

Combining Ability and Heterosis of QPM Hybrids for Yield, Qualitative and Quantitative Traits under Heatstress in Different Environments.

Abstract

With increasing climate change relates to rise in mercury causing heat stress in maize. Heat stress tolerance has appeared to be one of the foremost trait to overcome this situation. Relative magnitude of variances depicted additive and non-additive gene action for the expression of these characters were more extrusive for all the traits studied. GCA and SCA both showed huge collaboration with climate for all the characteristics. Parents NBPGR-36548 (P₄), VL-153237 (P₅) and BHU QPM-2 (P₂) were found to be good general combiners for grain yield per plant, chlorophyll content, oil content and starch content. Indicating that they could be good parental lines in hybridization programs. The scope of heterosis communicated by various crosses was from 0.71 % (P₂ X P₆) to 45.11 % (P₅ X P₆) in E₁, from 0.42 % (P₁ X P₇) to 5.69 % (P₁ X P₈) in E₂ and 18.92% (P₄ X P₈) in E₃. The better performing five crosses P₅ X P₇, P₅ X P₆, P₄ X P₈, P₅ X P₉ and P₄ X P₅. Crosses between good x average, average x average and good x good shows greater economic heterosis and exhibited high SCA effects for yield under HS. These best Hybrids showed no side effects of leaf firing, tassel blast, root lodging and no severe loss of yield in the present investigation. These crosses additionally should be assessed further multilocation in enormous scope.

Key words

Heat tolerance, GCA, SCA, Diallel, and Gene action.

Introduction

Breeding for heat tolerance in Quality Protein Maize (QPM) is one of the economically viable and sustainable ways of reducing yield losses caused by heat stress in QPM maize. Research on QPM has been ongoing for several decades (Maqbool *et al.*, 2021). Opaque-2 (*o2*) is a natural recessive mutation in the transcriptional activator conditioning negative expression of zein protein (Tripathy, S.K., *et al.*, 2017). However, the lower yields of QPM versus non-QPM varieties, as well as the susceptibility of QPM varieties to stresses, such as ear rot, heat stress, resulting in less tryptophan and lysine produced per unit area of land have been the focus of researchers over several years (Liliane *et al.*, 2017).

However, maize crops suffering from heat stress and drought stress maize varieties that produced the highest metabolites are not usually high yielding varieties. This directly impacts on children suffering from malnutrition so, to overcome this issue Quality Protein Maize is the best source of food which surplus your daily needs, since QPM maize has a higher amount of lysine and tryptophan content which eventually fulfil the total protein content to humankind. As per the FAO(2014) recommendations for total children intake for children should be 6.6 % lysine and 1.7% tryptophan whereas for adults 1.6% lysine and 0.5% tryptophan. Since, Quality Protein Maize has the accountability to at benchmark which contain 4.1% lysine and 1% tryptophan which is more higher than normal maize which accounts 2.7% of lysine and 0.6 % of tryptophan.

Increasing the climatic temperature around the globe makes the soil surface hotter, this makes plant kingdom thrive to survive, affecting plant growth and development, particularly in tropical and subtropical countries. Among abiotic stresses, high temperature stress is a major factor disrupting plants performance (Wahid *et al.*, 2007). Above optimum temperature (37.3⁰C) affects maize morphological, physiological, biochemical and molecular traits, which ultimately leads to poor growth and yields(Waqas *et al.*, 2021). QPM genotypes can produce yields as high as the non-QPM varieties. OPV's open pollination varieties and synthetics yield ranged from 2-7.3 t/ha in QPM as compare 4 t/ha and above in Non-QPM (Pixley, K.V 2003). In hybrids QPM yields 3-13.9 t/ha whereas, Non-QPM yields around 5t/ha and above (Prasanna, B.Met *al.*, 2001; Pixley, K.V 2003; Bello *et al.*, 2012;Bisen, P. *et al.*, 2017.). In India, during the 2019-2020 cropping seasons, 9.7 million ha of land was covered with maize with national average productivity of 2.9 tonnes/ha and a production of 28.6 million tonnes, still far below the world average 5.1 tons/ha (Department of Agriculture Co-operation, 2020). Whereas in Uttar Pradesh, it occupies an area 0.73 million hectares with an average productivity of 1.67 tonnes/ha and production of 1.23 million tonnes. (The International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI), Regional Profiles-India, 2018).

The exploitation of heterosis in maize (*Zea mays* L.) can be accomplished through the development and identification of high *per se* performance vigorous parental lines and their subsequent evaluation for combining ability in cross combinations to identify the hybrids with high heterotic effects (Abdel-Moneam *et al.*, 2014). A diallel is simple to manipulate in maize andsupplies important information about the studied populations for various genetic parameters (Vacaro *et al.*, 2002). The variability for selection and the expected genetic

advance is in the population of single cross is largest. The whole of the additive, dominance and epistatic components of genetic variation is available for exploitation in single crosses. Combining ability investigations of parental generations need to be conducted under appropriately stressed selection environments for the successful selection of suitable parents that can be used in hybridization programs (Hallauer and Miranda. 1988). Combining ability is defined as the capacity of an inbred line to transmit any of its superior traits to its offspring (Sprague and Tatum 1942). Successful estimation of combining abilities involves various steps such as parental selection for crossing, performing crosses using a definite mating design, evaluation and data interpretation. The study of the effects of combining ability, both general combining ability (GCA) and specific combining ability (SCA), are important indicators of potential value for assessing inbred lines in hybrid combinations as a step to develop hybrid varieties in maize (Abdel-moneam *et al.*, 2014). Heterosis and combining ability are the prerequisites for formulating hybrid breeding programme. The diallel analysis provides information on the type of gene action and general combining ability and specific combining ability (SCA) of genotypes (Silva *et al.*, 2010, Moterle *et al.*, 2011).

Therefore, the present study was undertaken to study the combining ability among the parental lines and heterosis among the newly generated cross combinations using 10 x 10 half diallel mating design.

Materials and methods

The experiments were conducted in three sites at Central Research Farm, SHUATS, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh at an altitude of 98m above sea level. These sites are located 100 mts away from each other, all the locations have sub-tropical climate with extremes of summer and winter. During winter season especially in month of December and January, temperature drops down to as low as 1-2^o C, while during summer the temperature reaches up to 45^oC (National Informatics Centre, Ministry Of Electronics & Information Technology, Government Of India 2022). The average precipitation is around 983 mm annually with maximum concentration during July to September.

Quality protein inbred lines (Table 1) obtained from different research centres in India, were used to generate single cross hybrids. Total of 45 F₁s obtained using diallel fashion with non-reciprocals.

Table 1. Name, origin and heat stress status of parental lines.

Inbred line	Name	Origin	Heat tolerance status
P ₁	BHU-QPM-8	B	HT
P ₂	BHU-QPM-2	B	HT
P ₃	NBPGR-33000	N	HS
P ₄	NBPGR-36548	N	HT
P ₅	VL-153237	C	HT
P ₆	IC-53826	N	HT
P ₇	IC-381506	N	HT
P ₈	IC-1306641	N	HT
P ₉	BHU-N3	B	HT
P ₁₀	BHU-B73-BC2	B	HS

B = BHU, Varanasi; N = NBPGR, New Delhi; C = CIMMYT, R/o Hyderabad;
HT = Heat Tolerance; HS = Heat susceptible.

Firstly, 10 inbred lines which were selected are crossed in all possible ways without reciprocals to produce 45 F₁s (Table 2).

Table 2. List of hybrids produced by crossing in a 10 x 10 diallel fashion excluding reciprocals.

