

# Effect of Phosphorus Fertilization and PSB Inoculation on Growth Attributes and Root Nodulation of Chickpea

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## ABSTRACT

A field experiment was conducted at Research Farm, JNKVV-College of Agriculture, Tikamgarh (Madhya Pradesh) during *rabi* season 2019-20 to assess the effect of phosphorus fertilization and PSB inoculation on growth attributes and root nodulation of chickpea. Results revealed that the vegetative growth parameters were, in general, enhanced very fast between 30 to 90 days thereafter the rise was normally very slow up to the crop maturity stage. Thus, at harvest stage, plant height ranged from 49.5 to 67.9 cm and branches 9.40 to 13.0 plant<sup>-1</sup> under various treatments.

Amongst the all treatments, 50 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> + PSB + 2% DAP foliar spray resulted in significantly higher number of root nodules plant<sup>-1</sup> and fresh and dry weight of root nodules plant<sup>-1</sup> at 30, 45, 60, and 75 DAS followed by 25 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> + PSB + 2% DAP spray before flowering stage. Similarly the same treatments also enhanced the fresh and dry matter production per plant up to the maximum extent, being significantly higher to the single applied P levels or with each of PSB and DAP spray.

*Keywords: Phosphorus fertilization; PSB; growth attributes; root nodulation; chickpea.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Chickpea (*Cicerarietinum* L.) is the predominant pulse crop of India. Being a legume it responds well to phosphorus fertilization. Phosphorus is an essential plant nutrient both as a part of several key plant structure compounds and as a catalysis in the conversion of numerous key biochemical reactions in plants. Some specific growth factors that have been associated with phosphorus are stimulated root development, increased stalk and stem strength, improved flower formation and seed production, more uniform and earlier crop maturity, increased nitrogen N- fixing capacity of legumes, improvements in crop quality and increased resistance to plant diseases [1,2,3].

Most of the phosphorus present in the soil unavailable to the plants. Efficiency of soil applied phosphatic fertilizer is a round 10-25 % as these are converted readily to less available forms by the process P- fixation [4]. Amelioration of phosphorus deficiency by application of costly phosphorus fertilizer is not viable portion to many resource poor farmers. The use of phosphate solubilizing bacteria (PSB) has opened the new vistas of phosphorus nutrition [5]. Phosphate

solubilizing bacteria (PSB) play an important role in enhancing phosphorus availability to plants by lowering soil pH and microbial production of organic acid and mineralization of organic phosphorus [6]. Considering these facts, this study was carried out to assess effect of phosphorus fertilization and PSB inoculation on growth attributes and root nodulation of chickpea.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

A field experiment was conducted at JNKVV, Research Farm, College of Agriculture, Tikamgarh (24° 43' N latitude and 78° 49' E longitude at an altitude of 358 m above sea level) Madhya Pradesh during *rabi* 2019-20 to assess effect of phosphorus fertilization and PSB inoculation on growth attributes and root nodulation of chickpea. The soil of the experimental field was clay loam having pH 7.20, electrical conductivity 0.26 dsm<sup>-1</sup>, organic carbon 0.62 %, available N, P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> and K<sub>2</sub>O 233, 16.7 and 497 kg ha<sup>-1</sup>, respectively. Nine treatments (T<sub>1</sub>- Control, T<sub>2</sub>-50 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>ha<sup>-1</sup>, T<sub>3</sub>-25 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>ha<sup>-1</sup>, T<sub>4</sub>- .50 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> +PSB (5 g kg<sup>-1</sup> seed), T<sub>5</sub>-25 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>+PSB (5 g kg<sup>-1</sup> seed), T<sub>6</sub>-50 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>+ 2% DAP spray before flowering stage, T<sub>7</sub>-25 kg

P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>+2% DAP spray before flowering stage, T<sub>8</sub>-50 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> +PSB + 2% DAP spray before flowering stage and T<sub>9</sub>-25 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> +PSB + 2% DAP spray before flowering stage) were replicated thrice in randomized block design. The chickpea var. JG 12 was sown @ 80 kg seed ha<sup>-1</sup> in rows 30 cm apart on 17 November 2019. A uniform dose of 20 kg N and 20 kg K<sub>2</sub>O ha<sup>-1</sup> was applied in all the treatments through urea and MoP, respectively. The P levels, PSB and 2% DAP foliar spray were applied as per treatments. The chickpea was grown as per recommended package of practices. The crop was harvested on 14 March 2020. The periodical observations at 30, 60, 90 DAS and harvest stage of growth parameters (Plant height, Plant population, Number of branches plant<sup>-1</sup>, Total fresh and dry weight g plant<sup>-1</sup>) and root nodulation growth at 30, 45, 60 and 75 DAS were recorded.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 3.1 Growth Parameters

A linear increase in plant height was observed with advancement in the age of chickpea (Table 1). Among the different treatments the plants height and number of branches plant<sup>-1</sup> were significantly higher in T<sub>8</sub>, (50 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>+PSB + 2% DAP spray before flowering stage) followed by T<sub>9</sub>, (25 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> +PSB + 2% DAP spray before flowering stage) at 30, 60, 90 DAS to maturity stage. The vegetative growth parameters were, in general, enhanced very fast between 30 to 90 days thereafter the rise was normally very slow up to the crop maturity stage. At harvest stage, plant height ranged from 49.5 to 67.9 cm and branches were 9.40 to 13.0 plant<sup>-1</sup> under various applied treatments. The lowest plant height was found in control plot than T<sub>3</sub> (25 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub>) the similar trend was found in number of branches plant<sup>-1</sup>.

