

Influencing the environmental factors on the abundance of puerulus *Panulirus homarus* in the Mentawai Islands, West Sumatra, Indonesia

SUPARNO^{1,*}, YUSRA¹, AMELIA SRIWAHYUNI LUBIS², AIDY FITRI YUSEN VIZA¹

¹Department of Fishery Resources Utilization, Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences, Universitas Bung Hatta. Jl. Sumatera Ulak Karang, Padang 25133, West Sumatra, Indonesia. Tel./fax.: +62-751-7055475, *email: suparnoprano@bunghatta.ac.id

²Department of Aquaculture, Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences, Universitas Bung Hatta. Jl. Sumatera Ulak Karang, Padang 25133, West Sumatra, Indonesia

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Abstract. Suparno, Yusra, Lubis AS, Viza AFY. 2024. Influencing the environmental factors on the abundance of puerulus *Panulirus homarus* in the Mentawai Islands, West Sumatra, Indonesia. *Biodiversitas* 25: 3758-3767. The lobster puerulus, the final larval stage of the spiny lobster, is significantly influenced by environmental factors, making it crucial for sustainable aquaculture development. This study aimed to analyze how these factors affect the abundance of puerulus *Panulirus homarus* (Linnaeus, 1758) in the Mentawai Islands, West Sumatra, Indonesia has practical implications for aquaculture. A one-way analysis of variance revealed that the temporal period significantly impacts the abundance of puerulus *P. homarus* ($P < 0.05$). In February (west season), the abundance was not significantly different from April (transition season I), but both differed significantly from June (east season). The highest abundance occurred in June (33.8 ± 4.21 ind/trip), followed by April (27.00 ± 5.00 ind/trip) and February (23.20 ± 2.22 ind/trip). Regression analysis showed that temperature ($R^2 = 0.8111$), salinity ($R^2 = 0.5158$), and phosphate ($R^2 = 0.5492$) strongly correlated with puerulus abundance. In contrast, chlorophyll-a ($R^2 = 0.2236$), nitrate ($R^2 = 0.4136$), and sea current velocity ($R^2 = 0.0223$) were less significant. These results emphasize the importance of temperature, salinity, and phosphate as key factors influencing puerulus distribution, providing valuable insights for sustainable aquaculture. Environmental parameters were observed using Aqua Modis satellite imagery. They included Sea Surface Temperature (SST), chlorophyll-a concentration, and current velocity, showing a good correlation with field measurements from the Copernicus Marine Environment Monitoring Service (CMEMs).

Keywords: Abundance, environmental factors, Mentawai Islands, puerulus

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia, as the largest archipelagic country in the world, has very high marine biodiversity and plays an important role in the global marine ecosystem (Hasan and Islam 2020; Hasan et al. 2022; Deswati et al. 2023; Suparno et al. 2023; Lelono et al. 2024). One of the high-value marine commodities is lobster, especially the puerulus type, which is the final larval stage of lobster (Clark et al. 2015; Masitah et al. 2023; Kismiyati et al. 2024). Lobster puerulus has a crucial ecological role in the lobster life cycle because, at this stage, they act as indicators of the health of coral reef ecosystems and other coastal habitats (Groeneveld et al. 2003; McManus et al. 2021; Amin et al. 2022a). The presence of lobster puerulus reflects good environmental conditions, such as water quality and abundance of plankton as a food source (Selgrath et al. 2007; Amin et al. 2022b). Therefore, the management and utilization of lobster puerulus are not only important for the sustainability of lobster resources but also for maintaining the ecological balance and function of marine ecosystems in Indonesia (Goldstein et al. 2017; Larasati et al. 2018).

In Indonesia, there is potential to establish a lobster farming industry similar to Vietnam's, given the significant pueruli resources identified (Ye et al. 2005; Cavieres and Nicolis 2018). However, in 2015, the Indonesian spiny

lobster aquaculture industry underwent a significant change when a new policy imposed a 200 g minimum legal size for spiny lobsters that could be caught and traded, effectively prohibiting the capture of pueruli for all species (Erlania et al. 2016; Setyagama et al. 2023). Furthermore, in 2016, another policy was announced, banning grow-out activities involving spiny lobsters (Lubis et al. 2023). By restricting access to pueruli and grow-out opportunities, these regulations have hindered the ability of Indonesian lobster farmers to develop a sustainable grow-out industry. Although the new policies were intended to increase the abundance of adult lobsters, there is no evidence (no increased fishery catch) that they have been successful (Clark et al. 2015; Priyambodo et al. 2020).

