Climate change drivers influencing Indian mackerel fishery in south-eastern Arabian Sea off Kerala, India

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ABSTRACT

The Indian mackerel *Rastrelliger kanagurta* (Cuvier, 1816) is one of the most important marine fishery resources along the south-eastern Arabian Sea along the coast of Kerala, south India. The effect of selected environmental variables on the Relative effort (Effort) and Weighted catch per unit effort (cpue) of the fish were investigated using simple correlation and Path analysis. Six major oceanographic variables, namely sea surface temperature (SST), sea surface chlorophyll-a concentration (SSC), sea surface salinity (SSS), Precipitation (Pr) Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) and Southern Oscillation Index (SOI) (ENSO index), were selected for the present study. Among these SST had the highest direct negative effect (-0.282, p<0.01), followed by SSS (-0.152, p<0.1) and IOD (-0.006, p<0.01). The highest positive direct effect on the cpue was exhibited by Pr (0.514, p<0.001) followed by SSC and SOI (0.178, p<0.01). The environmental variables also exerted indirect effects on cpue through Effort. The residual variance indicated that there are spurious effects exerted by environmental variables not included in the study. According to the coefficient of determination (R²), the relative importance of the influence of causally dependent environmental variables on the cpue of Indian mackerel is Pr> SSC >SSS.

Keywords: Climate impact, CPUE, Effort, Path analysis, *Rastrelliger kanagurta*

Introduction

Climate change reflected in significant aquatic environmental changes such as sea surface warming, sea level rise, shifts in salinity, dissolved oxygen and other ocean conditions is expected to impact marine organisms and associated fisheries (Wabnitz *et al.*, 2018). Changes in thermal conditions of the oceans are accompanied by changes in precipitation (Trenberth, 2011), ocean salinity (Boyer *et al.*, 2005) and primary production (Roxy, *et al.*, 2016). El Nino-Southern Oscillation (ENSO), the dominant mode of ocean-atmosphere interaction in the tropical Pacific, also influences tropical and global climate (Zheng, 2013). In recent decades, it has been recognised that Indian Ocean sea surface temperature (SST) anomaly, the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD), also has environmental links at par with ENSO events. The positive IOD events are often associated with El Nino (Izumo *et al.*, 2010) and negative events with La Nina (Lim and Hendon, 2017). The Indian Ocean has shown significant increase in the SST and salinity (Bindoff *et al.*, 2007) and decrease in primary productivity (Roxy *et al.*, 2016). As per the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2013) these rapid changes in physical and chemical conditions within ocean sub-regions have already affected the distribution and abundance of marine organisms and ecosystems. The looming challenge of climate change at individual, population, community and ecosystem levels (Harley *et al.*, 2006) has added to the economical underperformance of the global marine fisheries sector (Sumaila *et al.*, 2011).

The fisheries sector in India contributes 1.1% to the national GDP and is a principal source of livelihood for a large section of economically underprivileged population of the country. The Indian mackerel *Rastrelliger kanagurta* (Cuvier, 1816) is an important commercial fishery resource in India constituting 7.27% of the annual marine fish landings in 2017, of which 11.5% was contributed by the southern state of Kerala (CMFRI, 2018). It is a pelagic shoaling species with greatest abundance between 8°N and 12°N lat. and 75°E and 77°E long. Environmental variables are known to influence the fishery of mackerel, often leading to wide seasonal and annual fluctuations in landings (Krishnakumar *et al.*, 2008). The fish prefers to stay close to the thermocline (Abdussamad *et al.*, 2010). The distribution of Indian mackerel is also found to change in response to climate induced progressive increase in SST in the Indian Ocean. Since the fish is a filter feeder which feeds on plankton (Sivadas and Bhaskaran, 2009), the monsoon upwelling with subsequent replenishment of nutrients to the surface waters directly affects its spawning and recruitment success (Yohannan *et al.*, 2002).
Understanding the extent of climate change impacts on ecosystems and their interactions are key requirements of policy debates and adaptive management responses on climate change (Harley et al., 2006). Environmental variables such as salinity, temperature, Chl-α and primary productivity determine the distribution and abundance of marine fishes (Mohanty et al., 2017). Therefore the present study aimed to identify the major causal factors among a set of selected climatic variables viz., sea surface temperature (SST), sea surface chlorophyll-α concentration (SSC), sea surface salinity (SSS), precipitation (Pr), Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD) and Southern Oscillation Index, SOI (ENSO index); as well as to assess the magnitude of their direct and indirect impacts on the fishery of Indian mackerel along the south-eastern coast of Arabian Sea.

