

INTRODUCTION

Stevia (*Stevia rebaudiana* Bert.) is a natural sweetener plant used as a sugar substitute in commercial and healthcare industries that is widely used for illness therapy because it has anti-cancer, anti-hypersensitive, anti-hyperglycemic, and anti-microbial activities. Steviol glycosides content in stevioside, rebaudioside A, and rebaudioside C forms of stevia has a sweetness 200 to 300 times higher than cane sugar. Stevia also contains total flavonoids with high antioxidant activity (Amarakoon, 2021; Moongngarm et al., 2022; Peteliuk et al., 2021).

Stevia grows optimally in semi-humid areas with an average temperature of 6°C and rainfall of 1500-1800 mm/year. In a suitable environment, the flowering age of stevia occurs about 50 to 100 days after planting. Stevia is harvested at the flowering phase when its steviol glycol content reaches peak levels. Stevia could be propagated using seeds, vegetatively, and tissue culture, but propagation by seeds has some major constraints, namely low production, viability, and germination of stevia seeds. Vegetative propagation with stem cuttings is also not easy because the emergence and growth of shoots are influenced by several factors, such as the part of the plant used, the length of the cuttings, the number of internodes of the cuttings and the time of making the cuttings (season). The most widely practiced stevia propagation is through tissue cultures (Gunasena et al., 2021). The increasing demand for stevia should be balanced with improvements in planting materials and cultivation techniques so that stevia yields an increase (Amarakoon, 2021). awangmangu local variety of stevia has stevioside levels of 11.38-16.09% and Rebaudioside A 1.37-1.85%. The stevioside content of local varieties is within the range of stevioside stevia from Paraguay, which is 5.1-21%, while the rebaudioside A content of local varieties is lower than the range of rebaudioside A stevia from Paraguay (0-12%) (Penner et al., 2004). Efforts are needed to improve the quality of stevia.

Planting material improvements could be done using the superior seeds obtained from the results of crosses, induction of mutations, and assembly of the new high-yielding varieties due to high biomass yields and levels of secondary metabolite compounds. Crossbreeding of stevia is difficult due to stevia's self-incompatibility, leading to a low probability of successful self-pollination. In addition, obtaining viable seeds is challenging due to low germination capacity (Sinta et al., 2018). Plant breeding with polyploidization, irradiation, or genome editing is one of many solutions to increase plant diversity and seed availability in plants that are difficult to develop conventionally. Several plant mutation induction (polyploidization) could produce polyploid plants with higher growth and secondary metabolite compound content (Adabiyah et al., 2019; Gantait & Mukherjee, 2021).

Polyploid plants experience chromosome number changes from their origin due to mutation induction. There are two kinds of mutation induction agents (mutagens), namely physical mutagens (gamma rays, x-rays, beta rays, and UV rays) and chemical mutagens (EMS, DES, colchicine, and oryzalin) (Ermayanti et al., 2018; Lestari, 2021). Research related to mutation induction effect on the content of plant secondary metabolite compounds was carried out at *Dendrobium officinale* (Pham et al., 2019), *Solanum bulbocastanum* (Caruso et al., 2013), *Physalis peruviana* L. (Çömlekçioğlu & Özden, 2020), *Melissa officinalis* (Talei & Fotokian, 2020), *Capsicum frutescens* (Pliankong et al., 2017), *Artemisia cina* (Kasmiyati et al., 2020) and *Cnidium officinale* (Kim et al., 2021). Oryzalin is a safer mutation agent because it does not inhibit the vegetative growth of plants (Surya et al., 2016). Mutation induction using oryzalin in local Tawangmangu stevia plants is expected to increase the diversity of stevia plants with properties different from those of diploid stevia plants.

effective methods for estimating tetraploid plants before transplantation to the field.

