once a week compared to control with an AUDPC value of 4962.9. Furthermore, endophytic bacteria and salicylic acid can induce salicylic acid accumulation in pathogen-inoculated tomato roots. The results show that the elicitor is either biological or chemicals play an important role as inducers of plant defenses, thereby reducing bacterial wilt disease.

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Corresponding Author:

Triwanto Nababan

Magister Program of Agrotechnology, Faculty of Agriculture, Universitas Sumatera Utara

Jl. Dr. T. Mansur No.9, Padang Bulan, Kec. Medan Baru, Kota Medan, Sumatera Utara 20222

Email : triwannababan31@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

In field conditions, plants will always be attacked either by environmental conditions or pests and diseases (Carrer et al., 2016). Moreover, tomato plants (*Solanum lycopersicum*) are susceptible to disease infections such as *Ralstonia syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis* which causes bacterial wilt disease. These pathogens are soil-borne and cause serious damage to economic yields (Wenas et al., 2017; Rahmadhani et al., 2022). Hundreds of different plant species can be attacked by this genus of pathogen (Genin, 2010). Every year, there is a growing need for tomatoes in Indonesia and across the globe, but the challenge of wilt disease is the main obstacle. Therefore, sustainable and environmentally friendly tomato production needs to be carried out to support economic growth and the world's need for tomatoes (Chaudrary et al., 2019). Plants are

naturally able to identify invasive pathogenic microbes and initiate defensive mechanisms in response (Pandey et al., 2017). According to Klopper et al. (1992) There are two types of plant systemic resistance: acquired systemic resistance (SAR) and induced systemic resistance (ISR). SAR pathway required salicylic acid (SA) as initiating signal molecule (Buensanteai et al., 2010) and ISR pathway depend on jasmonic acid (JA) and ethylene (ET) as signaling factors mediated by useful microorganisms as elicitors (Walters et al., 2007). Endophytic bacteria and SA have been used in research as elicitors to increase plant resistance and control various plant pathogens, like *Ralstonia solanacearum* and *Meloidogyne* spp. (Elsharkawy et al., 2015), *Fusarium solani* (Saengchan et al., 2022), *Fusarium oxysporum* (Lastochkina et al., 2020) and *Pseudomonas syringae* (Zhang et al., 2021).

Exogenous SA can increase the production of plant defense enzyme activity related to pathogenesis proteins (PR) in the defense response of solanaceae impaired due to physiological and biochemical imbalances (Mostafanezhad et al., 2014) and also directly act as a growth regulator in plants. Endophytic bacteria will colonize the roots and trigger the activation of biochemical and physiological defense systems to encourage increased growth (Buensanteai et al., 2012). Together with our understanding that endophytic bacterial inoculation and pathogen infection result in the endogenous SA accumulation in plants (Lastochkina et al., 2020). SA accumulation increases in areas of infection and will spread systemically to all parts of the plant as a defense response (Song et al., 2004). This research could be a model of the relationship between SA accumulation induced by endophytic bacteria or SA and pathogen infection signals. It remains unclear whether the role of SA accumulation in increasing plant resistance is mediated by the two types of chemical and biological elicitors or which systemic resistance pathways result in endogenous SA accumulation under pathogen infection conditions.

In this study, we used *Arthrobacter* sp. and *Bacillus thuringiensis* as biological elicitors and exogenous SA as a chemical elicitor to induce plant resistance and investigate SA accumulation in tomato roots under *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis* infection. We hypothesize that endophytic bacteria and SA can increase plant resistance by increasing the accumulation of SA as a defense response in afflicted roots.

2. METHOD

2.1 Plant Material

Tomato plant cv "Servo F1" was grown in a tray filled with sterilized humus soil. After 1 weeks, the plants were moved using a soil and compost mixture (3:1) into pots (15cm) which were sterilized with steamer 90°C-121°C for 8 hours (Sujoko et al., 2015) and grown at 28°C under greenhouse condition.