The Mentawai Islands, off the coast of West Sumatra, offer ideal conditions for marine conservation, known for their clear waters and diverse coral reefs, which serve as natural habitats for marine species like puerulus lobsters (Hedberg et al. 2018; Nizinski et al. 2023). These healthy coral reefs indicate a balanced and productive ecosystem, making the Mentawai Islands a key area for marine conservation research in Indonesia (Rizal and Dewanti 2017). However, information on the abundance and distribution of puerulus lobsters in this region remains limited. Accurate data on these populations are crucial for developing sustainable management strategies (Priyambodo et al. 2020; Filippi et al. 2024). Water quality, including

physical, chemical, and biological parameters, plays a vital role in the survival and distribution of marine organisms like puerulus lobsters (Suparno et al. 2023). Variations in these parameters, influenced by both natural factors and human activities, can significantly impact marine populations. Therefore, understanding the relationship between water quality and puerulus lobster abundance is essential for effective conservation (Watson et al. 2016; Hutchinson et al. 2024). Furthermore, understanding the ecological and environmental drivers of puerulus lobster abundance in the Mentawai Islands is essential for informing both local and national marine policy (Priyambodo et al. 2020; Filippi et al. 2024).

Integrating scientific research on water quality parameters—such as salinity, temperature, dissolved oxygen, and nutrient levels—can provide a comprehensive assessment of habitat suitability for puerulus lobsters and help predict population fluctuations in response to environmental changes (Bright and Gueymard 2019; Purba et al. 2020). Sustainable conservation area development requires a holistic approach that considers various environmental and ecological factors. By knowing the relationship between water quality and the abundance of puerulus lobsters, cultivation practices can be developed that not only increase production but also maintain ecosystem balance (Priyambodo et al. 2020; Suparno et al. 2023). Environmentally friendly cultivation practices will ensure that aquaculture activities do not cause environmental degradation that can endanger marine ecosystems in the long term. Sustainable aquaculture development is also expected to provide economic benefits to the surrounding community, improving their welfare without sacrificing environmental sustainability (Rizal and Dewanti 2017). This study aimed to analyze the influence of environmental factors on the abundance of puerulus *P. homarus* in the Mentawai Islands, West Sumatra, Indonesia.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Study area and data sources

The research was conducted in the waters of the Mentawai Islands, West Sumatra, specifically in Tapak 1

Bay, Tapak 2, and Bake Bay (Figure 1), from January to June 2024. Description of sampling stations, namely location and coordinates, is presented in Table 1. This study utilized daily Chl-a and semi-daily SST products from Aqua MODIS Level 3 (<https://oceancolor.gsfc.nasa.gov/l3/>), with a spatial resolution of 4 km. The data collected included monthly and 8-day intervals for each temporal period: the west season (2nd, 10th, 18th, and 26th of February), transition season I (5th, 13th, 21st, and 29th of April), and east season (3rd, 11th, 19th and 27th of June) (Ouzounov et al. 2004; Bright and Gueymard 2019). Additionally, data on currents, nitrate, phosphate, and salinity, with a spatial resolution of a quarter (¼) degree (27.83 km), were obtained using CMEMS (Copernicus Marine Environment Monitoring Service) (<https://data.marine.copernicus.eu/>) (Tama et al. 2007; Aulicino et al. 2021).

Data collection

The research utilized spiny lobster puerulus larvae as the primary material for investigation. The equipment employed encompassed a variety of tools such as lobster seed collectors, fishing boats, cameras, life jackets, writing instruments, Global Positioning System (GPS) for geospatial positioning of observation stations, thermometers for temperature measurements, refractometer for salinity assessments, digital oxygen meter for dissolved oxygen quantification, secchi disk for brightness evaluations, current-meter for current speed determinations, pH Meter for pH level examinations, sample bottles, net plankton, microscope, and satellite data for comprehensive analysis. These tools were indispensable in facilitating the collection of data and ensuring the accuracy of the research findings.

Table 1. Description of sampling station

Station	Location name	Coordinate
1	Tapak 1 Bay	100°15'34"E; 3°03'41"S
2	Tapak 2 Bay	100°15'19"E; 3°03'53"S
3	Bake Bay	100°14'50"E; 3°03'28"S

