

Parasitic Potential of *Bracon brevicornis* Wesmael and *Chelonus blackburni* (Cameron) (Hymenoptera: Braconidae) on *Earias vittella* (Fabricius) (Lepidoptera: Nolidae) and *Helicoverpa armigera* (Hübner) (Lepidoptera: Noctuidae)

ABSTRACT

Aims: The current study was carried out to investigate the parasitic potential of parasitoids density against two important bhendi fruit borer pests age.

Study design: COMPLETELY RANDOM DESIGN (CRD).

Place and Duration of Study: The methodology and materials used in this investigation were developed at the National Bureau of Agricultural Insect Resources (ICAR NBAIR) Hebbal, Bengaluru (Latitude: 13.097221 Longitude: 77.568291), during 2019-20 and 2020-21

Methodology: An experiment was designed to examine the effects of different parasitoid densities and host age i.e on which instar larvae of fruit borer the percent parasitization of these two parasitoids was checked. The second, third, and fourth instar larvae of *E. vittella* were introduced separately at different ratios of *Bracon brevicornis* parasitoids and host viz., 1:10, 2:10, 3:10, 4:10, and 5:10. Mated female parasitoids were utilised in all cases, and the experiment was carried out in a glass jar of 18 x 12 cm, using the sandwich approach. (Jhansi,1984) with four replications. After 24 h, the larvae were observed and the percent parasitization was calculated. A similar study was carried out for the second, third, fourth, and fifth instars larvae of *H. armigera*.

To examine the parasitic potential of *C. blackburni*, another experiment was conducted with various ratios of its adults and eggs of *E. vittella* and *H. armigera* by adopting the procedure of Swamiappan and Balasubramanian (1979). The parasitoid and host eggs were maintained at a ratio of 1:100, 2:100, 3:100, 4:100, and 5:100 with four replications. The observation of percent parasitization was recorded after the egg incubation period.

Results: The parasitic potential studies showed that the parasitoid host ratio of 5:10 (100%) was the best for *E. vittella* (II, III and IV instar larvae) with the highest parasitization followed by 4:10 (96.83 %), 3:10 (85.08 %), 2:10 (61.71 %) and least parasitization was observed in 1:10 parasitoid host ratio (52.71 %). Similarly, for *H. armigera* (II, III, IV and V instar larvae) parasitoid host ratio of 5:10 was recorded the highest parasitization (96.75 %), followed by 4:10 (93.69 %), 3:10 (84.11 %), 2:10 (64.75 %) and least parasitization was observed in 1:10 parasitoid host ratio (45.07 %)

The parasitic potential of *C. blackburni* showed that the highest parasitization of 64.75 % was recorded against *E. vittella* in 5:100 parasitoid host ratio followed by 4:100 (60.50 %), 3:100 (52.55%), 2:100 (38.27%) and least parasitization was observed in 1:100 (25.60 %). Similarly, for *H. armigera*, at a parasitoid host ratio of 5:100 was recorded highest parasitization (70.50%), followed by 4:100 (64.50 %), 3:100 (58.25 %), 2:100 (43.45 %) and 1:100 (28.50 %)

Conclusion: The parasitoids: host ratio 5:10 for *B. brevicornis* and 5:100 for *C. blackburni* are best to manage the bhendi fruit borer complex at their IV instar level.

Key words: Bhendi, Fruit borer, Bio control, Natural enemies, parasitic potential.