Methods

Area of study

The Malabar coast which lies on the narrow coastal plain of Karnataka and Kerala states between the Western Ghats range and the Arabian Sea is rich in primary and secondary production and contributes nearly 50% of the total Indian marine fish landings (Smith and Madhupratap, 2005). The mackerel stock distributed in this upwelling zone along the south-eastern Arabian Sea (SEAS) coast is usually harvested using purse seine, ring seine and trawlers. The study area comprised Kerala coast of the south-eastern Arabian Sea region between 8°N and 12°N and 75°E and 77°E.

Environmental data

The monthly average data on climatic and oceanographic variables of Kerala coast were downloaded for the study area. From this dataset, quarterly data for the period 1998–2016 were averaged. The SST data was downloaded from International Comprehensive Ocean-Atmosphere Data Set (ICOADS-NOAA) and Pr data was obtained from CPC Merged Analysis of Precipitation dataset (COARDS-NOAA). The remote sensing data were aggregated by month in 1°-by-1° square grid cells. Non log-transformed SSC data from OCI (SeaDAS-NASA,) for 4 km resolution and SSS from MIROC-ESM-CHEM model output prepared for CMIP5 historical were obtained. IOD and SOI data were downloaded from NOAA-NCDC.

Estimation of cpue and effort

Quarterly landing data of Indian mackerel including information regarding fishing date, landing and fishing effort (actual fishing hours) along the study area for the period 1986-2016 was collected from National Marine Fishery Data Centre (NMFDC) of ICAR-Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute (ICAR-CMFRI). The catch and effort data was standardised following the standard methodology of FAO (Gulland, 1969). The Weighted CPUE (cpue or R) and Relative effort (Effort or E) were estimated using the equations:

$$ cpue \text{ or } R(y) = \sum_{i=1}^{n} \left( Ri(y) \times \frac{YS(y)}{YS}\right)$$

Relative effort or Effort (Ey) = \frac{YS(y)}{R(y)}

where Ri(y) is the relative CPUE, Yi(y) is yield of individual gear and YS(y) is the sum of yields of the gears in the quarter.

Statistical analysis

Both simple correlation and Path analysis were used to analyse the data. Pearson’s Correlation analysis was performed to assess the strength of the relation between Weighted CPUE (cpue) and climatic variables. Path analysis (Shipley, 2016) is a method for examining causal patterns among a set of variables. It is an extension of regression model, which is used to test the fit of a correlation matrix with a hypothetical causal model. The most significant difference that distinguishes Path analysis from other multivariate methods is that it determines both direct and indirect effects. A path coefficient is a standardised partial-correlation coefficient and measures the direct influence of one variable upon another. It permits the separation of the correlation coefficient into components of direct and indirect effects. The path diagram represents the visual part of the analysis and aids in comparing the magnitude of relationship between variables (Stage and Carter, 2004).

The path coefficients are calculated as follows (Dewey, 1959):

$$ P_{yx} = \frac{b_{Sx} \times SY}{Sx}$$

where P_{yx} is the path coefficient showing the direct effect of X independent variable on the Y dependent variable and b is the partial regression coefficient. In Equation 3, Sx is the standard deviation of the X variable and SY is the standard deviation of the Y variable respectively.

The data was normalised and maximum likelihood estimation was used for estimation of the path model. Variance Inflation factor analysis was done and highly correlated variables were set free to avoid multi-collinearity. In the current study, Path analysis was performed using sem function of lavaan package (R3.5.3). The ‘cpue’ and ‘Effort’ were considered as endogenous variables and the selected climatic variables SST, SOI, IOD (causally independent), Pr, SSS and SSC (causally dependent) as exogenous variables. A hypothetical path model has been proposed based on thorough literature.
Regression analysis was conducted for each variable in the hypothesised path model, that is dependent or endogenous in relation to other variables and its fit indices were examined. The goodness of fit of the hypothesised model was increased after trimming the model according to theoretically supported modification indices. The re-specified model was then identified using fit indices such as Chi-square, Comparative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), Standardised root mean square residual (SRMR) and Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA).