The increase in growth parameters due to treatments T<sub>8</sub>, T<sub>9</sub> and T<sub>6</sub> treatments may be owing to increased supply of N and P availability to crop plants. That is why seed inoculation with competitive and efficient phosphorus solubilizing bacteria at sowing is the recommended agronomic practice for pulse production technology. The similar findings was observed by Tiwari et al. [7], Singh et al. [8], Chauhan and Raghav [6]. The positive effect of phosphorus solubilizing bacteria (PSB) and plant growth promoting rhizobacteria (PGPR) on legume *Rhizobium* symbiosis is well documented in early events of nodulation. PSB has been found to have a positive effect on nodulation and N<sub>2</sub> fixing efficiency of *Rhizobium* in legumes [4,3].

**Table 1. Plant growth attributes of chickpea as influenced by P levels, foliar spray of P and PSB inoculation**

Treatments	Plant height in cm (DAS)				No.branches plant <sup>-1</sup> (DAS)			
	30	60	90	At harvest	30	60	90	At harvest
Control	15.2	27.6	48.5	49.5	4.24	6.56	8.45	9.40
50 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> ha <sup>-1</sup>	17.7	32.6	56.8	57.9	6.64	8.89	9.80	11.7
25 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> ha <sup>-1</sup>	16.9	31.2	52.3	53.4	5.44	7.76	9.00	10.4
50 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> +PSB (5 g kg <sup>-1</sup> seed)	18.7	35.4	63.2	64.3	6.82	8.43	10.8	11.8
25 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> +PSB (5 g kg <sup>-1</sup> seed)	17.8	32.0	61.7	61.9	5.68	7.37	9.40	10.5
50 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> + 2% DAP spray (before flowering stage)	18.3	32.7	64.7	64.9	5.94	8.86	11.3	12.8
25 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> +2% DAP spray (before flowering stage)	18.0	31.8	63.2	63.4	5.78	7.98	10.4	11.5
50 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> +PSB + 2% DAP spray (before flowering stage)	19.4	37.5	67.3	67.9	6.98	9.38	11.7	13.0
25 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> +PSB + 2% DAP spray (before flowering stage)	18.2	36.2	64.8	66.3	6.88	8.92	11.0	12.7
S.Em±	0.95	0.22	0.20	0.19	0.19	0.17	0.12	0.15
CD (P=0.05)	NS	0.65	2.59	0.57	0.58	0.50	0.37	0.46

Table 2. Fresh and dry weight g plant<sup>-1</sup> of chickpea as influenced by P levels, foliar spray of P and PSB inoculation

Treatments	Fresh weightg plant <sup>-1</sup> (DAS)				Dry Weightg plant <sup>-1</sup> (DAS)			
	30	60	90	At harvest	30	60	90	At harvest
Control	16.2	43.5	80.7	121.0	4.97	11.8	21.5	40.9
50 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> ha <sup>-1</sup>	18.0	46.5	83.5	127.2	5.60	12.8	23.2	43.5
25 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> ha <sup>-1</sup>	17.4	45.6	82.3	125.0	5.19	12.2	22.1	42.1
50 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> +PSB (5 g kg <sup>-1</sup> seed)	18.4	57.8	87.2	131.1	6.06	13.9	24.1	44.4
25 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> +PSB (5 g kg <sup>-1</sup> seed)	18.3	57.3	84.0	127.4	5.65	14.3	23.2	42.6
50 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> + 2% DAP spray (before flowering stage)	20.0	60.6	95.9	139.5	6.17	15.7	26.2	47.0
25 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> +2% DAP spray (before flowering stage)	19.6	56.4	89.0	134.7	5.83	14.7	25.4	45.0
50 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> +PSB + 2% DAP spray (before flowering stage)	21.9	61.9	100.7	146.9	7.08	16.4	27.6	53.2
25 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> +PSB + 2% DAP spray (before flowering stage)	21.1	60.9	100.0	144.7	6.83	15.8	27.1	51.6
S.Em±	<b>0.39</b>	<b>0.88</b>	<b>0.48</b>	<b>0.60</b>	<b>0.30</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<b>0.39</b>	<b>0.58</b>
CD (P=0.05)	<b>1.18</b>	<b>2.64</b>	<b>1.43</b>	<b>1.80</b>	<b>0.91</b>	<b>1.53</b>	<b>1.16</b>	<b>1.74</b>

Table 3. Root nodulation of chickpea as influenced by P levels, foliar spray of P and PSB inoculation

