Spatial –Temporal Analysis of Drought in Iran Using SPI During a Long - Term Period

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To cite this article:
Sohaila Javanmard, Mandana Emamhadi, Javad BodaghJamali, Ali Didehvarasl. Spatial –Temporal Analysis of Drought in Iran Using SPI During a Long - Term Period. Earth Sciences. Vol. 6, No. 2, 2017, pp. 15-29. doi: 10.11648/j.earth.20170602.12

Received: August 31, 2015; Accepted: September 21, 2015; Published: April 11, 2017

Abstract: This investigation represents temporal and spatial analysis of drought events over Iran for a 42 - year period (1963 - 2005). At first, the severity of drought occurrences over Iran has been identified using SPI (Standardized Precipitation Index) at various time scales (i.e., 3, 9, and 12 - month) for 50 synoptic stations. Then the spatial distribution of annual and seasonal drought severity using SPI - 12 months and SPI - 3 months respectively have been derived. Seasonal drought has been determined for spring, autumn, and winter using SPI - 3 months for May, Nov and Feb respectively. Maps of annual and seasonal drought showed occurrence of drought in most parts of Iran mostly in following years, 1985, 1990, 1998, 1999, 2000, and 2001. Based on the frequency of each drought severity category at different time scales (SPI - 3, 9, and 12 months), time series of number of stations experienced drought were derived. They showed that mild drought has been occurred continuously in about 85% - 95% of stations from 1998 through 2001 using SPI - 9 months and SPI - 12 months. But SPI - 3 months showed mostly 99% of stations were affected by drought continuously from 1998 through 2002. Finally, spatial distribution of each drought severity categories for different time - scales were derived.

Keywords: Iran, Drought Monitoring, SPI, Spatial, Temporal, Analysis

1. Introduction

Iran is located in the arid belt of the world so its climate is mostly arid or semi - arid, and very wet along the Caspian coast (Fig. 1). On the northern edge of the country (the Caspian coastal plain) temperatures nearly fall below freezing and remain humid for the rest of the year, summer temperatures rarely exceed 29°C, and annual precipitation ranges from 400 to 1300 mm. The Zagros Mountains basin experiences lower temperatures, sever winter, daily sub - freezing average temperatures, heavy snowfall, and the annual mean precipitation ranges from 200 to 400 mm in west of Iran. The eastern and central basins are arid and precipitation ranges from 50 to 200 mm and average summer temperatures exceed 38°C. The coastal plains of the Persian Gulf and Oman Sea in the southern Iran have mild winters, and very humid and hot summers, the annual precipitation ranges from 50 mm in eastern part to 300 mm in west along the shore. It seems that the temporal and spatial distribution of precipitation in Iran is volatile, as 90% of total precipitation occurs in cold and humid seasons in northern and western parts of the country and only 10% occurs in warm and dry seasons in central, southern and eastern parts. About 52% of precipitation occurs in 25% of the country area (Fig. 2).

Figure 1. Climatic classification of Iran using modified Domartan method.
A warming trend began in early 1990s and it has been continued in recent years despite some cooling. The annual mean temperatures have remained above average since 1995. A significant drought is observed during years of 1999 and 2000, which were associated with a lack of precipitation during the winter and spring, which normally are the wettest seasons. The country recovered from the drought conditions in 2004 with increasing rainfall, so drought is recurrent phenomenon in Iran for the last several decades and is one of the most damaging climate-related hazards to impact the country, as its effect may be different from region to region.

The most commonly used drought index is the Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) developed by McKee et al., (1993), designed to quantify the precipitation deficit for multiple time scales. These time scales reflect the impact of drought on different water resources. Up-dated SPI has more applications in Southwest Asia than other drought indices due to its limited input data requirements, flexibility and simplicity of calculations [URL 1].