Results

The total landings of Indian mackerel from 1986 to 2016 are plotted in Fig. 1. The figure shows an upsurge in the landings throughout the decade from the end of 1980s (21,318 t) towards the end of 1990s. Of these years, the highest landing of Indian mackerel was obtained in the year 1996 (32,103 t) but subsequent years witnessed a gradual reduction in the total catch till date.

Both cpue and Effort of Indian mackerel show gradual reduction from 1986 to 2016 (Fig. 2a and b), with correspondingly high values for both in the peak catch in the year 1996, as well as a gradual reduction mirrored by the catch values in the following years till 2016. The graph of CPUE against Relative Effort, reflected in Fig. 3 illustrates the reduction in cpue along with Effort over time.

If the environmental variables observed from the study area are plotted as in Fig. 4, significant variation since the beginning of the 21st century is clearly observable. SST, SSS and Pr show increasing trend whereas SSC shows decreasing trend. The variation in SOI and IOD are also shown in Fig. 5.

Descriptive statistics of the fishery data and environmental variables employed in the model are presented in Table 1, with coefficients of variation (CV) reflecting the degree of variation in the analysed data. The cpue, which was considered as an endogenous variable for the purposes of the model exhibited the greatest variation out of the two endogenous variables (62%). Correlation analyses were used to assess the magnitude and direction of associations between environmental variables and cpue (Table 2).
Fig. 4. Trend of SST, Pr, SSS and SSC along SEAS for 1998-2016

Fig. 5. Trend of SOI and IOD for the period 1960-2016

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of cpue, Effort and environmental variables

| Variables | Mean    | SD       | Range               | CV (%) |
|-----------|---------|----------|---------------------|--------|
| Effort    | 6105.151| 2763.037 | 1443.088-14049.363  | 45.257 |
| cpue      | 2.327   | 1.445    | 0.525-6.636         | 62.117 |
| SST       | 27.552  | 1.060    | 25.448-29.173       | 3.849  |
| Pr        | 3.855   | 1.565    | 1.252-6.021         | 40.586 |
| SSS       | 31.569  | 0.466    | 30.507-32.340       | 1.475  |
| SSC       | 0.888   | 0.686    | 0.238-2.665         | 77.283 |
| SOI       | 24.654  | 13.364   | 2.333-55.0          | 54.206 |
| IOD       | 0.213   | 0.229    | -0.28-0.876         | 107.591|

SD : Standard Deviation; CV : Coefficient of Variation
Table 2. Correlation coefficients among cpue, Effort and environmental variables

| Parameter | cpue  | SST  | Pr   | SSS  | SSC  | SOI  | IOD  |
|-----------|-------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| cpue      | 1     |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| SST       | 0.232** | 1   |      |      |      |      |      |
| Pr        | 0.366*** | 0.822*** | 1   |      |      |      |      |
| SSS       | -0.159 | 0.129 | -0.035 | 1 |      |      |      |
| SSC       | 0.261* | 0.577*** | 0.785*** | -0.273* | 1 |      |      |
| SOI       | 0.133 | -0.092 | -0.124 | 0.046 | -0.114 | 1 |      |
| IOD       | 0.109 | 0.086 | 0.108 | -0.229* | -0.034 | 0.111 | 1 |

* Significant at p<0.1, **Significant at p<0.01 and *** Significant at p<0.001

Correlation analyses were used to assess the magnitude and direction of associations between environmental variables and cpue (Table 2). The cpue showed significant positive correlations with Pr (0.366, p<0.001), SSC (0.261, p<0.05) and SST (0.232, p<0.05). A significant negative correlation was observed between cpue and SSS (-0.159, p<0.05). Correlations between environmental variables were also observed. SSC showed significant correlations with SST (0.577, p<0.001), Pr (0.785, p<0.01) and SSC (-0.273, p<0.05). Pr was highly correlated with SST (0.822, p<0.001). IOD showed a significant association with SSS (0.229, p<0.05). SOI did not show any significant correlation with endogenous (cpue) or exogenous variables (environmental variables).