Stevia plants that were oryzalin-induced showed differences in morphological characteristics from control plants. One of the morphological characteristics seen is the difference in the size of the induced stevia stomata with the control, and some treatments show differences in stomatal density. It is in line with the results of research (Rahmi et al., 2019; Ridwan et al., 2018; Ridwan & Witjaksono, 2020; Wang et al., 2020). As the microtubules destabilizer (microtubules inhibitor), Oryzalin disrupts and inhibits the function of microtubules, consequently inhibiting plant growth. Microtubules are fundamental components that support the diverse morphology and dynamics of various cell types, cell cycles, and developmental stages of plants and animals. Most microtubule inhibitors produce cytotoxicity in plant and animal cells. Oryzalin causes aberrant growth with milder effects than higher microtubule depolymerizing agents and also induces anisotropic expansion of epidermal cells (Ishida et al., 2021; Roll-Mecak, 2020). Stomata are one of the plant characters affected by chromosome manipulation and the polyploidization process, where

changes in stomatal size and density due to polyploidization can affect the photosynthetic process of plants (Handayani et al., 2023).

Erboğa et al. (2021) stated that oryzalin usage increased the length and width of the leaves stomatal and decreased the stomatal density. The chromosome number increased due to polyploidization increases in the stomatal size, which caused decreases in the stomatal density. Tetraploid plants have an increase in the number of chloroplasts in stomatal guard cells twice from diploid. Thus, stomatal density and size can serve as an index to distinguish tetraploid *L. ruthenicum* from its diploid because the size and density of stomata, as well as the frequency of chloroplast content of polyploidized plants, are inversely proportional to their ploidy level (Kara & Doğan, 2022; Rao et al., 2019). In this study, the treatment of oryzalin concentration and immersion time caused increases in the stomatal size but did not affect the stomatal density of stevia leaves. There was no increase in the size of stomatal guard cells and the size of non-stomatal epidermal cells (Figure 4). It agrees with Šmarda et al. (2023) that the stomatal density of the polyploidization effect is not always lower, although most are lower than the diploid.

Table 2. Effect of concentration and duration of oryzalin immersion on stomata of some morphologically polyploid stevia plants

Treatment	Stomata length	Stomatal diameter	Notes
Control	48.55	38.85	Normal
1.5µM-4hours (5)	51.99	42.73	no epidermal thickening occurs
1.5µM-6hours (13)	48.55	38.85	epidermal thickening occurs, cells are damaged
1.5µM-8hours (14)	61.10	38.91	epidermal thickening occurs
2.5µM-4hours (3)	55.98	42.39	epidermal thickening occurs, cells are damaged
2.5µM-6hours (3)	64.43	50.57	epidermal thickening occurs
2.5µM-8hours (15)	52.18	42.04	epidermal thickening occurs
3.5µM-4hours (12)	61.57	49.10	epidermal thickening occurs
3.5µM-6hours (15)	55.67	40.78	no epidermal thickening occurs
3.5µM-8hours (5)	50.09	40.80	epidermal thickening occurs

Leaf colors

The various concentrations of oryzalin with three different immersion times influenced the color of stevia leaves (Table 3). The control stevia had a dark sea green leaf color, while the treated stevia had 14 different leaf colors from the control leaf. The three most common stevia leaf colors were dark sea green (29 individuals), asparagus green (19 individuals), and smoke green (16 individuals). It is presumed that the color difference in stevia treatment results was affected by pigments or compounds contained in stevia leaves. One of the organs that affected the green color of the leaves was the stomata, which contain green pigments (chlorophyll). Zeng et al. (2019) stated that the doubling

chromosomes due to polyploidization causes modification of vegetative characteristics such as a decrease in plant height, thicker leaves with a darker green color, and an increase in root diameter accompanied by root number and length decrease. The dark green color of leaves treated with mutation agents can be used as an indicator that the polyploidization process occurs in plants due to the presence of higher chlorophyll content (Bharati et al., 2023; Handayani et al., 2023; Yadav et al., 2013). The results of this study indicate that some plants that have been treated with oryzalin concentration and immersion duration have darker leaf color compared to stevia leaves without treatment (control).

