



Research article

Antibiotic Sensitivity of *Vibrio* spp. Isolated from the Hatchery Water of Tiger Shrimp *Penaeus monodon*

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ABSTRACT

Penaeus monodon, one of the most traded aquatic species, fetch a premium price in national and international markets for its significant taste and nutritional value. But, vibriosis caused by *Vibrio* spp. is a threat to the sustainability of shrimp aquaculture. This study aimed at identifying and profiling antibiotic resistance of *Vibrio* spp. detected in the water samples, collected from June to September of 2023 from four shrimp hatcheries located in Cox's Bazar, Batiaghata and Dacope Upazillas of Khulna District and Debhata Upazilla of Satkhira District. The colonies of *Vibrio* spp. from TCBS isolation, included *Vibrio alginolyticus* ($9.55 \pm 0.14 \times 10^5$ CFU/ml) from Cox's Bazar samples, *Vibrio fluvialis* ($9.55 \pm 0.21 \times 10^6$ CFU/ml) from Dacope samples, and *Vibrio furnissii* ($3.66 \pm 0.41 \times 10^6$ CFU/ml) and *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* ($3.55 \pm 0.23 \times 10^5$ CFU/ml) from Debhata samples in accordance with biochemical tests. Considering two replications of all the experiments, the antibiotic sensitivity test (Kirby-Bauer method) determined that all *Vibrio* isolates were resistant to penicillin, 75% to erythromycin, 50% to ampicillin, 25% to oxytetracycline, nalidixic acid and azithromycin. The *V. alginolyticus* and *V. furnissii* isolates had multidrug resistance (MDR) with Multiple Antibiotic Resistance (MAR) values of 0.41 and 0.17, respectively. In contrast, all the tested isolates were susceptible to cefotaxime, chloramphenicol, sulphamethoxazole & trimethoprim, nitrofurantoin, ciprofloxacin, and tobramycin. Therefore, it has been evident that the shrimp hatchery's water is very prone to antibiotic resistant *Vibrio* spp. contamination with 5-41% MDR. This study recommends an effective implementation of biosecurity measures to reduce the transmission of disease from other sources and the driving factors associated with vibriosis in *P. monodon* hatchery must be identified.

Introduction

Aquaculture becomes an important production system due to its contribution to supplying dietary protein for human consumption. The aquaculture production of the globe has been growing up to meet the public demand; a record production of 223.2 million tonnes in 2022, comprising 185.4 million tonnes of aquatic animals and 37.8 million tonnes of algae, where aquaculture production accounts for 130.9 million tonnes and capture fisheries 92.3 million tonnes (FAO, 2024). This growth is largely centered in Asia, which contributes 70% of global output, led by China, India, Indonesia, and Vietnam, Thailand and Bangladesh.

Bangladesh possesses a wealth of fisheries resources and currently ranks as the second-largest producer of freshwater fish worldwide, recently overtaking China in

this category (FAO, 2024). The nation produced more than 4.92 million tons of fish during the 2022–2023 fiscal year, which contributed more than 22% to the agricultural GDP and 2.53% to the national GDP (DoF, 2024). Over the past ten years, the export of prawns and shrimp has accounted for around 80% of all fisheries export earnings, making it a significant economic driver. The income from the export of fish, shrimp, and other fisheries products contributes significantly to Bangladesh's foreign exchange profits, which make up about 0.91% of total export revenue (EPB 2024). Recent figures show that Bangladesh produced roughly 261,833 metric tons of shrimp and prawns in FY 2022–23, with exports valued at USD 347.54 million. (Hosain et al., 2021; DoF, 2024).

The southern part of Bangladesh, especially Cox's Bazar, Chattogram, Khulna, Bagerhat, Satkhira, and

ARTICLE INFO

Article timeline:

Date of Submission:

15 October, 2025

Date of Acceptance:

24 May, 2026

Article available online:

14 June, 2026

Keywords:

Shrimp Hatchery

Bacterial diseases

Susceptibility

AMR

*Corresponding author: anupsardar141@gmail.comDOI: <https://doi.org/10.53808/KUS.2026.SI.7.01.MariNEX1505-ls>

surrounding districts is considered as the heart for the cultivation of gigantic tiger shrimp in Bangladesh (Matin et al., 2016). To sustain this industry, an annual supply of 8 to 9 billion post-larvae (PL) is required. Currently, only 52 of the 80 existing hatcheries are active, producing between 1.6 and 2.6 billion PL per year. Of this total, only a small fraction (2–9%) originates from specific pathogen-free (SPF) brood stock (DoF, 2023; Sultana and Biswas, 2022).