2.2 Growth Condition of *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis* and Endopytic Bacteria

Patogen *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis* was isolated from tomato plants with wilting symptoms in Dolat Rayat District, Karo Regency, North Sumatera. *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis* was cultured at 30°C on Tryphenyl tetrazolium chloride (TZC) semi selective medium containing five milliliter 1% TZC, 10g peptone, 1g casein hydrolysate, 5g glucose, 12g agar in 1L distilled water for 48 h. (Safni et al., 2014). The pathogens cells were suspended in sterile distilled and centrifugation at 7000 rpm at 25°C for 10 minute and adjust to a fial density of 10^8 cfumL⁻¹.

The endophytic bacteria used are *Arthrobacter* sp. and *B. thuringiensis* the Plant Disease Laboratory, Faculty of Agriculture, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Aceh. Nutrient Agar (NA) medium was used to cultivate the isolates, and subsequently incubated for 48 hours at 28°C. The distilled water was sterile and used to suspend the bacterium cells and centrifugation at 7000 rpm at 25°C for 10 minute and adjust to a final density of 10^8 cfumL⁻¹.

2.3 Exogenous SA Preparation

SA obtained from the Plant Disease Laboratory, Universitas Sumatera Utara, Indonesia. SA was dissolved in 95% ethanol and sterile distilled water and adjusted to 10 mM (Leiwakabessy et al., 2017).

2.4 Experimental Design

Completely randomized design has been used in the study used eight treatment levels, namely:

K0– = Control without *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis*

K0+ = Control with *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis*

AB1 = *Arthrobacter* sp. once a week

AB2 = *Arthrobacter* sp. once every two weeks

BT1 = *B. thuringiensis* once a week

BT2 = *B. thuringiensis* once every two weeks

SA1 = Salicylic acid once a week

SA2 = Salicylic acid once every two weeks

Each treatment was tested on tomato plants planted in 15 cm pots and repeated three times. For each replication, three plants were prepared and 73 experimental sample units for total. Endophytic bacteria and salicylic acid treatment was given to tomato plants aged one week after transplanting. Tomato rizhosfer were irrigated with 100ml culture medium. One week after treatment plants were inoculated using root cuttings and soil drench of 100 mL (10^8 cfu.mL⁻¹) of *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis* suspension into each pot.

2.5 Evaluate AUDPC Bacterial Wilt Disease

Following the pathogen inoculation, the Bacterial wilt Disease AUDPC was observed for 14 days based on wilting symptoms. Assessed according to Winstead and Kelman (1952) using 0–5 scale: 0, healthy plants; 1, wilting of one lower leaf in portion; 2, wilting of 2–3 lower leaf; 3, all save the top two or three leaf wilt; 4, withering of every leaf; and 5, dead plants. The AUDPC value was calculated to see the development of wilt disease symptoms in each treatment. The AUDPC formula (1) is calculated using the Van der Plank formula (1963):

$$\text{AUDPC} = \sum_i^{n-1} \left(\frac{y_i + y_{i+1} + 1}{2} \right) (t_{i+1} - t_i) \quad (1)$$

Description: y_{i+1} = Observation data to- $i+1$; y_i = Observation data to- i ; t_{i+1} = Observation time to- $i+1$; t_i = Observation time to- i .

2.6 Extraction and Determination of SA Accumulation

Extraction is carried out with Nair and Umamaheswaran (2016) method. SA was extracted from 0.5 g of tomato roots and Pulverized in a cold mortar using liquid nitrogen and 1% of polyvinyl pyrrolidone (PVP) as an internal standard, and the mixture was homogenized in 3 mL sodium phosphate buffer (0.1 M, pH 6.5). Suspense was centrifuged at 5000 rpm at 4°C for 25°C. The supernatant used for the assay of SA accumulation. The stock solution used is FeCl₃ made with a 0.1% standard solution with a concentration of 0.1 mg.mL⁻¹. Next, the supernatant was mixed with FeCl₃ solution with an absorbance at 540 nm (Warrier et al., 2013).