F/M	P ₁	P ₂	P ₃	P ₄	P ₅	P ₆	P ₇	P ₈	P ₉	P ₁₀
P ₁	-	P ₁ x P ₂	P ₁ x P ₃	P ₁ x P ₄	P ₁ x P ₅	P ₁ x P ₆	P ₁ x P ₇	P ₁ x P ₈	P ₁ x P ₉	P ₁ x P ₁₀
P ₂	-	-	P ₂ x P ₃	P ₂ x P ₄	P ₂ x P ₅	P ₂ x P ₆	P ₂ x P ₇	P ₂ x P ₈	P ₂ x P ₉	P ₂ x P ₁₀
P ₃	-	-	-	P ₃ x P ₄	P ₃ x P ₅	P ₃ x P ₆	P ₃ x P ₇	P ₃ x P ₈	P ₃ x P ₉	P ₃ x P ₁₀
P ₄	-	-	-	-	P ₄ x P ₅	P ₄ x P ₆	P ₄ x P ₇	P ₄ x P ₈	P ₄ x P ₉	P ₄ x P ₁₀
P ₅	-	-	-	-	-	P ₅ x P ₆	P ₅ x P ₇	P ₅ x P ₈	P ₅ x P ₉	P ₅ x P ₁₀
P ₆	-	-	-	-	-	-	P ₆ x P ₇	P ₆ x P ₈	P ₆ x P ₉	P ₆ x P ₁₀
P ₇	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	P ₇ x P ₈	P ₇ x P ₉	P ₇ x P ₁₀
P ₈	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	P ₈ x P ₉	P ₈ x P ₁₀
P ₉	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	P ₉ x P ₁₀
P ₁₀	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Data Collection

Data on quantitative, qualitative and other important agronomic traits were collected on plot and individual plant basis and are discussed later in the text. Data collected on plot basis were for days to 50% tasselling, days to 50% silking, anthesis silking interval. Data on individual plant basis were taken for plant height, cob height, tassel length, seed index (100 seed weight), seed yield, days to maturity, harvest index, chlorophyll content, canopy temperature deficit, leaf area index, starch content and oil content. A total of fourteen parameters were taken in this research.

Experimental design and trial management

The study was carried out in three research sites representative different places in CRF, SHUATS. In kharif 2019 screening and evaluation of 160 diverse parental inbred lines used and among them selection of 10 vigorous and productive parental inbred lines based on *per se* performance for grain yield, quantitative and qualitative traits were undertaken. In Rabi-2019-2020 crossing program was undertaken as per Diallel mating design given by Griffing, (1956) (Model I, Method II) to generate 45 F₁ hybrids. In kharif 2020 multi-environment evaluation of F₁ hybrids + Parents + Check at three different dates of sowing with different environments viz., (1st, 15th and 31st July, 2020) in Randomized Block Design with three replications for assessing their stability. Data were recorded for quantitative and qualitative traits. Plot sizes for the progenies and parental lines were one row, 4.0 - 5.0 m long, with 0.75 m inter-row spacing and 0.25 m intra- row spacing. All agronomic practices like fertilisation and weeding were followed according to recommendations for maize cropping at each site. In all the 3 environments.

Statistical analysis

The statistical analysis was performed by using replication mean values based on the recorded data. The different statistical procedures followed were Analysis of variance, Estimation of Heterosis, Heterobeltiosis and Economic heterosis, Combining ability analysis and Stability Analysis. The data obtained for each character in F₁'s and parents were analyzed for each statistical procedure given by **Panse and Sukhatme (1967)**, 'F' test and 'I' test were worked out by the analysis of variance to assess the significance. It was conducted out according to the procedure of RBD analysis procedure for each character as per methodology of **Fisher and Yates (1938)**.

$$(Eq. 1) \quad Y_{ij} = M + B_i + T_j + E_{ij}$$

Where,

M = General effect

B= Block effect

T_i= Treatment effect

E_{ij}= Error component

Heterosis expressed as percent deviation from the mid parent. In the present experiment heterosis was estimated for 5-6 hybrids for the 19 characters studied, as suggested by **Turner (1953)**

$$(Eq- 2). \quad \text{Heterosis (ha) (\%)} = \frac{F_1 - MP}{MP} \times 100$$

$$(F_1 - MP) = \sqrt{\left(\frac{2MSe}{r}\right)}$$

$$\text{Heterobeltiosis (hb)\%} = \frac{(F_1 - BP)}{BP} \times 100$$

$$\text{Standard heterosis(hc)\%} = \frac{[(F_1 - BC)]}{BC} \times 100.$$

The combining ability analysis was computed on data obtained for parents and F₁s only by using diallel mating design (Model-I Method-II), (Griffings, 1956). $X_{ij} = \mu + g_i + g_j + S_{ij} + 1/rk + \sum e_{ijk}$ where, μ = population mean, g_i = general combining ability of i^{th} variety, g_j = general combining ability of j^{th} variety, S_{ij} = specific combining ability of ij^{th} cross, e_{ijk} = environmental component pertaining to ijk^{th} observation, i and j = male and female parents responsible for producing ij^{th} hybrid, r = number of replications

General and specific combining ability effects were calculated as follows: $g_i = 1/(p+2) \{X_i + X_{ii} - (2/p) X\}$ and $S_{ij} = X_{ij} - 1/(p+2) (X_i + X_{ii} + X_j + X_{jj}) + 2/\{(p+1)(p+2)\} X$. Where, g_i = Estimation of general combining ability (gca) effect of i^{th} parent and S^{ij} = Estimation of specific combining ability (sca) effect of the hybrid between i^{th} and j^{th} parent. Where, S_g = Sum of squares due to gca, S_s = Sum of squares due to sca, X_{ij} = Values of cross between i^{th} and j^{th} parent, X_i = Total of i^{th} (row) array in diallel table (summed over), X = Grand total of 'P' parents/ lines and $P(P-1)/2$ progenies of diallel table and, X_{ij} = Parental value of the i^{th} parent.

Results

Pooled analysis of variance for different quantitative and qualitative traits over different environments presented (Table 3) indicated that the mean sum of squares due to genotypes were significant for all the characters studied. The variances due to general

combining ability (gca) and specific combining ability (sca) were profoundly for all the characters examined were highly significant, indicating the importance of both additive and non-additive gene actions in the expression of most of the quality traits in maize. The dominance variance has greater influence in the inheritance of the trait as it was evident from the ratio of additive to dominance variance which was below unity ($VA/VD < 1$). Similar findings were also reported by Ram *et al.*, (2018), Gideon *et al.*, (2017) and Ravi *et al.*, (2021). High estimates of sca variances for grain yield, chlorophyll content, canopy temperature deficit, starch content and oil content and the ratio of gca and sca variance was less than unity ($\sigma^2g / \sigma^2s < 1$) indicated the preponderance of non-additive gene action for its expression and inheritance of the above characters. Comparable results in maize have been reported by Naggar *et al.*, (2014), Iiyaset *et al.*, (2020), Bhusalet *et al.*, (2020) and Bekele and Rao (2021).

Table 3. Analysis of variance for different quantitative traits in maize

Source of variation	Df	Env	Days to 50% tasseling	Days to 50% silking	ASI	Plant height	Cob height	Tassel length	LAI	Chlorophyll Content	CTD	Seed Index	Grain yield/plant	Days to maturity	Oil content	Starch content
Replicate	2	E ₁	42.62	44.92	0.65	2442.61	736.86	14.49	2.69	148.54	12.91	5.65	20665.98	0.55	0.05	1.32
		E ₂	0.01	0.46	0.44	687.12	310.13	19.74	3.01	125.94	94.81	1.06	1733.81	0.99	0.01	0.03
		E ₃	0.92	5.31	0.12	104.33	79.23	12.48	2.16	112.18	33.85	5.70	40.28	0.84	0.00	0.02
Treatments	54	E ₁	9.12	9.36	0.28	853.37	414.37	89.16	0.60	42.62	1.64	15.29	2165.46	26.28	1.25	59.65
		E ₂	8.42	7.19	0.24	1955.13	765.89	92.33	0.47	43.11	1.17	8.38	877.93	14.30	1.07	65.51
		E ₃	26.73	25.89	0.36	657.38	306.53	57.33	0.41	36.52	1.13	13.22	356.23	21.17	1.08	65.34
Parents	9	E ₁	4.67	5.86	0.83	410.88	231.51	68.66	0.61	90.52	1.31	17.23	588.75	31.50	0.53	15.39
		E ₂	24.40	25.72	0.09	411.88	230.52	47.89	0.67	90.36	2.13	13.01	687.24	23.44	0.45	19.09
		E ₃	19.43	12.09	0.03	409.88	230.90	106.73	0.65	89.30	2.10	15.68	688.20	23.40	0.44	17.51
Hybrids	44	E ₁	9.32	9.30	0.18	397.97	235.87	39.46	0.26	30.66	1.74	9.04	2120.54	25.60	1.30	69.40
		E ₂	3.37	2.73	0.26	1363.18	587.96	45.56	0.19	31.17	6.76	7.61	935.37	12.37	1.12	75.84
		E ₃	4.99	5.75	0.40	608.69	243.87	43.75	0.18	25.37	0.37	13.00	168.73	10.04	1.14	76.18
Parent vs hybrids	1	E ₁	40.07	43.39	0.01	24873.18	9913.87	2460.57	15.69	139.50	0.01	273.22	18332.02	9.50	5.60	28.89
		E ₂	86.55	75.33	0.49	41899.23	12404.10	2550.00	11.16	142.92	1.74	0.42	67.07	17.05	4.39	28.87
		E ₃	1048.90	1035.86	1.42	5018.52	3739.18	210.13	7.76	42.70	25.69	0.63	5627.40	490.52	4.28	18.96
Error	108	E ₁	2.97	2.99	0.19	189.72	736.86	15.48	0.27	37.36	1.49	2.73	1466.44	0.93	0.02	0.82
		E ₂	1.91	1.52	0.27	238.77	141.24	21.74	0.20	25.03	1.00	1.90	598.49	1.64	6.00	0.09
		E ₃	2.22	3.82	0.24	96.51	63.13	10.22	0.17	24.66	0.68	2.43	146.66	2.22	0.01	0.02

Under optimum conditions, the mean sum of squares for GCA was significant for all traits except chlorophyll content and canopy temperature deficit (Table 4). Significant SCA effects were observed for most of the traits except for chlorophyll content.