Specific pathogen free (SPF) PLs have recently been used in shrimp farms as a control measure of pathogenic infection, but the shrimp hatcheries have thousands of records of disease outbreaks and are still at risk of outbreaks. One of the common pathogenic causative agents of shrimp infections recorded are *Vibrio* species, such as *V. anguillarum*, *V. alginolyticus*, *V. splendidus*, *V. parahaemolyticus*, *V. harveyi*, *V. vulnificus*, *V. tubiashi*, *V. nigripulchritudo*, *V. fluvialis* and *V. damsel* (Rungrassamee et al., 2013). Vibriosis has been reported as the most devastating diseases in shrimp hatcheries in Bangladesh; primarily caused by *V. harveyi*, *V. metschnikovii*, *V. nereis*, and *V. alginolyticus* (Rahman et al., 2010). *Vibrio* spp. were commonly found throughout freshwater, estuaries, and marine environments. Additionally, there are more than twenty species known to exist; some of them are infections that affect humans (*V. vulnificus*, *V. cholerae* and *V. parahaemolyticus*), while others affect aquatic creatures, such as shrimp (*V. harveyi*, *V. penaeicida*, *V. parahaemolyticus*, *V. anguillarum*, *V. splendidus* and *V. vulnificus*). Additionally early mortality syndrome (EMS) or acute hepatopancreatic necrosis disease (AHPND), is a bacterial prawn disease brought on by *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*'s production of the PirABvp toxin. The AHPND pandemic has caused large financial losses to the aquaculture industry since 2009 (Lai et al. 2015; Kumar et al. 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021; Tran et al., 2020). *Vibrio harveyi*, *Vibrio owensii*, *Vibrio punensis*, *Vibrio alginolyticus*, and *Vibriocampbellii* are among the strains of *Vibrios* that can also cause AHPND as they carry the pVA1-type plasmid that contains the toxin's genes (Dong et al. 2019).

Extensive use of antibiotics in aquaculture had become very common to treat pathogenic bacteria and improve fish health (Dawood et al., 2018; Chen et al., 2020; Chowdhury et al., 2022). Most commonly used antibiotics in fish and shellfish farms are ampicillin, streptomycin, chloramphenicol, oxytetracycline, malachite green, and other chemicals (Chelossi et al., 2003). However, because of the continued use of antibiotics in aquaculture, microbial populations are under more natural selection pressure, which can develop antibiotic-resistant strains that can spread widely and cause dangerous infections (Gao et al., 2012). Aquatic habitats, fish consumers, and aquaculture production may all suffer as a result of these resistant bacteria (Watts et al., 2017).

The incidences of antimicrobial resistance has become pressing issue around the world. For instance, AMR *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* strains have been detected in shellfishes from major fish markets in Cochin, South India (Silvester et al., 2022), and shrimp ponds (Tendencia and de la Pena, 2001), and aquaculture habitats (Chelossi et al., 2003). The eggs from a mud crab hatchery of Bangladesh were contaminated with multidrug resistant *Vibrio* spp. *V.*

alginolyticus and *V. parahaemolyticus* (Hasanuzzaman et al., 2025). The luminous strains of *V. splendidus* and *Vibrio harveyi*, identified from shrimp larvae were resistant to penicillin G, kanamycin, erythromycin, and streptomycin (Baticados et al., 1990). Abraham et al., (1997) have detected AMR in *V. harveyi* strains isolated from diseased shrimp to Novobiocin, ofloxacin, oxytetracycline, penicillin G, polymyxin B, rifampicin, streptomycin, sulphasomidine, sulphamethazole, ampicillin, chlorotetracycline, ciprofloxacin, erythromycin, furazolidone, gentamycin, nalidixic acid, neomycin, nitrofurantoin, and nitrofurazole. There were five multidrug-resistant *Enterobacteriales* in the shrimp farms in Bagherhat of Bangladesh; *Proteus penneri*, *Morganellamorganii*, *Proteus alimentorum*, *Enterobacter hormaechei* subsp. *xiangfangensis*, and *Plesiomonas shigelloides* (Khan et al., 2022).