Zavettor and Ravelo (2000) analyzed temporally and spatially drought impacts in the Pampas region of Argentina using a network of 27 meteorological stations via SPI during the second half of 1999. Sevike and Zekai (2001) used SPI for determining drought properties of a given hydrological series. This index has been applied to the Edirne, Istanbul, and Kirklake rainfall records to derive the drought period, magnitude, and SPI values in Turkey. Seung - Ki Min et al., (2003) calculated monthly precipitation data from Climatic Research Unit (CRU) during (1951 - 1996). They found that the frequency of drought events in Korea has significant time intervals of 2–3 and 5–8 years and has been increasing since the 1980s and showed that the occurrence of droughts over central eastern China, Manchuria, and the north coast of Japan was highly correlated with the mentioned drought events in Korea. Caldag et al., (2004) used SPI to analyze the drought in northwest of Turkey, the results have showed that the Thrace region was under the effect of the severe drought conditions in 2000 and 2001, except for Istanbul.

Mathieu Rouault and Yves Richard (2005) analyzed the spatial extent of droughts in Southern Africa from 1901 to 1999, the study has shown that the increase in the spatial extent of drought in Southern Africa is due to stronger ENSO Southern African rainfall relationship since the 1970s. V. Serrano and Moreno (2005) compared the SPI at different time scales with surface hydrological variables in basin located in the central Spanish Pyrenees and found that the higher (>12 months) SPI time scales might not be useful for drought quantification in this area. They suggested that it is necessary to test the drought indices and time scales in relation to their usefulness for monitoring different drought
The National Drought Mitigation Center (NDMC, 2005. URL 2) is using the Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) to monitor moisture - supply conditions. The distinguishing features of this index are as following; identification of emerging droughts months sooner than the Palmer Index and its computation based on various time scales.

The Western Regional Climate Center (WRCC) uses the National Climate Data Center (NCDC) data to calculate SPI values for each climate division. The information is then re-classed and mapped at the NDMC using a Geographic Information System (GIS). The maps are based on preliminary precipitation data, and the data’s source and methods used in incorporating the data into a final product must be considered carefully when analyzing these maps (NDMC, 2008. URL 3). The SPI is computed by NCDC for several time scales, ranging from one month to 24 months to capture the various scales of both short - term and long - term droughts (NOAA, 2008).

The SPI have been widely applied in province rather than total Iran country. For example, Malekifard and Rezazadeh (2006) investigated about the wet and dry periods over northwest of Iran including Western Azerbaijan, Eastern Azerbaijan and Kurdistan provinces using SIAP index, moreover, the relationship of positive and negative phases of NAO with rainfall has been studied. BodaghJamali et al., (2003) used SPI for North - East of Iran during (1960 - 2002), the research showed that drought frequency increases but its duration decreases at the 3 - month scale and as the time scale increases, the index responds more slowly. Raziei et al. (2003) have studied on drought monitoring index in central region of Iran using SPI. They used monthly rainfall data of 22 rain gauge stations in central part of Iran with 40 years of data records to compute SPI index. Hedayati et al. (2005) analyzed drought over Kohkyloye - Boyerahmad province (west part of country) for a 20 - year period. They used percent of normal precipitation index, Z standard index, and five time scales of SPI - (3, 6, 12, 24 and 48 months). They found that severe drought has been occurred in 80% of region in 1993 and 1999. Hagygat et al. (2005) calculated SPI - (3and 6 months) over Fars province (central part of Iran) using 16 station data during a period of 35 years. The result showed that normal condition has been dominant in Fars province in 2005. Samadi neghab et al. (2005) used SPI index as factor in GCM model and prediction drought disaster over Khorsan province in North - East of Iran during 2005 - 2009. Bazrafshan (2007) studied drought condition over Golestan province using 13 stations data during 1980 - 2001. The result of analysis demonstrated that very severe drought occurred from 1985 through 1986 in the west part of province and humid condition was dominant from 1997 through 1998 in the east part of province. The severest drought has been occurred in 2000 and 2001 in the most parts of study area.

In this study we would present an analysis of drought vulnerability in Iran using drought frequency information at varying time scales (i.e., SPI - 3, 9, and 12 - month) and drought severity categories. The temporal and spatial drought analysis would be carried out using monthly precipitation data of 153 synoptic meteorological stations over Iran for a long term period during (1963 - 2005).

2. Data and Methodology

The Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) was developed by McKee of Colorado state university (McKee, et al, 1993) for understanding that a certain deficit of precipitation whether it has different impacts on the soil moisture, ground water, reservoir storage, snow pack, and stream flows. The SPI was designed to quantify the precipitation deficit for multiple time scales. These time scales reflect the impact of drought based on the various types of water resources. Soil moisture conditions respond to precipitation anomalies through a relatively short time - scale, while ground water, stream flows, and reservoir storages reflect long - term precipitation anomalies, therefore, the SPI was originally calculated for 3 - , 6 - , 12 - , 24 - , and 48 - month time periods.

