**Determination of pH, caffeine and reducing sugar in energy drinks available in Bangladesh**

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**Abstract**: Though the popularity of energy drinks is increasing day by day no considerable chemical studies on it has not yet been done in Bangladesh. This investigation was carried out to determine the pH, levels of caffeine and reducing sugar contents in five energy drinks available in local market in Rajshahi, Bangladesh. pH were measured by pH meter. Quantitative estimation of caffeine was performed by a simple and fast standard UV spectrophotometric method, using carbon tetrachloride as the extracting solvent. Reducing sugar content of the energy drink was also determined spectrophotometrically. Results showed that the pH of the beverages were perfectly acidic ranging from 2.85 to 3.11. The minimum caffeine level was observed in Brand-4 (40.34 mg/serving), while Brand-5 showed the highest caffeine content (244.57 mg/serving) showing a range from 40.34 to 244.57 mg/serving. The levels of caffeine in all energy drink samples are well below the maximum allowable limits set by the food regulatory bodies, except Brand-5. The reducing sugar content of the energy drinks ranged from 73.80 mg/serving to 136.08 mg/serving. Brand-1 has the lowest and Brand-4 has the highest reducing sugar providing an idea about the sugar contents of energy drinks. Further investigations are needed to determine the suitability of these energy drinks.

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**1. Introduction**

Now, there has been an increase in the popularity of “energy drink” or “functional beverages” in Bangladesh. They are also known as nutraceutical foods, which are substances considered to be a food or part of a food that may provide some health benefit (Villasenor *et al.*, 2002). Socio-culturally, Bangladesh does not favor wine or whisky as a drink either. In the upper crust of society though, intake of liquid like this is not considered a vice. Then people newly acquiring wealth here are always in search of enjoyment. They view that their drinking habit will help to overcome their class difference. Such pull and push within society however exert an extra pressure on the young generation to emulate their elders. But limited affordability compels them to lay their hands on cheaper varieties of drinks. Quite a few companies and business houses have taken a round-about path to cash in on the young people's gullibility. They are marketing a number of what is called energy drink. The market growth rate of energy drinks is very high in Bangladesh. However, the growth drift has some eccentricity. The market is mostly dominated by low-income segment. Now a days energy drinks are getting more popularity among the teenagers.

Energy drinks are acidic in nature having lower pH values. The lower pH value is due to the presence of CO2 gas or other acids such as phosphoric acid, malic acid, ascorbic acid, citric acid and tartaric acid used as preservative by the manufacturer of these energy drinks (Bassiouny and Yang, 2005; Ashurst, 2005). These acids inhibit the growth of microorganisms such as bacteria, mould and fungi which may contaminate beverages. Studies showed that drinking acidic beverages over a long period can cause erosion of tooth enamel and predisposition of the consumer to dental disease (Marshall *et al.*, 2003; Bassiouny and Yang, 2005).

Caffeine is a common ingredient of energy drinks. It is deliberately added as a flavoring agent and to make the drinks addictive. It is a bitter white crystalline ‘xanthine’ alkaloid that acts as a mild psychoactive stimulant drug. It is found in varying quantities in the seeds, leaves or fruits of many plants species (Andrews *et al.*, 2007; Dionex, 2007; Wanyika *et al.*, 2010; Violeta *et al.*, 2010). The most common sources of caffeine are coffee, cocoa beans, cola nuts and tea leaves. Caffeine stimulates CNS reducing physical fatigue and restoring mental alertness when unusual weakness or drowsiness occurs (Nehlig *et al.*, 1992; Maidon *et al.*, 2012). The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA, 2006) limits the maximum amount of caffeine in carbonated beverages to 6 mg/oz (200 ppm or 0.2 mg/ml). NSDA (1999) allows caffeine content in soft drinks in the range between 30 and 72 mg/355 ml (12 oz) or 8.45-20.28 mg/100 ml. According to Natural Health Products (NHP) Regulations (2008) the caffeine content in energy drink is 80 mg per 250 ml serving. Clauson *et al.*, (2008) reported that energy drinks contained 80-300 mg of caffeine per 8 oz serving. Though a recent literature review determined that consumption of up to 400 mg caffeine daily by healthy adults is not associated with adverse effects, adverse effects associated with caffeine consumption in amounts of 400 mg or more include nervousness, irritability, sleeplessness, increased urination, abnormal heart rhythms (arrhythmia), decreased bone levels, and stomach upset. Badr *et al.*, (2013) found that oral administration of caffeine lead to significant reduction in serum Ca, Zn and Mn in growing rats. Caffeine binds to cell membranes in place of adenosine, an inhibitory neurotransmitter, causing changes in normal physiological processes (Committee on Nutrition and the Council on Sports Medicine and Fitness, 2011). However, groups that are at risk, such as women of reproductive age and children, should limit their daily consumption of caffeine to a maximum of 300 mg for the former and 2.5 mg/kg body weight for the latter; thus they may need to avoid consuming energy beverages with a higher caffeine content (Nawrot *et al.*, 2003). Adolescents should limit caffeine consumption, as intakes greater than 100 mg/day has been associated with elevated blood pressure (Savoca *et al.*, 2014). Combination of caffeine with alcohol, narcotics and some other drugs compounds produces a toxic effect, sometimes with lethal outcome (Mamina and Pershin, 2002; Ben Yuhas, 2002; Wanyika *et al.*, 2010). Based on these findings, consumption of energy drinks by pregnant or nursing women, adolescents and children is not recommended. Khayyat *et al.*, (2012) found that energy drinks induced an elevation of liver enzymes AST, ALT and ALP after two and four weeks of treatment in albino rats.