Table 4. Magnitude of genetic variance for different maize traits.

Source of variation	Days to 50% tasseling	Days to 50% silking	ASI	Plant height	Cob height	Tassel length	LAI	Chlorophyll Content	CTD	Seed Index	Grain yield/plant	Days to maturity	Oil content	Starch content
σ^2g	7.64***	8.19**	0.17*	262.83**	215.23**	10.61*	0.11	11.94	0.33	5.56***	928.50	9.38***	0.46**	22.70**
σ^2s	2.11***	2.11**	0.08	288.78**	122.70**	33.54**	0.22***	14.66	0.59	5.00***	68.48	8.64***	0.41**	19.32**
GCA/SCA	0.49	0.54	0.50	0.07	0.17	0.02	0.01	-0.02	-0.15	0.09	0.19	0.09	0.09	0.10
VA (σ^2A)	1.10	1.20	0.02	33.27	29.67	0.91	0.00	-0.09	-0.03	0.78	73.28	1.51	0.08	3.74
VD (σ^2D)	1.12	1.11	0.02	225.54	85.51	2.38	0.13	2.21	0.09	4.09	191.67	8.33	0.40	19.05
VA/VD (σ^2A/σ^2D)	0.98	1.00	1.00	0.15	0.34	0.03	0.03	-0.04	-0.30	0.19	0.38	0.18	0.19	6.20

Significant levels: * = <.05, ** = <.01 & *** = <.001

ASI= Anthesis silking interval; LAI= leaf area index; CTD= canopy temperature deficit.

General combining ability analysis:

Assessments of GCA impacts various characters were either positive or negative. For the most part, parental lines which has positive GCA are suggested as great general combining ability attributes while negative GCA are reasonable for certain characters. Under Heat stress condition P₂, P₄ and P₅ are good general combiners for seed yield per plant and seed index (Table 5), indicating parental lines P₁, P₄, P₅, P₆, P₇, P₈ and P₂ were heat tolerant (Table 1). Moreover, Parental lines with negative GCA effects P₃, P₇ and P₁₀ were noted as poor inbred lines selected as parental material and among all this parental lines P₁₀ found susceptible for HS.

Table 5: General combining ability (GCA) effects for different characters in maize

Parents	code	Days to 50% tasseling	Days to 50% silking	ASI	Days to maturity	Plant height	Cob height	Tassel length	Chlor-ophyll Content	CTD	LAI	Seed index	Grain yield/ plant	Starch content	Oil content
BHU- QPM-8	P ₁	1.16 ***	1.12 ***	0.01	0.54 **	6.29 **	6.52 ***	-0.22	-1.64	0.08	0.01	0.92 ***	5.41	0.71 ***	-0.24 ***
BHU QPM-2	P ₂	0.083	-0.13	-0.12	1.03 ***	9.52 ***	7.69 ***	-1.14 *	-1.93 *	-0.17	0.06	0.64 **	2.31	2.77 ***	0.18 ***
NBPGR-33000	P ₃	-0.06	0.05	0.10	-0.76 ***	5.73*	-1.47	-0.02	1.07	0.24	-0.17 *	1.01 ***	0.82	1.24 ***	0.01 *
NBPGR-36548	P ₄	0.71 **	0.65 *	-0.05	-0.56 ***	-2.46	-3.08	0.84	-0.62	0.02	-0.08	-0.63 *	7.88	-0.38 **	0.04
VL-153237	P ₅	0.29	0.27	-0.03	-0.90 ***	3.69	0.65	1.01	0.76	-0.10	0.14	-0.28	14.40 *	-0.11	0.30 ***
IC-53826	P ₆	0.15	0.05	-0.11	0.73 ***	-11.90 ***	-5.88 **	-2.92 ***	0.02	-0.10	-0.08	-1.00 ***	8.39	1.09***	-0.25 ***
IC-381506	P ₇	-0.64 *	-0.76 **	-0.08	-0.01	1.74	2.88	0.68	1.57	0.20	0.02	-0.06	1.91	-2.04 ***	0.01
IC-1306641	P ₈	1.05 ***	1.01 ***	-0.05	1.68 ***	6.85 **	5.64 **	-0.07	0.30	0.28	0.02	-0.01	-3.53	0.73 ***	0.02
BHU-N3	P ₉	0.57 *	0.87 **	0.30 ***	-0.17	1.68	1.67	-0.83	-1.13	0.09	0.05	-0.61 *	-2.90	0.89 ***	0.18***
BHU-B73-BC2	P ₁₀	-0.56 *	-0.59 *	-0.05	0.29	-0.56 *	-0.59 *	-0.05	-0.35	-0.09	0.02	0.03	-6.89	0.63 ***	-0.23 ***

Under HS conditions, positive GCA effect values of chlorophyll content were desirable. Positive GCA depicts the plants ability to maintain chlorophyll content, which would enable such plants to photosynthesize when other plants were senescing. Parental lines P₅, P₆, P₇ and P₃ were good combiners for chlorophyll content. However, P₁, P₂, P₄, P₈ and P₁₀ were not combine well for this character.

Negative GCA effects were desirable for days to 50% tasselling, days to 50% silking and anthesis silking interval since it demonstrated the ability of the plant to flower early under stressed conditions. Parental lines P₇ and P₁₀ had negative GCA effects for 50% tasselling, days to 50% silking and Anthesis silking interval. P₃, P₇ and P₁₀ shows negative

GCA only for days to 50% tasselling and P₂, P₇ and P₁₀ shows negative GCA only for days to 50% silking and P₂, P₄, P₅, P₆, P₇ and P₈ shows negative GCA only for anthesis silking interval hence these parental lines are desirable for shortening the anthesis silking interval in the breeding programs. Plants showing positive GCA indicates late flowering and eventually probes to heat stress. Late maturing parental lines are not desirable since yield is greatly reduced under heat-stressed condition. Negative anthesis silking interval were desirable since it implies good synchronization of anthesis and silking. Negative GCA for canopy temperature deficit and plant height are well suitable for HS conditions. Negative GCA effects for canopy temperature deficit implied that CTD was not elevated under HS conditions. Parental lines P₂, P₄, P₅ and P₁₀ were good combiners for canopy temperature deficit while P₁, P₃, P₇, P₈ and P₉ were poor combiners. Plants which shows negative GCA for plant height are implied good combiners hence, short plant height are well suitable because they are less prone to lodging. Short plants shown by negative GCA effects are desirable. Parental lines P₄, P₆ and P₁₀ are good parental lines for plant height, whereas, P₁, P₂, P₃ and P₈ are poor parental lines.

Under HS conditions parental lines P₁, P₂, P₃, P₄, P₅, and P₆ shows best combining ability for grain yield per plant while, parental lines P₈, P₉ and P₁₀ are poor combiners (Table 5). All parental lines except P₁, P₂ and P₃ were good combiners for seed index. All parental lines except P₄, P₅ and P₇ were poor combiners for starch content. Parental lines P₁, P₆ and P₁₀ are poor combiners for oil content whereas, P₂, P₃, P₄, P₅ and P₆ are good combiners and shows good oil content these inbred are well suitable for oil content. Combining ability effects for the rest of the traits under HS conditions are shown in Table 5. Whereas, parental lines P₃, P₄, P₅, P₇ and P₉ shows great negative GCA effects which were desirable for days to maturity which they show early harvesting and parents which shows positive GCA for days to maturity like P₁, P₂, P₆, P₈ and P₁₀ shows delay in maturity means ultimately delay in harvesting.