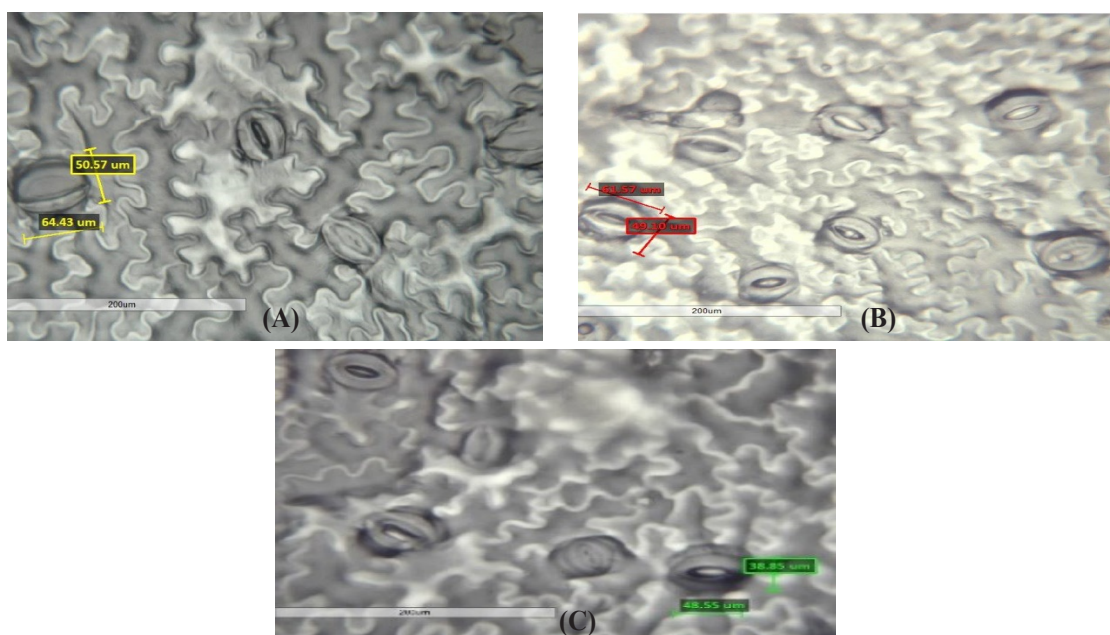


Figure 4. Effect of concentration and duration of oryzalin immersion on stevia stomata indicated as polyploid based on morphology. (A) 2.5µM-6hours (3); (B) 3.5µM-6hours (12); (C) Control or stomata of stevia leaves without treatment. Total magnification 400x. Bar scale = 200 µm(micrometer). µM = micromolar.

Table 3. Color variation of stevia after treatment of oryzalin concentration and immersion time

Colors	Treatment									
	Control	1.5µM	1.5µM	1.5µM	2.5µM	2.5µM	2.5µM	3.5µM	3.5µM	3.5µM
		-4h	-6h	-8h	-4h	-6h	-8h	-4h	-6h	-8h
Dark sea green	15		3		4	5	5	5	4	3
Asparagus green		2	4	1	1	4	2	2	2	1
Medium sea green			3	1				1		
Green smoke		6	1	2	2		1	1	1	2
Light green		3	1		1	1			1	1
Sea green					2	1				
Dark olive green		1					3	2		
Bitter green		1								
Cactus green			1	1	2	1			2	
Verdun green							1		1	
Pale green			1			1				1
Olive drab					1	1				
Sirroco green				1						
Yellow-green								1		
Yellowish brown								1		

Notes: µM = microMolar; h = hours

Ploidy level

Based on the treated stevia plant morphology that showed different growth indications from the control plants, stevia in the 3.5µM-6h treatment with sample number 7 was further tested by flow cytometry. The results of flow cytometry showed that the tested stevia plants did not show polyploidy. The results of the flow cytometry test of diploid plants (control) and treated plants display a peak level at a height of 100 (Figure 5). Morphological changes in plants indicate polyploids can occur due to genetic changes due to the induction of mutation agents or the influence of physiological, biochemical, and transcriptomic changes (Ruiz et al., 2020).