In the shrimp industry, biosecurity refers to the technique of excluding certain pathogens from broodstock, hatcheries, grow-out farms, as well as the entire area in order to prevent disease (Lightner, 2003). In Bangladesh, only three hatcheries in the districts of Cox's Bazar and Khulna have received approval for production of SPF PLs production (DoF, 2020), while most of the hatcheries continue their production. These shrimp hatcheries are experiencing production crash, and using a variety of antibiotics and other antimicrobial agents. But, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) has likely emerged as a potential threat to aquaculture as well as public health. One of the main public health issues related to the usage of antibiotics is the fast growing number of antibiotic resistance genes (ARGs) detected in aquaculture environments (Huang et al., 2017; Chen et al., 2022; Sun et al., 2020). Significant infections brought on by bacteria resistant to antibiotics were thought to be the direct cause of about 1.27 million fatalities globally in 2019 and to have contributed to an additional 4.95 million deaths (Murray et al., 2022). By horizontal gene transfer, ARGs can also quickly spread to different bacterial species (Ben et al., 2019). In the aquatic environment, approximately 90% of tested bacteria showed at least one antibiotic resistance, and 20% of them may be multi-antibiotic resistant, which could affect human and fish health as well as the fish farm environment (Lin, 2015; Preena et al., 2020; Zaman et al., 2017).

But, the occurrence, susceptibility pattern and multidrug resistance profile of *Vibrio* are not well understood and reported, whereas the hatcheries are at risk of vibriosis disease. Therefore, a study of antibiotic resistance of pathogenic bacteria in shrimp hatcheries in Bangladesh is one of the prerequisites for sustainable shrimp aquaculture. Since the Cox's Bazar is a significant source of brackish and seawater, the majority of shrimp hatcheries of Bangladesh are located there. Additionally, there are a number of shrimp hatcheries in the Khulna and Satkhira regions, which provide PLs to the shrimp farms in these areas. This study aimed at isolating *Vibrio* spp. from the water of four tiger shrimp hatcheries, one from each location, Cox's Bazar, Dacope, Bothiaghata, and Debhata, and exploring their antibiotic resistance profile.

Materials and Methods

Sample Collection

Four shrimp hatcheries, one from each location, Cox's Bazar (June, 2023), Dacope (August, 2023), Bothiaghata (August, 2023), and Debhata (September, 2023), were chosen for sample collection (Fig. 1). As hatchery water is a significant source of bacterial infections, 100 ml of water sample from each rearing tank from these four hatcheries were collected. All samples were collected in sterile bottles; immediately placed in an ice box, and transported to the Fish and Shellfish Quality Control and Pathology Laboratory of the Fisheries and Marine Resources Technology (FMRT) Discipline at Khulna University. The samples were used for isolating *Vibrio* species and subsequently carrying out antibiotic sensitivity tests; all laboratory works were done in accordance with the code of practice (CoP) to care and use of animals for scientific purposes at Life Science School, Khulna University under the ethical approval (Ref No: KUAEC-2023-04-08; Date: 30.04.2023) by Animal Ethics Committee of Khulna University, Bangladesh.

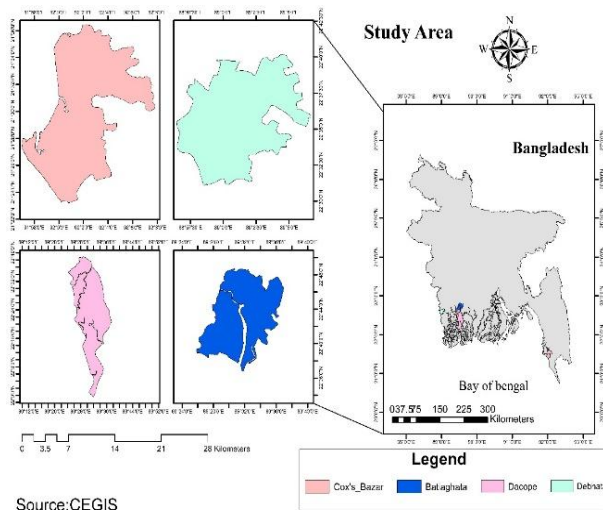


Figure 1: Map of Bangladesh indicating the study area. Salmon colour, Cox's Bazar; Aquamarine, Debhata; Orange, Dacope; and Blue, Batiaghata.