In view of the general combining ability results different parental lines under HS condition, no parental line showed great combiners for every one of the characteristics thus, parental line P₇ showed great general combining ability for each and every characters with the exception of seed index and starch content.

Specific combining ability

Significant SCA effects noticed for the majority of the characters under Heat-stress. In contrast characters like chlorophyll content, canopy temperature deficit and ear height no

significant effects were observed. Negative and positive SCA effect values were recorded under HS and in three different environments. Depending on the character, cross combinations with high positive SCA values denoted as the best specific combiners for that particular character while those showing negative SCA effects were described as poor combiners. Positive SCA values for the starch content, oil content, grain yield, tassel length and seed index were desirable. As such, QPM hybrids exhibiting high positive SCA values for these traits were considered as good specific combiners while those exhibiting negative SCA values were shown as poor combiners for SCA.

Under HS 26 F₁s combined well for grain yield in E₁, 24 F₁s combined well in E₂, whereas, only 12 F₁s are combined well for grain yield per plant in E₃. Hence E₁ shows great specific combining ability than the both environments. Cross combinations P₁ × P₁₀ in E₁ (21.32), in E₂ (29.68*), and in E₃ (12.99*); P₃ × P₅ (15.85), (0.74), (5.86); P₃ × P₇ (17.18), (8.26), (7.15) and P₅ × P₇ (46.63*), (22.80), (6.14) combined well for grain yield (Table 6), recording total grain yield of 165.65, 211.60, 196.40 and 255.87 q/ha (Table 8). These hybrids performed better than the check HQPM-5 (172.22 q/ha). Hybrid P₁ × P₉ with grain yield (100.48 q/ha) was the worst specific combiner for the grain yield. It is noted that these F₁s are derived from the crosses made by the best parents which are suitable for HS (Table 1). The average yield loss for all the 45 F₁s was 15 % as compared to check.

Precisely 61 % of the F₁s had positive SCA effects for the oil content hybrids P₃ × P₈ E₁ (1.17***), E₂ (1.17**) and E₃ (1.10**); and P₄ × P₅ (1.32**), (1.25**), (1.26**) were the best cross combinations for this character while, hybrid P₅ × P₈ (-0.99), (-0.83), (-0.82) with the highest negative SCA value, was the worst cross combination. In consideration to starch content, P₇ × P₈ (9.19), (9.24), (8.48) and P₁ × P₈ (7.50), (8.75), (9.05) recorded the highest positive SCA effects and these cross combinations were good for starch content. While P₂ × P₁₀ (-4.51), (-5.37), (-4.99) was the worst cross combination for this character. Negative SCA effects for days to 50% tasselling, days to 50% silking, anthesis-silking interval and days to maturity were desired to be well combined for SCA for negative effects. Negative SCA effects for anthesis silking interval demonstrated that flowering synchronization was good while negative days to 50% tasselling and days to 50% silking demonstrated early flowering of F₁s. While negative SCA of days to maturity is good because of early harvesting of crop and it is most necessary for Heat-stress condition. Hybrids were top five early flowering in all the environments P₁ × P₃, P₁ × P₄, P₄ × P₆, P₅ × P₉ and P₅ × P₁₀. Among them in first environment hybrid P₃ × P₆ (-2.67**), (-3.01**), (-0.071) is good for early flowering since it

shows good negative SCA for days to 50% tasselling, days to 50% silking and anthesis-silking interval. Only 30 % of the F₁s are good combiners for anthesis-silking interval.

Moreover, the best cross combinations for the tassel length were P₁ x P₁₀ (13.13***), P₆x P₈ (8.41**), P₂x P₈ (7.33**). Single cross hybrids P₁ x P₄ (0.70), (7.51**), (7.52**) showed positive SCA in all three environments, in contrast hybrid p₄ x p₁₀ (-9.2***), (-3.18), (-2.47) shows negative SCA in all the environments On the other hand hybrid P₄ x P₁₀ (-9.20) shows the worst combination for tassel length. For plant height 80 % of the hybrids shown positive SCA and remaining 20 % showing negative SCA and in most of them E₂ showed most extremes as positive and negative SCA among them the best cross combinations for positive SCA are P₁x P₈ (12.79), (46.92***), (14.59**); P₃x P₈ (14.51), (27.86**), (1.53); P₂x P₈ (21.64*), (17.67*), (6.78) in all three environments and the cross which show negative SCA were P₄ x P₁₀(-16.85*), (-9.55), (-21.75***) among them the inferior cross showing negative SCA are P₆ x P₈ in E₂ (-25.87); P₇ x P₈ (-26.45**); and the best cross also showed in the same environment P₃ x P₇ (34.80**); P₃ x P₈(27.86).

Table 7. Best and worst cross combinations for grain yield under HS condition.

High yielding hybrids				Low-yielding hybrids			
Hybrid	Grain yield (q/ha)			Hybrid	Grain yield (q/ha)		
Env	E ₁	E ₂	E ₃		E ₁	E ₂	E ₃
P ₃ x P ₆	153.57	101.13	83.67	P ₈ x P ₉	74.81	107.03	91.25
P ₄ x P ₉	165.73	109.87	84.33	P ₁ x P ₅	75.17	113.57	83.30
P ₅ x P ₆	184.77	126.30	79.27	P ₂ x P ₅	96.70	92.17	75.41
P ₅ x P ₇	184.23	127.73	95.02	P ₃ x P ₄	99.93	95.23	88.50
P ₃ x P ₁₀	161.05	109.23	101.83	P ₈ x P ₁₀	106.27	85.47	84.33

Under the HS conditions, the best cross combinations for the seed index were P₃ x P₈ (6.22***), P₃x P₆ (4.03**), P₁x P₄ (3.41***). Single cross hybrids P₄x P₉ (6.05), (6.13*), (5.67); P₆ x P₉ (5.61), (5.92*), (4.90); P₆ x P₈ (4.73), (4.51), (0.98) combined well for chlorophyll content in all E₁, E₂ and E₃ environments. On the other hand hybrids P₂ x P₆ (-4.13), P₃ x P₇ (-3.51), P₆x P₈ (-4.61) were the worst three combinations for seed index among them third environment effects more than other two whereas P₅ x P₉ (-5.58), (-8.41), (-6.68); P₁ x P₆ (-5.91), (-7.35), (-6.93), P₄ x P₅ (-3.33), (-2.42), (-3.19), were the worst three combiners for chlorophyll content.

Table 6. Specific combining ability (SCA) effects for different characters in maize over three environments