The SPI is a probability index that considers only precipitation. The SPI is an index based on the probability of recording a given amount of precipitation, and the probabilities are standardized so that an index of zero indicates the median precipitation amount (half of the historical precipitation amounts are below the median, and half are above the median). The index is negative for drought, and positive for wet conditions. As the dry or wet conditions become more severe, the index becomes more negative or positive. The index is negative for drought and positive for non - drought (wet) conditions.

The main advantage of the SPI is that it allows for areas with different rainfall regimes to be compared. What constitutes a "drought" in a tropical area might be the same rainfall amount that would be considered "heavy rain" in a desert region. The SPI provides a method for comparing an area against its own history and giving a normalized value to describe its current rainfall conditions. Rainfall values at different locations could be compared through this normalization.

The SPI is a probability index based only on precipitation record for a location and chosen period (months or years) which converts cumulative probability to the standard normal random variable (SPI) as following expressions according to Abramowitz and Stegun (1965).

$$\text{SPI} = \begin{cases} \frac{c_0 + c_1 t + c_2 t^2}{1 + d_1 t + d_2 t^2 + d_3 t^3} & \text{per } 0 < H(P) < 0.5 \\ \frac{c_0 + c_1 t + c_2 t^2}{1 + d_1 t + d_2 t^2 + d_3 t^3} & \text{per } 0.5 < H(P) < 1 \end{cases}$$

where:

- $c_0 = 2.51515$, $c_1 = 0.002853$, $c_2 = 0.00003$, $d_1 = 1.432788$, $d_2 = 0.461256$, $d_3 = 0.046286$

P is the accumulated precipitation for the given time-scale, H (P) is the cumulative probability of the observed precipitation and c0, c1, c2, d1, d2, d3 are some mathematical constants.
Table 1 shows a classification system linking SPI's with drought intensities. A drought event occurs any time the SPI is continuously negative and reaches an intensity less than or equal to -1.0. The event ends when the SPI becomes positive. Each drought event has a duration defined by its beginning and end, and an intensity for each month if the event lasts. The sum of the SPI's for all the months within a drought event is the drought magnitude.

| SPI Values | Drought severity    |
|------------|---------------------|
| 2.0 or more | Extremely wet       |
| 1.5 to 1.99 | Very wet            |
| 1.0 to 1.49 | Moderately wet      |
| -0.99 to 0.99 | Near normal       |
| -1.0 to -1.49 | Moderately dry      |
| -1.5 to -1.99 | Severely dry        |
| -2.0 and less | Extremely dry       |

Secondly, the monthly precipitation data for 153 synoptic stations for long term period (1963 - 2005) were gathered from I. R. of Iran Meteorological Organization (IRIMO) data center. Then the severity of drought occurrences over the above mentioned stations has been identified using SPI at varying time scales (i.e., 3, 9, and 12-month). The temporal analysis including seasonal drought monitoring using SPI 3-month for spring, autumn and winter, also annual monitoring using SPI 12-month during the period of study have been performed in this study.

In the next step, drought frequency occurrences have been identified in 153 stations for each drought category at different time scales (SPI 3, 9, and 12-month) over Iran. Then the frequencies were mapped to analyze their spatial distribution using GIS software. Hereby we have aimed to identify areas vulnerable to drought at comparable time scales based on their occurrence frequencies.

3. Results

3.1. Long Term Precipitation Anomalies

Since Iran is a country with diverse climate (Fig. 1) along with a wide range of precipitation distribution in annual and seasonal time scales (Fig. 2), estimation of long-term precipitation anomalies have been analyzed in 6 selected synoptic stations over the country from 1951 through 2005. The selected 6 stations which are representative of 4 different climates have been shown in figure 3. Chabahar and Yazd stations are the samples of hyper-dry climate which are located in southeast and center of Iran respectively. Abadan and Mashhad stations are the samples of dry climate which are located in southwest and northeast of Iran respectively. Tabriz station is the sample of moderate dry climate which located in the northwest and Babolsar station is the sample of wet climate which is located in north of the country. The geographical and climatic characteristics of the above mentioned stations which are considered for a long-term anomaly of precipitation have been shown in Table 2.

