

Determining the effect of Plant Growth Regulators on Growth, Yield and Quality of Chilli (*Capsicum annuum* L.)

ABSTRACT

Chili peppers are fruit-bearing plants from the *Capsicum* genus, and they are known for their spicy and pungent flavors. Chili peppers thrive in warm climates and can be grown in various types of soil. They are typically cultivated as annual plants, although some varieties can be perennial in suitable conditions. Therefore, the present investigation was carried out at the Central Research Farm, Department of Horticulture, Naini Agricultural Institute, Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture Technology and Sciences, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh during *Kharif* 2021-22 with a view to identify the effects of different doses plant growth regulators and its role in growth, yield and quality of Chilli variety TMPH-443. The experiment was laid in Randomized block design with 13 treatments and 3 replications with different combination in plant growth regulators. Under this experiment, overall, 13 treatment was taken including control. Different plant growth regulators (PGRs) used comprised of NAA, GA₃, 2-4 D and Triacantanol all four at different doses. According to the current research, the use of Plant growth regulators (PGRs) had a significantly positive impact on the growth and development of chilies. Among the various treatments that were evaluated, T₅ (NAA @ 40 ppm spray) yielded the most favourable results in terms of growth viz., plant height, leaf area, early flowering and maturation and yield viz., fruit weight, length of fruit, fruit girth, number of fruits per plant, and yield per plant.

Keywords: NAA, GA₃, 2-4 D, PGRs, Chilli.

1. INTRODUCTION

Chilli (vernacular name: *Mirchi*), botanically known as *Capsicum annuum* (L.) is one of the well-known plants belonging to Solanaceae. It is a diploid cross-pollinated dicot plant species with chromosome number $2n=2x=24$ (Haque, 2016). *Capsicum* plants originated in modern-day Bolivia and have been a part of human diets since about 7,500 BC (Pickersgill, 1971). They are one of the oldest cultivated crops in the Americas. Origins of cultivating chili peppers have been traced to east-central Mexico some 6,000 years ago, although, according to research by the New York Botanical Garden press in 2014, chili plants were first cultivated independently across different locations in the Americas including highland Bolivia, central Mexico, and the Amazon (Katherine *et al.*, 2014). They were one of the first self-pollinating crops cultivated in Mexico, Central

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America, and parts of South America. In India Chilli is grown in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, West Bengal, and Himachal Pradesh on large scale. The substances that give chili peppers their pungency (spicy heat) when ingested or applied topically are capsaicin (8-methyl-N-vanillyl-6-nonenamide) and several related chemicals, collectively called capsaicinoids. The quantity of capsaicin varies by variety, and on growing conditions. Water-stressed peppers usually produce stronger pods. When a habanero plant is stressed, by absorbing low water for example, the concentration of capsaicin increases in some parts of the fruit (Ruiz-Lao *et al.*, 2011). The varieties of chilies that are cultivated in India are Naga, Jwala, Guntur, Kanthari, Bhut Jolokia and many more. Lycopene, which is soluble in water, is responsible for the red colour of red chili peppers.

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PGRs have been found to alleviate the adverse effects of various abiotic stresses on chilli plants, including drought, salinity, and extreme temperatures. They can enhance stress tolerance and improve the plant's ability to withstand challenging environmental conditions (Kumar and Sharma, 2020). Auxins like NAA, are commonly used as rooting hormones during propagation, leading to improved root establishment and overall plant vigour (Aggrawal *et al.*, 2018). Gibberellic acid (GA) and cytokinin can stimulate flowering and increase fruit set in chilli plants. They can help in synchronizing flowering, resulting in uniform fruit production and higher yields (Arora and Bist, 2016). Plant growth regulators (PGRs) are crucial for the growth and development of chilli plants. They promote cell division, elongation, and differentiation, leading to better plant growth, flowering, fruiting, and seed formation. PGRs can also enhance nutrient uptake efficiency, increase resistance to biotic and abiotic stresses, and improve crop quality and yield. In chilli cultivation, PGRs like gibberellic acid (GA₃) and salicylic acid can improve plant vigour and health, synchronize maturity, promote fruit set, and increase marketable yield, thereby increasing profitability. The use of PGRs is a valuable tool for growers to maximize crop potential and meet consumer demand. Keeping these above point the present investigation was undertaken with aim to study the effect of plant growth regulators on growth, yield and quality of Chilli.