S.NO	Hybrids	Env.	Days to 50% tasselling	Days to 50% Silking	ASI	Plant height	Ear height	Tassel length ¹	LAI	Chlorophyll content	CTD	Seed index	Seed yield per plant	Days to maturity	oil content (%)	Starch content (%)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(12)	
1	P ₁ X P ₂	E ₁	0.629	0.399	-0.265	1.558	-2.404	1.52	-0.007	1.4	1.753**	0.801	3.642	-1.409**	-0.674***	2.488***
		E ₂	-0.753	-0.639	0.068	-7.344	3.688	2.136	0.736**	1.923	0.368	0.219	-1.167	-0.293	-0.602***	3.037***
		E ₃	-0.404	-0.487	-0.169	-7.763	-10.855*	5.495**	0.727**	0.813	0.46	0.072	-2.748	1.798*	-0.566***	1.690***
2	P ₁ X P ₃	E ₁	0.712	0.677	-0.098	10.149	2.933	-5.049*	-0.041	-2.184	-1.213	-0.667	-2.067	-0.742	0.122	-0.072
		E ₂	-0.28	-0.444	-0.237	10.184	-7.257	-1.223	0.408	-2.615	0.004	1.387	12.985	0.568	0.148***	0.497**
		E ₃	-0.543	-0.904	-0.169	2.32	-7.466	0.856	0.443	-3.472	-0.171	0.568	-2.123	1.687*	0.187***	0.41
3	P ₁ X P ₄	E ₁	-0.732	-0.795	-0.126	12.061	5.655	0.705	0.262	1.331	1.267	3.416***	-11.792	1.730**	0.856***	2.071***
		E ₂	-0.947	-0.972	-0.098	16.173	9.695	7.519**	0.451	-0.654	-0.641	0.949	8.428	0.152	0.383***	1.997***
		E ₃	-0.947	-0.972	-0.098	16.173	9.695	7.519**	0.451	-0.654	-0.641	-0.528	-6.143	0.659	0.367***	1.553***
4	P ₁ X P ₅	E ₁	-0.205	0.649	0.513*	-3.846	-4.487	1.987	-0.108	-1.274	-0.702	0.996	-44.082*	-3.270***	-0.740***	-0.426
		E ₂	-0.641	-0.333	0.235	0.684	-3.916	-2.731	-0.03	-1.339	0.654	0.917	3.798	-1.265	-0.732***	1.010***
		E ₃	0.707	0.79	-0.003	1.459	4.43	-4.977**	-0.015	-1.866	0.06	1.795*	-3.579	-1.23	-0.773***	0.851**
5	P ₁ X P ₆	E ₁	0.101	0.371	0.179	11.681	8.594	4.725*	-0.252	-0.643	-0.027	1.964*	-2.27	-4.576***	0.11	5.376***
		E ₂	-0.169	-0.111	-0.015	14.823	12.149	5.241*	-0.172	0.469	0.19	-0.998	-18.98	-4.210***	0.118***	5.693***
		E ₃	1.874*	1.679	-0.086	4.292	8.773*	2.023	-0.048	0.475	-0.038	-0.272	-7.279	-2.174**	0.044*	5.718***
6	P ₁ X P ₇	E ₁	0.629	-0.045	-0.098	4.353	13.700*	3.242	0.068	4.175	0.12	-0.654	-13.696	-4.826***	0.157*	-4.377***
		E ₂	-0.336	-1.083	-0.182	0.862	-3.638	7.463**	-0.056	3.052	-0.505	-0.639	17.747	-4.571***	0.191***	-5.107***
		E ₃	2.290**	2.652*	0.192	6.665	7.292	-3.338	-0.186	3.23	-0.155	-0.253	-4.438	-2.230**	0.202***	-5.215***
7	P ₁ X P ₈	E ₁	0.934	1.177	0.207	12.799	7.897	4.782*	0.616*	1.298	-0.558	-1.486	18.694	0.813	-0.258***	7.506***
		E ₂	1.109	1.278	0.096	46.928***	27.219***	5.602*	0.001	0.367	-0.656	-1.600*	26.887*	2.679***	-0.158***	8.751***
		E ₃	1.235	1.374	0.053	14.592**	6.621	2.217	0.065	0.189	-0.082	-1.423	-2.725	3.465***	-0.202***	9.054***
8	P ₁ X P ₉	E ₁	1.407	0.982	-0.154	12.169	14.327*	3.516	0.503	-0.487	-0.908	-3.023**	3.07	2.008***	-0.117	-3.961***
		E ₂	1.164	1.194	0.263	2.417	4.72	3.352	0.11	0.396	-0.137	-1.406	-54.05***	1.985**	0.008	-5.649***
		E ₃	2.596**	1.957	-0.169	10.442	3.038	1.051	0.084	0.481	-0.079	-1.686*	-15.783*	1.659*	0.023	-5.230***
9	P ₁ X P ₁₀	E ₁	-0.455	-0.212	0.207	27.296***	20.218***	13.131***	0.576*	-0.864	0.234	1.945*	21.322	3.535***	-0.242**	-6.441***
		E ₂	0.581	0.556	-0.098	36.517***	40.426***	-3.37	0.005	0.582	0.318	0.802	29.686*	1.763*	-0.298***	-7.512***
		E ₃	1.179	1.235	-0.03	-18.874***	-4.006	1.412	-0.032	0.892	-0.196	-0.614	12.992*	1.104	-0.315***	-7.110***
10	P ₂ X P ₃	E ₁	1.184	1.01	-0.182	16.987*	11.575*	2.155	0.987***	4.858	-0.711	-1.12	3.069	-1.854***	0.862***	7.891***
		E ₂	1.497*	0.972	-0.487	12.928	12.851*	7.074**	0.511*	3.181	-0.562	-1.012	25.415	0.346	0.745***	8.395***
		E ₃	0.735	0.513	-0.03	-7.158	-6.442	5.856**	0.508*	2.518	-0.094	0.903	-2.025	3.187***	0.765***	9.065***
11	P ₂ X P ₄	E ₁	-1.927*	-1.795	0.124	-5.232	6.096	-0.111	0.554*	-0.417	-0.13	0.89	-15.674	2.619***	-0.707***	-2.437***
		E ₂	-1.169	-0.889	0.318	19.250*	-5.532	3.916	-0.023	0.196	-0.241	0.35	-21.942	1.596*	-0.516***	-1.342***
		E ₃	1.04	0.929	-0.197	23.026***	16.203***	2.273	-0.016	0.337	-0.743	0.073	-19.361**	1.159	-0.499***	-1.899***
12	P ₂ X P ₅	E ₁	-0.732	-0.351	0.429	-4.012	-8.979	0.943	0.083	1.122	-0.533	1.11	-35.33	-0.381	0.680***	-2.206***
		E ₂	-1.197	-1.25	-0.015	-10.572	-9.809	-4.667	0.036	1.981	0.221	-0.835	-14.506	0.513	0.762***	-2.818***
		E ₃	0.985	0.874	-0.197	1.981	2.454	3.356	-0.244	1.764	-0.176	-1.824*	-16.314*	-0.063	0.805***	-2.584***
13	P ₂ X P ₆	E ₁	0.573	0.371	-0.237	5.615	7.106	4.359*	0.05	3.697	-0.358	-2.002*	2.215	-0.354	-0.400***	-2.994***
		E ₂	-0.725	-0.361	0.402	5.901	14.590*	0.638	0.041	3.756	-0.876	-1.897*	-4.7	0.902	-0.298***	-2.358***
		E ₃	0.152	0.096	0.053	3.815	0.13	4.356*	-0.027	4.018	-0.293	-4.13***	-7.404	0.992	-0.234***	-2.720***
14	P ₂ X P ₇	E ₁	-1.899*	-2.045*	-0.182	9.676	7.188	4.095	0.12	-5.915	0.256	0.793	15.123	-0.937	0.853***	-2.438***
		E ₂	-1.891*	-1.333*	0.235	22.606**	9.803	2.194	0.273	-7.352**	-0.005	-0.372	-22.423	-0.126	0.751***	-3.399***
		E ₃	1.235	1.068	-0.336	-9.146	0.316	5.995***	0.225	-6.936*	-0.241	-1.875*	-2.616	-0.396	0.737***	-2.677***
15	P ₂ X P ₈	E ₁	-0.927	-0.823	0.124	21.646**	8.386	4.642*	0.308	0.134	-1.088	1.437	12.379	1.035*	1.189***	-2.417***
		E ₂	-1.114	-0.972	0.179	17.673*	3.993	7.333**	0.106	1.137	-0.123	1.035	-4.65	0.79	0.829***	-1.997***
		E ₃	1.179	1.79	0.525*	6.781	-5.689	-3.783*	0.143	1.135	-0.488	-0.741	-1.277	-0.369	0.787***	-1.748***