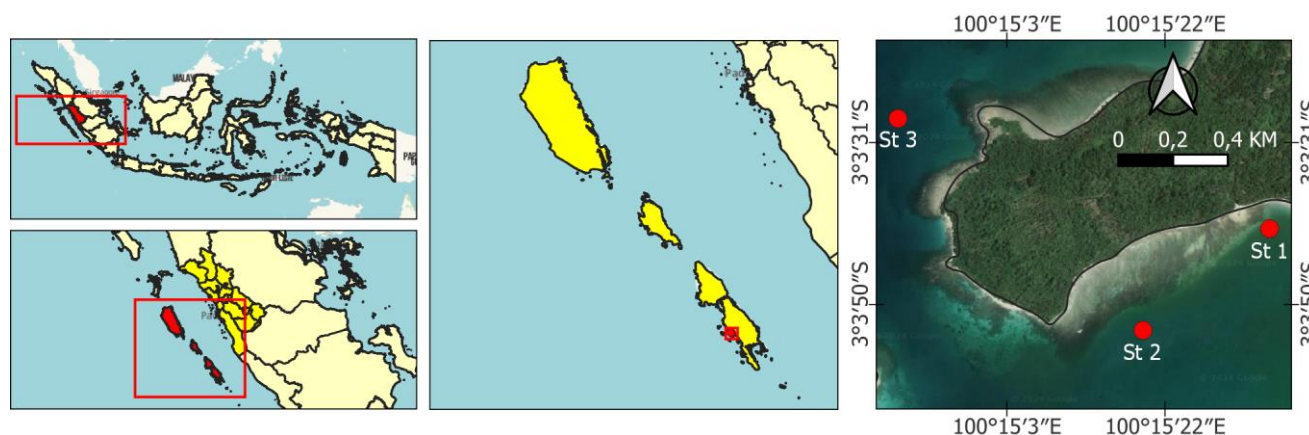


Figure 1. Research location in Mentawai Islands, West Sumatra, Indonesia. St 1: Tapak 1 Bay; St 2: Tapak 2 Bay; St 3: Bake Bay

The primary data gathered in this study pertains to the quantity of lobster seeds or puerulus obtained from fishermen's catches. At the same time, the supplementary data includes various physical and chemical characteristics of the aquatic environments under examination. Observing lobster larvae or seeds involves using a specialized collection tool called "pocong." The height of the pocong is 50 cm, the diameter is around 30 cm, and the mesh size is around 0.5 cm. Light is used to attract lobster larvae to the designated raft location, exploiting their phototaxis behavior. Then, to analyze monthly distribution patterns and abundance variations, the total count of lobster larvae or seeds at each monitoring site was recorded over three months. The seed data represents the combined total from all collectors at each specific station.

The evaluation of various physical, chemical, and biological aspects of water involves the measurement of parameters such as temperature, salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen levels, water flow rate, nitrate (NO₃-N), phosphate (PO₄-P), and chlorophyll-1 concentration. Field measurements were conducted for temperature, salinity, pH, dissolved oxygen, and water flow rate using tools such as a refractometer, pH meter, dissolved oxygen meter, Secchi disk, and current meter. In comparison, the analysis of nitrate (NO₃-N) and phosphate (PO₄-P) levels required water sample collection for laboratory testing. Furthermore, data on Sea Surface Temperature (SST) and chlorophyll-a concentration from satellite imagery were obtained from the NASA Ocean Color Web platform at <https://oceancolor.gsfc.nasa.gov/13/>, while information on current velocities was obtained from the CMEMs (Copernicus Marine Environment Monitoring Service) in <https://data.marine.copernicus.eu/>.

Satellite image data processing

Sea Surface Temperature (SST) and chlorophyll-a data were acquired from Aqua-MODIS (Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer) Level 3 composite satellite imagery, which had a spatial resolution of 4 km on a monthly basis spanning from August 2020 to October 2020 (Ciancia et al. 2018). The data was sourced from <http://oceancolor.gsfc.nasa.gov/> in Network Common Data Form (NetCDF) format. Concurrently, measurements of current, nitrate, phosphate, and salinity were obtained with a spatial resolution of a quarter (1/4) degree (equivalent to 27.83km) from the CMEMs (Copernicus Marine Environment Monitoring Service) portal

(<https://data.marine.copernicus.eu/>) (Aznar et al. 2016). This dataset exhibits a strong correlation with argo measurements conducted in the field. Moreover, the data was meticulously arranged and scrutinized using Ocean Data View, employing DIVA gridding interpolation to assess the magnitude of each parameter.

Data analysis

To determine the effect of environmental factors on the abundance of puerulus *P. homarus* in the waters, a one way variance analysis was carried out. While analyzing the relationship between environmental factors in the waters and lobster puerulus settlements, a regression analysis was carried out. Analysis of variance and linear regression were carried out using SPSS 26.0 software. This study used puerulus settlements as dependent variables, with temperature, chlorophyll-a, salinity, phosphate, nitrate, and current speed as independent variables. The condition of the aquatic environment was analyzed using Ocean data view using DIVA gridding interpolation to view the values of all observed environmental parameters.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Influence of temporal period on the abundance of puerulus lobsters

This specimen is the puerulus stage of *P. homarus*, which is characterized by a body color that is still transparent and the morphology of the specimen's body does not have pigmentation. The antennae from the tip to the base have black dots (alternating) and the antennae do not light up when exposed to light. The figure of the puerulus is seen in Figure 2. Based on the results of a one-way analysis of variance, the temporal period significantly affects the abundance of puerulus *P. homarus* ($P < 0.05$). The abundance of *P. homarus* puerulus in February (west season) was not significantly different from April (transition season I), but February and April were significantly different from June (east season). The highest abundance of *P. homarus* puerulus was in June or east season at 33.8 ± 4.21 ind/Trip, followed by April (transition season I) at 27.00 ± 5.00 ind/Trip and the last in February (west season) at 23.20 ± 2.22 ind/Trip. Data on the effect of the period on the abundance of puerulus *P. homarus* is presented in Figure 3.