Mutation induction is an attempt to change the morphology and traits of plants due to genetic changes. Successful induction requires a synergistic pairing of the penetration efficiency of microtubulin inhibitors (antimitotic agents) and plant

meristematic tissues. In addition, success depends on the length of exposure, the concentration of antimitotic agent used, and in in-vitro applications depends on the interaction between basal media and growth regulators (Mullins et al., 2021; Touchell et al., 2020). The success of mutation induction is influenced by determining the duration and dose of exposure to mutagen compounds that inhibit the formation of microtubule compounds. The optimal immersion time in oryzalin solution differs with different concentrations but is around one day for *Lilium rosthornii* with a concentration of 0.01% (34.6 µM) (Wang et al., 2020). In addition, de Carvalho et al. (2016) also stated that handling techniques and the condition of the plants at the time of treatment application also affect the sensitivity of the plants to the given oryzalin because it becomes a bridge to facilitate the penetration of the antimitotic agent into the plant tissue.

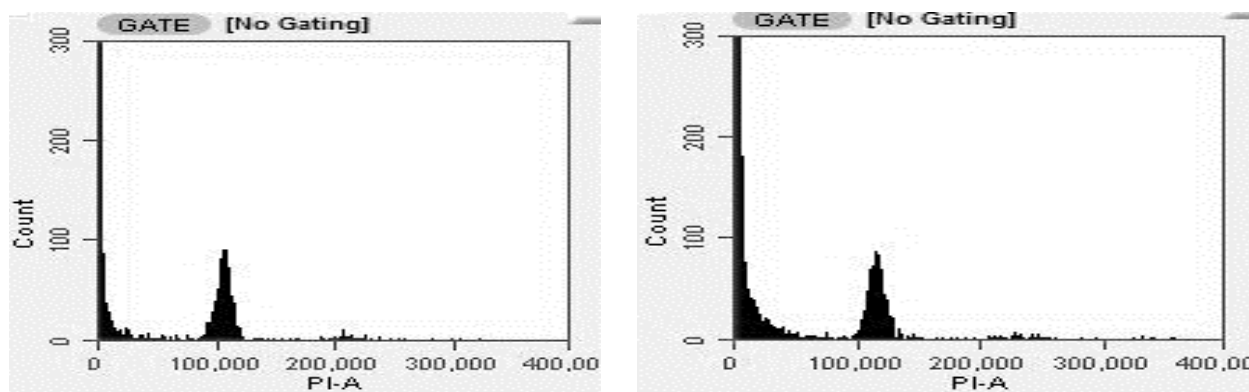


Figure 5. Results of flow cytometric analysis of diploid stevia plants (control) (a) and selected treated stevia plants (2.5 μ M-6hours sample number 3) (b)

CONCLUSION

Oryzalin concentration up to 3.5 μ M in 6 hours of immersion time was safe to induce mutation because it produced 67% live stevia. The oryzalin combination treatment applied to the stevia variety Tawangmangu generated morphological growth that indicates polyploidized including height, number of internodes, internode length, stem diameter, leaf size, leaf thickness, leaf color, stomata, and stem diameter. In addition, there were variations in growth, such as chimeras, rosette growth, and leaf splitting. However, further testing using flow cytometry showed that the treatment of concentration and duration of oryzalin immersion directly on vegetative material did not produce polyploid stevia individuals. Further research on the higher oryzalin concentration, longer immersion time, and stevia meristematic parts treated to obtain tetraploid stevia.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

D.S. designed, conducted, collected research data, analyzed, interpreted data,

drafted, and finalized the manuscript; P. and S.A. provided guidance, advice, input and supervision during the research process and manuscript drafting.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge the Center for Research on Medicinal Raw Materials and Traditional Medicines - National Research and Innovation Agency (PR BBOOT - BRIN) and Health Research and Development Agency - Ministry of Health for permission and support. This research is also supported by research facilities, as well as scientific and technical support from the Genomic Characterization Laboratory at BRIN". The authors also extend their gratitude to Dyah Subositi, Harto Widodo, and all PR BBOOT-BRIN research colleagues who provided the authors with ideas, support, advice, and insight.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

All authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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