16.	P ₂ X P ₉	E ₁	0.879	1.316	0.429	10.449	5.625	-0.258	0.065	-3.754	1.295	0.404	-4.185	0.563	-0.810 ***	-1.059 *
		E ₂	-0.391	-0.056	0.346	14.162	6.827	6.749 **	0.386	-3.294	0.029	-1.572 *	11.208	1.429 *	-0.855 ***	-2.084 ***
		E ₃	2.207 **	2.04	0.303	-7.035	-0.605	0.051	0.403	-2.979	-0.011	-2.051 *	6.099	0.492	-0.836 ***	-1.975 ***
17.	P ₂ X P ₁₀	E ₁	0.684	0.455	-0.21	5.876	4.04	4.281 *	0.045	2.709	0.803	1.925 *	-7.96	1.758 **	-0.472 ***	-4.154 ***
		E ₂	0.359	0.306	-0.015	14.595	3.866	3.694	-0.016	2.799	0.318	1.670 *	2.373	1.207	-0.377 ***	-5.377 ***
		E ₃	1.790 *	2.652 *	0.775 **	-20.685 ***	-3.982	-7.255 ***	0.023	2.245	-0.155	1.720 *	-10.149	1.937 *	-0.450 ***	-4.995 ***
18.	P ₃ X P ₄	E ₁	2.157 *	2.149 *	-0.043	14.483	9.1	2.17	-0.116	1.026	-0.23	2.168 *	-30.049	3.952 ***	-0.088	-1.293 *
		E ₂	-1.364	-1.028	0.346	-13.555	-6.143	1.858	-0.067	0.484	-0.571	-0.389	-12.89	2.457 ***	0.007	-2.081 ***
		E ₃	2.568 **	2.179 *	-0.197	8.442	-6.074	-0.366	0.027	0.355	-0.541	0.396	-5.94	3.715 ***	0.027	-3.108 ***
19.	P ₃ X P ₅	E ₁	0.684	0.593	-0.071	-7.54	-1.442	4.288 *	0.51	0.674	0.334	-1.759	15.852	4.619 ***	-0.594 ***	-2.070 ***
		E ₂	-1.058	-1.056	0.013	25.956 **	4.58	4.608	0.492 *	1.436	0.324	-1.268	0.747	1.04	-0.665 ***	-3.014 ***
		E ₃	3.513 ***	3.457 **	0.136	4.731	4.176	-1.949	0.479 *	1.022	0.36	-1.791 *	5.86	0.826	-0.686 ***	-3.677 ***
20.	P ₃ X P ₆	E ₁	-2.677 **	-3.018 **	-0.071	-4.58	-4.557	4.967 *	0.21	2.449	0.776	3.51 ***	23.077	3.980 ***	0.202 **	6.916 ***
		E ₂	-2.919 ***	-2.833 ***	0.096	11.428	2.978	1.247	-0.097	2.577	-0.073	4.03 ***	-2.748	1.763 *	0.172 ***	7.079 ***
		E ₃	0.013	3.346 **	0.386	3.231	3.852	-0.616	-0.08	3.189	-0.435	0.962	-2.326	0.881	0.165 ***	7.023 ***
21.	P ₃ X P ₇	E ₁	0.184	0.566	0.318	3.791	-2.828	4.876 *	0.33	-1.81	0.289	0.018	17.118	-0.604	-0.371 ***	-2.845 ***
		E ₂	-0.419	-0.806	-0.404	34.801 ***	19.858 **	1.802	-0.164	-0.987	-0.702	-0.437	8.262	1.402 *	-0.399 ***	-2.869 ***
		E ₃	3.429 ***	2.985 **	-0.336	-10.063	-6.629	0.023	-0.145	-0.735	-0.642	-3.51 ***	7.155	2.492 **	-0.401 ***	-2.453 ***
22.	P ₃ X P ₈	E ₁	-2.177 *	-1.879 *	0.29	14.511	3.857	1.533	-0.149	-2.084	0.145	-0.265	24.897	2.035 ***	1.172 ***	-4.431 ***
		E ₂	-1.641 *	-1.111	0.54	27.867 **	24.382 ***	2.274	0.262	-1.354	-0.787	0.202	23.102	-1.015	1.179 ***	-4.280 ***
		E ₃	0.707	0.374	-0.141	1.531	-1.967	-1.088	-0.014	-1.043	-0.836	6.22 ***	8.971	-1.48	1.109 ***	-5.727 ***
23.	P ₃ X P ₉	E ₁	-2.705 **	-2.740 **	-0.071	14.294	5.829	3.817	0.295	-0.885	-0.272	-0.168	27.92	-2.104 ***	-0.244 **	-3.552 ***
		E ₂	0.747	0.806	0.04	17.356 *	2.549	2.691	0.335	-0.543	-0.535	-1.17	-14.507	-2.043 **	-0.199 ***	-3.547 ***
		E ₃	1.402	1.29	0.636 *	-24.285 ***	-6.216	-0.588	0.175	-0.301	-0.499	-0.555	-6.18	-1.952 *	-0.143 ***	-2.628 ***
24.	P ₃ X P ₁₀	E ₁	-1.899 *	-1.934 *	-0.043	0.901	4.147	6.212 **	-0.219	1.134	0.703	0.94	-1.968	-3.576 ***	0.174 *	0.682
		E ₂	0.164	0.5	0.346	-7.877	-6.412	-1.698	0.067	1.43	0.154	-0.596	-7.108	-2.265 **	0.163 ***	1.123 ***
		E ₃	1.652 *	1.235	-0.225	-5.935	8.073	0.773	0.099	0.303	0.04	-1.317	-0.038	0.492	0.145 ***	1.516 ***
25.	P ₄ X P ₅	E ₁	-0.427	-0.545	-0.098	17.508 *	-2.097	4.275 *	0.163	-3.337	0.948	1.891 *	28.263	-1.576 **	1.323 ***	-3.897 ***
		E ₂	-1.725 *	-1.583 *	0.152	19.945 *	6.865	2.449	0.201	0.112	0.761	-6.078	-1.376 *	1.251 ***	-4.401 ***	
		E ₃	0.485	0.54	-0.03	-20.085 ***	-8.845 *	-5.199 **	0.158	-3.192	-0.003	1.042	-1.182	0.798	1.251 ***	-4.328 ***
26.	P ₄ X P ₆	E ₁	0.545	0.843	0.568 *	-5.866	-3.992	3.261	0.126	0.541	0.023	-0.797	2.744	-1.215 *	-0.271 ***	5.775 ***
		E ₂	-0.586	-0.694	-0.098	3.417	7.263	3.088	0.276	-0.195	0.548	-0.433	-15.339	-1.654 *	-0.206 ***	7.042 ***
		E ₃	-0.682	-0.904	-0.114	-12.585 *	-6.836	-0.199	0.229	-0.498	0.226	2.335 **	-9.409	-1.146	-0.189 ***	6.653 ***
27.	P ₄ X P ₇	E ₁	1.073	1.093	-0.043	-1.704	5.003	2.417	0.313	1.292	1.337 *	2.255 *	13.319	0.202	-0.107	1.271 *
		E ₂	0.247	0.667	0.402	12.789	1.476	-2.356	0.338	2.794	-0.273	2.65 ***	-0.462	-0.015	-0.037	1.298 ***
		E ₃	0.402	1.402	0.831 **	-17.880 **	-8.983 *	-4.561 *	0.274	3.001	-0.071	2.258 **	-8.548	1.465	-0.107 ***	1.796 ***
28.	P ₄ X P ₈	E ₁	0.045	-0.018	-0.071	6.952	1.511	1.04	0.294	3.075	0.126	2.519 **	44.898 *	-0.159	-0.618 ***	-3.855 ***
		E ₂	0.025	-0.306	-0.321	8.523	2.666	4.116	0.085	2.893	0.068	1.198	6.478	1.568 *	-0.546 ***	-2.497 ***
		E ₃	0.013	-0.21	-0.308	-10.619 *	-5.654	-1.338	0.112	2.842	-0.289	1.458	7.685	2.826 ***	-0.528 ***	-3.265 ***
29.	P ₄ X P ₉	E ₁	-0.482	-0.545	-0.098	14.656	6.35	-3.379	0.325	6.056	-1.258	-0.447	39.481	1.702 **	0.929 ***	5.938 ***
		E ₂	0.081	-0.056	-0.154	19.345 *	6.167	3.199	0.401	6.138 *	-0.713	-1.608 *	6.435	2.207 **	0.910 ***	4.069 ***
		E ₃	1.707 *	1.04	-0.197	-5.102	1.096	0.162	0.388	5.678 *	-0.766	1.215	-12.039	2.020 *	0.927 ***	4.651 ***
30.	P ₄ X P ₁₀	E ₁	0.99	0.927	-0.071	-16.851 *	-8.618	-9.253 ***	-0.442	2.806	-1.316 *	-1.587	14.893	0.563	-0.249 **	1.362 **
		E ₂	0.164	-0.028	-0.182	-9.555	13.873 *	-3.189	-0.214	3.608	0.209	1.233	12.667	2.318 **	-0.359 ***	0.813 ***
		E ₃	2.290 **	2.318 *	-0.058	-21.752 ***	-15.615 ***	-2.477	-0.255	3.185	0.067	0.886	7.403	1.798 *	-0.355 ***	0.678 **
31.	P ₅ X P ₆	E ₁	0.073	-0.045	-0.126	1.445	9.399	-2.811	-0.004	3.279	-0.347	-0.641	40.698	2.785 ***	-0.353 ***	1.825 ***
		E ₂	-1.28	-1.389 *	-0.098	13.595	4.986	2.505	-0.092	3.54	-0.557	-1.852 *	20.264	1.263	-0.381 ***	1.499 ***
		E ₃	2.596 **	2.374 *	-0.114	-19.963 ***	-16.585 ***	-5.116 **	0.204	3.822	-0.236	1.605	-7.755	1.965 *	-0.415 ***	1.941 ***
32.	P ₅ X P ₇	E ₁	0.268	0.205	-0.071	8.173	-2.628	-3.985	0.283	-0.886	-0.033	-0.976	46.633 *	0.535	0.667 ***	-0.688
		E ₂	0.553	0.306	-0.265	3.634	9.199	-0.273	0.168	-0.044	0.048	-0.26	22.808	1.568 *	0.698 ***	-0.235
		E ₃	-0.321	-0.321	-0.169	-16.591 **	-12.400 **	3.523 *	0.15	0.318	-0.49	-1.106	6.149	-0.091	0.733 ***	-0.275
33.	P ₅ X P ₈	E ₁	-1.427	-1.24	0.235	6.329	4.236	0.938	0.031	-3.543	0.189	2.132 *	18.292	1.174 *	-0.997 ***	-5.318 ***

