MORPHOMETRIC RELATIONS FOR BODY SIZE AND MOUTH DIMENSIONS FOR FOUR FISH SPECIES IN THE STRAIT OF GIBRALTAR

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Background. The deep-water longline fishery of the blackspot seabream, Pagellus bogaraveo, is an economically important fishery in the Strait of Gibraltar, which is a very complex transition ecosystem between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean with an extreme spatial and temporal variability. This paper presents a series of morphometric relations for the four most important species in this fishery. Some ecological considerations about the results are also discussed.

Materials and Methods. The data were collected during a gear selectivity study, using different sizes of hooks baited with sardine. Relations for weight–length, length–length, and mouth dimensions for blackspot seabream, Pagellus bogaraveo (Brünnich, 1768); Atlantic pomfret, Brama brama (Bonnaterre, 1788); blackbelly rosefish, Helicolenus dactylopterus (Delaroche, 1809); and Mediterranean horse mackerel, Trachurus mediterraneus (Steindachner, 1868) were estimated and compared with the ones reported for the same species from other areas.

Results. The sample size varied from 89 for T. mediterraneus to 2180 for P. bogaraveo. The fitted L–W relations explained more than 81% of the variance. For P. bogaraveo and T. mediterraneus, the estimated allometric coefficient was higher than those reported for other areas, showing a faster increase in weight, in contrast to H. dactylopterus and B. brama that showed a slower increase in weight. Moreover, linear and highly significant relations between mouth size and fish length were found for P. bogaraveo, H. dactylopterus, and T. mediterraneus.

Conclusions. In this study, the first record for total length–standard length relation for H. dactylopterus is reported based on real measurements. There has been no previous studies on the relation between the different mouth size dimensions for the studied species as well as for mouth size and body length relations for P. bogaraveo and H. dactylopterus. The difference between estimated and reported coefficients might be attributed to different environmental adaptations and to the size ranges used due to the gear-size selectivity.

Keywords: Weight–length, length–length, mouth dimensions, Strait of Gibraltar, Pagellus bogaraveo, Brama brama, Helicolenus dactylopterus, Trachurus mediterraneus

INTRODUCTION

Fish size is frequently considered more significant than fish age, mainly because many ecological and physiological factors depend more on the size than the age. Consequently, variability in fish size has important implications for diverse aspects of fisheries science and fish population dynamics (Erzin et al. 1997).

Length and weight data are standard in all fish sampling programs. Its because the knowledge of the length–weight relations is essential for different studies in biology, physiology, and ecology of natural and commercially exploited population of fishes. In this way, in the biological studies of not exploited populations, the analysis of length–weight relations allows to monitor the seasonal variations in the growth and the condition in fish populations. This helps to clarify the functional relations between the growth and the environmental conditions, which allows forecasting the variation of the population dynamics under different environmental scenarios (Gutiérrez-Estrada et al. 2000, Ritcher et al. 2000). On the other hand, in fisheries studies the length–weight relations are fundamental for the estimation of weight-at-age, the
calculation of yield and biomass, and are often used to estimate the stock current biomass (Petrakis and Stergiou 1995, Moutopoulos and Stergiou 2002).

However, an inadequate sampling design can result in substantial error in estimated parameters (length, weight) (Safran 1992). This is often due to the fact that most fisheries-based data consist largely of adult fish and smaller sizes and juveniles are poorly represented (Morato et al. 2001).

Several authors have reported different relation between mouth size and body size in marine fishes from mouth size dimensions as vertical and horizontal gapes or mouth area represented as an ellipse (Erzini et al. 1997, Karpouzi and Stergiou 2003) and related them to ecological and/or fisheries aspects.