1. INTRODUCTION

Okra (*Abelmoschus esculentus* L.) is an important vegetable in India. It is also known as lady's finger and locally called "bhendi". It contains large quantities of carbohydrate, protein and vitamin C. Okra is a nutritious vegetable which plays an important role to meet the demand of vegetables of the country when vegetables are scanty in the market (Anon., 2015). Okra mucilage is suitable for medicinal and industrial application. Nowadays okra production is in great loss due to attack of various pests, diseases and lack of knowledge about its cultural practices. Okra is susceptible to the attack by many insect pests from vegetative to reproductive stages that cause considerable damage and reduce the productivity and an increase in farm cost (Ali *et al.*, 2015). Among the pests, Okra shoot and fruit borer (OSFB) *Earias vittella* and The okra fruit borer *Helicoverpa armigera* are said to be the crop's most serious insect pests, which interferes with its economic production in almost all okra growing countries. Srinivasan and Gowder (1959) reported that these pests may cause 40-50% damage of fruit in some areas of south-east Asian countries. Krishnaiah (1980) noticed that the insects attack fruits and cause 35% damage in harvestable fruit in India. To suppress insect pest attacks on vegetable crops, chemical pesticides are routinely utilised (Alam *et al.*, 2002). According to one study, chemical insecticides are employed at least 180 times each year to protect vegetable crops from insect pests. Many problems such as insect resistance and resurgence, environmental pollution, consumer health hazards, and increased production costs have been caused by such irrational applications of chemical insecticides (Pedigo, 2002, Mamum *et al.*, 2014 and Kearns.,2020). Alternative approaches are paramount to avoid dependence on chemical insecticides. Biological control is an alternative promising approaches that only target the insects pests and establish food and healthy environments. Among the various groups of biocontrol agents, braconids are well-known parasitoids for the management of different lepidopteran pests, including the okra fruit borer complex.

Two potential parasitoids *viz.* *Bracon brevicornis* is an ectoparasitoid of diverse range of larval-stage of lepidopteran pests and *Chelonus blackburni* which is a uniparental solitary egg-larval parasitoid of lepidopteran pests (Divakar and Pawar, 1979; Chaudhary *et al.* 1983).

In okra, however, information on the parasitic potential of natural enemies' densities on okra pests especially on their different host age is very scarce. Keeping these in view, the current study was carried out to investigate the parasitic potential of parasitoids against two important bhendi fruit borer pests host density.

2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The methodology and materials used in this investigation were developed at the National Bureau of Agricultural Insect Resources (ICAR NBAIR) Hebbal, Bengaluru (Latitude: 13.097221 Longitude: 77.568291), during 2019-20 and 2020-21

Culture of parasitoids

The larval parasitoid, *Bracon brevicornis* Wesmael (Braconidae: Hymenoptera) was cultured by sandwich method (Jhansi, 1984). The culture was kept alive in a plastic container of 18 × 12 × 12 cm size. Fully grown rice moth *Corcyra cephalonica* larvae as laboratory host and they were placed on muslin cloth and subjected to parasitization by mated females of *B. brevicornis* at the (parasitoid: host ratio) 1: 20. The muslin cloth containing the *C. cephalonica* larvae was immediately closed with another khada cloth and fastened with rubber bands to arrest the movement of larvae and facilitate easy parasitization by *B. brevicornis*. The larvae were replaced once in 24 hours until the death of the parasitoid. Each day, the parasitized *C. cephalonica* larvae were removed and placed on filter papers until pupation of *B. brevicornis*. These filter papers containing pupae of *B. brevicornis* were transferred to plastic containers to aid the emergence of the adults of *B. brevicornis* for continuing the parasitoid culture. The emerging adults were given a sugar: honey solution (1: 1) dipped in cotton swab and stuck within the plastic containers for the nourishment of adult parasitoids

The egg larval parasitoid *Chelonus blackburni* (Braconidae: Hymenoptera) was cultured by Sprinkle of *Corcyra cephalonica* eggs on white card with gum, Allow the parasitoids @ 1:100 (parasitoids : eggs) in a plastic container, and expose for 24 hours, Transfer the cards to another plastic container with 250g of broken bajra grains. The Parasitoids was develops inside the larvae and they spin their white cocoon, adult parasitoids was emerge in 15-20 days.