Figure 2. Puerulus of the *Panulirus homarus*

The relationship between aquatic environment and *Panulirus homarus* puerulus

The results of the regression analysis revealed that the parameters of temperature ($R^2=0.8111$), salinity ($R^2=0.5158$), and phosphate ($R^2=0.5492$) had a strong relationship with the presence of lobster puerulus in the waters of the Mentawai Islands. In contrast, the parameters of chlorophyll-a ($R^2=0.2236$), nitrate ($R^2=0.4136$), and sea current velocity ($R^2=0.0223$) did not show a significant relationship with lobster puerulus at that location. The regression analysis of the aquatic environment and lobster puerulus is shown in Figure 4. The regression analysis (Figure 4) shows that temperature, salinity, and phosphate are key factors affecting the distribution of Puerulus lobsters in Mentawai Islands waters. These factors have a stronger and more significant impact on lobster distribution compared to chlorophyll-a, nitrate, and current velocities.

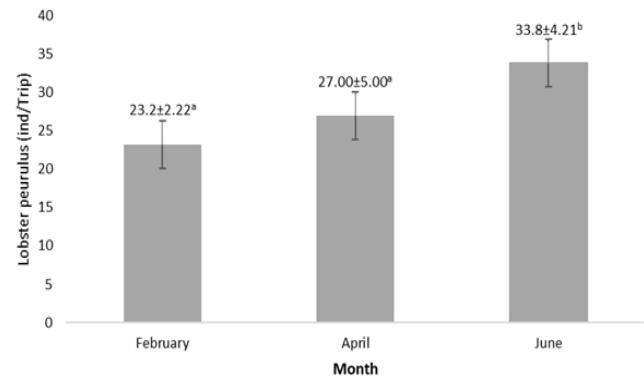


Figure 3. Influence of temporal period on the abundance of *Panulirus homarus* puerulus