Another common ingredient of energy drink is refined sugar. A comprehensive study of energy beverages reported that the median sugar content of sugar-sweetened energy drinks was 27 g per 8 oz serving, comparable to sodas and fruit drinks, and higher than sportsdrinks and flavored water (Yale Rudd Center for Food Policy & Obesity, 2011). Clauson *et al.*, (2008) reported that energy drinks contained 35 g of processed sugar per 8 oz serving. Consumption of sugary beverages is associated with increased risk for dental caries, weight gain, overweight, obesity, diabetes, and heart disease (Pomeranz, 2011; Webb, 2013).

Though a number of energy drinks have been introduced to the Bangladeshi market no considerable chemical analysis on it has not yet been done to determine its suitability as a drink. As a little attempt in this matter the aims of the present investigation is to determine the levels of pH, caffeine and reducing sugar in energy drinks available in Bangladesh.

**2. Material and Methods**

*Sample collection:*Five available energy drink samples were collected from Saheb Bazar, Rajshahi and were marked as Brand-1, Brand-2, Brand-3, Brand-4 and Brand-5. The beverages were purchased from various confectionary stores of Saheb Bazar, Rajshahi. After collection samples were preserved in refrigerator.

*Determination of pH:*pH of the energy drinks were determined by using Hanna benchtop pH meter (HI 2314).

*Determination of caffeine:*10 mg of caffeine was dissolved in 100 ml purified carbon tetrachloride (CCl4) in 100 ml volumetric flask to get 100 ppm stock standard of caffeine solution. Working standards were prepared by pipetting 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 ml, respectively aliquots of the stock standard solution into separate volumetric flasks (50 ml) and diluting to volume with purified carbon tetrachloride to produce concentrations of 10, 20, 30, 40 and 50 mg/l, respectively standard solution. The absorbance of each solution was measured at absorption maximum of 270 nm using 1cm quartz cuvette. The absorbance values were then plotted against concentrations to generate a standard calibration curve. The caffeine of the energy drink was extracted with carbon tetrachloride (CCl4) (Tauta *et al.*, 2014). The absorbance of each sample solution was measured at absorption maximum of 270 nm using 1cm quartz cuvette. Hitachi double beam spectrophotometer (U-2900) was used for taking absorbance of standards and samples.

*Determination of reducing sugar:*The reducing sugar content of the energy drink was determined spectrophotometrically by measuring absorbance at 575 nm (Miller, 1959).

**3. Results and Discussions**

The pH values of the energy drinks are given in Table 1, which ranges from 2.85 to 3.11. All the energy drinks are acidic. Brand-3 has the lowest and Brand-4 has the highest pH value. Tauta *et al.*, (2014) found that beverages are acidic having a pH range from 5.92 to 6.44. The ideal (neutral) pH of the mouth ranges from 6.5-7.5. A pH of 5.5 is considered to be the threshold level for the development of dental decay. Both soft drinks and sports drinks have been shown to have a pH between 2.5 and 3.5. Demineralization of tooth enamel will occur more rapidly if the pH drops below the critical 5.5 level for long periods of time and if the pH is dropped below the critical level frequently. Citric acid is the most aggressive acid linked to tooth demineralization (Oltjen). Lin *et al.*, (2003) showed that all kinds of soft drinks are acidic and that cola drinks especially make our bodies poor in oxygen.