The parasitic potential of *Bracon brevicornis* and *Chilonus blackburni* against fruit borers

An experiment was designed to examine the effects of different parasitoid densities and host age *i.e* on which instar larvae of fruit borer the percent parasitization of these two parasitoids was checked. The second, third, and fourth instar larvae of *E. vittella* were introduced separately at different ratios of *Bracon brevicornis* parasitoids and host *viz.*, 1:10, 2:10, 3:10, 4:10, and 5:10. Mated female parasitoids were utilised in all cases, and the experiment was carried out in a glass jar of 18 x 12 cm, using the sandwich approach. (Jhansi, 1984) with four replications. After 24 h, the larvae were observed and the percent parasitization was calculated. A similar study was carried out for the second, third, fourth, and fifth instars larvae of *H. armigera*.

To examine the parasitic potential of *C. blackburni*, Another experiment was conducted with various ratios of its adults and eggs of *E. vittella* and *H. armigera* by adopting the procedure of Swamiappan and Balasubramanian (1979). The parasitoid and host eggs were maintained at a ratio of 1:100, 2:100, 3:100, 4:100, and 5:100 with four replications. The observation of percent parasitization was recorded after the egg incubation period.

Statistical analysis:

The data was statistically evaluated for completely random design (CRD), Duncan's multiple range test (DMRT), and one factor ANOVA, and the results were interpreted.

3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The parasitic potential of *B. brevicornis* against fruit borers, *E. vittella* and *H. armigera*

The parasitic potential studies showed that the parasitoid host ratio of 5:10 (100%) was the best for *E. vittella* (II, III and IV instar larvae) with the highest parasitization followed by 4:10 (96.83 %), 3:10 (85.08 %), 2:10 (61.71 %) and least parasitization was observed in 1:10 parasitoid host ratio (52.71 %). Similarly, for *H. armigera* (II, III, IV and V instar larvae) parasitoid host ratio of 5:10 was recorded the highest parasitization (96.75 %), followed by 4:10 (93.69 %), 3:10 (84.11 %), 2:10 (64.75 %) and least parasitization was observed in 1:10 parasitoid host ratio (45.07 %) (Table 1 & Fig.1).

Sheeba and Narendran (2007) reported that preferences of the parasitoid vary with host insects and *B. brevicornis* was more effective against *E. vittella* followed by *H. armigera*. According to them, *B. brevicornis* was more effective against *Opisina arenosella* with 90% parasitization. The current study also discovered the fourth instar larvae were preferred by the parasitoids than the early instars larvae. The host acceptance and parasitization percentage may differ depending on the host's age. Hopper (1986) reported that *Microplitis croceipes* preferred the third and fourth instar larvae of *Heliothis virescens* (F.). However, early instars were also parasitized. It is in confirmation by earlier findings of Reichmuth *et al.* (1997). According to them, very young and small lepidopteran hosts can also be killed when stung by the parasitoids.

Table 1. Parasitic potential of *B. brevicornis* against the larvae of *E. vittella* and *H. armigera*

