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Biflavonoid as Potential 3-Chymotrypsine-like Protease (3CLpro) Inhibitor of SARS-Coronavirus

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Abstract

3CL protease is one of the key proteins expressed by SARS-Coronavirus-2 cell, the potential to be targeted in the discovery of antiviral during this COVID-19 pandemic. This protein regulates the proteolysis of viral polypeptide essential in forming RNA virus. 3CL protease was commonly targeted in the previous SARS-Coronavirus including bat and MERS, hence, by blocking this protein activity, the coronavirus should be eradicated. This study aims to review the potency of biflavonoid as the SARS-Coronavirus-2 3CL protease (3CLpro) inhibitor. The review was initiated by describing the chemical structure of biflavonoid and followed by listing its natural source. Instead, the synthetic pathway of biflavonoid was also elaborated. The 3CLpro structure and its function was also illustrated followed by the list of its 3D-crystal structure available in protein data bank. Lastly, the pharmacophores of biflavonoid have been identified as protease inhibitor was also discussed. This review hopefully will help researchers to obtain a packed information about biflavonoid which could lead to the study in designing and discovering a novel SARS-Coronavirus-2 drug by targeting 3CLpro enzyme.

1. Introduction

The pandemic Covid-19 has been extending for almost 10 months since it was outbreak in January 2020 [1]. The statistic up to now (24 October 2020) is 43 M cases, 29 M recovered and 1.15 M

death, across the world. United State of America is so far a country with the highest cases as reported approximately 8.5 M [2]. Meanwhile, Indonesia is still having an increased cases that today, it has been approximately 393,000 cases with 318,000 recovered and 13,500 death [3]. This situation has made very huge impacts in all aspects of live including economy, politics, social, culture, health and education. For example, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) reported that since April 2020, the high income countries (30 countries) have 18% average economic losses, whereas the upper middle-income countries (13 countries) suffer 24% average losses. The lower middle-income countries (6 countries) are hurt by 22% average loss, confirming the economic crisis unleashed by the pandemic, regardless of income level [4]. The SARS-Coronavirus-2 viral vector is still debating, however, there is either bat or snake believed as the first virus transmitting species to human [5].

As some other corona viruses, SARS-CoV-2 is also a family of coronaviridae, which genomically composed by the structural as well as non-structural proteins. This is RNA virus in which on one hand, the structural protein contains S protein (spike), M protein (membrane), E protein (envelope) and N protein (nucleocapside) [6]. On the other hand, the non-structural protein (NSP) is an open reading frame consisting of NSP1-16 [7]. Upon entry into the host cell, the incoming viral genome is translated to produce two large precursor polyproteins 1a (pp1a) and 1ab (pp1ab) that are processed by open reading frame (ORF) 1a-encoded viral proteinases, papain-like proteinase (PLpro) and 3C-like proteinase (3CLpro), into 16 mature nonstructural proteins (NSP1–NSP16, numbered according to their order from the N-terminus to the C-terminus of the ORF 1 polyproteins). Many of the NSPs perform essential functions in viral RNA replication and transcription [8]. The virus life cycle is illustrated in Figure 1.

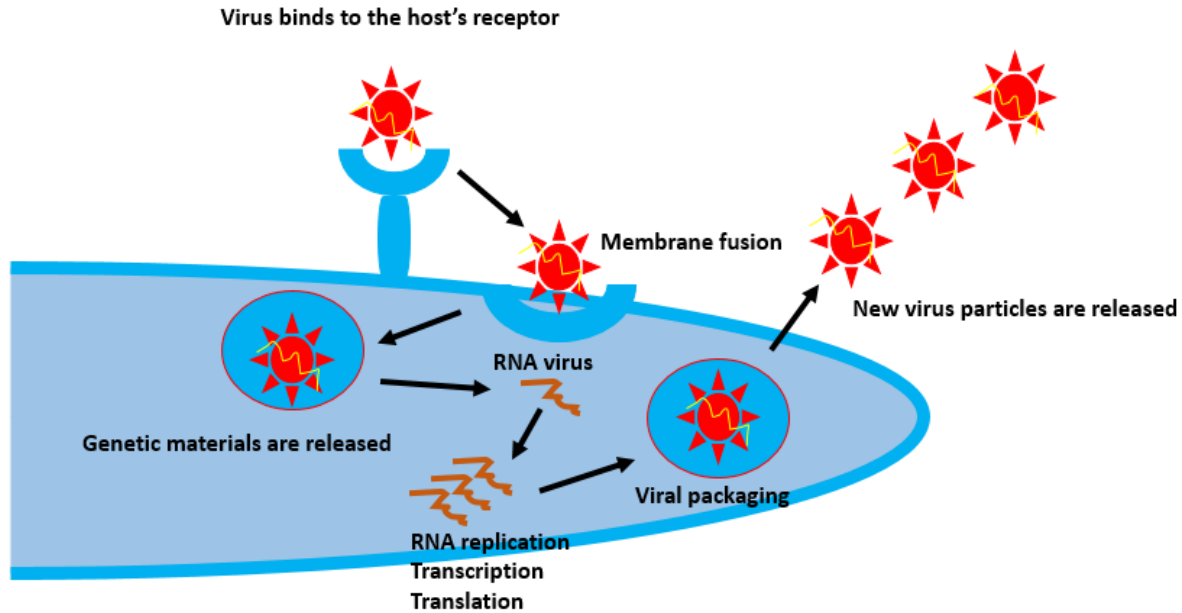


Figure 1. The life cycle of coronaviruses is initiated by the binding of the viral cell through its protein spike (S) to the host cell's receptor namely angiotensin converting enzyme 2 (ACE2). Upon membrane fusion (endocytosis), the virus is coated by endosome. The following endosomal break down releases RNA from the virus into the host cell. The incoming viral genome is translated to produce two large precursor polyproteins 1a (pp1a) and 1ab (pp1ab) which are cleaved by proteases into small products. A series of subgenomic mRNA are transcribed and finally translated into viral proteins. The viral protein along with RNA are packed into virion in the ER and golgi and then transported via vesicles and released out of the cell [9].

One of the common studied NSPs is NSP5 in which chymotrypsin like protease (3CLpro) is one kind of this non-structural protein [10]. 3CLpro cleaves the polyprotein into viral RNA which is then replicated and packed in the new mature virus. Therefore, by interfering this proteolytic step, the viral RNA replication will be interrupted leading to the prevention of new viruses for further expansion. 3CLpro is one of interesting protein targets in combating coronavirus by competitive inhibition with the peptide substrate [11].

Review on natural product compounds potential for SARS-Coronavirus have been published by targetting diverse proteins. These includes tanshinones, diarylheptanoids and geranylated flavonoids targetting PLpro [12], quercetine (reverse transcriptase) [13], aloemodin and hesperitin (3CLpro) [14], apigenin (viral internal ribosome entry) [15], isatisindigotica (protease) [16],

amentoflavone (biflavonoid; protease) [17], kaempferol (3a ion channel) [18], glycyrrhizin (protease) [19], tetradrine (viral S and N) [20], silvestrol (cap-dependent viral mRNA translation) [21,22], etc.

Biflavonoid is currently attractive to be proposed as the serine protease inhibitor due to the suitability of its chemical structure with the active site of the protease [23]. Serine proteases are characterised by a distinctive structure, consisting of two beta-barrel domains that converge at the catalytic active site. These enzymes can be further categorised based on their substrate specificity as either trypsin-like, chymotrypsin-like or elastase-like. Therefore, the dimer form of biflavonoid is such a good inhibitor model that would fully occupy the two beta-barrel domain (main site and prime site) [24].

In this review, we will focus on the biflavonoid as the interesting compound, potential for 3CLpro inhibitor of SARS-Coronavirus-2. The review will be started by defining the chemical structure of biflavonoid and its sources from both natural product as well as synthesis. The following section would be elaborating the 3CLpro structure and its function as the interesting protein target for biflavonoid. The review also summarized the available SARS-Coronavirus-2 3CLpro 3D crystal structure in protein data bank. Last but not least, the current study of the biflavonoid as a diverse protease inhibitor would be carried out to give the insight mechanism on how the biflavonoid can act as a potential SARS-CoV-2 antiviral agent.

2. Chemical structure

Biflavonoid is a natural product compound bearing a dimer of two sets of flavonoid, linked by either C-C or C-O bond [25,26]. The flavonoid itself is chemically constructed by 15-C skeleton, which is divided into two aromatic rings (Ring A and Ring B) and connected by a heterocyclic ring having α , β - unsaturated carbonyl chain [27]. Instead of flavonoid is the major form of such compound class, there are two kind analogs which enrich the flavonoid structural diversity. They are isoflavonoid (derived from 3-phenylchromen-4-one (3-phenyl-1,4-benzopyrone) and neoflavonoid (derived from 4-phenylcoumarine (4-phenyl-1,2-benzopyrone). Other subgroup of flavonoid including flavan, flavanone, flavanonol, anthocyanidin and anthoxantin are also widely distributed among natural resources [28]. Figure 2 illustrates the structure of flavonoid and its analogs.