This paper present a series of morphometric relations for four of the most important commercial species caught in a longline fishery in the Strait of Gibraltar. The Strait of Gibraltar is a very complex transition ecosystem between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean with an extreme spatial and temporal variability of physical, chemical, and biological characteristics. In this type of systems the analysis of these relations provides very relevant information because changes in morphometric relations can reflect changes in the ecosystem processes, such as productivity, energy pathways, disturbances regimes, abiotic stress, and overfishing.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Data source. The data were collected during three sampling campaigns carried out in the frames of a gear selectivity study in the Strait of Gibraltar, from December 1999 to July 2005. Three fishing trials were carried out using different hook sizes in a deep-water longline. Each main line consisted of 70 gangions and is attached to a small sinker and a 3.00 mm diameter monofilament line on a hydraulic bobbin. A 20-kg concrete ballast is attached to the end of the longline and is released and left on the bottom when the longline is hauled. The fishing was carried out on rocky bottoms at depths of up to 850 m. Usual fishing practices were observed (setting time, duration of set), using 5 hook sizes. The hooks were baited with standard sized pieces of European pilchard, Sardinia pilchardus (Walbaum), in all longline sets.

After the longlines were hauled, the fish caught were identified to the species level, and total length (TL), standard length (SL), and fork length (FL) recorded to the nearest mm. The fish were weighed on a 0.01 g precision balance. Mouth size was measured with a 0.01 mm precision gauge, taking the largest vertical and horizontal gape (VG and HG, respectively) with the mouth opened to the maximum.

The four most frequently caught species were used for this study: blackspot seabream, Pagellus bogaraveo (Brünnich, 1768); Atlantic pomfret, Brama brama (Bonnaterre, 1788); blackbelly rosefish, Helicolenus dactylopterus (Delaroche, 1809); and Mediterranean horse mackerel, Trachurus mediterraneus (Steindachner, 1868). Data for B. brama, H. dactylopterus and T. mediterraneus are from the three fishing trials.

Length–weight analysis. Following Santos et al. (2002), a power curve (Equation 1) was fitted to the L–W data:

\[ W = al^b \] (1)

This equation can also be expressed in its logarithmic form (Equation 2):

\[ \log W = \log a + b \log L \] (2)

where: \( W \) is the total weight [g], \( L \) is the total length [mm], \( a \) is the intercept (initial growth coefficient or condition factor), and \( b \) the slope (growth coefficient, i.e., fish relative growth rate). In equation 1, \( a \) is weight \times length\(^b\) units, and \( b \) is a dimensionless constant (Xiao 1998).

Parameters \( a \) and \( b \) of the \( L–W \) relation were estimated by linear regression analysis (least-squares method). Measures were log-transformed in order to eliminate any effect of ‘scale’, to keep relations linear and their variances comparable. The degree of association between variables (\( L \) and \( W \)) was assessed by the coefficient of determination (\( r^2 \)). Statistical significance level was estimated with a one-way analysis of the variance (ANOVA).

The allometry coefficient is expressed by the slope \( b \) of the linear regression equation. In the relations between different types of variables (size and weight), the \( L–W \) relation reflects an isometric growth when \( b = 3 \), where the relative growth of both variables is perfectly identical (Mayrat 1970).

Statistically significant differences of the estimated values of \( b \) from the isometric value were confirmed using Student’s \( t \)-test in which the null hypothesis was that \( b = 3 \) (Equation 3), with a confidence level of 99% (Sokal and Rohlf 1987):

\[ t_s = (b - 3) \times (S_b)^{-1} \] (3)

where: \( t_s \) is the value of the Student’s \( t \)-test, \( b \) the obtained slope and \( S_b \) the standard error for the slope.

Length–length analysis. The relations between the different length measurements were estimated by fitting the data to the following linear model (Equation 4):

\[ (FL, SL) = a + b (TL, FL) \] (4)

where: TL is the total length, FL the fork length, SL the standard length (all of them in mm), \( a \) is the intercept, and \( b \) the slope.

Mouth size dimensions analysis. Fish mouth area was calculated following the ellipse model proposed by Erzini et al. (1997) (Equation 5):

\[ MA = 0.25\pi (VG \times HG) \] (5)

where: \( MA \) [mm\(^2\)] is the ellipse area, \( VG \) and HG [mm] are the vertical and horizontal mouth gapes respectively.

The relations between fish mouth dimensions were estimated by the following equation (Equation 6):

\[ (VG, HG) = a + b (HG, MA) \] (6)

where: \( a \) is the intercept and \( b \) the slope.