2.7 Statistics Analysis

Data were evaluated by analysis of variance (ANOVA) means were compared using Duncan's multiple comparison 5% (SPSS 25).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Effect of Endopytic Bacteria and SA on The Severity of Bacterial Wilt Disease

Plant disease intensity over time is quantified by the AUDPC value. In this study, the AUDPC value was influenced by endophytic bacteria and also by SA which showed a more significant effect on development caused by *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis*. Tomato positive control (Fig. 1a) with an AUDPC value of 4962.9. Application intensity is an essential component in the development of resistance where it showed by *Arthrobacter* sp. in Figure 1b the AUDPC value is 1449.7 with an application intensity once every two weeks and 148 with an application intensity once a week. Likewise with the other two single treatments *B. thuringiensis* (Fig. 1c) and SA (Fig. 1d).

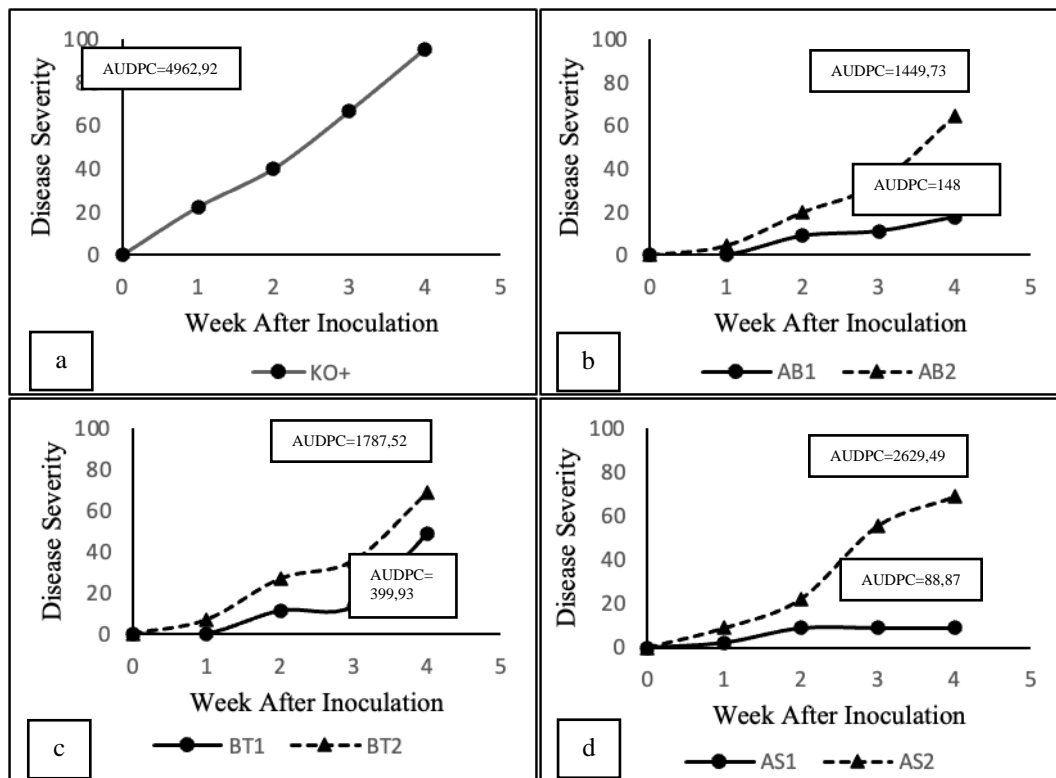


Figure 1. Graphical interpretation of AUDPC calculations of wilt disease caused by the pathogen *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis*. (a) *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis*; (b) *Arthrobacter* sp.; (c) *B. thuringiensis*; (d) Exogenous SA;