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2.MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present investigation was done to understand the impact of combine application and sole application of plant growth regulators on plant growth, fruit yield and quality of fruit of chilli variety TMPH-443. The details of the materials used, and the methods adopted in the investigation, which was carried out at Horticultural Research Field, Department of Horticulture, Naini Agricultural Institute, Sam Higginbottom University of Agriculture, Technology and Sciences (SHUATS), Prayagraj during the *Kharif* season of 2021-22. The experiment was laid in Randomized block design with 13 treatments and 3 replications with different combination in plant

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growth regulators. Observations were recorded at different stages of growth periods and studied for growth parameters like plant height, leaf area, earliness parameters like days to 50% flowering, days to first harvest, yield parameters like fruit length, fruit girth, fruit weight and quality parameters TSS. The data were analysed by the method suggested by Fisher and Yates, 1963. The height of five randomly selected plants from each plot was measured in cm with of a 100 cm meter scale from ground level to tip of the shoot at 90 DAT stage. The numbers of days taken from the date of sowing to the date at which 50% plants flowered or date at which plants start 50% flowering in whole plot were recorded as days to 50% flowering, similarly, was taken days to first harvest. The percentage of total soluble solids of the fruit was determined with the help of Portable Hand Refractometer. The sample of juice for this purpose was taken from the strained juice. The observed value of T.S.S. was recorded from the scale of the instrument (0-32 range).

The details of treatment combination used are T₀ (Water Spray (Control)); T₁ (2,4-D 2 ppm spray); T₂ (2,4-D 3 ppm spray); T₃ (2,4-D 4 ppm spray); T₄ (NAA 30 ppm spray); T₅ (NAA 40 ppm spray); T₆ (NAA 50 ppm spray); T₇ (Triacantanol 4 ppm spray); T₈ (Triacantanol 5 ppm spray); T₉ (Triacantanol 6 ppm spray); T₁₀ (GA₃ 9 ppm spray); T₁₁ (GA₃ 10 ppm spray); T₁₂ (GA₃ 11 ppm spray).

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

3.1 Growth parameters

3.1.1 Influence of Plant growth regulators (PGRs) on Plant height (cm)

The plant height significantly varied among different treatment combinations at 90 DAS. The maximum plant height at 90 DAS (47.13 cm) was observed with treatment T₅ (NAA @ 40 ppm spray) followed by T₆ (NAA @ 50 ppm spray) with 46.26 cm. Minimum plant height at 90 DAS (35.18 cm) was observed in T₀ (Control). PGRs application regulates plant height in chilli by influencing cell division and elongation, promoting internode elongation, and altering hormonal balance. The taller plant height in chillies treated with NAA (40 ppm) spray, compared to treatments involving GA₃, Triacantanol, and 2,4-D, is attributed to NAA's stimulation of cell elongation and growth-promoting hormones, resulting in increased stem elongation and overall plant height compared to the other treatments. Similar findings were reported by Gare *et al.*, (2017); Mahindre *et al.*, (2018) in Chilli.

3.1.2 Influence of Plant growth regulators (PGRs) on leaf area (cm²)

The leaf area per plant significantly varied among different treatment combinations. The maximum leaf area per plant (440.16 cm²) was observed with treatment T₅ (NAA @ 40 ppm +spray) followed by T₆ (NAA @ 50 ppm spray) with 3017.85 cm². Minimum leaf area per plant

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(1931.78cm²) was observed in T₀ (Control) while the remaining treatments were moderate in their growth habit.

The notable increase in leaf area in chillies treated with NAA (40 ppm) spray, in comparison to treatments involving GA₃, Triacantanol, and 2,4-D, can be attributed to NAA's impact on cell division and expansion. NAA is recognized for its role in promoting cell division and enlargement, leading to enhanced leaf development. Conversely, GA₃, Triacantanol, and 2,4-D might primarily affect other physiological processes or focus on specific growth aspects. The targeted action of NAA at the given concentration likely prioritized leaf expansion, resulting in the observed augmented leaf area. Further investigations are necessary to comprehensively understand the intricate mechanisms underlying these distinct leaf area responses. Similar findings were reported by **Mahto *et al.*, (2020)**; **Naga *et al.*, (2022)**; and **Kumar and Topno (2022)** in Chilli.

3.2. Earliness parameter

3.2.1 Influence of Plant growth regulators (PGRs) on Days to 50% flowering and days to first harvest

The days to 50% flowering significantly varied among different treatment combinations at flowering. The minimum days to 50% flowering (40.23 days) was observed with treatment T₅ (NAA @ 40 ppm spray) followed by T₆ (NAA @ 50 ppm spray) with 40.87 days. Maximum days to 50% flowering (48.02 days) was observed in T₀ (Control). The days to first harvest significantly varied among different treatment combinations at flowering. The minimum days to first harvest (80.50 days) was observed with treatment T₅ (NAA @ 40 ppm spray) followed by T₆ (NAA @ 50 ppm spray) with 81.70 days. Maximum days to first harvest (98.33 days) was observed in T₀ (Control).