Mouth size–body length analysis. The relation between mouth size and fish body length was estimated by fitting the following equation (Equation 7) to the data:

\[ (VG, HG, MA) = a + b (TL, FL, SL) \] (7)

where: VG, HG, and MA are the different measures of mouth size, TL, FL, and SL are the fish lengths, \( a \) is the
The above relations were estimated when absolute Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient ($r$) was higher than 0.70. Parameters $a$ and $b$ of the above relations were estimated using linear regression analysis (least-square method) and the degree of association between variables was assessed by the coefficient of determination ($r^2$). One-way analysis of the variance (ANOVA) was used to evaluate statistical significance. For estimating mouth size and body length relations there were also tested root square and logarithmic transformation of the variables, but in all cases $r^2$ values estimated without transformation of the variables were equal or higher. Therefore, simple linear relations were selected in favour of the simplicity of the model.

**RESULTS**

Table 1 shows the results of fits of the $L–W$ relation for the four fish species studied (Fig. 1), along with parameters estimated from other studies. The sample size varied from 89 for *T. mediterraneus* to 2180 for *P. bogaraveo*. All the relations were highly significant (ANOVA, $P < 0.001$), with explained variance levels higher than 80%. Slope values varied from 2.843 for *B. brama* to 3.239 for *P. bogaraveo*, whereas the latter was higher than the estimates reported from other areas. The Student’s $t$-test result ($t = 26.55$, $P = 0$) confirmed the positive allometry in this case. Likewise, $b$ values for *T. mediterraneus* in the Strait of Gibraltar (3.146) was higher than other estimated values from other areas (Table 1). In this case, the Student’s $t$-test also confirmed the positive allometry ($t = 3.946$, $P = 0$). On the other hand, for *H. dactylopterus* and *B. brama* the estimated $b$ values were lower compared with other areas, but the Student’s $t$-test showed no significant difference with the isometric value ($t = 2.580$, $P = 0.010$; and $t = 2.437$, $P = 0.015$, respectively).

The parameters of the length–length relations for the four species are shown in Table 2, along with those reported by other authors. All relations were highly significant (ANOVA, $P < 0.001$), with explained variances of more than 90%. Fig. 2 shows the dispersions of the fork- and standard length by total length for all species.

For the mouth size dimensions, only three species (*P. bogaraveo*, *T. mediterraneus*, and *H. dactylopterus*) showed an absolute $r^2$ values higher than 0.70 between the different dimensions used (VG, HG, MA, TL, FL, and SL).

The estimated linear relations between the different mouth-size dimensions for these three species had, in most cases, explained variances higher than 80%, except for the relations between VG and HG for *T. mediterraneus* and *H. dactylopterus* ($r^2$ values of 0.78 and 0.69, respectively). All relations were highly significant (ANOVA, $P < 0.01$) (Table 3).

Mouth size and body length estimated relations had explained variances levels lower than 80% only in the VG and body length relation for *T. mediterraneus* and *H. dactylopterus*, and in the MA and body length relation for *H. dactylopterus*. All relations were highly significant (ANOVA, $P < 0.01$). The results are shown in Table 4.

**DISCUSSION**

The sample of fishes used in this study does not include juveniles or very small individuals, possibly due to the fishing gear size selectivity, or perhaps to the fishing depth and area, and therefore the estimated relations should be limited to the size range used in the estimation of the linear regression parameters (Petrakis and Stergiou 1995, Santos et al. 2002). Several authors have noted that it is particularly dangerous to extrapolate morphometric relations based on adult fish to fish larvae, younger or immature stages (Bagenal and Tesch 1978, Safran 1992). Moreover, given that the samples were collected during four years and seasons, the estimates should therefore be considered as average values (Petrakis and Stergiou 1995, Gonçalves et al. 1997, Santos et al. 2002).