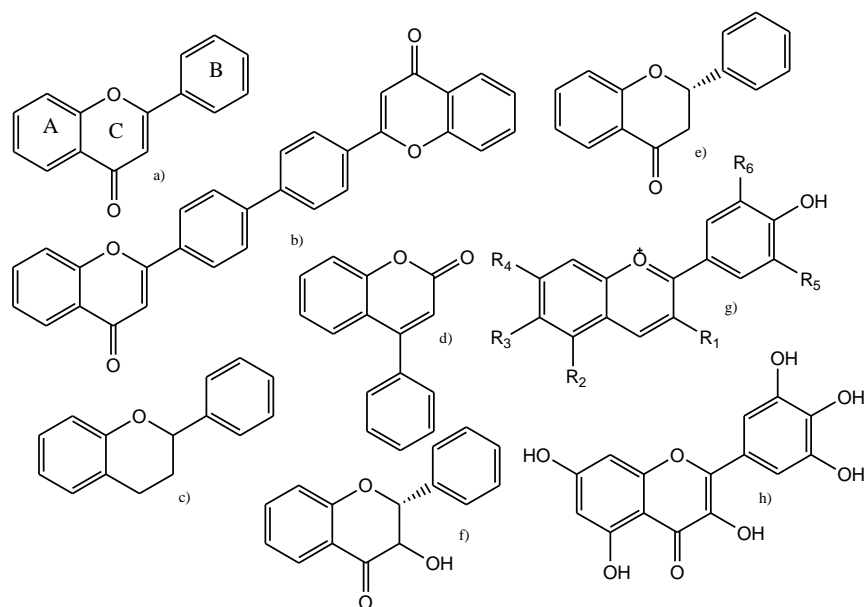


Figure 2. The structures of a) flavonoid, b) biflavonoid, c) isoflavonoid, d) neoflavonoid, e) flavanone, f) flavanonol, g) anthocyanidin and h) anthoxantin which are naturally occurred in plants.

The aromatic rings are often decorated by poly-hydroxy group, therefore this compound's class are frequently called polyphenolic compounds. The presence of OH group also has a chance for the flavonoid to be biosynthetically formed in a glycoside. The sugar moiety in the glycosidic form makes the flavonoid more soluble in water than organic solvents, due to the polar character of the sugar [29,30].

Spectroscopically, alike to polyphenolic flavonoid, the yellowish biflavonoid absorbs UV light at 500-600 nm. The colorimetric reaction namely bathochromic shift (red shift) occurs when it reacts with alkaline solution to prolong the maximum wavelength (650 nm). Vice versa, polyvalent ion such as Al^{3+} may shift the wavelength into hypsochromic shift (blue shift) with a lower wavelength (450 nm) [31]. Using fourier transform infrared (FTIR) spectroscopy, the carbonyl of chromone group stretching vibration is transmitted at 1600 cm^{-1} , meanwhile the vinyl aromatic group appears at 3600 cm^{-1} as a bending vibration [32]. The proton of biflavonoid is indicated as multiplet signals around 6-8 ppm which often overlap in *trans/ cis* configuration protons of α , β - unsaturated carbonyl chain as confirmed by nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy. In conjunction, the carbon signal of carbonyl chromone group is indicated in 160 ppm, whereas the vinylic aromatic carbon appears at 150 ppm. Using mass spectroscopy, the origin of flavonoid skeleton

could be the most stable mass/ ion (base peak) during the fragmentation due to electron impact bombardment [33].

3. Natural sources

A naturally occurring biflavonoid is distributed in various plant species. The first isolated natural biflavonoid was from *Ochna squarrosa* Linn. (Ochnaceae) [34], and later was from *Lonicera japonica* (Caprifoliaceae) [35]. *Torreya nucifera* was also identified as the natural source producing four biflavonoids [36]. Amentoflavone is another kind of biflavonoid isolated from a broad family of plants such as selaginellaceae, cupressaceae, euphorbiaceae, podocarpaceae, and calophyllaceae [37]. It was reported for at least 127 biflavonoids distributed among plants, but the most occurrences are *Ginkgo biloba*, *Lobelia chinensis*, *Polygala sibirica*, *Ranunculus ternatus*, *Selaginella pulvinata*, *Selaginella tamariscina* [37].

More recent study had identified the biflavonoid 13',118-binaringenin in drupes of *Schinus terebinthifolius*, was indicated by UHPLC-MS [38]. Five biflavonoids were lately found in *Ceratodon purpureus* presenting a diastereomerism in the second biflavonoid [39]. In the same year, three biflavonoid types were also discovered in *Selaginella doederleinii* including amentoflavone type, robustaflavone type, and hinokiflavone type [40]. From the family of zingiberaceae, new biflavonoids with flavanone-chalcone type existing in fingerroot (*Boesenbergia rotunda*) [41]. The pure biflavonoid with aglycones morelloflavone (Mo) type, volkensiflavone (Vo) type, as well as the morelloflavone's glycoside fukugiside (Fu) type were characterized in *Garcinia madruno* [42]. The genus of *Garcinia* again was shown its resource of biflavonoid by discovering seven compounds including volkensiflavone, fukugetin, fukugeside, GB 1a, GB 1a glucoside, GB 2a, and GB 2a glucoside from *Garcinia xanthochymus* fruits [43]. Figure 3 illustrates the chemical structure of hinokiflavone, ochnaflavone, morelloflavone and volkensiflavone. For more data, Table 1 tabulates the various study reporting biflavonoid found in natural source in the last three years.

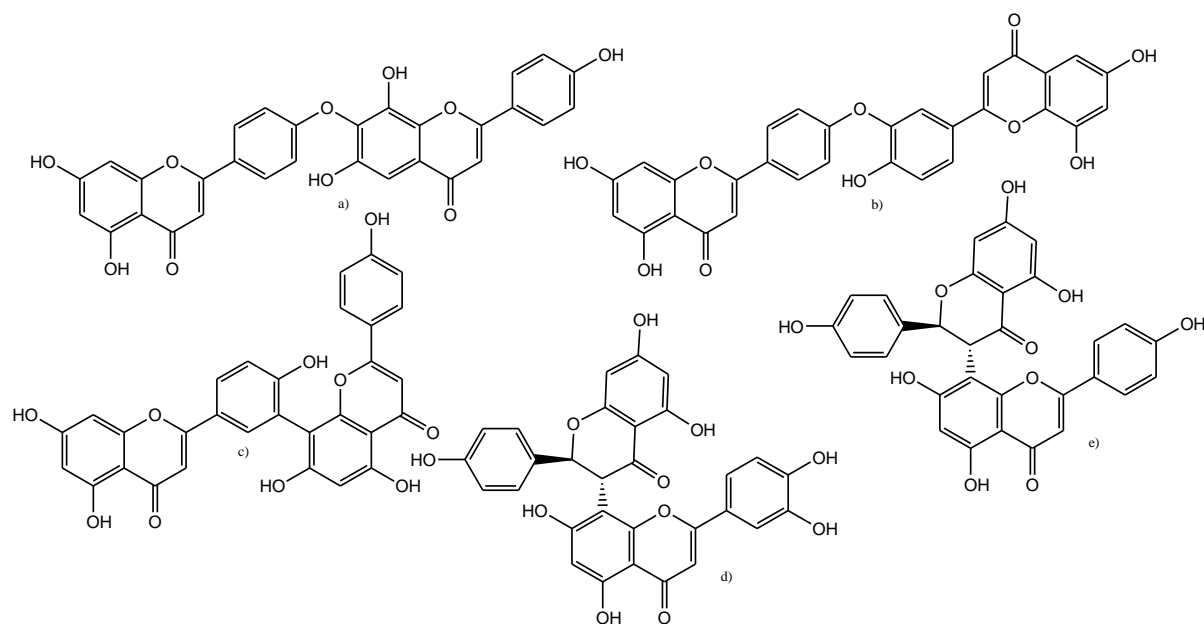


Figure 3. The chemical structures of earlier biflavonoid found in plants: a) hinokiflavone, b) ochnaflavone, c) amentoflavone, d) morelloflavone, and e) volkensiflavone.

Table 1. Biflavonoids from natural resources have been reported in the last three years.