Treatments	No. root-nodules plant <sup>-1</sup> (DAS)				Fresh Weight root-nodules g plant <sup>-1</sup> (DAS)				Dry Weight root-nodules g plant <sup>-1</sup> (DAS)			
	30	45	60	75	30	45	60	75	30	45	60	75
Control	14.8	21.0	32.7	29.5	0.187	0.422	0.578	0.503	0.036	0.081	0.112	0.097
50 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> ha <sup>-1</sup>	16.4	22.6	34.2	30.9	0.217	0.488	0.669	0.582	0.042	0.094	0.130	0.113
25 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> ha <sup>-1</sup>	15.7	21.9	33.6	30.3	0.201	0.453	0.622	0.541	0.039	0.088	0.121	0.105
50 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> +PSB (5 g kg <sup>-1</sup> seed)	16.6	22.7	34.4	31.0	0.234	0.527	0.721	0.628	0.045	0.102	0.140	0.121
25 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> +PSB (5 g kg <sup>-1</sup> seed)	16.9	23.0	34.70	31.4	0.220	0.496	0.681	0.592	0.042	0.096	0.132	0.114
50 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> + 2% DAP spray (before flowering stage)	18.1	24.2	35.9	32.6	0.255	0.574	0.785	0.684	0.049	0.111	0.152	0.132
25 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> +2% DAP spray (before flowering stage)	17.6	23.7	35.4	31.1	0.233	0.523	0.715	0.623	0.045	0.101	0.138	0.120
50 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> +PSB + 2% DAP spray (before flowering stage)	19.0	25.2	36.8	33.5	0.294	0.664	0.911	0.792	0.057	0.128	0.177	0.153
25 kg P <sub>2</sub> O <sub>5</sub> +PSB + 2% DAP spray (before flowering stage)	18.5	24.7	36.3	33.0	0.293	0.660	0.901	0.786	0.056	0.127	0.175	0.152
S.Em±	<b>0.31</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<b>0.30</b>	<b>0.57</b>	<b>0.003</b>	<b>0.007</b>	<b>0.014</b>	<b>0.009</b>	<b>0.001</b>	<b>0.002</b>	<b>0.003</b>	<b>0.002</b>
CD (P=0.05)	<b>0.92</b>	<b>0.86</b>	<b>0.88</b>	<b>1.70</b>	<b>0.010</b>	<b>0.021</b>	<b>0.042</b>	<b>0.027</b>	<b>0.002</b>	<b>0.005</b>	<b>0.010</b>	<b>0.007</b>

### 3.2 Root Nodulation

The data on number of nodules plant<sup>-1</sup> (Table 2) indicated the significant differences among various treatments. Treatment T<sub>8</sub>, (50 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> +PSB + 2% DAP spray before flowering stage) registered significantly the highest (36.8) number of nodules plant<sup>-1</sup> followed by T<sub>9</sub>, (25 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> +PSB + 2% DAP spray before flowering stage) produced significantly higher number of nodules. Control plot registered significantly lowest (32.7) number of nodules than all the treatments. This may be because of the increased naturally occurring nitrogen – fixing bacteria as well as applied phosphate solubilizing bacteria in the root-zone thereby the sufficient supply of N and P nutrients to the growing plant for their plant growth [9,5,10,2] Chauhan and Raghav [6].

The increase in number of nodules and their fresh and dry weight plant<sup>-1</sup> with increasing levels of phosphorus alone and along with phosphorus solubilizing agents and through foliar spray may be attributed to adequate supply of phosphorus to the plant roots specially at nodules formation and the association of P with microbial population and its activity. These results are in conformity with those observed by Tiwari et al. [7],Kumar et al. [10] Chalchissa, C. and Chala, M. [3].

### 3.3 Fresh and Dry Matter Plant<sup>-1</sup>

The fresh and dry matter production g plant<sup>-1</sup> at 30, 60, 90 DAS and at harvest stages were influenced significantly due to different treatments (Table3). The treatments T<sub>8</sub>, T<sub>9</sub> and T<sub>6</sub> enhanced the fresh and dry matter production per plant up to the maximum extent, being significantly higher to the single applied P levels or with each of PSB and DAP spray. The increase in fresh and dry matter production plant<sup>-1</sup> due to applied P levels and PSB inoculation has also been reported by Raj et al. [11], Chalchissa, C. and Chala, M. [3].

## 4. CONCLUSION

In general, the growth parameters (plants height and number of branches plant<sup>-1</sup>) were increased by nearly two to three fold in all the treatments with the successive growth and development stages i.e., from 30, 60, 90 days up to maturity. The vegetative growth parameters were, in general, enhanced very fast between 30 to 90 days thereafter the rise was normally very slow up to the crop maturity stage. Amongst the all

treatments, 50 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> + PSB + 2% DAP foliar spray resulted in significantly higher number of root nodules plant<sup>-1</sup> and fresh and dry weight of root nodules plant<sup>-1</sup> at 30, 45, 60, and 75 DAS followed by 25 kg P<sub>2</sub>O<sub>5</sub> + PSB + 2% DAP spray before flowering stage. Similarly the same treatments also enhanced the fresh and dry matter production per plant up to the maximum extent, being significantly higher to the single applied P levels or with each of PSB and DAP spray.

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## COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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