![Figure 3. Geographical distributions of the stations in the analysis.](image-url)
Table 2. Characteristics of selected stations.

| No. | Synoptic Station | Location | Climate        | Geographical Coordination |
|-----|------------------|----------|----------------|----------------------------|
| 1   | Chahbahar        | Southeast| Extremely dry  | Lat. (N): 25° 17’        |
|     |                  |          |                | Lon. (E): 60° 37’         |
| 2   | Yazd             | Center   | Extremely dry  | Lat. (N): 31° 54’        |
|     |                  |          |                | Lon. (E): 54° 17’         |
| 3   | Abadan           | Southwest| Dry            | Lat. (N): 30° 22’        |
|     |                  |          |                | Lon. (E): 48° 15’         |
| 4   | Mashhad          | Northwest| Dry            | Lat. (N): 36° 16’        |
|     |                  |          |                | Lon. (E): 59° 38’         |
| 5   | Tabriz           | Northwest| Moderately dry | Lat. (N): 38° 5’         |
|     |                  |          |                | Lon. (E): 46° 17’         |
| 6   | Babolsar         | North    | Wet            | Lat. (N): 36° 43’        |
|     |                  |          |                | Lon. (E): 52° 39’         |

Figure 4. Long-term precipitation anomalies in 6 selected stations in different climate of Iran (a) Chahbahar, (b) Yazd, (c) Abadan, (d) Mashhad, (e) Tabriz, (f) Babolsar.
Table 3. Analysis of precipitation anomaly in some selected stations in different climate of Iran.

| Station              | Climate      | Extremely dry years                                      | Last dry spell       | Considerable notes                      |
|----------------------|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Chahbahar (southeast) | Extremely dry| 1958, 1962, 1964, 1970, 1981, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1995, 2000 | 1989–2005            | 1972, 1982, 1997 (Very wet years)       |
| Yazd (center)        | Extremely dry| 1958, 1964, 1973, 1985, 1990, 1998 (6 years)            | 2002–2003            |                                        |
| Abadan (southwest)   | Dry          | 1951, 1966, 1970, 1975, 1984, 1990, 1994, 2000, 2001 (9 years) | 1999 – 2002.         |                                        |
| Mashhad (northeast)  | Dry          | 1961, 1971, 1975, 1983, 1989, 1990, 1995 (7 years)       | 1995–2001            | 2003–2005                               |
| Tabriz (northwest)   | Moderately dry| 1952, 1961, 1966, 1970, 1985, 1991, 1996, 1999, 2001, 2005 (10 years) | Last Wet spell       | 2002 – 2004                             |
| Babolsar (north)     | Wet          | Most of years                                            |                      |                                        |

Figure 4 (a) shows the precipitation anomaly in Chabahar station. It shows mostly precipitation is lower than normal during the long term period (1963 - 2005) except for the following years, 1972, 1982, 1997. It has also shown a continuous drought condition from 1998 through 2005. As another sample of central part of Iran with extremely dry climate, Yazd station has been chosen. Figure 4 (b) shows the time series of precipitation anomaly during long term period (1952 - 2005). It shows sever drought events in the following years, 1958, 1962, 1964, 1970, 1981, 1985, 1987, 1989, 1996, 1998, 2005 and persistence of dry condition from 1987 through 2005.

Figure 4 (c) shows anomaly of precipitation at Abadan station. It shows very dry condition in the following years, 1958, 1964, 1973, 1985, 1990, 1998. Figure 4 (d) shows Mashhad station has experienced very dry condition in the following years, 1951, 1966, 1970, 1975, 1984, 1990, 1994, 2000, 2001, and persistence of dry spell from 1999 through 2002.

Figure 4 (e) shows the precipitation anomaly in Tabriz station. It shows very dry condition in the following years 1961, 1971, 1975, 1983, 1989, 1990, 1995 and persistence of dry period from 1995 through 2005 except for 2002.

The anomaly of precipitation in Babolsar station has been shown in figure 4 (f). It shows very dry condition in the following years including 1952, 1961, 1966, 1970, 1985, 1991, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2005 and very wet condition from 2002 through 2004.