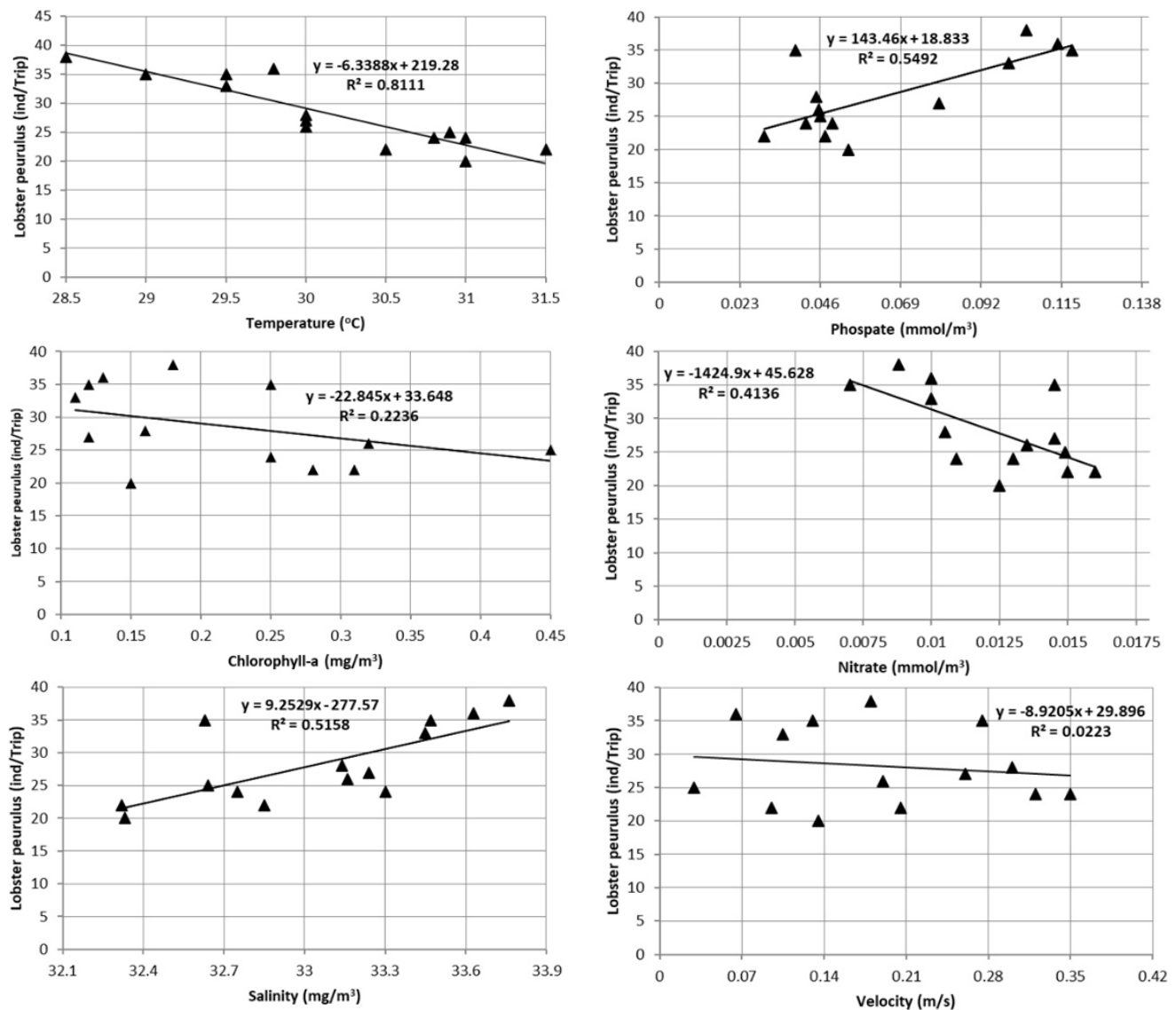


Figure 4. The regression analysis of the aquatic environment and lobster puerulus

Condition of the aquatic environment

The environmental parameters of the waters observed using Aqua Modis satellite imagery include Sea Surface Temperature (SST), chlorophyll-a concentration, and current velocity. The distribution of SST, chlorophyll-a, and current velocity in the waters of the Mentawai Islands is shown in Figure 5. Based on Aqua Modis satellite imagery, in February, April, and June, SST in the waters of the Mentawai Islands ranged from 28.5 to 31.5°C. Spatially, warm temperatures are generally found in coastal waters, especially in bays. Conversely, cold temperatures are spread in the offshore waters south of the sampling location. Sea Surface Temperature (SST) is greatly influenced by the amount of heat received from the sun, so tropical areas or around the equator, which receive the most heat from the sun, tend to have higher temperatures.

Based on the spatial distribution of Aqua Modis satellite imagery, the concentration of chlorophyll-a in the waters of the Mentawai Islands in February ranged from 0.15 to 0.45 mg^{-1}m^3 , in April between 0.16 to 0.32 mg^{-1}m^3 , and in June between 0.11 to 0.18 mg^{-1}m^3 . Chlorophyll-a is more concentrated in coastal waters, and its concentration decreases as the season changes towards the east season. The highest concentration of chlorophyll-a was recorded in February, during the western season.

Environmental parameters observed at the research location include sea current velocity, salinity, phosphate, and nitrate. Spatial distribution data from the Copernicus

Marine Environment Monitoring Service (CMEMS) showed a good correlation with argo measurements in the field (Figure 6). The results of current velocity measurements in the waters of the Mentawai Islands show significant variations throughout the year, with velocities ranging from 0.029 to 0.135 m/s in February, 0.190 to 0.350 m/s in April, and 0.065 to 0.260 m/s in June. The measurement results in the waters of the Mentawai Islands showed that the current speed ranged from 0.029 to 0.135 m^{-1}s in February, between 0.190 to 0.350 m^{-1}s in April, and between 0.065 to 0.260 m^{-1}s in June. The salinity in these waters ranged from 32.33 to 33.85 mg/m^3 in February, April, and June. The spatial data shows that the salinity of the waters is relatively stable throughout the year; several environmental and hydrological factors can influence this stability.

Phosphate distribution spatial data from CMEMS shows a range of values between 0.0420 to 0.0540 mg^{-1}m^3 in February, between 0.0300 to 0.0495 mg^{-1}m^3 in April, and between 0.0800 to 0.1140 mmol/m^3 in June. Phosphate concentrations in the water tend to decrease towards the east season. For nitrate, data from CMEMS shows values of around 0.0125 to 0.0160 mg^{-1}m^3 in February, around 0.0109 to 0.0150 $\text{mmol}^{-1}\text{m}^3$ in April, and around 0.0070 to 0.0145 mg^{-1}m^3 in June. Like phosphate, nitrate concentrations also show a decrease towards the east season.