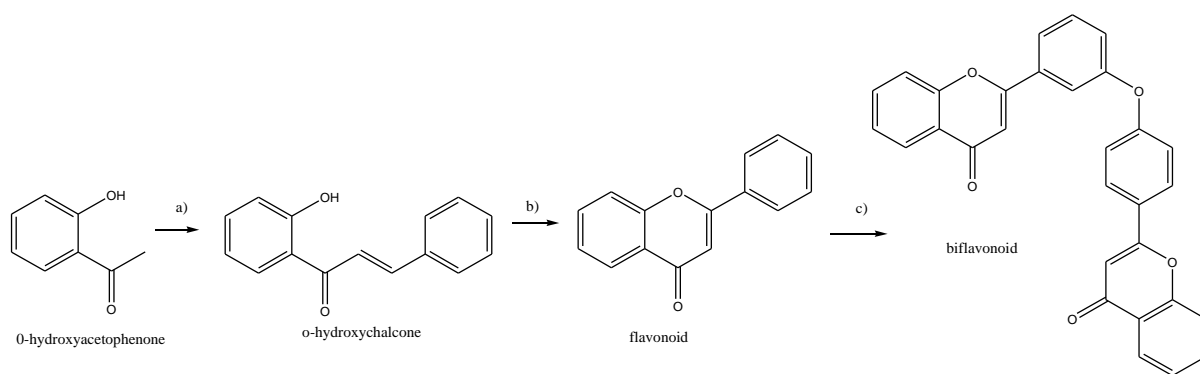
No	Biflavonoid	Plants	References
1	dihydrodaphnodorin B	<i>Fumana procumbens</i>	[44]
2	daphnodorin B	<i>Fumana procumbens</i>	[44]
3	volkesiflavone	<i>Garcinia gardneriana</i>	[45]
4	morelloflavone	<i>Garcinia gardneriana</i> , <i>Garcinia madruno</i>	[45]
5	7,7''-di- <i>O</i> -methylchamaejasmin	<i>Ormocarpum kirkii</i>	[46]
6	campylosperrone A	<i>Ormocarpum kirkii</i>	[46]
7	a dimeric chromene [diphysin	<i>Ormocarpum kirkii</i>	[46]
8	amentoflavone 7''- <i>O</i> - β - <i>D</i> -glucopyranoside	<i>Ginkgo Biloba</i>	[47]
9	bilobetin	<i>Ginkgo Biloba</i>	[47]
10	isoginkgetin	<i>Ginkgo Biloba</i>	[47]
11	sciadopitysin	<i>Ginkgo Biloba</i>	[48]
12	agathisflavone	<i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i> ; <i>Anacardium occidentale</i>	[49,50]
13	tetrahydroamentoflavone	<i>Schinus terebinthifolius</i>	[49]
14		<i>Selaginella uncinata</i>	[50]
15	7, 4', 7'', 4'''-tetra- <i>O</i> -methyl amentoflavone	<i>Cephalotaxus harringtonia</i>	[51]
16	7, 4', 7''-tri- <i>O</i> -methyl amentoflavone	<i>Cephalotaxus harringtonia</i>	[51]
17	sequoiaflavone	<i>Cephalotaxus harringtonia</i> ; <i>Ouratea ferruginea</i>	[51, 52]
18	amentoflavone monomethoxy derivatives		[53]
19	dihydrochalcone flavanone	<i>Sophora flavescens</i>	[54]
20	2',3'-dihydroochnaflavone	<i>Ochna mauritiana</i>	[55]
21	dulcisbiflavonoid B	<i>Garcinia dulcis</i>	[56]

22	dulcisbiflavonoid C	<i>Garcinia dulcis</i>	[56]
23	umcephabiflovin A	<i>Cephalotaxus oliveri</i>	[57]
24	umcephabiflovin B	<i>Cephalotaxus oliveri</i>	[57]
25	S-taiwanhomoflavone-B	<i>Cephalotaxus oliveri</i>	[57]
26	5, 6, 6'-trihydroxy-[1,1'-biphenyl]-3,3'-dicarboxylic acid	<i>M. ferrea</i>	[58]
27	fukugiside	<i>Garcinia madruno</i>	[59]
28	neochamaejasmin B	<i>Stellera chamaejasme</i>	[60]
29	oliveriflavone A, B, and C	<i>Cephalotaxus oliveri</i>	[61]
30	rhusflavanone	<i>Mesua ferrea</i>	[62]
31	mesuaferrone B	<i>Mesua ferrea</i>	[62]
35	sinodiflavonoids A	<i>Sinopodophyllum emodi</i>	[63]
36	sinodiflavonoids B	<i>Sinopodophyllum emodi</i>	[63]
37	oxytrodiflavanone A	<i>Oxytropis chiliophylla</i>	[64]
38	oxytrochalcoflavanones A	<i>Oxytropis chiliophylla</i>	[64]
39	oxytrochalcoflavanones B	<i>Oxytropis chiliophylla</i>	[64]
40	hinokiflavone	<i>Selaginella sinensis</i>	[65]
41	isocampylospermone A	<i>Ochna Serrulata</i>	[66]
42	campylospermone A	<i>Ochna Serrulata</i>	[66]
43	cupressuflavone	<i>Cupressus sempervirens</i>	[67]
44	(8-hydroxy-3'- β -D-galactosyl-isoflavone)-2'-8''-(4'''-hydroxy-flavone)-biflavone	<i>Solanum nigrum</i>	[68]
45	2',3',5-trihydroxy-5''-methoxy-3''-O- α -glucosyl-3-4'''-O-biflavone	<i>Solanum nigrum</i>	[68]
46	7'-O-methyl hinokiflavone	<i>Selaginella tamariscina</i>	[69]
47	(2R,3S)-volkensiflavone-7-O- β -acetylglucopyranoside	<i>Allanblackia floribunda</i>	[70]
48	(2S,3S)-morelloflavone-7-O- β -acetylglucopyranoside	<i>Allanblackia floribunda</i>	[70]
49	(S)-2''R,3''R- and (R)-2''S,3''S-dihydro-3''-hydroxyamentoflavone-7- methyl ether	<i>Cardiocrinum giganteum</i>	[71]
50	(S)-2''R,3''R- and (R)-2''S,3''S-dihydro-3''-hydroxyamentoflavone	<i>Cardiocrinum giganteum</i>	[71]
51	4,4',7-tri-O-methylisocampylospermone A	<i>Ochna serrulata</i>	[72]
52	4'''-de-O-methylafzelone A	<i>Ochna serrulata</i>	[72]
53	serrulone A	<i>Ochna serrulata</i>	[72]
54	sumaflavone	<i>Juniperus phoenicea</i>	[73]

4. Synthetic sources

Instead of natural sources, biflavonoid is also produced via synthetic pathway. This usually aims to derivatize the biflavonoid lead compound into a modified diverse functional group could be responsible for its biological activity. In addition, the synthetic pathway could be more reproducible than isolating the biflavonoid from its genuine natural sources. This will proportionally reduce the cost of production as well as increase the yields [74,75].

Biflavonoid is synthetically formed by two units (monomer) of flavonoid underwent the Ullmann coupling reaction [76]. This reaction forms diaryl ether link between two units of flavonoid, which is conditioned by mixing them with an alkaline carbonate solution, *N,N*-dimethylacetamide and dry toluene solvent under nitrogen exposure, followed by heating the mixture above 100°C for several hours [77]. The total synthesis of biflavonoid is initiated by reacting *ortho*-hydroxy acetophenone with benzaldehyde under Claisen Smith condensation to form chalcone as the intermediate compound [78]. The next step is the synthesis of flavone (monomer) by iodinating the chalcone using DMSO as the solvent [79]. The detail total synthesis of biflavonoid is schemed out in Scheme 1.



Scheme 1. Total synthesis of biflavonoid. Reagents and conditions: a) benzaldehyde, KOH, MeOH, rt, overnight, 70-87%; b) I₂, DMSO, 100 °C, overnight, 75-86%; and c) Ullmann modified coupling reaction, 8-58% [80].

An interesting biflavonoid was constructed according to naringenin monomer by reacting the available phloroglucinol and 4-hydroxy- or 4-methoxybenzaldehyde. Naringenin is the flavanone-skeleton structure attached by three hydroxy groups at the 4', 5, and 7 carbons. The product was confirmed as 3',3'''-binaringenin and four related biflavonoids with a considerably good yield (15-35%) [81].

Biflavonoid was also prepared electrochemically by reacting flavonol isorhamnetin, LiClO₄ and amine in acetonitrile solvent. The mixture was electrolyzed in a diaphragm cell at anodic current density 5 mA/cm² for 3.5 h. A platinum plate with working surface 2 cm² was used as the anode. Once the electrolysis completed, about 90% of the acetonitrile was distilled from the anode compartment. Further purification using chromatography column was applied and followed by recrystallization to obtain the biflavonoid product with a good yield (60-70%) [82].

A step-economical preparation of a very rare biflavonoid has been performed by combining the methylated bioflavone under a modular and divergent synthesis strategy. The divergent synthesis was carried out by using aldehyde as the building block such as isophthalaldehyde, terephthalaldehyde, and benzene-1,3,5-tricarbaldehyde to produce the chalcone intermediate under Claisen Smith condensation. The following reaction was oxidative cyclization to obtain the biflavonoid as the targeted compound. Interestingly, instead of biflavonoid, the divergent method is also applied in the production of triflavonoid [83].

The synthesis of biflavonoid was further explored by applying Suzuki-Miyaura cross-coupling reaction followed by alcohol methylation for the synthesis of rare 'hybrid' derivatives. These derivatives belong to different subclasses of monomers. The second biflavonoid was constructed as homodimeric compounds in which a methylenedioxy group acts as the linker between the two flavonoid monomers. This reaction facilitates the probing of uncharted regions of biologically interesting chemical space [84].

The first stereodivergent synthesis of biflavanone was conducted by exclusively controlling the temperature to produce a stereoselective product. The scaffold of 2,2'-biflavanones attached by diverse substitution at the phenyl ring and conditioned by SmI_2 / Methanol/ THF, confirmed a good yield with a high selectivity for both stereoisomers of the expected compounds. On one hand, the (R*,R*)-stereoisomer only formed when the temperature was controlled at -40 °C, on the other hand, the reaction generated the (R*,S*)-isomer when the mixture was refluxed [85]. The control of regioselective reaction was performed using aromatic prenyltransferase from *Aspergillus terreus* (AtaPT). Prenylation was applied to produce biflavonoids 1–3 dimerized connected by a diphenyl linkage at the hydrogen bond involving C5''-OH group. This OH is chemically less accessible than other OH groups in the ring. The AtaPT was used as the substrate that successfully yielded the different regio and chemoselective products. This study would be recommended for developing green synthetic reactions for such prenylated biflavonoids [86].