Table 1. pH of energy drinks

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sl. No. | Name | Serving size (ml) | pH |
| 1 | Brand-1 | 250 | 2.98 |
| 2 | Brand-2 | 250 | 3.01 |
| 3 | Brand-3 | 250 | 2.85 |
| 4 | Brand-4 | 270 | 3.11 |
| 5 | Brand-5 | 250 | 3.09 |

The caffeine content in the in the energy drink samples ranged from 40.34 to 244.57 mg/serving (Table 2). The average caffeine content in the energy drinks was found to be 89.21 mg/serving. The lowest caffeine content was found in Brand-4 (40.34 mg/serving), while Brand-5 showed the highest caffeine content (244.57 mg/serving). Tauta *et al.* (2014) showed that caffeine content in energy drink samples of Nigeria ranged from 47.56 to 58.31 ppm and the average caffeine quantity in the energy drinks was found to be 52.24 ppm. Mei *et al.* (2012) found that caffeine concentrations in energy drinks samples of Sudan ranged from 170.6 ppm to 324 ppm with average concentration of 255.6 ppm. Consumption of 300 mg of caffeine per day is generally considered as safe (Rogers and Dernoncourt, 1998; Smith, 2005). This amount typically corresponds to 3 cans of energy drink, especially 1 can for Brand-5. Caffeine content in beverage drinks varies by brand from 10 to 60 mg of caffeine per serving (Violeta *et al.*, 2010). In our investigation, the levels of caffeine in all energy drink samples are well below the maximum allowable limits set by the above food regulatory bodies, except Brand-5 containing 244.57 mg of caffeine per serving (0.978 mg/ml or 978.28 ppm). This value is very high from maximum allowable limits set by the above food regulatory bodies such as US Food and Drug Administration (FDA, 2006), NSDA (1999) and Natural Health Products (NHP) Regulations. Consumption of 3 to 4 cans of these energy drinks (Brand-1,2,3,4) cross the maximum allowable limit causing adverse effects, where consumption of only one can of Brand-5 is enough to cause that.

Table 2. Caffeine content of energy drinks

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sl. No. | Name | Serving size (ml) | Caffeine(mg/serving) |
| 1 | Brand-1 | 250 | 51.68 |
| 2 | Brand-2 | 250 | 50.43 |
| 3 | Brand-3 | 250 | 59.03 |
| 4 | Brand-4 | 270 | 40.34 |
| 5 | Brand-5 | 250 | 244.57 |

The reducing sugar content of the energy drinks are given in Table 3, which ranges from 73.80 mg/serving to 136.08 mg/serving. Brand-1 has the lowest and Brand-4 has the highest reducing sugar. The high concentrations of refined carbohydrates in energy drinks make it harder for saliva to clear this product from the teeth and as such the pH remains more acidic for a longer period of time. Refined sugars play a pivotal role in the caries (tooth decay) process. The evidence linking sugar and tooth decay is overwhelming. An increase of 1 oz in daily soda pop consumption increases a child’s risk of having extensive caries by 26%. In addition to potential tooth destruction, high soft drink consumption can lead to excessive caloric intake, which may contribute to childhood obesity, a growing problem in the U.S. Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and asthma are all conditions linked to obesity and nutritional imbalances (Oltjen).

Table 3. Reducing sugar content of energy drinks

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Sl. No. | Name | Serving size (ml) | Reducing sugar (mg/serving) |
| 1 | Brand-1 | 250 | 73.80 |
| 2 | Brand-2 | 250 | 115.20 |
| 3 | Brand-3 | 250 | 85.05 |
| 4 | Brand-4 | 270 | 136.08 |
| 5 | Brand-5 | 250 | 103.95 |

**4. Conclusion**

In Bangladesh, the popularity of energy drink is increasing day by day and our young generation is adopting in it. From the study it is found that the pH values of available energy drinks are lower than that of other countries, which is a matter of concern. It is shown from the results of this study that the concentration of caffeine in the energy drinks was significantly lower than the maximum authorized level, except Brand-5 which may cause health hazards. In this investigation reducing sugar content provides an idea about the sugar contents of energy drinks. However since caffeine is an additive substance and because of health concerns arising from its consumption, it seems appropriate that warning labels, indication of the presence and amounts of caffeine should accompany all caffeinated beverages. As health hazards are also associated with low pH and sugar content of these drinks, the amount of these parameter should presented on the labels. None of the drinks evaluated in this study were so labeled. Energy drink manufacturer can follow US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Nutrition Labeling and Education Act of 1990 (NLEA) and Dietary Supplement Health and Education Act of 1994 (DSHEA) for proper labeling. Further investigations are needed to determine the appropriateness of these energy drinks.

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2/20/2015