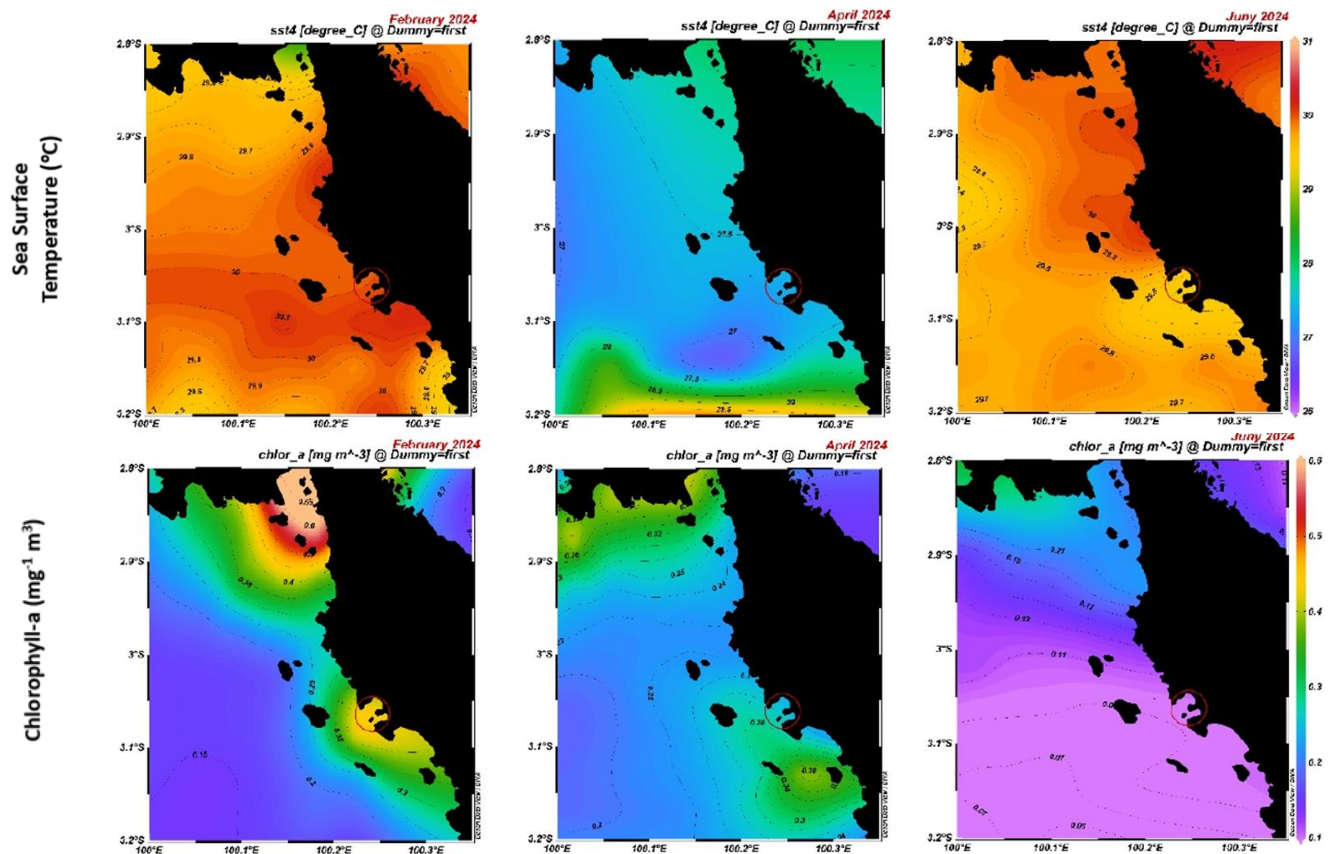


Figure 5. Spatial distribution of sea surface temperature, chlorophyll-a, and current speed in the waters of Mentawai Islands in February, April, and June 2024