5. 3-Chymotrypsin-like Protease

The extensive process of proteolysis releases the functional polypeptides which is mainly achieved by main proteinase and frequently also named 3C-like proteinase (3CLpro). This indicates the similar cleavage site with the early picornavirus 3C proteinases (3Cpro), although further study showed that similarity is limited by two families of the protease. 3CLpro cleaves at least 11

conserved amino acid residues includes GLN---(SER, ALA, GLY) sequences (the cleavagesite is indicated by ---) [87]. This process is initiated by the autocleavage of its own enzyme from two polypeptides (polypeptide A and polypeptide B). There are three non-canonical 3CLpro cleavage sites at the P2 position employing PHE, MET or VAL residues in SARS-Coronavirus polyproteins. The cleavage site of 3CLpro SARS-Coronavirus is illustrated in Figure 4 [88,89].

3CLpro Cleavage Site	P6	P5	P4	P3	P2	P1	P1'	P2'	P3'	P4'	P5'	Relative Kcal/Km
nsp4/5	T	S	A	V	L	Q	S	G	F	R	K	100%
nsp5/6	S	G	V	T	F	Q	G	K	F	K	K	41%
nsp6/7	K	V	A	T	V	Q	S	K	M	S	D	3%
nsp7/8	N	R	A	T	L	Q	A	I	A	S	E	5%
nsp8/9	S	A	V	K	L	Q	N	N	E	L	S	2%
nsp9/10	A	T	V	R	L	Q	A	G	N	A	T	22%
nsp10-12	R	E	P	L	M	Q	S	A	D	A	S	0,2%
nsp12/13	P	H	T	V	L	Q	A	V	G	A	C	8%
nsp13/14	N	V	A	T	L	Q	A	E	N	V	T	9%
nsp14/15	T	F	T	R	L	Q	S	L	E	N	V	28%
nsp16/15	F	Y	P	K	L	Q	A	S	Q	A	W	27%

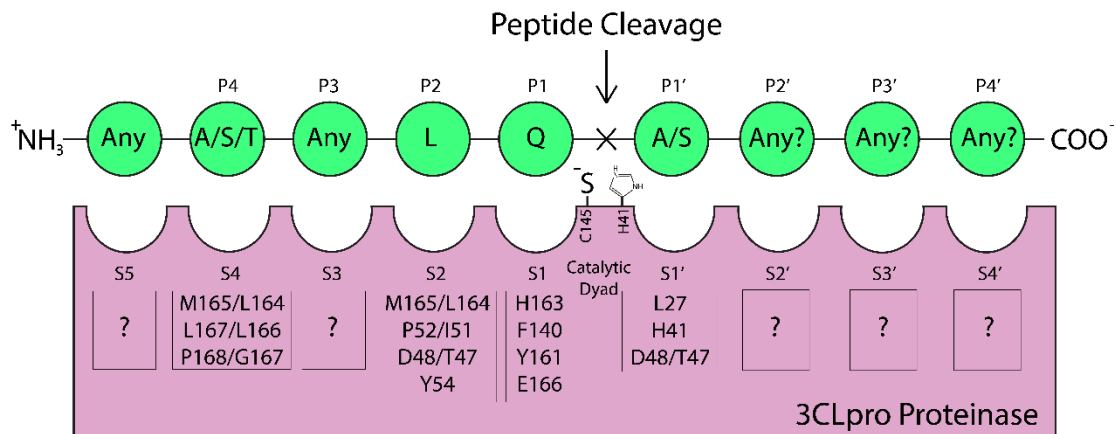


Figure 4. The 3CLpro cleavage sites of SARS CoV which recognize 11 sequences of peptide substrate with their respective Kcal/Km. This Kcal/Km values reflect the canonical recognition which is supported by the recognition sites of a series of other coronavirus 3C proteases [90,91].

The availability of experimentally determined three dimensional (3D) structures of the SARS-Coronavirus-2 3CLpro has greatly aided in the design of anti-SARS-Coronavirus-2 drug [92].

Recently, the sudden increase in the number of crystal structures of 3CLpro are deposited in the protein data bank (PDB) [93]. Most of the earlier crystal structures are devoid of inhibitor. Thus, it could not explain properly the particular binding site of 3CLpro [94]. Therefore, many earlier efforts to understand the structure and function of NS3pro relied mainly on the models developed based on the crystal structures of other betacoronavirus such as SARS-Coronavirus, MERS, Bat Corona, etc [95].

To date, there are more than 100 3D structures of SARS-Coronavirus-2 3CLpro deposited in the protein data bank (PDB) (www.rcsb.org). In general, the crystal structures 3CLpro reveal the presence of three structural domains in each monomer wherein domains I (position 8-101), II (position 102-184) and III (position 201-303) has a characteristic chymotrypsin-like fold with a catalytic cysteine (CYS145) and histidine (HIS41). This is linked to a third C-terminal domain by a long loop (position 185-200) by orienting the N-terminal residues that are essential for the dimerization [96-99]. Domain I and domain II are decorated in an antiparallel β -barrel structure, whereas the domain III is composed by five α -helices arranged in a globular cluster. The helical domains of the two monomers form a dimer through H-bond interactions from end to end of the N-terminal residues and the key residues from the individual monomers. The catalytic activity is suggested to be contributed by the salt bridge between the N-terminal SER1 of one monomer and GLU166 of the other monomer [98,100]. Table 2 presenting for 115 3D-structures of 3CLpro available in protein data bank.

SARS-Coronavirus-2 3CL pro in complex with a novel inhibitor 5,6,7-trihydroxy-2-phenyl-4H-chromen-4-one was solved its 3D-crystal structure in 2.20 Å of resolution. This flavonoid inhibitor binds to the active site of the protease through the hydrogen bond interaction between ortho-hydroxyphenyl (ring A) of the ligand with GLY143, and the carbonyl group of ring C with GLU166. The non-bonding interaction was also observed between the phenyl of ring B with HIS41 and CYS44. This complex is one of the proofs that flavonoid is such an important feature for 3CLpro pharmacophore, therefore so do the biflavonoid which could cover more space to interact with the 3CLpro. Figure 5 illustrates the interaction between 5,6,7-trihydroxy-2-phenyl-4H-chromen-4-one and the active site of SARS-Coronavirus-2 3CLpro (PDB ID 6M2N) [101].

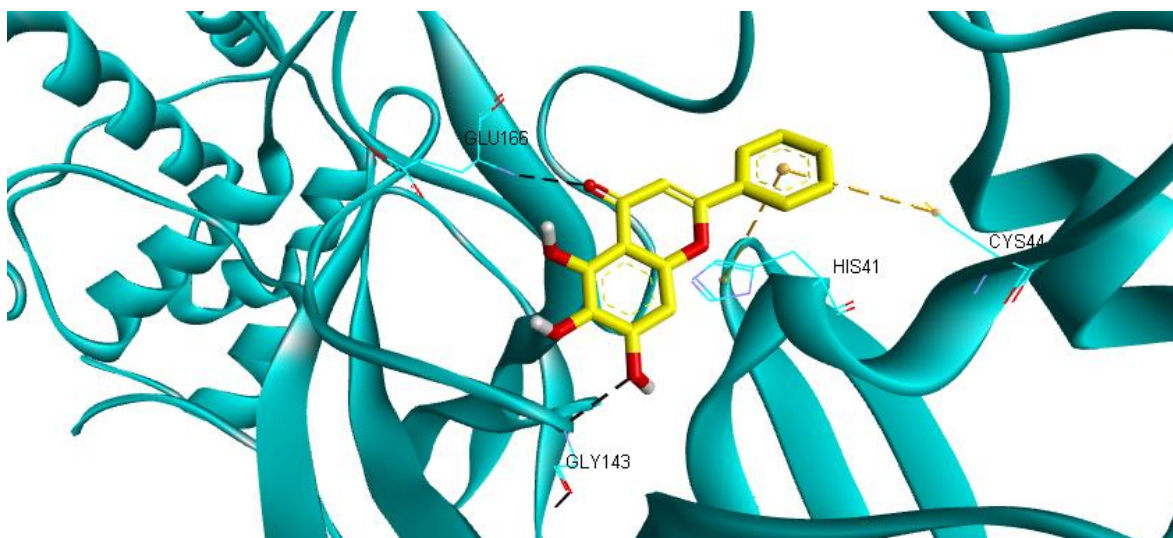


Figure 5. The interaction between 5,6,7-trihydroxy-2-phenyl-4H-chromen-4-one and the active site of SARS-Coronavirus-2 (PDB ID 6M2N). The 3CLpro is presented in a blue ribbon model, whereas the inhibitor is in a stick model (yellow = C, white = H, and red = O). The H-bond and hydrophobic interactions are presented in black and yellow dot lines, respectively.