Tomato treated with *Arthrobacter* sp. and SA once a week has a good ability to inhibit bacterial wilt disease, characterized by a low Graphical interpretation of AUDPC calculations of wilt disease during two observations. These results are in line with Velázquez et al. (2013) *Arthrobacter agilis* is able to suppress *botrytis cinerea* and also induce exogenous SA in cassava plants infected with *Fusarium solani* (Saengchan et al., 2021). Aspirin, 2,6-dichloroisonicotinic acid (INA), and benzothiadiazole S-methyl ester (BTH) are some instances of exogenous SA applications which enhance PR gene expression and resistance, which can complement their increased disease resistance phenotype (Cordova et al., 2012). These results have been found in *Arabidopsis* disease resistance and defense response activation (Caruana et al., 2020), *P. syringae* in tomato (Uppalapati et al., 2007) and biotic and abiotic stress in tobacco (Catinot et al., 2008). The majority agree that SA signaling and plant resistance to hemibiotrophic and biotrophic diseases are associated (Zhang et al., 2018). Endophytic bacteria stated the capacity to boost plant resilience by increasing the levels of SA and JA in plants and activating the SA and JA/ET signaling pathways, respectively (Hyakumachi et al., 2013; Pieterse et al., 2014; Aviles et al., 2016).

The secondary compounds that endophytic bacteria produce are able to directly oppose pathogens and function as immune elicitors to trigger the ISR pathway. (Prsic and Ongena, 2020). Secondary metabolite compounds produced such as Phenazines (Chin et al., 2003), polysaccharides (EPS) (Jiang et al., 2016), Harzianic acid (Manganiello et al., 2018), Microbial volatile compounds (MVCs) (Kong et al., 2018) and Cyclic lipopeptides surfactin and VOC 2, 3-butanediol (Ryu et al., 2004; Chowdhury et al., 2015) as molecules, triggered the activation phytohormones SA and JA of signal transduction pathways. These reveal how endophytic bacteria and plants interact: the bacteria secrete substances known as secondary metabolites to increase the resistance of the host plants, while the plants create metabolites to attract the bacteria to avoid pathogen infection.

Bacterial wilt disease progression curve is a monomolecular model curve that will be used to calculate the AUDPC value. This finding supported by Madden et al. (2007) who reported that the monomolecular model was in better statistical agreement with other statistical models of plant

diseases including estimation of epidemiological rates, disease severity and determination of disease incidence. Treatment with *Arthrobacter* sp. and SA had the lowest AUDPC value and the lowest disease development rate, while *B. thuringiensis* had the highest AUDPC value and disease development rate. Tomato plants are very susceptible to wilt infection, as explained by Lebeau et al., (2011) that while potato, tomato, and eggplant are all members of the same family, their responses to with *R. syzygii* species complex (RSSC) strains varied, indicating that potato and eggplant have a high level of defense against bacterial wilt, in contrast to tomatoes.

3.2 SA Accumulation from Tomato Roots

The results of SA accumulation are presented in Figure 2. Higher SA accumulation was found in SA1 treatment with a value of 240.86 ng/g, which was not significantly different from the SA accumulation in the *Arthrobacter* sp. (AB1) and *B. thuringiensis* (BT1) once a week applied intensity, with SA accumulation 203.75 ng/g and 214.26 ng/g.