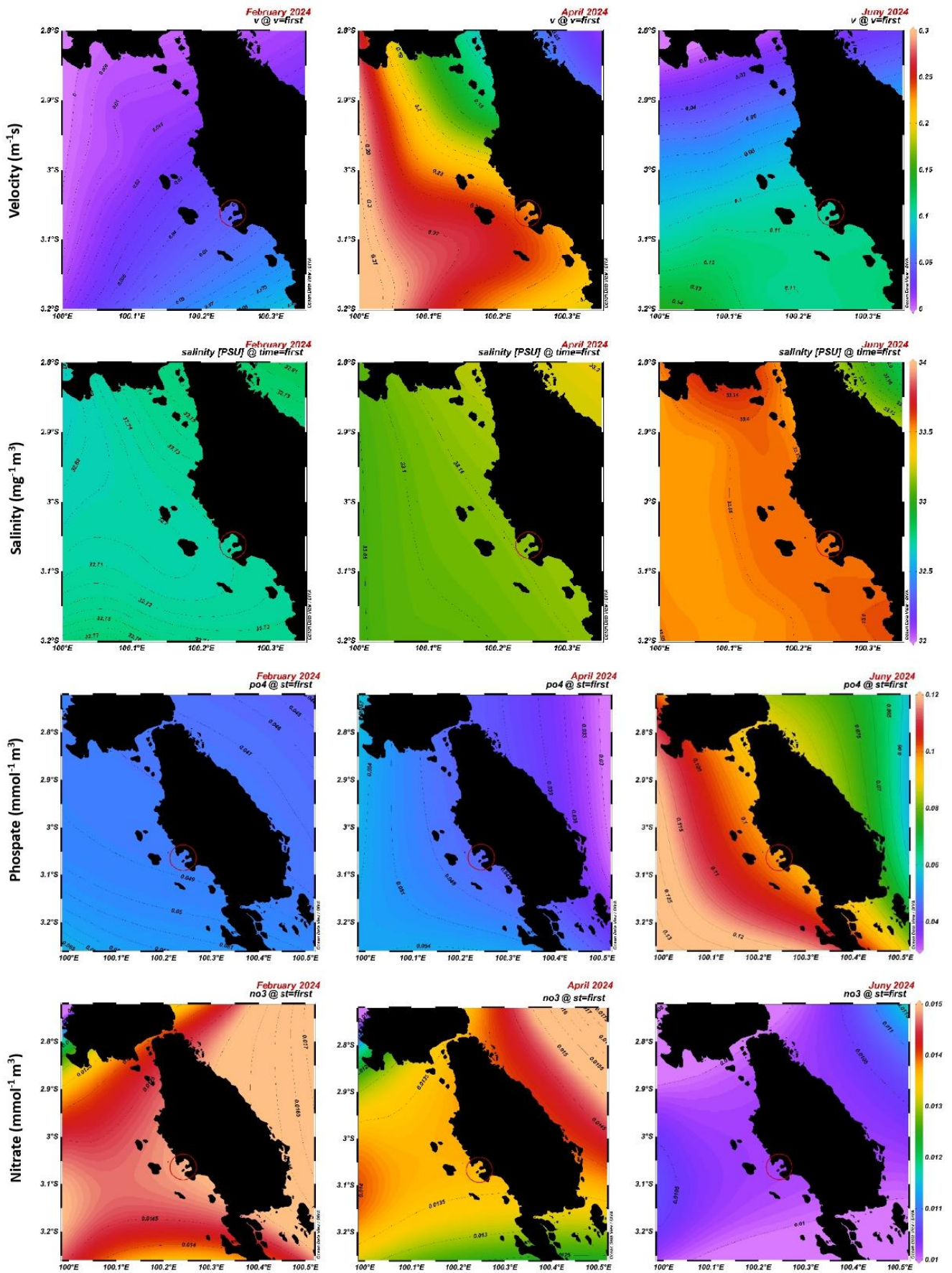


Figure 6. Spatial distribution of current speed, salinity, phosphate, and nitrate in the waters of Mentawai Islands in February, April, and June 2024

Discussion

The findings of this research, which highlight the significant influence of environmental conditions in the east monsoon on the recruitment process of puerulus *P. homarus* (Masithah et al. 2023), pave the way for future studies. The highest lobster abundance is in the east season (June), which is 33.8 ± 4.21 per trip; in April (transition season I), puerulus abundance decreased to 27.00 ± 5.00 per trip (Figure 3). Finally, the lowest abundance occurred in February (west season), with an average of 23.20 ± 2.22 per trip. The difference in puerulus abundance between the east season, transition season I, and the west season is believed to be a result of changes in environmental conditions such as currents, water temperatures, and food availability in each season. The east season appears to provide the most optimal conditions for puerulus recruitment, resulting in the highest abundance. Meanwhile, the west season, with its potentially extreme or unfavorable environmental conditions, shows lower puerulus abundance (Purba et al. 2021).

Differences in puerulus abundance observed between February, April, and June may provide insight into how the life cycle of *P. homarus* is affected by seasonal variation (Bell et al. 2008; Cavieres and Nicolis 2018). February, which is the west monsoon, is often characterized by less stable sea conditions and high rainfall, which may hinder puerulus mobility and capture. These conditions may lead to lower puerulus abundance compared to other months. In contrast, the east monsoon, which is characterized by calmer weather and more stable water temperatures, can enhance the success of puerulus in adapting and developing (Clark et al. 2015; Filippi et al. 2024). These data may also have implications for lobster resource management and conservation strategies. Understanding the period with high puerulus abundance can help in planning fishing or monitoring activities more efficiently. The peak period puerulus abundance period in June may be an optimal time for conservation efforts, such as the creation of protected areas or monitoring the species to ensure the successful development of hatching larvae before they enter the adult stage. Seasonal variation may affect not only puerulus abundance but also the overall health of the ecosystem (Purba et al. 2021; Hutchinson et al. 2024).

The R^2 value for temperature (0.8111) shows a strong influence on lobster Puerulus distribution. Temperature impacts lobster habitat suitability due to metabolic, growth, and survival effects (Sunder et al. 2020; Purba et al. 2021). Suitable temperature fluctuations affect species abundance and distribution. Salinity with an R^2 value of 0.5158 has a strong relationship affecting lobster presence moderately. Salinity influences osmoregulation, habitat adaptation, and migration patterns (Westermann et al. 2012; Sunder et al. 2020; Xing et al. 2021). Phosphate concentration's R^2 value of 0.5492 shows a significant relationship. Phosphate is vital in the marine food chain, impacting phytoplankton productivity (Suantika et al. 2018; Trinugroho et al. 2020). Changes in phosphate concentration affect food availability for lobster Puerulus (Aznar et al. 2016; Grifoll et al. 2022). Chlorophyll-a's R^2 value (0.2236) indicates a weak relationship with lobsters. Nitrate with an R^2 value of

0.4136 has a moderate relationship, not strong enough to explain lobster presence. Current velocities with an R^2 value of 0.0223 show no significant relationship with lobster Puerulus presence (Banihashemi et al. 2017; Khaled et al. 2023; Liu et al. 2024).