| Sl. No. | Treatment (Parasitoid : Host) Ratio | % Parasitization (%)* | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | | <i>Earias vittella</i> larvae | | | | <i>Helicoverpa armigera</i> larvae | | | | |
| | | II instar | III instar | IV instar | Mean | II instar | III instar | IV instar | V instar | Mean |
| 1 | 1:10 | 45.50 (42.40) ^e | 55.25 (47.99) ^d | 57.38 (49.22) ^d | 52.71 (46.53) | 40.63 (39.58) ^d | 50.00 (44.98) ^d | 52.38 (46.34) ^c | 37.25 (37.60) | 45.07 (42.13) |
| 2 | 2:10 | 55.25 (47.99) ^d | 67.25 (55.07) ^c | 62.63 (52.29) ^c | 61.71 (51.78) | 70.00 (56.77) ^c | 68.50 (55.84) ^c | 75.00 (59.98) ^b | 45.50 (42.40) | 64.75 (53.74) |
| 3 | 3:10 | 75.25 (60.14) ^c | 85.25 (67.39) ^b | 94.75 (76.73) ^b | 85.08 (68.08) | 83.45 (65.97) ^b | 90.00 (71.54) ^b | 100.00 (90.00) ^a | 63.00 (52.51) | 84.11 (70.01) |
| 4 | 4:10 | 90.50 (72.03) ^b | 100 (90.00) ^a | 100.00 (90.00) ^a | 96.83 (84.01) | 100.00 (90.00) ^a | 100.00 (90.00) ^a | 100.00 (90.00) ^a | 74.75 (59.81) | 93.69 (82.45) |
| 5 | 5:10 | 100.00 (90.00) ^a | 100 (90.00) ^a | 100.00 (90.00) ^a | 100 (90) | 100.00 (90.00) ^a | 100.00 (90.00) ^a | 100.00 (90.00) ^a | 87.00 (68.84) | 96.75 (84.71) |
| C.D @ 0.05 % | | 0.95 | 0.652 | 0.62 | - | 0.19 | 0.28 | 0.33 | 0.64 | - |
| SE(m) ± | | 0.31 | 0.209 | 0.20 | - | 0.06 | 0.09 | 0.11 | 0.20 | - |
| C.V. | | 0.84 | 0.513 | 0.48 | - | 0.15 | 0.22 | 0.25 | 0.66 | - |

* Mean of four replications in each treatment ** Figures in parentheses are arc sin values
In a column, means followed by same letter(s) are not significantly different by DMRT (P<0.05)