The above analysis has showed that in different climate of Iran, the highest frequency of very severe drought has been occurred in hyper - dry climate as well as wet climate of Iran which is about 10 years among the period of study (Table 3).
Table 4. Analysis of annual monitoring of drought using SPI 12 - months.

| Years | Drought Sever | Wetness Sever | Moderate | Moderate |
|-------|---------------|---------------|----------|----------|
| 1985  | Center (Ghom, Esfahan, Kavir), Shahroud, Tabas, Iranshahr, Jask, Abadan | Most of region | Northwest | Northwest |
| 1986  | South (Fars, South of Esfahan and Yazd), Northwest of Kerman, East, Zabol | Center, East, Southeast, Southwest | Center | Most of region |
| 1987  | Northwest, NorthEast, East, Center, Southwest (partly) | Most of region except Center (Bam), South (Zahedan) | Most of region | North, Northwest, Southeast |
| 1988  | Extended from Northeast to Southwest | West, Southwest (partly), Northeast (Shahrud, semnan, Babolsar), Southeast, South (partly), East (Birjand) | Most of region | Southeast |
| 1989  | From East extended to center, Southwest (Ahvaz, Abadan) | Most of region | Most of region | Northwest |
| 1990  | Northeast, Central, South (Osman Sea and Persian Gulf) | North (along Caspian sea), Southwest, Northeast, East, Southeast | Most of region | Northwest |
| 1991  | Northeast, Center, Northeast, East, South | Some parts of Northern part of Southern Caspian Sea coast, West, Southwestern part which extended to North, West, most region of Western parts of Caspian Sea | South part | North |
| 1992  | North, West, some parts of Center and South, some dispersed with small area in North and Northwest, Southeast, South | Most of region | Most of region | Southeast |
| 1993  | Northeast and Northwest (dispersed in limited area) | Most of region | Most of region | Southwest |
| 1994  | Chabahar, Jask | Most of region | Most of region | Northeast, East, Southeast |
| 1995  | North, East, South which from North to South intensified | Most of region | Southern part of Caspian Sea | East |
| 1996  | East, Southeast, South, Central South, Southwest | Most of region | Most of region | Northwest |
| 1997  | Southeast, South, Southwest | Most of region | Most of region | Northwest |
| 1998  | Extended to from East South like a narrow band | from Center to South wetness intensified | Most of region | Northwest, Center which is extended to South |

Table 5. Temporal analysis of dry and wet years during long term period based on SPI 12 - month over Iran.

| Moderate dry years | Moderate wet years |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1985               | 1986               |
| 1987               | 1988               |
| 1990 (sever)       | 1991 - 1993        |
| 1994               | 1996 - 1998        |
| 2001 (sever)       | 2003 - 2004        |
| 2000 - 2002        |                    |
| 2004 (partly)      |                    |

3.2. Annual Monitoring of Drought Using SPI - 12 Months

In this section, the monthly precipitation data series of 50 synoptic stations during long term period (1985 - 2004) have been gathered from data base centre of IRIMO. Then the severity of drought occurrences over the above mentioned stations have been identified using SPI at varying time scales (i.e., 3, 9, and 12 - month). The annual monitoring of drought using SPI 12 - month from 1985 to 2005 has been derived as shown in figure 5. Spatial distribution of annual drought using SPI - 12 months showed that drought has been extended in most regions of country in the following years including 1990,
1994, 2000, 2001. Summary of geographical distribution of drought with different severity over Iran has been shown in Table 4. Since desirable results could not be achieved only by temporal analysis of drought, in this section we consider some selected years in which the most parts of the country have been extremely influenced by drought or wet conditions. Temporal analysis of dry and wet years during long term period based on SPI 12-month has been indicated in Table 5. Spatial distribution of annual drought also shows that in early 21st century drought condition has been dominant in most parts of country from 2000 through 2002, but drought condition has been shifted to wet condition in 2003. Some parts of Iran experiences dry condition while the other parts have been influenced by wet conditions in 2004.