Sample Preparation and Bacterial Culture

At first, water from different rearing tank of a hatchery were mixed homogeneously and 100 ml of the combined water was used for stock sample preparation. Then, each water sample was thoroughly mixed with physiological saline using a vortex machine, and the resulting mixture was treated as the stock solution. Sterile falcon tubes were used to make 10-fold serial dilutions of each stock solution. The serial dilution samples were enriched by adding sterile alkaline peptone water (APW) and incubated at $37 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ for 8-12 hours. Thiosulphate Citrate Bile Salt Sucrose (TCBS) agar plates were prepared and 0.1 ml of each diluted solution was added to each plate and spread homogeneously using a sterile glass spreader. The inoculation plates were incubated at $37 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ in an incubator for 18 to 24 hours. Post-incubation, distinct colonies were quantified to calculate the Total Viable Count (TVC) in colony-forming units per milliliter (CFU/ml). Each bacterial test had two replications to avoid manual error.

Biochemical Test of Bacteria

Morphologically isolated isolates were selected for pure culture and 2 pure culture plates of identical isolates were selected for biochemical tests. Biochemical test was carried out for confirming the isolates as *Vibrio* spp. following Bacteriological Analytical Manual (BAM) (Kaysner et al., 2004).

A sterile glass rod was used to move the pure-cultured bacterial colonies on filter paper, soaked with oxidase reagent for the oxidase test (FDA, 1992); a positive reaction was considered when a dark purple color appeared quickly, within a few seconds.

The Voges-Proskauer (VP) test involved inoculating a colony from the pure culture plate with MR-VP media and incubating it at 37°C for 48 hours. Within 30 minutes, watch for the medium's surface to turn reddish-pink. During the thirty-minute waiting time, the tube was vigorously shaken continuously. (FDA, 1992).

To conduct additional experiments, a pure culture inoculum was aseptically transferred to a sterile tube containing broth for each test: to phenol red sucrose broth for the sucrose test, phenol red lactose broth for the lactose test, and phenol red mannitol broth for mannitol fermentation test. The tubes were then incubated at $35\text{--}37^\circ\text{C}$ for 24 hours, and the color change was used to assess the results.

The NaCl growth test involved adding 3%, 6%, 8%, and 10% of NaCl to a sterile test tube of nutritional broth, and then each pure culture inoculum was added in the broth tube and the tube was thoroughly mixed. The bacterial growth was ascertained by monitoring the turbidity after 24 hours of incubation at $35\text{--}37^\circ\text{C}$. (Kaysner et al., 2004).

Autoclaved sterile distilled water was used as a control group for each biochemical test and all the tests had two replications.

Antibiotic Sensitivity Test

For the antibiotic sensitivity test (AST) investigation, the following 17 antibiotics frequently used in aquaculture were used; azithromycin, AZM (15 μg), amoxicillin, AMO (30 μg), ampicillin, AMP (10 μg), erythromycin, E (15 μg), cefotaxime, CTX (30 μg), chloramphenicol, C (30 μg), ciprofloxacin, CIP (5 μg), nalidixic Acid, NA (30 μg), nitrofurantoin, F (300 μg), oxytetracycline, OT (30 μg), penicillin G, P (10 μg), sulfamethoxazole & trimethoprim, SXT (25 μg), levofloxacin, LEV (5 μg), streptomycin, S (10 μg), gentamicin, CN (10 μg), tobramycin, TBR (30 μg) and tetracycline, TE (30 μg); and blank disc were considered as a control group. The antibiotic susceptibility test was carried out by the Kirby-Bauer disc diffusion method ((Bauer et al., 1966) considering two replications. The representative isolates from the pure culture plates selected for biochemical test were considered for AST and inoculated in Muller Hinton Broth (MHB; Himedia, India) supplemented with 2% NaCl; after a 24-hour incubation period and the suspension's concentration comparing with the 0.5 McFarland standard; the isolates were tested. A sterile swab, after being dipped into the suspension tube, was used to swab the Mueller Hinton Agar (MHA) plate's surface. The commercially manufactured antibiotic discs and a blank disk were strategically positioned onto the inoculated MHA plates. To ensure optimal diffusion,

each disc was gently pressed to confirm complete contact with the agar surface. To ensure optimal diffusion, each disc was gently pressed to confirm complete contact with the agar surface. The plates were then inverted and incubated aerobically at 37°C for a precise duration of 18–24 hours. Following incubation, a digital vernier caliper was used to measure the clear zones of inhibition (ZOI) to the closest millimeter. To classify the isolates as Susceptible (S), Intermediate (I), or Resistant (R), these parameters were evaluated in accordance with the CLSI susceptibility breakpoints. The Multiple Antibiotic Resistance (MAR) index was calculated to measure the degree of multidrug resistance (MDR).