The initial condition factor ($a$) and allometric coefficient ($b$) can be related to the ecological process and to the vital history (Stearns and Crandall 1984, Wootton 1990). A high allometric coefficient implies that the species gains weight faster than it grows in length. The fitted $L–W$ relations explained more than 81% of the variance. For *P. bogaraveo* and *T. mediterraneus* the $b$ values were higher than those from other areas, showing a faster increase in weight, in contrast, with *H. dactylopterus* and *B. brama* that showed slower increase in weight. In fact, $L–W$ relations are not constant, and can vary according to many factors, like temperature, salinity, food availability, sex, gonadal development, spawning season, and feeding rate and coefficients $a$ and $b$ also vary between species, and sometimes between stocks of the same species (Stearns and Crandall 1984, Wootton 1990). During their growth, fishes pass through different stages, and it would be difficult to have $L–W$ estimates for all individual stages. There can also exist differences between seasons and/or days (because of changes in the stomach content) (Bagenal and Tesch 1978). However, Mayrat (1970) considered that the coefficient $b$ is characteristic of each species and usually does not vary significantly along years. In this case, the difference between estimated and reported coefficients might be also attributed to the size-ranges used (15–58 cm) due to differences in gear and gear-size selectivity. For *T. mediterraneus*, the range of sizes used in the equation regression, without individuals between 32 and 40 cm of total length, that can also affect the estimated coefficients.

There has been no previous studies on the relation between the different mouth size dimensions (vertical and horizontal gape, and mouth area) for the studied species as well as for mouth size and body length relations for *P. bogaraveo* and *H. dactylopterus*. In the case of *T. mediterraneus*, a linear relation between horizontal gape and total body length was reported by Karpouzi and Stergiou (2003). These authors reported that in Aegean Sea total body length of Mediterranean horse mackerel explained the 58% of the size gape variability (horizontal mouth gape). This contrast with the results of this study in
Table 1

Estimated parameters for the $L-W$ relations ($W = aTL^b$) for *Pagellus bogaraveo*, *Trachurus mediterraneus*, *Helicolenus dactylopterus*, and *Brama brama* in the Strait of Gibraltar (presently reported study and estimates from literature sources); for all cases $P < 0.001$

| Species         | Source                  | Locality        | $n$  | Sex  | $a$  | $b$  | $S_b$ | $r^2$ | t test result          |
|-----------------|-------------------------|-----------------|------|------|------|------|-------|-------|-------------------------|
| *P. bogaraveo*  | Presently reported study|                 | 2180 | unsexed | 0.001 | 3.239 | 0.009 | 0.970 | +Allometric              |
|                 | Aleizar 1987            | Cantabrian Sea  | 360  | mixed | 0.009 | 3.158 |       | 0.984 |                        |
|                 | Coull et al. 1989       | UK              | 6    | unsexed | 0.008 | 3.212 |       |       |                        |
|                 | Krug 1989               | ICES VI–VIII    | 360  | unsexed | 0.141 | 3.079 |       |       |                        |
|                 | Krug 1989               | Azores          | 360  | unsexed | 0.149 | 3.137 |       |       |                        |
|                 | Campillo 1992           | Lyon Gulf       | 872  | unsexed | 0.007 | 3.209 |       |       |                        |
|                 | Campillo 1992           | Lyon Gulf       | 872  | females | 0.009 | 3.138 |       |       |                        |
|                 | Gonçalves et al. 1997   | Portugal        | 57   | unsexed | 0.021 | 2.891 |       |       |                        |
|                 | Stergiou and Moutopoulos 2001 | Aegean Sea | 649  | mixed | 0.021 | 2.926 | 0.959 |       |                        |
|                 | Mendes et al. 2004      | Portugal        | 30   | unsexed | 0.014 | 3.001 | 0.918 |       |                        |
|                 | Gil 2006                | Strait of Gibraltar | 1041 | unsexed | 0.014 | 3.014 | 0.990 |       |                        |
| *T. mediterraneus* | Presently reported study |                 | 89   | unsexed | 0.001 | 3.146 | 0.037 | 0.988 | +Allometric              |
|                 | Djabali et al. 1993     | Algeria         | 103  | female | 0.014 | 3.000 |       |       |                        |
|                 | Djabali et al. 1993     | Algeria         | 103  | male   | 0.013 | 3.000 |       |       |                        |
|                 | Dulcic and Kraljevic 1996 | Croatia   | 17   | unsexed | 0.015 | 2.996 | 0.988 |       |                        |
| *H. dactylopterus* | Merella et al. 1997     | Balearic Islands | 232  | unsexed | 0.014 | 2.760 | 0.999 |       |                        |
|                 | Stergiou and Moutopoulos 2001 | Cyclades | 485  | mixed | 0.010 | 2.900 | 0.979 |       |                        |
|                 | Stergiou and Moutopoulos 2001 | Greece  | 81   | mixed | 0.020 | 2.804 | 0.969 |       |                        |
|                 | Moutopoulos and Stergiou 2002 | Cyclades | 191  | mixed | 0.014 | 2.824 | 0.063 | 0.92 | –Allometric             |
|                 | Koutrakis and Tsikiras 2003 | Aegean Sea | 21   | unsexed | 0.012 | 2.908 | 0.977 |       |                        |
| *B. brama*      | Presently reported study |                 | 293  | unsexed | 0.001 | 2.871 | 0.050 | 0.919 | Isometric               |
|                 | Dorel 1986              | Celtic Sea      | 214  | unsexed | 0.010 | 3.091 | 0.998 |       |                        |
|                 | Merella et al. 1997     | Balearic Islands | 103  | unsexed | 0.013 | 3.040 | 0.997 |       |                        |
|                 | Monteiro et al. 1991    | Azores          | 105  | mixed | 0.010 | 3.144 | 0.997 |       |                        |
|                 | Massuti et al. 2000     | Western Mediterranean | 2366 | mixed | 0.001 | 3.020 | 0.990 |       |                        |
|                 | Portela et al. 2002     | Uruguay         | 183  | females | 0.014 | 3.064 |       |       |                        |
|                 | Portela et al. 2002     | Uruguay         | 146  | males  | 0.007 | 3.256 |       |       |                        |
|                 | Mendes et al. 2004      | Portugal        | 102  | unsexed | 0.009 | 3.216 | 0.902 |       |                        |