Two peptidomimetic-based inhibitors are complexed with SARS-Coronavirus-2 in different monomer of trimer with 2.15Å of the crystal resolution (PDB 6WTT) [102]. (1*S*,2*S*)-2-({*N*-[(benzyloxy)carbonyl]-*L*-leucyl}amino)-1-hydroxy-3-[(3*S*)-2-oxopyrrolidin-3-yl]propane-1-sulfonic acid binds to the active site in the monomer A, by interacting with CYS145, GLU166, GLN189, HIS164, and PHE140 at the respective atoms of O (OH), O (C=O), H (NH-amide), H (NH-amide), and H (NH-pyrrolidinone) (Figure 6). Monomer B demonstrates the same binding mode with the monomer A, whereas the monomer C is bound by *N*-2-~[(benzyloxy)carbonyl]-*N*-[(1*R*,2*S*)-1-hydroxy-3-[(3*S*)-2-oxopyrrolidin-3-yl]-1-(trimethyl-λ⁴-sulfanyl)propan-2-yl]-*L*-leucinamide. In the monomer C, the ligand interacts with GLU166, HIS164, HIS41, and GLN189 at the respective atoms of O (C=O), N (NH-amide) and N- (NH-pyrilidinone), O (OH), and N (NH-amide).

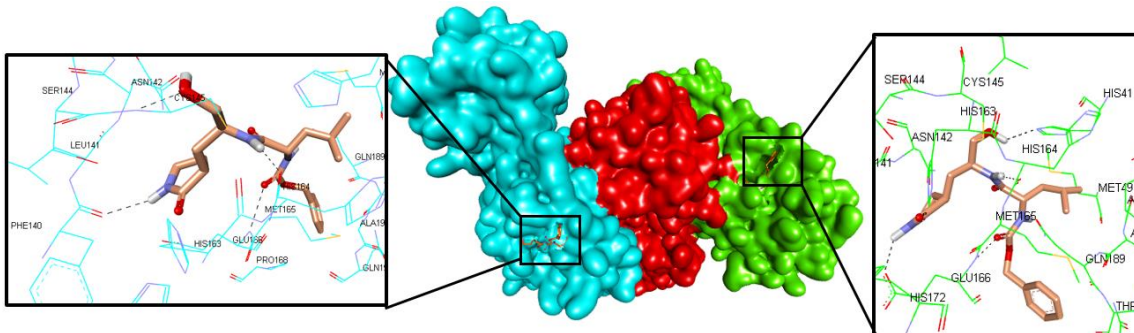


Figure 6. The trimer structure of 3CLpro as indicated by blue (monomer A), red (monomer B) and green (monomer C) surface model. Inset is the ligand complex to active site of the enzyme (presented by blue stick and green stick, for monomer A and monomer C, respectively). presented in a stick model (orange = C, white = H, blue = N and red = O). The H-bond is presented in black dot lines, respectively.

A class of imidazole-4-carboxamide compound was also complexed to SARS-Coronavirus-2 3CLpro and the 3D crystal structure was resolved at 1.46Å (PDB ID 6W79; Figure 7a) [103]. This inhibitor binds to the active site of the protease by interacting with the residues GLY143 and GLU166 at atom O (C=O-amide) and also the next O (C=O-amide), respectively. The hydrophobic interaction was also performed via the interaction between ASN142- O (C=O-amide), THR26-CH-imidazole), CYS145-imidazole ring, LEU141-ASN142-pyridine.

An inhibitor which was a repurposed drug from antineoplastic, complexed with SARS-Coronavirus-2 3CLpro in 1.60Å of 3D-crystal resolution (PDB ID 7BUY; Figure 7b) [104]. Interestingly, this inhibitor binds covalently (distance 1.8Å) at its O (C=O) to CYS145 which is one of the catalytic site residues. This inhibitor's name is carmofur bearing hexylcarbamide acid structure, in which the fatty acid tail occupies the hydrophobic S2 subsite. A study reported that carmofur inhibits viral replication in cells ($EC_{50} = 24.30 \mu\text{M}$) and is a promising lead compound to develop new antiviral treatment for SARS-Coronavirus-2.

A more diverse inhibitor's structure was observed from the 3D-crystal structure with PDB ID 5RGG which was resolved at 2.26Å of resolution [105]; Figure 7c). The inhibitor is a carboxamide derivative namely 4-methyl-*N*-phenylpiperazine-1-carboxamide, binds at HIS80 via H-bond interaction. Instead of H-bond, HIS80 was also interact with the inhibitor via hydrophobic interaction which was co-bound with LYS90. This experiment could give an insight understanding

that even small molecule is able to bind to the protease, however, the potency of such inhibitor could be low due to the larger cavities which need an extending occupation.

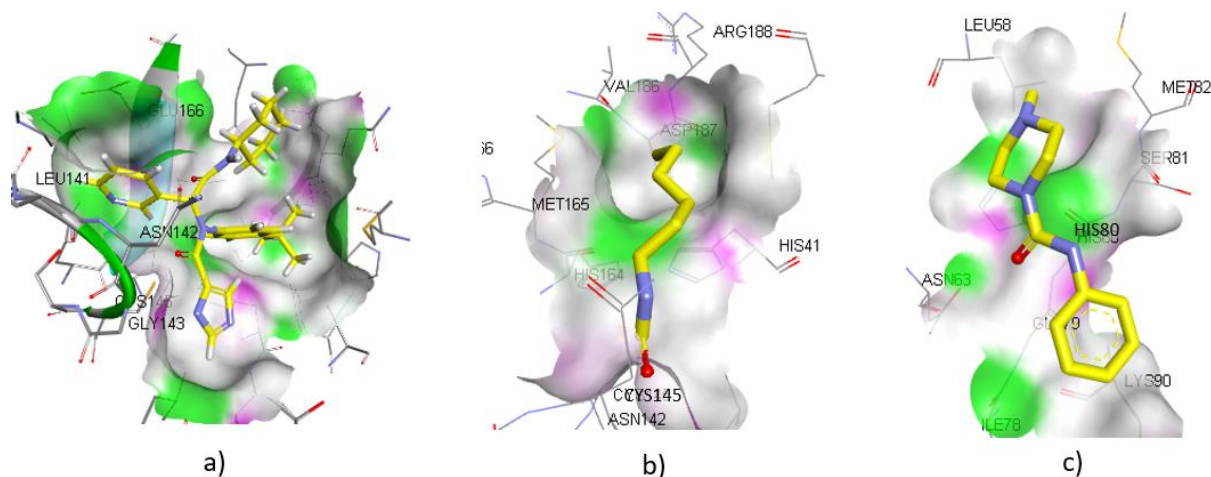


Figure 7. The presentation of a) imidazole-4-carboxamide, b) carmofur, and c) 4-methyl-N-phenylpiperazine-1-carboxamide bound into the active site of SARS-Coronavirus-2 3CLpro. The protein is visualized in surface model with the green area = hydrogen bond acceptor residues, white area = neutral residues, and magenta area = hydrogen bond donor residues. The ligands are presented in a stick form with yellow = C, white = H, blue = N, and red = O.

Table 2. The list of 3CLpro 3D-crystal structure available in protein data bank.

PDB ID	Co-crystallized Ligand	Resolution (Å)	Reference
6M2N	5,6,7-trihydroxy-2-phenyl-4H-chromen-4-one	2.20	[101]
6M2Q	-	1.70	[101]
6WQF	-	2.30	[106]
6XB1	1-ethyl-pyrrolidine-2,5-dione	1.80	[107]
6XB0	dimethyl sulfoxide	1.80	[107]
6XB2	1-ethyl-pyrrolidine-2,5-dione, dimethyl sulfoxide	2.10	[107]
6L00 and 6LNQ	(2~{S})-4-methyl-~{N}-[(2~{S})-1-oxidanylidene-3-[(3~{S})-2-oxidanylidene-pyrrolidin-3-yl]propan-2-yl]-2-[[(~{E})-3-phenylprop-2-enoyl]amino]pentanamide	1.94 and 2.25	[108]
7JFQ	1,2-ethanediol, formic acid	1.55	[109]
6XKF	1,2-ethanediol, chloride ion	1.80	[110]
6XKH	1,2-ethanediol, acetate ion, formic acid	1.28	[111]
6XOA	1,2-ethanediol	2.10	[112]
6LNQ	<i>N</i> -[(2 <i>S</i>)-3-methyl-1-[(2 <i>S</i>)-4-methyl-1-oxidanylidene-1-[(2 <i>S</i>)-1-oxidanylidene-3-[(3 <i>S</i>)-2-oxidanylidene-pyrrolidin-3-yl]propan-2-yl]amino]pentan-2-yl]amino]-1-oxidanylidene-butan-2-yl]-1 <i>H</i> -indole-2-carboxamide	2.24	[108]