Data Processing, Analysis and Interpretation

Microsoft Word and Excel (Office 2019) were used to gather, compile, assess, and present the experimental data; mean, and standard error were used as statistics SPSS 29.0 was used to perform ANOVA for determining statistical significance in the variation of *Vibrio* spp. load among the waters samples of the hatcheries. The antibiotic susceptibility test findings were interpreted and reported as either sensitive, resistant, or intermediate using the zone diameter interpretative standard for veterinary infections (CLSI, 2013). The multidrug resistance profile and multiple antibiotic resistance index of resistant isolates were evaluated (Schwarz et al., 2010). The MAR index of a single isolate was calculated as a/b (Krumperman, 1983), where "a" indicates the number of antibiotics to which the isolate was resistant and "b" indicates the number of antibiotics to which the isolate was exposed. A higher MAR index close to 1 was interpreted as having higher level of antibiotic resistance, while a lower MAR value close to 0 is an indication of little or no resistance. MAR index values greater than 0.2 indicate that the isolate originated from a source where antibiotics were used to a large degree.

Result

Occurrence of *Vibrio* infection

The water samples from three hatcheries were found to be positive for *Vibrio* spp. infection (Table 1), except the samples from Batiaghata hatchery which just started production when Specific Pathogen Free hatchery management was implemented effectively, keeping the

Vibrio spp. load in the water is either lower than the detection limit of free of *Vibrio*. The prevalence of *Vibrio* spp. was significantly ($P < 0.05$) higher in the water from the hatchery of Dacope having the colonies $9.5 \pm 0.21 \times 10^6$ CFU/ml of isolate VYCL, compared to $3.6 \pm 0.41 \times 10^6$ CFU/ml of isolate VYST and $3.5 \pm 0.23 \times 10^5$ CFU/ml of isolate VGST in Debhata and $9.5 \pm 0.14 \times 10^5$ CFU/ml of isolate VYCX in Cox's Bazar.

Identification of *Vibrio* Isolates

The biochemical tests identified the isolate VYCX from Cox's Bazar as *Vibrio alginolyticus* and VYCL from Dacope as *Vibrio fluvialis*. The samples VYST and VGST from Debhata showed the presence of *Vibrio furnissii* and *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, respectively (Table 2).

Antibiotic susceptibility pattern of isolated bacteria

The antibiotic susceptibility profile of the isolated bacteria revealed significant variations in their responses to different antibiotics (Table 3). Cefotaxime (CTX), chloramphenicol (C), ciprofloxacin (CIP), nitrofurantoin (F), and tobramycin (TBR) were the most effective; all isolates were 100% sensitive. In contrast, all isolates (100%) were resistant to penicillin (P) while 75% to erythromycin, 50% to ampicillin (AMP) and amoxicillin (AMO). Other antibiotics like trimethoprim-sulfamethoxazole (SXT), oxytetracycline (OT), azithromycin (AZM), and nalidixic acid (NA) showed mixed effectiveness, with varying proportions of sensitivity, intermediate susceptibility, and resistance (Figure 2).

Multiple Antibiotic Resistance (MAR) Index of the isolates

Vibrio alginolyticus isolated from the sample VYCX was found resistant to ampicillin, erythromycin, azithromycin, tetracycline, oxytetracycline, penicillin G, and nalidixic acid antibiotics. Penicillin G resistance was observed in *Vibrio fluvialis* (VYCL), while resistance to ampicillin, Penicillin G, and Erythromycin was observed in *Vibrio furnissii* (VYST). Erythromycin and Penicillin G were not effective against *Vibrio parahaemolyticus* (VGST) (Table 4). The isolates *Vibrio alginolyticus* and *Vibrio furnissii* showed multidrug resistance Pattern with MAR values of 0.41 and 0.17, respectively (Figure 3).