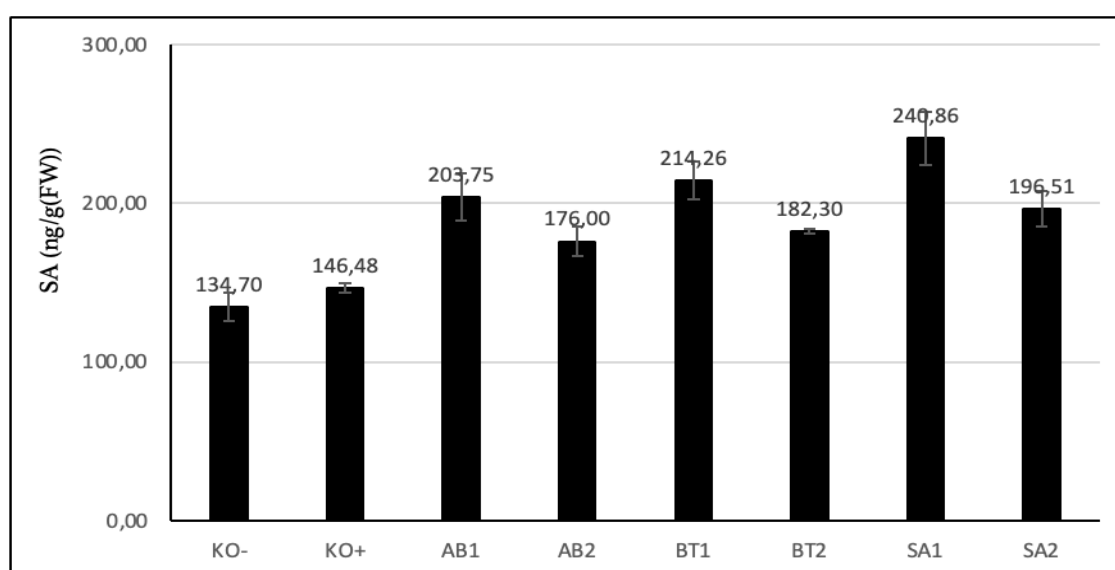


Figure 2. SA accumulation in tomato roots after treatment with endophytic bacteria, SA and the pathogen *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis* infection. *Data calculated in ng x10³. KO–= without *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis*; KO+= with *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis*; AB1= *Arthrobacter* sp. once a week; AB2 = *Arthrobacter* sp. once every two weeks; BT1= *B. thuringiensis* once a week; BT2= *B. thuringiensis* once every two weeks; SA1= SA once a week; SA2= SA once every two weeks.

In this study, the results showed that the application of endophytic bacteria and SA could induce tomato resistance to the soil-borne pathogen *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis*. The high content level of SA accumulation in tomato roots treated with *Arthrobacter* sp. and *B. thuringiensis* are related to the level of tomato resistance to infection with *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis*. According to Silverman et al. (1995) The expression of SA, which has a positive correlation with the SA accumulation content, determines the level of plant resistance. SA functions in the elicitation and signaling aspects of the systemic resistance-inducing pathway. In response to oxidative stress, necrosis, and mechanical injury, SA is produced at the elicitation level and subsequently distributed throughout the plant (Heil and Bostock, 2002).

Application of exogenous SA to the rhizosphere resulted in a considerable improvement in the level of SA accumulation. It's potential that the root system of tomatoes can absorb SA, disseminate it throughout the plant, and eventually boost resistance against systemic diseases (Spletzer et al., 1999). Tobacco plants treated with SA also exhibited a comparable reaction (Oostendorp et al., 2001) and SA accumulation in rice treated with exogenous SA under *Xanthomonas oryzae* infection (Le Thanh et al., 2017). One factor lowering tomato wilt disease is an increase SA accumulation in afflicted areas. In addition, the SA accumulation is associated with the defense mechanism that tomato utilized, which is triggered by an inducer agent and SA as an elicitor.

4. CONCLUSION

This study showed a decrease in the severity of bacterial wilt disease due to once-weekly application of endophytic bacteria and SA are led to increased SA accumulation in the tomato roots under *R. syzygii* subsp. *indonesiensis* infection which was a sign of activation of systemic resistance. Further research needs to be developed considering that many endophytic bacteria have the capacity to promote plant resistance and can reduce the use of pesticides to support sustainable environmentally friendly agriculture.

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