7JUN	-	2.30	[113]
7JR3	-	1.55	[114]
7JR4	-	1.55	[115]
6XHU	-	1.80	[116]
6XQT	(1 <i>R</i> ,2 <i>S</i> ,5 <i>S</i>)-3-[<i>N</i> -({1-[(<i>tert</i> -butylsulfonyl)methyl]cyclohexyl} carbamoyl)-3-methyl- <i>L</i> -valyl]- <i>N</i> -{(1 <i>S</i>)-1-[(1 <i>R</i>)-2-(cyclopropylamino)-1-hydroxy-2-oxoethyl]pentyl}-6,6-dimethyl-3-azabicyclo[3.1.0]hexane-2-carboxamide	2.30	[117]
6XQS	(1 <i>S</i> ,3 <i>aR</i> ,6 <i>aS</i>)-2-[(2 <i>S</i>)-2-((2 <i>S</i>)-2-cyclohexyl-2-[(pyrazin-2-ylcarbonyl)amino]acetyl)amino]-3,3-dimethylbutanoyl]- <i>N</i> -[(2 <i>R</i> ,3 <i>S</i>)-1-(cyclopropylamino)-2-hydroxy-1-oxohexan-3-yl]octahydrocyclopenta[<i>c</i>]pyrrole-1-carboxamide	1.90	[117]
6XQU	boceprevir (bound form)	2.20	[117]
6W2A	[4,4- <i>bis</i> (fluoranyl)cyclohexyl]methyl ~ { <i>N</i> }-[(2~{ <i>S</i> })-1-[[1~{ <i>R</i> },2~{ <i>S</i> })-1- <i>bis</i> (oxidanyl)-oxidanylidene- $\text{S}^{\wedge}5$ -sulfanyl]-1-oxidanyl-3-[(3~{ <i>S</i> })-2-oxidanylidenepyrrolidin-3-yl]propan-2-yl]amino]-4-methyl-1-oxidanylidene-pentan-2-yl]carbamate, (1 <i>S</i> ,2 <i>S</i>)-2-[(<i>N</i> -{[(4,4-difluorocyclohexyl)methoxy]carbonyl}- <i>L</i> -leucyl)amino]-1-hydroxy-3-[(3 <i>S</i>)-2-oxopyrrolidin-3-yl]propane-1-sulfonic acid	1.65	[118]
6WTK	<i>N</i> -2~-(benzyloxy)carbonyl]- <i>N</i> -{(2 <i>S</i>)-1-hydroxy-3-[(3 <i>S</i>)-2-oxopyrrolidin-3-yl]propan-2-yl]- <i>L</i> -leucinamide	2.00	[119]
6WTM	-	1.85	[119]
6WTJ	(1 <i>S</i> ,2 <i>S</i>)-2-({ <i>N</i> -[(benzyloxy)carbonyl]- <i>L</i> -leucyl)amino)-1-hydroxy-3-[(3 <i>S</i>)-2-oxopyrrolidin-3-yl]propane-1-sulfonic acid	1.90	[119]
6W63 and 6W79	<i>N</i> -(4- <i>tert</i> -butylphenyl)- <i>N</i> -[(1 <i>R</i>)-2-(cyclohexylamino)-2-oxo-1-(pyridin-3-yl)ethyl]-1 <i>H</i> -imidazole-4-carboxamide	2.10	[103]
6WCO	<i>N</i> -(4- <i>tert</i> -butylphenyl)- <i>N</i> -[(1 <i>R</i>)-2-(cyclopentylamino)-2-oxo-1-(pyridin-3-yl)ethyl]-1 <i>H</i> -imidazole-4-carboxamide	1.48	[103]
6XBH	-	1.60	[120]
6XBG	-	1.45	[121]
6XFN	-	1.70	[122]
7JU7	Masitinib	1.60	[123]
3SZN	ethyl (4 <i>R</i>)-4-({ <i>N</i> -[(benzyloxy)carbonyl]-1-phenylalanyl}amino)-5-[(3 <i>S</i>)-2-oxopyrrolidin-3-yl]pentanoate	1.69	[124]
3SNE	2-(<i>N</i> -morpholino)-ethanesulfonic acid	2.60	[125]
3SNA, 3SNB, and 3SNC	-	3.05, 2.40 and 2.58	[125]
6XBI	-	1.70	[126]
6XHO	ethyl (2 <i>E</i> ,4 <i>S</i>)-4-{{ <i>N</i> -[(4-methoxy-1 <i>H</i> -indole-2-carbonyl)- <i>L</i> -leucyl]amino}-5-[(3 <i>S</i>)-2-oxopyrrolidin-3-yl]pent-2-enoate	1.45	[127]
6XHN	(3 <i>S</i>)-3-{{ <i>N</i> -[(4-methoxy-1 <i>H</i> -indole-2-carbonyl)- <i>L</i> -leucyl]amino}-2-oxo-4-[(3 <i>S</i>)-2-oxopyrrolidin-3-yl]butyl 2-cyanobenzoate	1.38	[127]
6XHL and 6XHM	<i>N</i> -[(2 <i>S</i>)-1-((2 <i>S</i>)-4-hydroxy-3-oxo-1-[(3 <i>S</i>)-2-oxopyrrolidin-3-yl]butan-2-yl)amino)-4-methyl-1-oxopentan-2-yl]-4-methoxy-1 <i>H</i> -indole-2-carboxamide	1.47 and 1.41	[127]
6XA4	-	1.65	[128]
6Y2E	-	1.75	[129]
6Y2G, 6Y2F	~{ <i>tert</i> }-butyl~{ <i>N</i> }-[1-[(2~{ <i>S</i> })-3-cyclopropyl-1-oxidanylidene-1-[[2~{ <i>S</i> },3~{ <i>R</i> })-3-oxidanyl-4-oxidanylidene-1-[(3~{ <i>S</i> })-2-oxidanylidene-pyrrolidin-3-yl]-4-	2.20, and 1.95	[129]

	[(phenylmethyl)amino]butan-2-yl]amino]propan-2-yl]-2-oxidanylidene-pyridin-3-yl]carbamate		
7JKV	<i>N</i> -[(2 <i>S</i>)-1-((1 <i>S</i> ,2 <i>S</i>)-1-(1,3-benzothiazol-2-yl)-1-hydroxy-3-[(3 <i>S</i>)-2-oxopyrrolidin-3-yl]propan-2-yl]amino)-4-methyl-1-oxopentan-2-yl]-4-methoxy-1 <i>H</i> -indole-2-carboxamide	1.25	[130]
5RHF	1-acetyl- <i>N</i> -methyl- <i>N</i> -phenylpiperidine-4-carboxamide	1.76	[105]
5RHE	1-acetyl- <i>N</i> -(6-methoxypyridin-3-yl)piperidine-4-carboxamide	1.56	[105]
5RGG	4-methyl- <i>N</i> -phenylpiperazine-1-carboxamide	2.26	[105]
5RG1	<i>N</i> -alpha-acetyl- <i>N</i> -(3-bromoprop-2-yn-1-yl)- <i>L</i> -tyrosinamide	1.57	[105]
5RGH	5-fluoro-1-[(5-methyl-1,3,4-thiadiazol-2-yl)methyl]-1,2,3,6-tetrahydropyridine	1.70	[105]
5RGR	<i>N</i> ,1-dimethyl- <i>N</i> -(propan-2-yl)-1 <i>H</i> -pyrazolo[3,4- <i>d</i>]pyrimidin-4-amine	1.41	[105]
5RG3	<i>N</i> ~2~-acetyl- <i>N</i> ~1~-prop-2-en-1-yl- <i>L</i> -aspartamide	1.58	[105]
5RG2	<i>N</i> ~2~-acetyl- <i>N</i> -prop-2-en-1-yl- <i>D</i> -allothreoninamide	1.63	[105]
5RGS	[(2~{ <i>R</i> })-4-(phenylmethyl)morpholin-2-yl]methanol	1.72	[105]
5RGK	2-fluoro- <i>N</i> -[2-(pyridin-4-yl)ethyl]benzamide	1.43	[105]
5RGJ	(5 <i>S</i>)-7-(pyrazin-2-yl)-2-oxa-7-azaspiro[4.4]nonane	1.34	[105]
5RGM	<i>N</i> '-acetyl-4,5,6,7-tetrahydro-1-benzothiophene-2-carbohydrazide	2.04	[105]
5RGM	<i>N</i> '-acetyl-4,5,6,7-tetrahydro-1-benzothiophene-2-carbohydrazide	2.04	[105]
5RG0	1,1'-(piperazine-1,4-diyl)di(ethan-1-one)	1.72	[105]
5RGN	1-{4-[(4-methylphenyl)sulfonyl]piperazin-1-yl}ethan-1-one	1.86	[105]
5RGQ	1-(4-fluoro-2-methylphenyl)methanesulfonamide	2.15	[105]
5RGP	1-{4-[(2,4-dimethylphenyl)sulfonyl]piperazin-1-yl}ethan-1-one	2.07	[105]
5R8T	-	1.27	[105]
5RGZ	2-(3-cyanophenyl)- <i>N</i> -(pyridin-3-yl)acetamide	1.52	[105]
5RHA	1-{4-[(thiophen-2-yl)methyl]piperazin-1-yl}ethan-1-one	1.51	[105]
5RH3	(2 <i>R</i>)-2-(3-chlorophenyl)- <i>N</i> -(4-methylpyridin-3-yl)propanamide	1.69	[105]
5RH4	(2 <i>R</i>)-2-(6-chloro-9 <i>H</i> -carbazol-2-yl)propanoic acid	1.34	[105]
5RGU	<i>N</i> -(3-[(2 <i>R</i>)-4-oxoazetidin-2-yl]oxy)phenyl)-2-(pyrimidin-5-yl)acetamide	2.11	[105]
5RH6	<i>N</i> -[(1 <i>R</i>)-2-[(2-ethyl-6-methylphenyl)amino]-2-oxo-1-(pyridin-3-yl)ethyl]- <i>N</i> -[6-(propan-2-yl)pyridin-3-yl]propanamide	1.60	[105]
5RGT	<i>N</i> -[(1 <i>R</i>)-2-(tert-butylamino)-2-oxo-1-(pyridin-3-yl)ethyl]- <i>N</i> -(5-tert-butyl-1,2-oxazol-3-yl)propanamide	2.22	[105]
5RH5	<i>N</i> -(5-tert-butyl-1,2-oxazol-3-yl)- <i>N</i> -[(1 <i>R</i>)-2-[(4-methoxy-2-methylphenyl)amino]-2-oxo-1-(pyridin-3-yl)ethyl]propanamide	1.72	[105]
5RGW	2-(5-cyanopyridin-3-yl)- <i>N</i> -(pyridin-3-yl)acetamide	1.43	[105]
5RH8	2-(cyanomethoxy)- <i>N</i> -[(1,2-thiazol-4-yl)methyl]benzamide	1.81	[105]
5RGV	2-(isoquinolin-4-yl)- <i>N</i> -phenylacetamide	1.82	[105]
5RH7	<i>N</i> -(5-tert-butyl-1 <i>H</i> -pyrazol-3-yl)- <i>N</i> -[(1 <i>R</i>)-2-[(2-ethyl-6-methylphenyl)amino]-2-oxo-1-(pyridin-3-yl)ethyl]propanamide	1.71	[105]
5RGY	<i>N</i> -(4-methoxypyridin-2-yl)-2-(naphthalen-2-yl)acetamide	1.976	[105]
5RGX	2-(3-cyanophenyl)- <i>N</i> -(4-methylpyridin-3-yl)acetamide	1.69	[105]
5RH9	<i>N</i> -{4-[(1 <i>S</i>)-1-methoxyethyl]phenyl}- <i>N</i> -[(1 <i>R</i>)-2-[(4-methoxy-2-methylphenyl)amino]-2-oxo-1-(pyridin-3-yl)ethyl]propanamide	1.91	[105]
5RH0	<i>N</i> -(5-methylthiophen-2-yl)- <i>N</i> '-pyridin-3-ylurea	1.92	[105]
5RH2	2-(3-chlorophenyl)- <i>N</i> -(4-methylpyridin-3-yl)acetamide	1.83	[105]
5RH1	2-(5-chlorothiophen-2-yl)- <i>N</i> -(pyridin-3-yl)acetamide	1.96	[105]
5REA	(azepan-1-yl)(2 <i>H</i> -1,3-benzodioxol-5-yl)methanone	1.63	[105]
5REB	1-[(thiophen-3-yl)methyl]piperidin-4-ol	1.68	[105]
5REC	2-[[1 <i>H</i> -benzimidazol-2-yl)amino]methyl]phenol	1.73	[105]