$n$, sample size; $a$ and $b$ are the parameters of the relation, $S_b$ is the standard error of $b$ estimation; $r^2$ is the coefficient of determination. $n$, sample size; $a$ and $b$ are the parameters of the relation, $S$ is the standard error for the slope $b$; $r^2$ is the coefficient of determination.
which, the body size explained the 83% of mouth size variability. In spite of this, in both cases the size of the gape increased linearly with body length, the slope of the regression line differed between both study areas. In the Strait of Gibraltar the Mediterranean horse mackerel had significantly bigger gapes relative to their body length than in the Aegean Sea.

This pattern is similar to that found in northern pike, *Esox lucius* L. where the mouth size was correlated with body length on different lakes in Sweden (Magnhagen and Heibo 2001). Between different species, the variation in size of the feeding apparatus is commonly explained as an adaptation to the type of prey to enhance the ability of the predator to capture and ingest its prey. Nevertheless, when morphological variations are found within a species, there can be alternatives to the adaptation hypothesis, as discussed by Forsman and Shine (1997). Magnan (1988), Walker (1997), and Svanbäck (2004) indicated that inter-population variation in mouth morphology is usually correlated with differences in the availability of resources either through with other species or by geographical differences in ecological conditions such as water temperature, salinity, and food supply. Similar conclusions have been drawn for other corporal structures and even for the body shape. For example, Ehlinger and Wilson (1998) reported that in bluegill, *Lepomis macrochirus* Rafinesque, 1819, the body shape seemed to be habitat-specific. Also, Karpouzi and Stergiou (2003) indicated that mouth fish morphology plays an important role in determining the type of prey consumed, while morphological variations can lead to changes in foraging ability and subsequently differential exploitation of food resources. In this way, the most probable explanation for the differences in mouth size in relation to body length found between the Mediterranean horse mackerel populations of the Strait of Gibraltar and the Aegean Sea is a combination between adaptations to the prey type and environmental features of each study area.

To compare the results of different authors, the use of different mouth size measurements for different analyses can be confusing, if there are no previous reports on the different mouth size dimensions relation, as occurs with the different body length measurements (total-, fork-, and standard length).