		E ₂	-1.669 *	-2.000 **	-0.321	11.034	14.056 *	-2.134	0.184	-3.505	-0.27	0.312	11.848	1.485 *	-0.838 ***	-4.770 ***
		E ₃	0.957	1.402	0.359	-6.33	-17.737 ***	4.078 *	0.187	-3.11	-0.251	-2.27**	3.882	2.270 **	-0.831 ***	-5.630 ***
34.	P ₅ X P ₉	E ₁	-1.288	-1.768	-0.46	11.232	9.408	1.889	0.291	-5.585	-0.127	-0.085	28.271	-2.631 ***	0.547 ***	5.754 ***
		E ₂	0.386	0.583	0.179	16.856 *	7.89	2.283	0.124	-8.410 **	0.582	0.706	11.205	-0.876	0.435 ***	5.166 ***
		E ₃	1.318	0.985	0.136	4.52	-4.32	0.912	0.107	-6.685 *	0.379	-1.682 *	13.258 *	1.131	0.440 ***	5.643 ***
35.	P ₅ X P ₁₀	E ₁	-0.482	-0.629	-0.098	4.143	-1.427	2.881	-0.206	3.788	-0.686	14.923	1.230 *	-0.024	4.472 ***	-0.553
		E ₂	0.803	0.611	-0.182	-11.377	-7.071	4.894	-0.191	2.059	0.138	-2.48**	-24.93	0.568	0.780 ***	4.766 ***
		E ₃	1.568	1.596	-0.058	8.537	3.303	3.606 *	-0.24	0.516	0.335	-0.111	-9.567	2.576 **	0.779 ***	4.873 ***
36.	P ₆ X P ₇	E ₁	-1.427	-1.073	0.263	3.05	5.39	2.867	0.523	4.738	-0.624	-0.397	-8.589	-3.770 ***	0.223 **	-0.513
		E ₂	-0.641	-0.806	-0.182	-11.894	1.264	-1.967	0.292	4.541	-0.116	-1.088	11.347	-2.043 **	0.215 ***	-0.062
		E ₃	0.846	-0.432	-0.253	-0.091	-6.057	-4.144 *	0.263	0.989	0.392	1.854 *	-8.164	-1.035	0.177 ***	-0.122
37.	P ₆ X P ₈	E ₁	2.212 *	2.149 *	-0.098	-1.411	3.931	1.464	0.384	-2.689	0.998	1.017	-16	-7.465 ***	0.249 **	-6.326 ***
		E ₂	0.47	0.222	-0.237	-25.827 **	-18.546 **	-2.828	0.092	-2.047	-0.334	-4.31***	-15.48	-5.793 ***	0.206 ***	-5.907 ***
		E ₃	1.457	1.29	-0.058	-8.163	-2.061	8.412 ***	-0.222	-2.513	-0.316	-4.61***	-9.135	-3.674 ***	0.193 ***	-6.356 ***
38.	P ₆ X P ₉	E ₁	0.684	0.288	-0.46	-0.031	3.337	0.961	0.008	5.613	0.814	2.694 **	-5.81	4.396 ***	0.313 ***	-2.564 ***
		E ₂	0.859	0.806	-0.071	-13.005	-2.379	-4.078	0.228	5.921 *	0.785	1.945 *	6.344	2.513 ***	0.139 ***	-3.967 ***
		E ₃	0.818	0.54	0.386	-7.98	-1.644	0.912	0.207	4.909	0.134	-0.023	-5.012	3.520 ***	0.168 ***	-3.217 ***
39.	P ₆ X P ₁₀	E ₁	-1.51	-1.24	0.235	3.153	4.205	-3.307	0.117	5.339	-0.044	-1.039	1.062	1.924 ***	0.354 ***	4.324 ***
		E ₂	-0.725	-0.5	0.235	0.095	-5.006	0.533	-0.08	4.421	0.74	3.32***	-1.447	2.624 ***	0.370 ***	3.753 ***
		E ₃	2.068 *	2.152 *	0.192	0.37	-2.354	1.939	-0.129	4.863	0.081	2.316 **	-5.904	2.631 **	0.413 ***	3.860 ***
40.	P ₇ X P ₈	E ₁	-0.927	-0.934	-0.043	8.251	7.226	1.223	-0.223	-0.671	-0.488	0.325	-4.825	4.619 ***	0.273 ***	9.194 ***
		E ₂	-1.697 *	-1.083	0.596 *	-26.455 **	-8.333	-1.939	0.014	-0.911	0.838	2.176 **	-23.237	0.846	0.328 ***	9.242 ***
		E ₃	-1.793 *	-0.737	-0.066	1.876	2.124	1.717	0.066	-1.41	-0.353	2.410 **	-5.28	1.27	0.308 ***	8.481 ***
41.	P ₇ X P ₉	E ₁	0.212	-0.129	-0.404	-3.593	0.399	0.344	0.121	-4.449	-0.772	2.559 **	10.044	-1.187 *	-0.543 ***	-2.874 ***
		E ₂	-0.641	-0.833	-0.237	0.034	3.835	2.811	0.294	-4.813	-0.743	1.237	15.521	-1.515 *	-0.672 ***	-3.265 ***
		E ₃	1.568	0.846	-0.336	10.726 *	-3.792	1.884	0.306	-5.135	-0.373	0.967	7.325	-0.202	-0.654 ***	-3.163 ***
42.	P ₇ X P ₁₀	E ₁	-2.316 *	-1.990 *	0.29	1.081	-1.526	0.126	-0.186	-0.306	-0.263	1.043	-4.231	3.341 ***	0.281 ***	3.017 ***
		E ₂	-0.225	-0.139	0.068	-1.199	-0.126	3.088	0.012	-1.34	-0.655	0.245	-9.947	1.929 **	0.285 ***	2.915 ***
		E ₃	1.152	1.457	0.136	7.409	4.164	4.578 **	-0.004	-0.644	-0.083	1.438	-1.796	1.576	0.321 ***	2.750 ***
43.	P ₈ X P ₉	E ₁	0.184	-0.24	-0.432	12.72	-0.473	4.861 *	0.129	0.857	-0.616	2.000 *	-40.023	1.452 **	0.272 ***	5.540 ***
		E ₂	0.136	-0.139	-0.293	19.434 *	11.025	3.949	0.194	0.1	-0.362	-0.524	11.394	-0.265	0.285 ***	5.417 ***
		E ₃	1.513	1.235	0.192	-14.346 **	-9.129 *	1.773	0.19	-0.083	-0.487	0.3	2.828	0.826	0.248 ***	5.686 ***
44.	P ₈ X P ₁₀	E ₁	-0.677	-0.768	-0.071	-0.143	0.335	-1.664	-0.268	2.853	0.826	2.481 **	-4.575	-0.687	0.387 ***	4.684 ***
		E ₂	-1.114	-1.111	0.013	5.201	-13.936 *	5.227 *	0.052	2.003	-0.873	-0.716	-9.907	0.179	0.096 **	-0.746 ***
		E ₃	1.096	0.846	-0.336	5.337	-0.507	-1.199	0.08	1.804	-0.464	-1.295	-3.98	1.604 *	0.320 ***	4.713 ***
45.	P ₉ X P ₁₀	E ₁	-0.205	-0.295	-0.098	6.274	2.887	1.24	-0.061	-4.955	0.242	2.734 **	-15.172	-4.159 ***	-0.266 ***	-4.000 ***
		E ₂	2.609 ***	2.806 ***	0.179	-10.311	-5.435	0.311	-0.458	-2.216	-0.754	-0.955	-6.916	-3.515 ***	0.146 **	4.600 ***
		E ₃	2.457 **	1.763	-0.225	10.854 *	-4.756	1.967	-0.473 *	-2.604	-1.017 *	2.195 *	-7.271	-2.202 **	-0.038 *	-1.308 ***
	Sij > 0 at 95%	E ₁	1.849	1.853	0.462	14.763	11.322	4.217	0.552	6.551	1.308	1.771	41.044	1.033	0.146	0.969
	Sij--Sik at 95%		2.718	2.724	0.678	21.701	16.642	6.199	0.811	9.63	1.923	2.604	60.332	1.518	0.215	1.425
	Sij--Skl at 95%		2.591	2.597	0.647	20.691	15.868	5.91	0.774	9.182	1.834	2.483	57.525	1.447	0.205	1.359
	Sij > 0 at 95%	E ₂	1.483	1.322	0.557	16.562	12.738	4.998	0.477	5.363	1.071	1.476	26.221	1.374	0.067	0.324
	Sij--Sik at 95%		2.179	1.944	0.818	24.345	18.724	7.346	0.701	7.883	1.574	2.169	38.543	2.019	0.099	0.476
	Sij--Skl at 95%		2.078	1.853	0.78	23.212	17.852	7.004	0.668	7.516	1.501	2.068	36.749	1.925	0.094	0.454
	Sij > 0 at 95%	E ₃	1.598	2.094	0.524	10.529	8.516	3.426	0.448	5.322	0.884	1.671	12.98	1.597	0.036	0.5
	Sij--Sik at 95%		2.349	3.077	0.77	15.477	12.518	5.035	0.658	7.824	1.299	2.456	19.08	2.347	0.052	0.735
	Sij--Skl at 95%		2.24	2.934	0.734	14.757	11.936	4.801	0.628	7.46	1.239	2.342	18.192	2.238	0.05	0.7