The accelerated flowering onset in chillies treated with NAA (40 ppm) spray, in contrast to treatments involving GA₃, Triacantanol, and 2,4-D, can be attributed to NAA's role in promoting floral induction and development. NAA is known to trigger the expression of genes associated with flowering, leading to early initiation of flowering processes and thus fruit formation ultimately to earliness in harvesting. Conversely, GA₃, Triacantanol, and 2,4-D may have varying effects on flowering-related genes or prioritize other physiological pathways. The targeted effect of NAA at the specified concentration likely expedited the molecular triggers for flower formation, resulting in the observed early flowering. Further molecular and hormonal investigations are warranted to uncover the precise mechanisms underpinning these distinct flowering time responses and thus intern maturity. Similar conclusions were inferred by **Gare *et al.*, (2017)**; **Mahindre *et al.*, (2018)**; **Naga *et al.*, (2022)** in Chilli.

3.3 Yield Parameters

3.3.1 Influence of Plant growth regulators (PGRs) on number of fruits per plant

The number of fruits per plant significantly varied among different treatment combinations at flowering. The maximum number of fruits per plant (115.26 fruits) was observed with treatment T₅ (NAA @ 40 ppm spray) followed by T₆ (NAA @ 50 ppm spray) with 111.45 fruits. Minimum number of fruits per plant (78.48 fruits) was observed in T₀ (Control).

The increased fruit set in chillies treated with NAA (40 ppm) spray, in contrast to treatments involving GA₃, Triacantanol, and 2,4-D, can be attributed to NAA's role in promoting flowering and enhancing pollination efficiency. NAA is known to stimulate flowering by influencing hormonal pathways and enhancing flower bud differentiation. It may also improve pollination through increased nectar secretion and attracting pollinators. Conversely, GA₃, Triacantanol, and 2,4-D may prioritize other physiological processes or have different effects on floral development. The targeted effect of NAA at the provided concentration likely synergistically influenced flowering and pollination, resulting in the observed higher fruit set. Further studies on hormonal crosstalk and pollination mechanisms are necessary to fully elucidate these distinct fruit-setting responses. Similar conclusions were inferred by **Mahato *et al.*, (2020)**; **Kumar and Topno (2022)** in Chilli.

3.3.2 Influence of Plant growth regulators (PGRs) on fruit length (cm) and fruit girth (cm)

The average fruit length significantly varied among different treatment combinations at flowering. The maximum average fruit length (10.61 cm) was observed with treatment T₅ (NAA @ 40 ppm spray) followed by T₆ (NAA @ 50 ppm spray) with 10.38 cm. Minimum average fruit length (6.55 cm) was observed in T₀ (Control). The average fruit girth significantly varied among different treatment combinations at flowering. The maximum average fruit girth (3.58 cm) was observed with treatment T₅ (NAA @ 40 ppm spray) followed by T₆ (NAA @ 50 ppm spray) with 3.44 cm. Minimum average fruit girth (2.16 cm) was observed in T₀ (Control).

The augmented fruit length and girth in chillies treated with NAA (40 ppm) spray, as opposed to treatments involving GA₃, Triacantanol, and 2,4-D, can be attributed to NAA's specific impact on cell elongation and fruit development. NAA is known to enhance cell division and elongation, leading to increased fruit size. It may also affect hormonal regulation related to fruit growth. Conversely, GA₃, Triacantanol, and 2,4-D might prioritize other aspects of plant physiology or have varying effects on fruit development. The focused action of NAA at the given concentration likely promoted elongation of fruit cells, resulting in the observed enhanced fruit length and girth. Further investigation into hormonal interactions and cellular mechanisms is essential to fully

understand these distinct fruit length and girth responses. These results are in close conformity with the findings of *Chaudhary et al., (2006)*; *Naga et al., (2022)* in Chilli.

3.3.3 Influence of Plant growth regulators (PGRs) on fruit weight (g) and fruit yield per plant (g/plant)

The average fruit weight significantly varied among different treatment combinations at flowering. The maximum average fruit weight (2.84 g) was observed with treatment T₅ (NAA @ 40 ppm spray) followed by T₆ (NAA @ 50 ppm spray) with 2.75 g. Minimum average fruit weight (1.96 g) was observed in T₀ (Control). The average fruit yield per plant significantly varied among different treatment combinations at flowering. The maximum average fruit yield per plant (305.30 g/plant) was observed with treatment T₅ (NAA @ 40 ppm spray) followed by T₆ (NAA @ 50 ppm spray) with 287.40 g/plant. Minimum average fruit yield per plant (189.43 g/plant) was observed in T₀ (Control).