3.3. Seasonal Monitoring of Drought Using SPI - 3 Month

The seasonal (spring, autumn and winter) monitoring of drought has also been derived using SPI - 3 months for May, Nov., and Feb. respectively. Figures 6 through 8 show maps of spatial distribution of drought using SPI - 3 month for spring (May), autumn (Nov.), and winter (Feb.) respectively for the years when drought has been extended in most regions of the country in 1990s. They demonstrated that the most regions of country have experienced drought in spring of 1990, 2000, 2001, in autumn of 1998, 2001, 2003, and in winter of 1998, 1999, and, 2000. The summary of temporal analysis of occurred drought with different severities based on SPI - 3 month for 3 seasons including spring, autumn, and winter during long term period has been indicated in Table 6.

Figure 6. Seasonal drought monitoring using SPI 3-month in Iran for autumn from 1985 to 2004.
Figure 7. Seasonal drought monitoring using SPI 3-month in Iran for winter from 1985 to 2004.

Table 6. Summary of temporal analysis of occurred drought with different severities based on SPI - 3 months for 3 seasons, including spring, autumn, and winter during long term period.

| Drought severity | SPI - 3 months | Severe Drought | Mild drought | wet | Very wet |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|-----|----------|
| Spring           | 1985, 2000     | 1990, 2001     | 1987, 1993 - 95, 1997 - 99, 2002, 2003, 2004 (partly) | 1991, 1992, 1996 |
| Autumn           | 1990, 1992, 1995, 2003 | 1985, 1988, 1993, 1998, 2000, 2001 | 1987, 1994, 1998, 2000 | 1986, 1989, 1999, 2002 |
| Winter           | 1993, 1996     | 1985, 1988, 1998, 2000 | 1992, 1997, 2004 | 1986, 1987, 1991, 2001 |
The seasonal analysis of drought shows that mild and severe droughts have been occurred in both seasons of autumn, and winter, in the following years: 1985, 1988, 1993, 1998.

Seasonal and annual monitoring of drought have been carried out using SPI 3-month and SPI 12-month respectively. The percentage of drought severity in different time scales has also been derived. Number of stations which have experienced various severities of droughts at different time scales of SPI in the study period has been shown in Table 7 and figures 9 through 12.

| SPI - Time scales | Drought Severity | No. (%) | Years | No. (%) | Years | No. (%) | Years |
|-------------------|------------------|---------|-------|---------|-------|---------|-------|
| 3-month           | Mild             | 80-90   | Most of years | 70     | 1990, 2000, 2001  | 40     | 1985, 2000, 2001  |
| 9-month           | Mild             | 80      | 1984, 1998, 2004 | 50      | 1985, 1990, 1999, 2000, 2001 | 40     | 1990, 1995, 1998  |
| 12-month          | Mild             | 60      | 1984, 1998, 2004 | 50      | 1985, 1990, 1999, 2000, 2001 | 30     | 1985, 1991, 1988, 1999 |
|                   | Moderate         |         |       |         |       |         |       |
|                   | Severe           |         |       |         |       |         |       |
Mild Drought

We initially examined occurrences of mild droughts and found that they tend to occur in nearly 2/3 of Iran’s whole area over North-western, north, center and west of the country at 3-month time scale. The percent of occurrence during long term period is about 6 - 9% in most part of Iran. While the Eastern and South-Eastern parts are characterized with the lowest frequencies about 3 - 6% at the same temporal scale (Figure 13). As the time scale increases to 9-month; the maximum occurrence of mild drought has been shifted to
south-eastern and south-western of the country with 9-12%. Its average frequency occurrence has been extended to the half of the country and the frequency of minimum drought has been occurred in North-eastern and Northern of the country with 6%. Occurrence of the 12-month time scale of SPI is nearly the same as 9-month time scale but the maximum frequency of spatial occurrence of drought has been extended toward southern part of the country including south-eastern, south-western, and southern regions about 9-11% (Table 8).

Figure 13. Mild Drought Occurrences at SPI 3, 9, and 12-month time scale.

Figure 14. Moderate Drought Occurrences at SPI 3, 9, and 12-month time scales.