5REE	(2 <i>R</i> ,3 <i>R</i>)-1-benzyl-2-methylpiperidin-3-ol	1.77	[105]
7JVZ	-	2.50	[131]
6W9Q	-	2.05	[132]
7BRR	(1 <i>S</i> ,2 <i>S</i>)-2-({ <i>N</i> -[(benzyloxy)carbonyl]- <i>L</i> -leucyl}amino)-1-hydroxy-3-[(3 <i>S</i>)-2-oxopyrrolidin-3-yl]propane-1-sulfonic acid	1.40	[133]
7BRO	-	2.00	[134]
7BRP	(1 <i>R</i> ,2 <i>S</i> ,5 <i>S</i>)- <i>n</i> -[(1 <i>S</i>)-3-amino-1-(cyclobutylmethyl)-2,3-dioxopropyl]-3-[(2 <i>S</i>)-2-{{(tert-butylamino)carbonyl}amino}-3,3-dimethylbutanoyl]-6,6-dimethyl-3-azabicyclo[3.1.0]hexane-2-carboxamide	1.80	[135]
7C2Q	-	1.93	[136]
7C8T	<i>N</i> -[(benzyloxy)carbonyl]- <i>O</i> -(<i>tert</i> -butyl)-1-threonyl-3-cyclohexyl- <i>N</i> -[(1 <i>S</i>)-2-hydroxy-1-[(3 <i>S</i>)-2-oxopyrrolidin-3-yl]methyl}ethyl]-l-alaninamide	2.05	[137]
7C8R	Ethyl (4 <i>R</i>)-4-[[[(2 <i>S</i>)-4-methyl-2-[[[(2 <i>S</i> ,3 <i>R</i>)-3-[(2-methylpropan-2-yl)oxy]-2-(phenylmethoxycarbonylamino)butanoyl]amino]pentanoyl]amino]-5-[(3 <i>S</i>)-2-oxidanylidenepyrrolidin-3-yl]pentanoate	2.30	[137]
6XCH	-	2.20	[138]
6L70	(1 <i>S</i> ,2 <i>S</i>)-2-({ <i>N</i> -[(benzyloxy)carbonyl]- <i>L</i> -leucyl}amino)-1-hydroxy-3-[(3 <i>S</i>)-2-oxopyrrolidin-3-yl]propane-1-sulfonic acid	1.56	[139]
6FV1	(2~{ <i>S</i> })-4-methyl-~{ <i>N</i> }-[(2~{ <i>S</i> },3~{ <i>R</i> })-3-oxidanyl-4-oxidanylidene-1-[(3~{ <i>S</i> })-2-oxidanylidenepyrrolidin-3-yl]-4-[(phenylmethyl)amino]butan-2-yl]-2-[[(~{ <i>E</i> })-3-phenylprop-2-enoyl]amino]pentanamide	2.30	[140]
6FV2	(<i>S</i>)- <i>N</i> -benzyl-3-((<i>S</i>)-2-cinnamamido-3-phenylpropanamido)-2-oxo-4-((<i>S</i>)-2-oxopyrrolidin-3-yl)butanamide	2.95	[140]
7D31	(3~{ <i>S</i> },3~{ <i>a</i> }-~{ <i>S</i> },6~{ <i>a</i> }-~{ <i>R</i> })-2-[3-[3,5-bis(fluoranyl)phenyl]propanoyl]-~{ <i>N</i> }-[(2~{ <i>S</i> })-1-oxidanylidene-3-[(3~{ <i>S</i> })-2-oxidanylidenepyrrolidin-3-yl]propan-2-yl]-3,3~{ <i>a</i> },4,5,6,6~{ <i>a</i> }-hexahydro-1~{ <i>H</i> }-cyclopenta[<i>c</i>]pyrrole-3-carboxamide 2	2.00	[141]
7D10	(1 <i>R</i> ,2 <i>S</i> ,5 <i>S</i>)-3-[<i>N</i> -({1-[(<i>tert</i> -butylsulfonyl)methyl]cyclohexyl}carbamoyl)-3-methyl- <i>L</i> -valyl]- <i>N</i> -{(1 <i>S</i>)-1-[(1 <i>R</i>)-2-(cyclopropylamino)-1-hydroxy-2-oxoethyl]pentyl}-6,6-dimethyl-3-azabicyclo[3.1.0]hexane-2-carboxamide	1.78	[142]
7C7P	(1 <i>S</i> ,3 <i>aR</i> ,6 <i>aS</i>)-2-[(2 <i>S</i>)-2-({(2 <i>S</i>)-2-cyclohexyl-2-[(pyrazin-2-ylcarbonyl)amino]acetyl}amino)-3,3-dimethylbutanoyl]- <i>N</i> -[(2 <i>R</i> ,3 <i>S</i>)-1-(cyclopropylamino)-2-hydroxy-1-oxohexan-3-yl]octahydrocyclopenta[<i>c</i>]pyrrole-1-carboxamide (3~{ <i>S</i> },3~{ <i>a</i> }-~{ <i>S</i> },6~{ <i>a</i> }-~{ <i>R</i> })-~{ <i>N</i> }-[(2~{ <i>R</i> },3~{ <i>S</i> })-1-(cyclopropylamino)-2-oxidanyl-1-oxidanylidene-hexan-3-yl]-2-methanoyl-3,3~{ <i>a</i> },4,5,6,6~{ <i>a</i> }-hexahydro-1~{ <i>H</i> }-cyclopenta[<i>c</i>]pyrrole-3-carboxamide	1.74	[143]
7COM	boceprevir (bound form)	2.25	[144]
6ZRU	boceprevir (bound form)	2.10	[145]
6ZRT	(1 <i>S</i> ,3 <i>aR</i> ,6 <i>aS</i>)-2-[(2 <i>S</i>)-2-({(2 <i>S</i>)-2-cyclohexyl-2-[(pyrazin-2-ylcarbonyl)amino]acetyl}amino)-3,3-dimethylbutanoyl]- <i>N</i> -[(2 <i>R</i> ,3 <i>S</i>)-1-(cyclopropylamino)-2-hydroxy-1-oxohexan-3-yl]octahydrocyclopenta[<i>c</i>]pyrrole-1-carboxamide	2.10	[146]
6MOK	-	5.10	[147]

6LZE	~{N}-[(2~{S})-3-cyclohexyl-1-oxidanylidene-1-[(2~{S})-1-oxidanylidene-3-[(3~{S})-2-oxidanylidene-pyrrolidin-3-yl]propan-2-yl]amino]propan-2-yl]-1~{H}-indole-2-carboxamide	1.50	[148]
7C6S	boceprevir (bound form)	1.60	[149]
7CX9	3-iodanyl-1~{H}-indazole-7-carbaldehyde	1.73	[150]

5. Biflavonoid as The Protease –Inhibitor

Although it is not so many, there is a few study of biflavonoid-class compounds reporting their activities as protease inhibitors. Amentoflavone from *Torreya nucifera* was the early biflavonoid studied its inhibitory activity against SARS-CoV 3CLpro by showing IC₅₀ 8.3 μM. The results were compared to three types of flavonoid (apigenin, luteolin and quercetin) which showed less inhibition and therefore, the structure-activity relationships were generated to confirm that the more potent activity of biflavonoid appeared to be associated with the presence of benzene ring moiety at position C-3' of flavones, as biflavone had an effect on 3CLpro inhibitory activity [36]. Based on the Ryu et al. finding, a QSAR study of biflavonoid and its analogs were carried out to generate a QSAR model defining that increasing value of the dipole moment along X-axis may be conducive to the activity. Therefore, the steric character of this part may be favorable for its activity. Compounds having higher dipole moment due to the much bulky aryl groups, therefore, have a higher activity than the compound having less bulky aryl group [23].