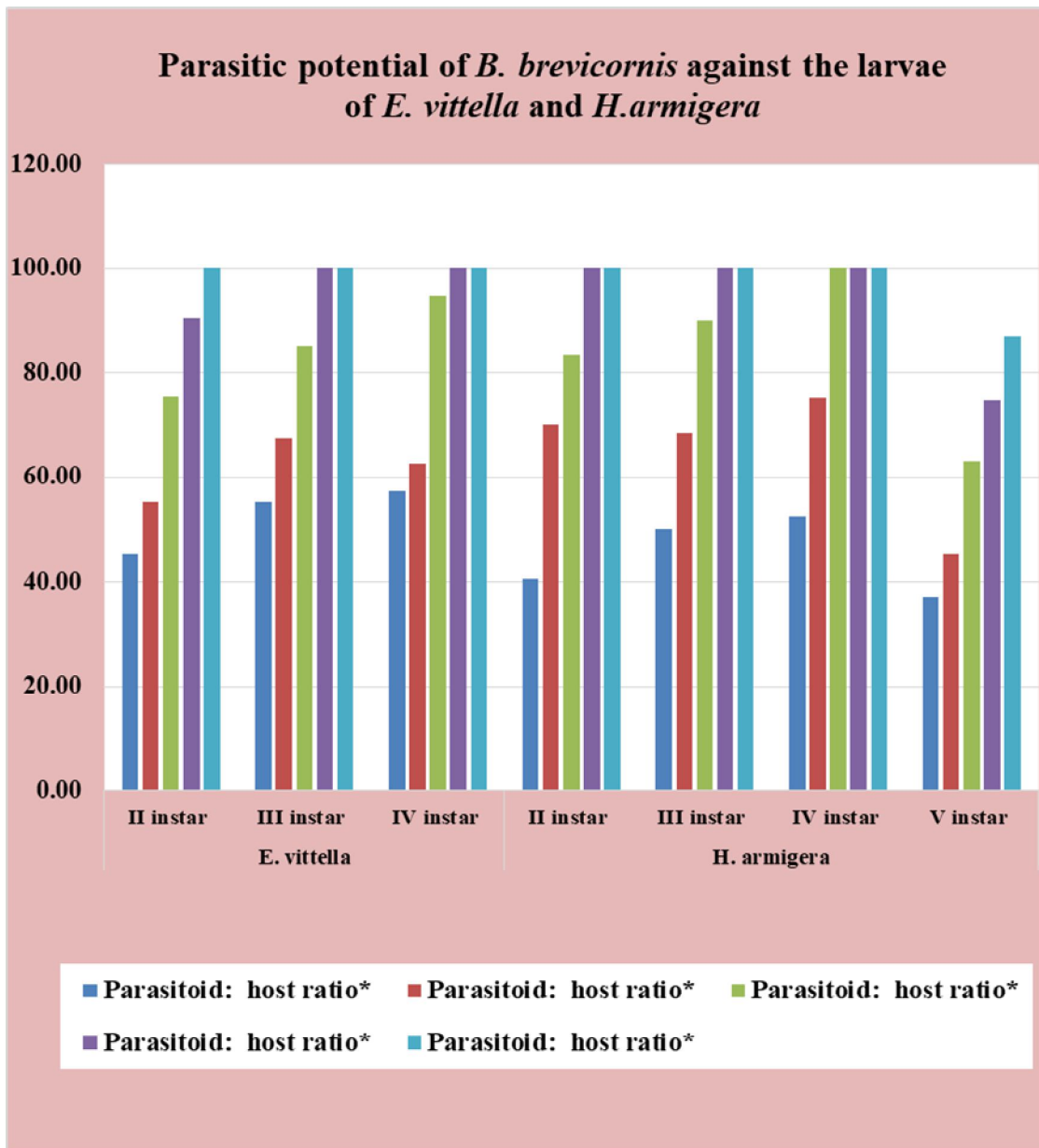


Fig 1. Parasitic potential of *B. brevicornis* against the larvae of *E. vittella* and *H. armigera*.

*(Parasitoid: Host) Ratio, 1:10, 2:10, 3:10, 4:10, 5:10.

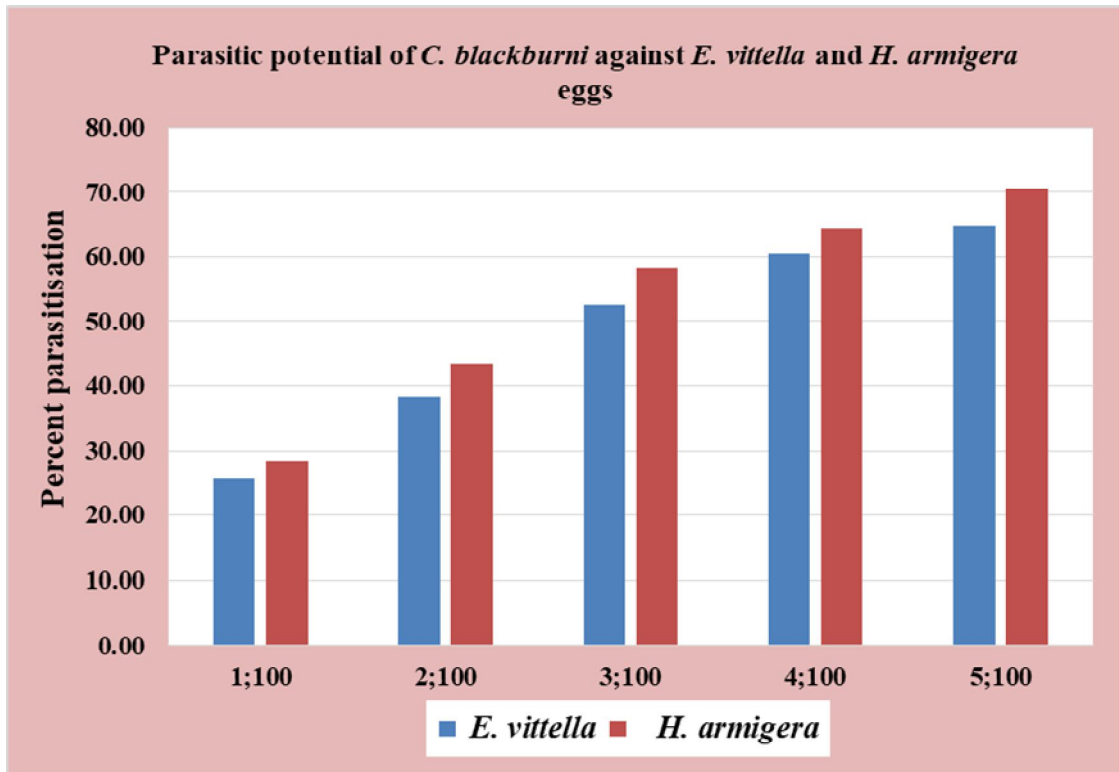
The parasitic potential of *C. blackburni* against fruit borers *E. vittella* and *H. armigera*