The increased fruit weight in chillies treated with NAA (40 ppm) spray, in contrast to treatments involving GA₃, Triacantanol, and 2,4-D, can be attributed to NAA's influence on fruit development and biomass accumulation. NAA promotes cell division and enlargement in fruit tissues, leading to greater fruit size and weight and thus yield per plant. It may also enhance nutrient uptake and assimilation, contributing to increased biomass. Conversely, GA₃, Triacantanol, and 2,4-D might prioritize different physiological processes or have varying effects on fruit growth. The targeted action of NAA at the specified concentration likely facilitated enhanced cell division and nutrient utilization, resulting in the observed higher fruit weight and yield. Further exploration of cellular mechanisms and nutrient dynamics is crucial to fully grasp these distinct fruit weight responses. Similar inferences were also concluded by *Tayde et al., (2018)*; *Mishra et al., (2019)* and *Kumar and Topno (2022)* in Chilli.

3.4. Quality Parameters

3.4.1. Influence of Plant growth regulators (PGRs) on TSS (° Brix)

The TSS significantly varied among different treatment combinations at flowering. The maximum TSS (7.80 °Brix) was observed with treatment T₁₁ (GA₃ @ 10 ppm spray) followed by T₁₀ (GA₃ @ 9 ppm spray) with 7.50 °Brix. Minimum TSS (6.10 °Brix) was observed in T₀ (Control).

The elevated fruit yield in chillies treated with GA₃ (10 ppm) spray, in contrast to treatments involving NAA, Triacantanol, and 2,4-D, can be attributed to GA₃'s direct influence on reproductive processes and fruit development. GA₃ promotes flower initiation, increases the number of flowers per plant, and enhances fruit set by stimulating hormonal pathways related to

flowering and fruiting. It also contributes to the formation of larger and heavier fruits through cell elongation and enlargement. Conversely, NAA, Triacntanol, and 2,4-D may have different impacts on flower and fruit development or prioritize other physiological responses. The targeted action of GA₃ at the specified concentration likely optimized flowering, fruiting, and ultimately resulted in the observed enhanced fruit yield. Further research on hormonal interactions and reproductive physiology is crucial to comprehensively understand these distinct yield outcomes. Similar inferences were also concluded by **Gare *et al.*, (2017); Kumar *et al.*, (2022)** in Chilli.

4.CONCLUSION

According to the current research, the use of Plant growth regulators (PGRs) had a significantly positive impact on the growth and development of chillies. Among the various treatments that were evaluated, T₅ (NAA @ 40 ppm spray) yielded the most favourable results in terms of growth viz., plant height, leaf area, early flowering and maturation and yield viz., fruit weight, length of fruit, fruit girth, number of fruits per plant, and yield per plant and TSS.

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UNDER PEER REVIEW

Table 1 Effect of PGRs on different treatments for various parameters of Chilli.

Treatment Notation	Plant height (cm) [at 90 DAT]	Leaf area (cm ²)	Days to % flowering	Days to first harvest	No of fruits per plant	Fruit length (cm)	Fruit girth (cm)	Fruit weight (g)	Fruit yield per plant (g/plant)	TSS [°Brix]
T ₀	35.18	1931.78	48.02	98.33	78.48	6.55	2.16	1.96	189.43	6.31
T ₁	38.18	2228.99	46.34	90.00	85.26	7.57	2.57	2.17	197.63	6.59
T ₂	38.62	2102.09	46.82	92.00	84.43	7.29	2.45	2.13	191.27	6.38
T ₃	36.65	2012.59	47.14	85.67	81.16	6.88	2.32	2.13	195.40	6.51
T ₄	45.19	2812.14	40.97	91.00	100.84	10.41	3.34	2.76	296.46	9.88
T ₅	47.13	3440.16	40.23	80.50	115.26	10.61	3.58	2.84	305.30	10.18
T ₆	46.26	3017.85	40.87	81.70	111.45	10.38	3.44	2.75	287.40	9.58
T ₇	44.34	2517.15	44.41	87.17	91.75	8.75	3.07	2.24	207.80	6.93
T ₈	45.47	2614.46	44.86	88.50	95.82	8.39	3.02	2.34	225.80	7.53
T ₉	46.11	2741.24	44.25	89.00	99.53	8.44	3.13	2.42	241.93	8.06
T ₁₀	46.24	2832.22	42.58	85.67	103.14	9.52	3.31	2.47	256.57	8.55
T ₁₁	46.16	2854.14	42.45	90.83	106.29	9.64	3.23	2.54	268.03	8.93
T ₁₂	45.93	2813.82	42.55	83.17	108.15	9.56	3.21	2.64	270.70	9.02
F test	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S	S
S.E (d) (±)	0.09	3.77	0.03	1.63	0.14	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.54	0.02
CD_{0.05}	0.18	7.83	0.07	3.38	0.29	0.03	0.03	0.04	1.11	0.04
C.V.	0.25	0.18	0.09	5.26	0.18	0.23	0.49	0.97	0.27	0.29