The antiproteolytic activity of biflavonoid was early determined on morelloflavone-4'''-*O*-β-*D*-glycosyl, (±)-fukugiside, and morelloflavone. These biflavonoids were isolated from the fruit epocarp of *Garcinia brasiliensis* which further semisynthesized into three moreflavone derivatives i.e. morelloflavone-7,4',7'',3''',4''''- penta-*O*-acetyl, morelloflavone-7,4',7'',3''',4''''-penta-*O*-methyl and morelloflavone-7,4',7'',3''',4''''-penta-*f*-butanoyl. A high inhibitory activity was demonstrated by these biflavonoid against r-CPB2.8 and r-CPB3 isoforms which are papain-like protease of *Leismania mexicana* with IC₅₀ 0.42-1.01 μM for four the most active compounds. Interestingly, there was no cytotoxic activity towards normal cell lines as observed from the *in vitro* study [151].

Further study was pursued by the same research group in evaluating those biflavonoid activities against the cysteine protease (papain and cruzain) and serine protease of *Trypanozoma cruzii*. All biflavonoid compounds demonstrated excellent inhibitions toward all protease enzymes (IC₅₀ 0.02-106 μM), however, morelloflavone-7,4',7'',3''',4''''- penta-*O*-acetyl showed the best activity which might be due to the carbonyl group in the structure. This functional group could

favor a higher nucleophilic attack by serine and cysteine proteases. This agreed with morelloflavone-7,4',7'',3''',4''''-penta-*O*-methyl ($IC_{50} = 15.4 \pm 0.7 \mu\text{M}$ for papain), in which the compound having no carbonyl group in structure, was less active in the inhibition process. This was confirmed by the structure–activity relationships (SARs) study had been performed using flexible docking simulations [152].

A study by Assis et al. reported fukugetin, a biflavone originated from *Garcinia brasiliensis*, demonstrated partial competitive and hyperbolic-mix type inhibitions against the major cysteine protease of *Trypanosoma cruzii* (cruzain and papain), respectively. The potency of such biflavone was expressed in a slow reversible type inhibition with K_i 1.1 and 13.4 μM for cruzain and papain, respectively, describing that the biflavone has 12 times faster inhibition toward cruzain than papain in inhibiting the enzymes. The molecular docking study predicted that this activity is due to the chemical interaction between biflavone at ring C with S3 pocket, whereas the ring C' binds at S2 pocket through hydrogen bond as well as hydrophobic interactions [153].

A virtual screening was performed to identify the hits of tryptase inhibitor followed by in vitro experiments to identify the lead compounds. Tryptase is a class of serine protease enzyme released as the allergic response such as skin inflammation and asthma, from the mast cells. Out of 98,000 compounds screened, 2.28% of the library (2503 compounds) were selected as the hits. Interestingly, biflavonoids were one of the most frequently represented in the 200 compounds with the strongest tryptase binding energy. Using FRET-based assay, these 200 compounds were further in vitro screened to afford the lead compound, and then biflavonoid podocarpus flavone A blocks tryptase activity by 61.6%. The docking study suggested that the biflavonoid is favorably binding at the S4 of tryptase [154].

Biflavonoid was also reported to down regulate the expression of matrix metalloproteinase-1 (MMP-1) from human skin fibroblast. MMP is a zymogen (zinc-dependent peptidase) which degrades the extracellular matrix to perform angiogenesis, inflammation, cell migration and tissue remodelling. The high expression of this enzyme is often associated with cancer and wound diabetic foot ulcer. 2',8''-biapigenin, sumaflavone, taiwaniaflavone, amentoflavone, and robustaflavone were isolated from *Selaginella tamariscina* showed significant MMP-1 inhibitory activity in primary human dermal fibroblasts after UV irradiation. The IC_{50} values of sumaflavone, amentoflavone and retinoic acid (used as the positive control) were 0.78, 1.8, and 10 μM , respectively [155].

6. Perspectives

Two main protein targets in coronaviral genome are classified into structural and non-structural protein. Structural protein which is composed by membrane, envelope, and nucleocapsid are formed in the inner viral cell, whereas the spike protein is located in the outer cell [156, 157]. It might be difficult to control the activity of such structural protein because they roles the virus' life during the viral cell assembly which could be too fast too control. Most likely, the host will be suddenly infected by the virus while there is no time to block the activity of S protein during viral-host attachment as well as its endocytosis. Therefore, designing the protein inhibitor for coronavirus, the non-structural protein could be more favorable than the structural protein due to its role in controlling the polypeptide proteolytic, reverse transcription, RNA replication as well as the protein translation, which might take more time than the viral assembly.

Among the 16 nonstructural proteins, NSP5 are the most attractive targets while others are still elusive [158]. The NSP5 main protease (3CLpro) is the most common targeted protein in coronavirus because they are formed in the host and acting during cleavage and post-translational polyprotein synthesis, thus it is relatively easier to control their activities. Two classes of compound are reported having these protein activities, including peptide and nonpeptide compound. Naturally, the protease has peptide substrate due to its function to hydrolyse the peptide bond upon proteolysis. Therefore, for competitive inhibitor, compound having peptide-like structure should be suitable to block the enzyme-substrate binding. There are notable peptide (like) compounds demonstrating low micromolar activity towards the protease such as lopinavir and ritonavir [159]. Although peptide is the suitable structure designed for the protease inhibitor, however, the physic-chemical properties of this class of compound often make it fails under clinical trials. Peptide has a number of flexible bond which makes it energetically unstable either during preparation or its pharmacokinetic stage. The structure is mimicking protein, therefore it is sensitive towards denaturation and hydrolysis during preparation. At the pharmacokinetic stage especially during absorption, peptide is less absorbed due to its isoelectric character which makes it very polar in aqueous biological fluids thus is hard to penetrate the intestinal membrane lipid bilayer [160]. This causes the peptide becomes unsuitable for oral preparation which needs absorption process. Other alternative is formulated in parenteral preparation, however, this is costly and not applicable administered by patient themselves. Therefore, peptide is practically used as

the model only and then should be further modified to more rigid character to improve the stability. One effort has been conducted to formulate the drug delivery system to improve the bioavailability such as using liposome technology, however, the use of organic solvents in the liposome dosage form could make it toxic [161, 162].

Non-peptide or often called as small molecule inhibitors, currently takes more attention used as the molecule target for protease inhibitors. The presence of aromatic rings could make the compound is energetically more stable than the peptide due to its rigid character [163]. The rigid character makes the entropy of the compound to be less thus stabilizing the compound-enzyme affinity upon binding. The non-peptide inhibitor is still can be divided into natural and synthetic compound. Natural compound is unique structure due to the presence of chiral carbon which could make the ligand-protein binding become more specific. A class of biflavonoid showed *in vitro* competitive inhibition in low micromolar activities towards the protease which agreed with the docking explanation. Amentoflavone is the early biflavonoid found active against 3CLpro of SARS-Coronavirus underlining the potency of such compound to be this protease inhibitor. It was postulated that the presence of benzene ring moiety at position C-3' of flavones, as biflavone had an effect on 3CLpro inhibitory activity. The synthetic (semi synthetic) biflavonoids are the further strategy to get the product being more feasible to be developed as protease inhibitor. Compounds bearing more carbonyl groups seems like promising as this protease inhibitor as it is designed to favor a higher nucleophilic attack by serine and cysteine proteases, using molecular docking.

3CLpro is still the most recommended protein target in the discovery of anti-SARS coronaviral agent. The availability of crystal structure and its high conserve binding site, makes the structure based drug design becomes applicable [164, 165]. The structure-based drug design is also able to combine with ligand-based drug design since the structure information of the compounds either in peptide or non-peptide, have been reported as the protease inhibitors. The non-peptide compound such as biflavonoid provide more promising candidate to enter either pre- or clinical stage due to its more stable physic-chemical properties during preparation as well as pharmacokinetics.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, our review strongly recommend that biflavonoid, either from natural product or its synthetic is very potential to be used as of SARS-Coronavirus-2 3CLpro inhibitor. Its dimer and big structure are more suitable for 3CLpro binding site composing two beta barrels than the

corresponding flavones. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first review to describe the potential inhibitory effects of biflavonoid against 3CLpro. Thus, we believe that this compound may be a good candidate for development as a natural therapeutic drug against SARS-Coronavirus-2 infection.

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Mail - Yustina Sri Hartini - Outlook

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