The parasitic potential of *C. blackburni* showed that the highest parasitization of 64.75 % was recorded against *E. vittella* in 5:100 parasitoid host ratio followed by 4:100 (60.50 %), 3:100 (52.55%), 2:100 (38.27%) and least parasitization was observed in 1:100 (25.60 %). Similarly, for *H. armigera*, at a parasitoid host ratio of 5:100 was recorded highest parasitization (70.50%), followed by 4:100 (64.50 %), 3:100 (58.25 %), 2:100 (43.45 %) and 1:100 (28.50 %) (Table.2 Fig.2). The current study's findings agreed with Swamiappan and Balasubramanian (1979), who found 59.60% parasitization against *E. vittella*, and Jeyarani *et al.* (2008), who reported 87.11% parasitization of *H. armigera* by *C. blackburni*.

Table 2. Parasitic potential of *C. blackburni* against *E. vittella* and *H. armigera* eggs

| Sl. No. | Treatment (Parasitoid: Host) Ratio | Parasitization (%)** | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | <i>E. vittella</i> | <i>H. armigera</i> |
| 1 | 1:100 | 25.60 (30.38) ^e | 28.50 (32.25) ^e |
| 2 | 2:100 | 38.27 (38.20) ^d | 43.45 (41.22) ^d |
| 3 | 3:100 | 52.55 (46.44) ^c | 58.25 (49.73) ^c |
| 4 | 4:100 | 60.50 (51.04) ^b | 64.50 (53.41) ^b |
| 5 | 5:100 | 64.75 (53.56) ^a | 70.50 (57.08) ^a |
| C.D @ 0.05 % | | 0.82 | 0.17 |
| SE(m) ± | | 0.26 | 0.05 |
| C.V. | | 1.09 | 0.20 |

* Mean of four replications in each treatment ** Figures in parentheses are arc sin values
In a column, means followed by same letter(s) are not significantly different by DMRT (P<0.05)



**Fig 2. Parasitic potential of *C. blackburni* against *E. vittella* and *H. armigera* eggs
*(Parasitoid: Host) Ratio, 1:100, 2:100, 3:100, 4:100, 5:100.**

4. Conclusion

The parasitic potential of *B. brevicornis* against fruit borers, *E. vittella* and *H. armigera* was checked by maintaining different parasitoid host ratio. The result revealed that the parasitoid host ratio of 5:10 showed the highest parasitization for *E. vittella* (II, III and IV instar larvae) followed by 4:10, 3:10, 2:10 and least parasitization was observed in 1:10 parasitoid host ratio. Similarly, in *H. armigera* (II, III, IV and V instar larvae) parasitoid host ratio of 5:10 was recorded the highest parasitization, followed by 4:10, 3:10, 2:10 and least parasitization was observed in 1:10 parasitoid host ratio.

The parasitic potential of *C. blackburni* against fruit borers *E. vittella* and *H. armigera* was checked and the result showed that the highest parasitization was recorded against *E. vittella* in 5:100 parasitoid host ratio followed by 4:100, 3:100, 2:100 and least parasitization was observed in 1:100. Similarly, for *H. armigera*, at a parasitoid host ratio of 5:100 was recorded highest parasitization, followed by 4:100, 3:100, 2:100 and 1:100.

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