Sea surface temperatures in the tropical waters of Mentawai Islands show small fluctuations due to the tropical climate (Gao et al. 2010; Barnes et al. 2021). SST remains warm in February, April, and June. Local ocean currents and upwelling can affect SST, but their impact is minimal in tropical waters (García-Monteiro et al. 2022; Bousbaa et al. 2024). Stable temperatures of 27 to 30°C indicate insignificant influence of ocean currents. Solar radiation and weather patterns contribute to SST stability (Westermann et al. 2012; Sunder et al. 2020; Xing et al. 2021). Chlorophyll-a concentrations in Mentawai Islands waters are influenced by various factors (Tilstone et al. 2013; Montaghi et al. 2024). Nutrient flow from land runoff increases chlorophyll-a in rainy seasons, while dry seasons decrease it (Yang et al. 2020). Upwelling triggered by seasonal winds enhances phytoplankton production and chlorophyll-a. Ocean currents and SST fluctuations also affect chlorophyll-a concentrations (Zhang et al. 2020).

Fluctuations in current velocities are influenced by seasonal changes, with lower velocities in February and higher velocities in April, possibly due to river flows and tidal effects (Huang 2017; Grifoll et al. 2022). June sees decreased velocities due to reduced freshwater flows and wind changes, along with local ocean dynamics and seabed topography playing a role (Banihashemi et al. 2017). The complexity of current dynamics in Mentawai Islands can impact ecological and environmental processes (Kotarba 2015; Sreekanth and Kulkarni 2020). Salinity levels in the region remain stable throughout the year, with minimal impact from seasonal variations (Suantika et al. 2018; Trinugroho et al. 2020). The consistency in salinity levels is maintained by factors such as limited influence from seasonal changes, local ocean dynamics, and seabed topography (Imron et al. 2019). The stability in salinity levels reflects a balance between seasonal factors and ocean dynamics, keeping salinity within a consistent range (Purba et al. 2021; Iskandar and Suga 2022).

Phosphate concentrations decrease towards the east season due to environmental factors (Aznar et al. 2016; Grifoll et al. 2022). February shows higher levels of runoff, while April sees a decrease from reduced freshwater flow (Tama et al. 2007; Zhang and Ioannou 2016). June marks an increase, possibly due to ocean dynamics. Fluctuations reflect complex interactions in Mentawai Islands Waters (Purba et al. 2021). Nitrate concentrations also decrease towards the east monsoon (Xi et al. 2020; Aulicino et al. 2021). February has higher levels of land runoff, while April sees a decline from reduced input. June shows another decrease in sea surface temperatures and current changes. Fluctuations reflect interactions in Mentawai Islands Waters (Zhang and Ioannou 2016).

Data analysis shows the puerulus lobster population in Mentawai Islands increased due to favorable environmental factors like high sea surface temperature, supported by satellite imagery (Sunder et al. 2020; García-Monteiro et al.

2022). The specific temperature range boosts lobster recruitment and population growth. The optimal temperature for lobsters can be adjusted to geographical location. The ideal temperature for lobster cultivation in Indonesia ranges from 26 to 30°C. In this temperature range, tropical lobsters show optimal growth, good metabolism, and fewer health problems. Temperature can affect physiological responses, thermal tolerance, and bacterial communities in lobsters in water. Temperature factors also significantly affect lobster health, adaptability, and susceptibility to shell disease (Goncalves et al. 2021; Horricks et al. 2023; Watson et al. 2023). Stable salinity in Mentawai Islands waters is vital for lobster puerulus survival and growth, contributing significantly to successful larval development (Ihde et al. 2008; Lubis et al. 2023). Maintaining stable salinity levels is crucial for osmotic balance regulation in puerulus. The combination of appropriate salinity and temperature conditions creates a favorable environment for lobster larval recruitment (García-Monteiro et al. 2022; Barnes et al. 2021). Consistent temperature and salinity levels in Mentawai Islands likely contributed to the increase in puerulus captures, emphasizing the importance of considering multiple environmental factors for habitat suitability (Gao et al. 2010; Bousbaa et al. 2024). Salinity stability in the region directly affects puerulus lobster's ability to thrive and impacts overall population dynamics (Suantika et al. 2018; Trinugroho et al. 2020; Purba et al. 2021).

This study concludes the significant influence of environmental factors on the abundance of *P. homarus* puerulus in the waters of the Mentawai Islands, West Sumatra, Indonesia. Key findings indicate that water temperature, salinity, and phosphate concentrations have strong correlations with puerulus distribution, while chlorophyll-a, nitrate, and current velocity show weaker or negligible relationships. Seasonal variations also play an important role, with the highest abundance observed in June during the east monsoon, indicating that environmental conditions during this period are more conducive to puerulus recruitment. The results of this study demonstrate the importance of a comprehensive management strategy that considers both ecology and the environment, ensuring sustainable aquaculture practices and effective conservation efforts for puerulus *P. homarus*.

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