Heterosis

The range of standard / economic heterosis expressed by the F_1 hybrids over the National check (HQPM-5) for different quantitative traits along with number of hybrids in desirable direction. For maturity traits (days to 50 % tasselling, days to 50 % silking and ASI) hybrid $P_1 \times P_6$, $P_1 \times P_7$, $P_2 \times P_3$, $P_3 \times P_4$, $P_3 \times P_7$, $P_4 \times P_6$, $P_4 \times P_8$ recorded significant heterosis in desirable negative direction in E_1 and E_2 which was found to be earliest over all the three environments over check HQPM-5, however, $P_4 \times P_8$ showed a significant heterosis in negative direction and early. Similarly, for plant growth parameters (plant height and ear height, tassel length) among them $P_1 \times P_6$, $P_1 \times P_7$, $P_2 \times P_4$ showed heterosis in positive direction while $P_1 \times P_8$ and $P_1 \times P_{10}$ showed significant heterosis in positive direction over the best check HQPM-5 in E_1 and E_2 environments however, E_3 environment showed negative significant it indicates low plant in that environment as compared to the E_1 and E_2 environments over the best check HQPM-5 and out of them the hybrids $P_1 \times P_8$ (225.00 cm) in E_1 , $P_1 \times P_{10}$ (186.76 cm) in E_2 and $P_1 \times P_7$ (145.10 cm) in E_3 . Hence, P_1 as a female parent is best suitable for plant height moreover, for ear height hybrid $P_1 \times P_{10}$ has more cob height in both the E_1 and E_2 environments (97.32 cm and 120.67 cm) over the best check HQPM-5 (73.60). Nevertheless, E_3 has very low cob height 64.67 cm $P_1 \times P_6$ these were identified as the best genotypes in all three environments. Whereas, the range of heterosis was low for canopy temperature. For leaf area index deficit trait there were reasonably good number of hybrids which recorded significant heterosis overall the three environments. While for chlorophyll content there were lower number of hybrids recording significant heterosis over check. Similarly, over check, HQPM-5 a total of 12 hybrids recorded significant standard heterosis in desirable positive direction in leaf area index. These results were in line with the findings of Mohammed and Yousif (2020) and Karim, A.N.M.S *et al.*, (2018). The highest grain yield was recorded in the hybrid $P_5 \times P_7$ (188.41 q/ha) and this hybrid differed significantly over the best check for seed index, cob length, plant height and starch content. For majority of the top five hybrids the higher grain yield was manifested through seed index. Similarly, $P_3 \times P_8$ had higher test weight and $P_1 \times P_8$ higher cob height as compared to the best check for the respective traits. For seed yield and all of the top five hybrids were statistically on par with the best check. E_1 and E_2 showed the best standard heterosis in all the parameters as compared to E_3 environment.

Discussion

The progress of most crop improvement programs vigorously relies on the limit of the hereditary material to convey desired traits unto its progeny. Combining ability studies

involve determining the average breeding value gca of germplasm used as well as the genetic value due to the interaction between these specific genes in a cross combination (SCA). Variances due to SCA and GCA were estimated for assessing the gene action influencing inheritance of different characteristics studied under HS conditions. Hence results shown significant differences traits studied under HS conditions. Results showed significant differences for GCA and SCA effects thus implying the presence of adequate additive variation and dominance variance, respectively. General combining ability defined as the average performance of the genotype in a series of hybrid combinations and is a measure of additive gene effect. While specific combining ability refers to the performance of the genotype in a specific cross in relation to the formal and is a measure of non-additive gene effect (Sharief *et al.*, 2009). Combining ability in maize grain yield has been studied exclusively and the findings have been extensively used in maize breeding programs (Shimelis *et al.*, 2019). Under HS, GCA effects were more important in determining most traits non-additive variances were higher than additive variances similar observations were reported by (Richard, O.A. *et al.*, 2021). Preponderance of additive effects is observed when the GCA:SCA ratio is greater than one while preponderance of dominance effects is observed when the ratio is less than one.

Dominance or epistatic genetic effects mostly influenced maize grain yield under HS. The results obtained in this investigation are partially in accordance with Hallauer and Miranda (1988), who emphasized that dominance effects for the traits showing strong expression of heterosis phenomenon are often more important than additive ones. From the breeders' point of view, having dominance as the major type of gene action for the most important traits suggests that selection for these traits would be quite difficult and a long-term process. Pfunde 2016 observed that inheritance of grain yield among white QPM inbred lines was mostly influenced by non-additive gene action under HS. Since SCA effects were predominant in determining yield under HS conditions, the breeding strategy to improve this trait under these stresses must consist of inbreeding followed by cross-breeding to generate superior hybrids Awata, L.A *et al.*, 2018. Genetic effects governing maize grain yield and other yield attributing traits under heat stress condition, remain sparse as far as we could possibly know. Principally, outcome from this research showed gene action governing grain yield and other traits were shown non-additive in variance since the ratio among gca and sca is less than 1 for almost all the characters. This prioritizes the need for heat-stress breeding for the improvement of maize yields under sub-tropical regions.

According to the GCA values obtained in this study, inbred lines P₄ and P₅ were observed as good general combiners for grain yield, under HS and for oil content P₂, P₄, P₅, P₇ and P₉ were the best combiners, whereas, P₁, P₃, P₆, P₈, P₉ and P₁₀ were the good combiners for starch content since they exhibited high GCA values. Two of these inbred lines P₃ and P₁₀ were heat-susceptible rest all parental lines (Table 1) are heat tolerant for HS conditions. This may suggest that heat tolerance at the early stages was not synonymous with tolerance to HS during vegetative and grain formation stages in this study. This could be further supported by the fact that the lowest yielding F₁ (P₁ x P₉) was derived from a cross between two inbred lines that were classified to be heat tolerant at the early and later stages too. Most of these inbred lines were able to transfer their high yielding potential to their F₁s. The highest yielding F₁ (P₅ X P₆: 2.56 t/ha) came from two lines that were generally good combiners for yield under HS condition. However, in some cases, high starch was observed in cross combinations involving (P₄ X P₅: 5.80 %) under heat stressed conditions. Similar observations were reported by Nyasha and Charles 2020 and Tulu *et al.*, 2018. Such observations demonstrate the importance of non-additive gene effects in influencing yield potential.

Conclusions

Based on the results, grain yield was significantly influenced by non-additive gene action under HS condition. Single cross hybrids P₅ x P₇, P₅ x P₆, P₄ x P₈ and P₄ x P₅ exhibited high SCA effects for grain yield under the stressed environment. Among these environments, E₁ has performed well in all the characters except for plant height, tassel height. These hybrids were therefore the highest yielders under heat stress condition. On the other hand, inbred lines (NBPGR-36548) P₄ and (VL-153237) P₅ exhibited high GCA effects for grain yield under HS condition. It was found that significant SCA estimates involving at least one of parent with high GCA is desirable in the present study. Further, these F₁s depicted positive significant economic heterosis (H_c), and positive significant *sca* effects for grain yield and quality traits in all the environments except in third environment and these parental materials can be very useful source in hybridization programs.

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