Fig. 1. Length–weight relations \( (W = aTL^b) \) for *Pagellus bogaraveo*, *Trachurus mediterraneus*, *Helicolenus dactylopterus*, and *Brama brama*; \( n \), sample size; \( r^2 \), coefficient of determination; \( P \), significance value.
Table 2

Morphometric relations between total- (TL, cm), fork- (FL, cm), and standard (SL, cm) length for *Pagellus bogaraveo*, *Trachurus mediterraneus*, *Helicolenus dactylopterus*, and *Brama brama* in the Strait of Gibraltar (presently reported study and estimates from literature sources)

| Species | Source | Locality | n  | y   | a   | b   | x   | r²  | Sex  |
|---------|--------|----------|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| **P. bogaraveo*** | Presently reported study | FL | 2180 | -0.731 | 0.910 | TL | 0.99 | unsexed |
| | Presently reported study | SL | 2180 | -0.876 | 0.792 | TL | 0.93 | unsexed |
| | Presently reported study | SL | 2180 | -0.322 | 0.873 | FL | 0.95 | unsexed |
| | Alcázar 1987 | Cantabrian Sea | 200 | SL | -0.903 | 0.829 | TL | 0.99 | mixed |
| | Alcázar 1987 | Cantabrian Sea | 200 | SL | -0.227 | 0.831 | TL | 0.99 | males |
| | Alcázar 1987 | Cantabrian Sea | 200 | SL | -0.003 | 0.830 | TL | 0.99 | females |
| | Krug 1989 | Azores | FL | -0.463 | 0.900 | TL | unsexed |
| | Krug 1989 | Azores | SL | -3.180 | 0.924 | TL | 0.99 | unsexed |
| | Krug 1989 | Azores | TL | -0.043 | 1.132 | FL | unsexed |
| | Presently reported study | FL | 88 | 0.131 | 0.894 | TL | 0.99 | unsexed |
| | Presently reported study | SL | 85 | -1.037 | 0.840 | TL | 0.99 | unsexed |
| | Presently reported study | SL | 86 | -1.142 | 0.939 | FL | 0.99 | unsexed |
| | Moutopoulos and Stergiou 2002 | Aegean Sea | 154 | FL | 1.090 | 0.840 | TL | >0.93 | unsexed |
| | Moutopoulos and Stergiou 2002 | Aegean Sea | 154 | SL | -0.320 | 0.960 | FL | >0.93 | unsexed |
| | Moutopoulos and Stergiou 2002 | Aegean Sea | 154 | SL | 0.460 | 0.820 | TL | >0.93 | unsexed |
| | Smith-Vainz 1986 | FL | 0.000 | 0.875 | TL | unsexed |
| | Smith-Vainz 1986 | SL | 0.000 | 0.934 | FL | unsexed |
| | Smith-Vainz 1986 | SL | 0.000 | 0.817 | TL | unsexed |
| **T. mediterraneus*** | Presently reported study | FL | 293 | -0.625 | 0.834 | TL | 0.97 | unsexed |
| | Froese and Pauly 2007 | SL | 1 | 0.000* | 0.829* | TL | unsexed |
| | Froese and Pauly 2007 | SL | 11 | 0.045* | 0.839* | TL | 0.99 | unsexed |
| | Presently reported study | FL | 463 | 2.370 | 0.764 | TL | 0.91 | unsexed |
| | Presently reported study | SL | 464 | 0.558 | 0.695 | TL | 0.92 | unsexed |
| | Presently reported study | SL | 467 | -0.805 | 0.885 | FL | 0.98 | unsexed |
| | Froese and Pauly 2007 | FL | 1 | 0.000* | 0.778* | TL | unsexed |
| | Froese and Pauly 2007 | SL | 1 | 0.000* | 0.886* | FL | unsexed |
| | Froese and Pauly 2007 | SL | 1 | 0.000* | 0.690* | TL | unsexed |
| | Froese and Pauly 2007 | TL | 1 | 0.000* | 1.127* | FL | unsexed |
| | Froese and Pauly 2007 | TL | 1 | 0.000* | 1.212* | SL | unsexed |
| | Lobo and Erzini 2001 | Portugal | 234 | TL | 0.716 | 1.205 | FL | 0.97 | unsexed |