**Moderate Drought**

Figure 14 shows that the frequency of occurrence of moderate drought with 3-month time scale of SPI is about 30% - 35% in most area of the country but it is higher about 40% - 48% in north west and partly west. On the other hand, the 9-month time scale of SPI also shows that frequency of
drought occurrence is about 28% - 33% and it is little higher about 33% - 38% in northwest. Moreover, the 12-month time-scale also shows the occurrence of drought is about 29% - 36% in the whole country but it is about 22% - 29% in southeast and east. It could be concluded that most of country in different time scales is about in minimum 22% - 33%, and in maximum is about 29% - 48%. The moderate drought frequency through the short time-scale has been considered higher, on the other hand in the long time-scale it is found lower. The frequency of drought occurrence is almost with the same value in most of the country through different time-scales (Table 8).

**Severe Drought**

Figure 15 shows that the frequency of severe drought occurrence with 3-month time-scale is about 2.5% - 4.5%, in nearly half of Iran except for southeastern part with 0.5% - 1.5%. The severe drought occurrence is about 2 - 4% in majority of country which could be concluded that it doesn't change at longer time-scales. The 9-month and 12-month time-scales show the same manner, the severe drought has been occurred in most of country about 2 - 4% (Table 8).
Very severe Drought

Figure 16 shows that very severe drought occurrences in majority of country is about 2 - 6% with 3 - month time - scale. Furthermore, this drought severity is about 4 - 9% with 9 - month, and about 6 - 9% with12 month time - scales. It could be concluded that the frequency of very severe drought occurrence is nearly about 5% in most of country in different time scales (Table 8).

Table 8. Spatial analysis of drought (with different category and different time scale) during long term period (1963 - 2005).

| SPI Time Scale | Drought Severity | Spatial Extension | Frequency of Occurrence (%) | Spatial Extension | Frequency of Occurrence (%) | Spatial Extension | Frequency of Occurrence (%) | Spatial Extension | Frequency of Occurrence (%) |
|----------------|------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 3 - month      | Mild             | 2/3 Area, Southeast, East | 6~9 | Majority | 30~35 | 1/2 Area | 2.5~4.5 | Majority | 2~6 |
| 9 - month      | Moderate         | 1/2 Area, Southeast, Southwest | 3~6 | Majority, Northwest, West | 40~48 | Southeast | 0.5~1.5 | Majority | 4~9 |
| 12 - month     | Severe           | 1/2 Area, Southeast, Southwest | 5~8 | Majority | 33~38 | Majority | 2~4 | Majority | 6~9 |
|                | Very severe      | 1/2 Area, Southeast, East | 9~11 | Majority, Southeast, East | 29~36 | 2~4 | Majority | 2~4 |

4. Conclusion and Discussions

The main aim of this investigation is identification of temporal and spatial analysis of drought occurrences using SPI - 3, 9, and 12 - month. At first, we have carried out the long term precipitation anomalies over Iran. It showed that in different climate of the country, the highest frequency of very severe drought has been occurred in very extremely dry climate as well as wet climate of Iran which is prolonged about 10 years during the study period (42 years).

Then the severity of drought occurrences over Iran has been identified using SPI (Standardized Precipitation Index) at varying time scales (i.e., 3, 9, and 12 - month). The SPI has been computed using monthly precipitation data of 153 synoptic stations for a long term period (1963 - 2005). The temporal analysis of SPI 12 - month over Iran has been shown that in early 20 century drought condition has been dominant in most parts of country from 2000 to 2002, but the drought condition has been shifted to wet condition in 2003; Some parts of Iran experiences dry condition while the other parts have been influenced by wet conditions in 2004.

The temporal analysis of drought using SPI 3 - month for May, Nov., and Feb. has showed that mild and sever drought has been occurred in both autumn and winter seasons, in the following years, 1985, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1995, 1998, and 1999. In the next step, drought occurrences in Iran have been identified based on the frequency of the events which has been occurred in 153 stations at different time scales (SPI - 3, 9, and 12 - month).

Then the frequencies were mapped to analyze their spatial distribution using GIS software.

The above analysis has shown that mild drought has been occurred in about 80 -90% of stations using SPI 3 - month, and the results of SPI 3, 9, 12 - month indicate moderate drought has been occurred in about 50~70% of stations in the following years, 1985, 1990, 1999, 2000, 2001, and 2005. However, all time scales of SPI show that about 30~40% of stations has been affected by sever drought in the following years, 1985, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1995, 1998, 1999, and very sever drought has been occurred in about 20~40% stations in the years including 1984, 1998, 2000, and 2005.

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