Even though Effort was not used in correlation analysis it was included in Path models so as to identify the indirect effects of climatic variables on cpue through Effort. The fit indices of the Path model identified were Chi-square (0.38, p=0.829), CFI (1), TLI (1), SRMR (0.008) and RMSEA (0.001). Fig. 6 shows the Path diagram of the selected Path model. The direct and indirect effects of environmental variables on cpue are shown in Table 3 along with the determination coefficients.

Table 3. Decomposition table showing direct and indirect effects of environmental variables and Effort on cpue

| Variable | Direct effect | Effort | SST | Pr | SSS | SSC | IOD | SOI | Total effect | Determination coefficient |
|----------|---------------|--------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------------|--------------------------|
| cpue     |               |        | 0   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | -0.284**    | 0.247                    |
| SST      | -0.282**      | -0.154*| 0.451* | 0.001 | 0.112 | -0.003 | 0   | 0   | 0.238*      | exogenous               |
| Pr       | 0.514***      | 0.193* | -0.246* | 0.001 | 0.112* | 0.001 | 0   | 0   | 0.232***    | 0.842                   |
| SSS      | -0.152**      | 0.078* | 0   | 0  | 0.003 | -0.002 | 0   | 0   | -0.076      | 0.057                   |
| SSC      | 0.011         | -0.229** | 0   | 0  | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0   | 0.218       | 0.77                     |
| IOD      | -0.006        | 0.047  | -0.001 | 0.074 | -0.035* | -0.001 | -0 | 0   | 0.113       | exogenous               |
| SOI      | 0.178***      | 0.01   | -0.018 | -0.089 | 0.001 | 0.001 | -0.003 | 0   | 0.124*      | exogenous               |

*Significant at p<0.1, **Significant at p<0.01 and ***Significant at p<0.001, Residual effect : 0.23 (cpue)

Fig. 6. Path diagram of selected Path model for cpue, Effort and environmental variables
Table 3. Decomposition table showing direct and indirect effects of environmental variables and Effort on cpue

| Variable | Direct effect | Indirect effect through Effort | Effort | SST | Pr | SSS | SSC | IOD | SOI |
|----------|---------------|--------------------------------|--------|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Effort   | -0.284***     | -0.282***                      | -0.154* | -0.451* | 0.001 | 0.112 | -0.003 | -0.001 | -0.284*** |
| SST      | -0.282***     | -0.154*                        | -0.451* | -0.001 | 0.001 | 0.112 | -0.003 | -0.001 | -0.284*** |
| Pr       | 0.514***      | 0.193*                         | -0.246* | -0.001 | 0.112* | 0.001 | 0.112* | 0.001 | 0.232*** |
| SSS      | 0.011         | -0.229**                       | 0.078*  | 0.003  | -0.002 | 0.001 | -0.001 | 0.001 | 0.113 |
| SSC      | -0.006        | 0.047                          | -0.001 | 0.074  | -0.035* | -0.001 | -0.001 | 0.001 | 0.124* |
| IOD      | 0.011         | 0.01                           | -0.018 | -0.088 | 0.001  | 0.001 | -0.003 | 0.001 | 0.113 |
| SOI      | 0.178***      | 0.178***                       | 0.178*** | 0.178*** | 0.178*** | 0.178*** | 0.178*** | 0.178*** | 0.178*** |

*Significant at p<0.1 , **Significant at p<0.01 and ***Significant at p<0.001, Residual effect : 0.23 (cpue)

Direct effects

The direct effect of Effort on cpue was high and negative (-0.284, p<0.001). Path coefficient analysis revealed that among the selected environmental variables, SST had the highest direct negative effect (-0.282, p<0.01), followed by SSS (-0.152, p<0.01). The highest positive direct effect on the cpue of Indian mackerel was exhibited by Pr (0.514, p<0.001). SST also had a low direct positive effect on cpue. The direct effect of IOD on cpue was weak and negative (-0.006, p<0.01). Conversely, SOI showed a significant direct positive effect on cpue (0.178, p<0.01).