* Based on photo measurements; n, sample size; a and b, parameters of the linear regression analysis; r², coefficient of determination.
Fig. 2. Length–length relations \((Y = a + bX)\) between fork- and standard lengths with total body length for *Pagellus bogaraveo*, *Trachurus mediterraneus*, *Helicolenus dactylopterus*, and *Brama brama*; \(n\), sample size; \(r^2\), coefficient of determination; \(P\), significance value.
### Table 3

Relations between different mouth size dimensions of *Pagellus bogaraveo*, *Trachurus mediterraneus*, and *Helicolenus dactylopterus* in the Strait of Gibraltar

| Species               | n     | y     | a     | b     | x     | r²  |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| *P. bogaraveo*        | 1960  | VG    | 1.562 | 0.864 | HG    | 0.90|
|                       |       | VG    | 19.330| 0.014 | MA    | 0.96|
|                       |       | HG    | 21.699| 0.016 | MA    | 0.97|
| *T. mediterraneus*    | 54    | VG    | 18.930| 0.540 | HG    | 0.78|
|                       |       | VG    | 27.104| 0.010 | MA    | 0.92|
|                       |       | HG    | 21.134| 0.016 | MA    | 0.94|
| *H. actylopterus*     | 282   | VG    | 20.977| 0.656 | HG    | 0.69|
|                       |       | VG    | 34.372| 0.009 | MA    | 0.86|
|                       |       | HG    | 25.366| 0.012 | MA    | 0.93|

*n*, sample size; *a* and *b*, parameters of the linear regression analysis; *r²*, coefficient of determination; VG, vertical mouth gape; HG, horizontal mouth gape; MA, mouth area.

### Table 4

Relation between mouth size and total body length for *Pagellus bogaraveo*, *Trachurus mediterraneus*, and *Helicolenus dactylopterus* in the Strait of Gibraltar

| Species               | n     | y     | a     | b     | x     | r²  |
|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----|
| *P. bogaraveo*        | 2134  | VG    | 1.175 | 0.101 | TL    | 0.88|
|                       |       | VG    | 2.357 | 0.110 | FL    | 0.88|
|                       |       | VG    | 4.569 | 0.120 | SL    | 0.84|
| 1960                  | HG    | 1.593 | 0.110 | TL    | 0.89|
|                       | HG    | 2.866 | 0.120 | FL    | 0.89|
|                       | HG    | 4.746 | 0.134 | SL    | 0.89|
|                       | MA    | -1237.75 | 7.025 | TL    | 0.90|
|                       | MA    | -1199.04 | 7.679 | FL    | 0.91|
|                       | MA    | -1091.98 | 8.588 | SL    | 0.88|
| *T. mediterraneus*    | 80    | VG    | 23.726| 0.059 | TL    | 0.77|
|                       | VG    | 24.007| 0.064 | FL    | 0.75|
|                       | VG    | 24.679| 0.069 | SL    | 0.76|
| 54                    | HG    | 15.390| 0.092 | TL    | 0.83|
|                       | HG    | 15.297| 0.103 | FL    | 0.83|
|                       | HG    | 17.025| 0.108 | SL    | 0.82|
|                       | MA    | -372.255 | 5.813 | TL    | 0.88|
|                       | MA    | -379.383 | 6.496 | FL    | 0.89|
|                       | MA    | -274.386 | 6.841 | SL    | 0.87|
| *H. dactylopterus*    | 282   | VG    | 7.222 | 0.188 | TL    | 0.72|
|                       | VG    | 12.195| 0.209 | SL    | 0.65|
|                       | HG    | 0.121 | 0.254 | TL    | 0.90|
|                       | HG    | 2.173 | 0.313 | SL    | 0.90|
|                       | MA    | -2319.35 | 18.512 | TL    | 0.60|
|                       | MA    | -1729.37 | 20.11 | SL    | 0.50|

*n*, sample size; *a* and *b*, parameters of the linear regression analysis; *r²*, coefficient of determination; VG, vertical mouth gape; HG, horizontal mouth gape; MA, mouth area; TL, total length; FL, fork length; SL, standard length.
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