Indirect effects

The path coefficient value of SST on cpue was found to be the result of strong positive indirect effects via Pr (0.451, p<0.01) and Effort (-0.154, p<0.05), followed by SSC, IOD and SSS. The effect of SST via SSS, SSC and IOD was found to be low and non-significant. The highest significant indirect effect of Pr was shown via SST (-0.246, p<0.05) followed by Effort (0.193, p<0.05) and SSC (0.112, p<0.05). The indirect effect of SSS exhibited via Effort was found to be significant (0.078, p<0.05), whereas the effect through SSC and IOD was non-significant. The indirect effect of SSC was mainly through Effort (-0.229, p<0.01). The total effect of IOD is the sum of indirect effect via Effort (0.047) and SSS (-0.035, p<0.05). The total effect of SOI was a result of the sum of indirect effects via Pr, Effort, IOD and SST. The determination coefficients of the causally dependent exogenous variables were obtained as Effort (0.247), Pr (0.842), SSS (0.057) and SSC (0.77).

Discussion

Correlation analysis revealed significant relations between cpue of Indian mackerel and environmental variables (Table 2). Path coefficient analysis revealed significant positive direct effect of Pr on the cpue of Indian mackerel. The positive effect of Pr may be due to reduction in SST, increase in salinity stratification, mixed layer depth, light availability and nutrient entrainment with increase in precipitation (rainfall). These may lead to increased Chl-a production as reported by Kim et al. (2014). Roxy et al. (2016) reported that the monsoonal wind forcing in the SEAS leads to a strong coastal upwelling, supplying nutrients to the surface and thereby elevating the rates of primary productivity.

Conversely, a significant change in SST can negatively affect the Chl-a production as reported by Behrenfeld et al. (2006). Moreover, temperature is considered to be the most important factor governing both metabolic and spawning activities in fishes. It has been reported that pelagic species are able to detect temperature variations causing them gravitate towards areas favourable to their metabolism, or detect areas of greater prey availability (Sund et al., 1981; Freon and Misund, 1999). On contrary, studies by Suprabha et al. (2016) revealed that Chl-a concentration has greater influence on the distribution of Indian mackerel compared to that of SST.

The direct path coefficient of SSS (-0.152) shows that the negative effect is moderate and significant. Salinity may directly influence the osmotic balance of the body fluid of fishes thereby influencing their distribution as reported by Pradhan and Reddy (1962). Additionally, studies by Silas (1974) show the importance of salinity in the survival of the larval stages of Indian mackerel. Furthermore, SSS has a significant role in the productivity of marine environment. Increases in salinity have been reported to affect the growth and distribution of phytoplankton (Sushanth and Rajashekhara, 2012) and zooplankton (Santangelo, 2014). The current investigation also reveals that SSS has a negative effect on cpue through SSC. SSC exhibits a strong indirect effect via Effort and an increase in SSC are reflected by a corresponding increase in Effort, strongly suggesting that the distribution of Indian mackerel is directly affected by the availability of food.

The positive and negative effects of SOI on cpue, Effort and other environmental variables were found to be counter-balanced by the effects of IOD. The direct
A correlation and path-coefficient analysis of selected environmental variables on the cpue of Indian mackerel was found to be positive, medium and significant, whereas the effect of IOD on cpue was weak and negative. IOD is shown to have negative indirect effect through SSS whereas the most significant effect of SOI is the direct effect that it exerts on cpue. The results clearly indicated that all the environmental variables exerted indirect effects on cpue through Effort. The direct effect of Effort on cpue was negative. The direct effect of SST, SSS and IOD on cpue was negative whereas the effects of Pr, SOI and SSS and SOI were positive. SST, SOI and IOD also exerted indirect effects on cpue through Pr, SSS and SSS. The study also indicates that there are likely to be unknown effects of other environmental variables on the fishery of Indian mackerel which once taken into consideration may refine the model results. Since cpue and Effort are considered as measures of abundance and distribution of fishes, the effect of environmental variables have a direct impact on their fishery. As Indian mackerel is one of the major fishery resources along the south-eastern coast of Arabian Sea, the influence of environmental variables on its landings under changing climatic conditions is expected to directly affect the livelihood of fishermen in the long run.

Acknowledgements

We express our sincere gratitude to the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), New Delhi for providing financial support for the study through the National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture (NICRA) project implemented at ICAR-CMFRI, Kochi. We are also grateful to the Director, ICAR-CMFRI, Kochi for providing facilities to carry out the study.

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