Table 1: Prevalence of bacteria in different samples

| Sample Code | Sample Source | Sampling Area | Culture Media | Culture Method | CFU/ml | Colony Color | Colony Shape | Colony Size |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|---|--------------|--------------|-------------|
| VYCX | Water | Cox's Bazar | TCBS | Enriched | ^a $9.5 \pm 0.14 \times 10^5$ | Yellow | Round | Large |
| VYCL | Water | Dacope | TCBS | Enriched | ^b $9.5 \pm 0.21 \times 10^6$ | Yellow | Round | Medium |
| VYST | Water | Debhata | TCBS | Enriched | ^a $3.6 \pm 0.41 \times 10^6$ | Yellow | Round | Medium |
| VGST | Water | Debhata | TCBS | Enriched | ^a $3.5 \pm 0.23 \times 10^5$ | Deep Green | Round | Medium |

Different superscripts in the same column shows significant ($P < 0.05$) difference.

Table 2: Biochemical test of different isolates from different samples

| Isolates | Color in TCBS | NaCl (0%) | NaCl (3%) | NaCl (6%) | NaCl (8%) | NaCl (10%) | Oxidase | Sucrose | Lactose | D-Mannitol | Voges-Proskauer | Putative bacterial species |
|----------|---------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|------------|---------|---------|---------|------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|
| VYCX | Yellow | - | + | + | + | + | + | + | - | + | + | <i>Vibrio alginolyticus</i> |
| VYCL | Yellow | - | + | + | + | - | + | + | - | + | - | <i>Vibrio fluvialis</i> |
| VYST | Yellow | - | + | + | + | - | + | + | - | + | - | <i>Vibrio furnissii</i> |
| VGST | Deep Green | - | + | + | + | - | + | + | - | + | - | <i>Vibrio parahaemolyticus</i> |

‘+’ = Positive and ‘-’ = Negative

Table 3: Zone of inhibition (mm) with susceptibility criteria

| Isolate ID | Zone of inhibition (mm) with susceptibility criteria | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------|--|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---|
| | CTX | CN | C | LEV | SXT | OT | P | F | E | CIP | AZM | NA | S | AMO | TBR | B |
| VYCX | 27±0.7(S) | 25±0.7(S) | 26±0.3(S) | 29±0.4(S) | 23±0.4(S) | 0±0(R) | 34±0.1(S) | 21±0.7(S) | 0±0.4(R) | 27±0.3(S) | 0±0.7(R) | 7±0.1(R) | 21±0(S) | 20±0.4(S) | 21±0.3(S) | - |
| VYCL | 34±0.4(S) | 18±0.7(S) | 36±0.1(S) | 24±0.4(S) | 19±0.3(S) | 27±0.7(S) | 8±0.1(R) | 19±0(S) | 16±0.4(I) | 21±0.1(S) | 22±0.7(S) | 14±0.1(I) | 18±0.7(S) | 20±0.3(S) | 22±0.4(S) | - |
| VYST | 30±0.7(S) | 16±0.4(S) | 27±0.7(S) | 14±0.3(I) | 21±0.4(S) | 18±0.1(I) | 0±0.1(R) | 20±0.7(S) | 8±0.4(R) | 26±0(S) | 16±0.1(I) | 19±0(S) | 14±0.1(I) | 16±0.4(I) | 17±0.7(S) | - |
| VGST | 31±0.3(S) | 16±0.1(S) | 20±0.4(S) | 29±0.4(S) | 25±0.3(S) | 26±0(S) | 0±0.4(R) | 20±0.1(S) | 12±0.1(R) | 30±0.7(S) | 24±0.7(S) | 17±0.4(I) | 15±0(S) | 16±0.7(I) | 21±0.3(S) | - |

CTX = Cefotaxime, CN = Gentamicin, AMP = Ampicillin, TE = Tetracycline, C = Chloramphenicol., LEV = Levofloxacin, SXT = Sulfamethoxazole & Trimethoprim, OT = Oxytetracycline, P = Penicillin G, F = Nitrofurantoin, E = Erythromycin, CIP = Ciprofloxacin, AZM = Azithromycin, NA = Nalidixic Acid, S = Streptomycin, AMO = Amoxicillin, TBR = Tobramycin and B = Blank

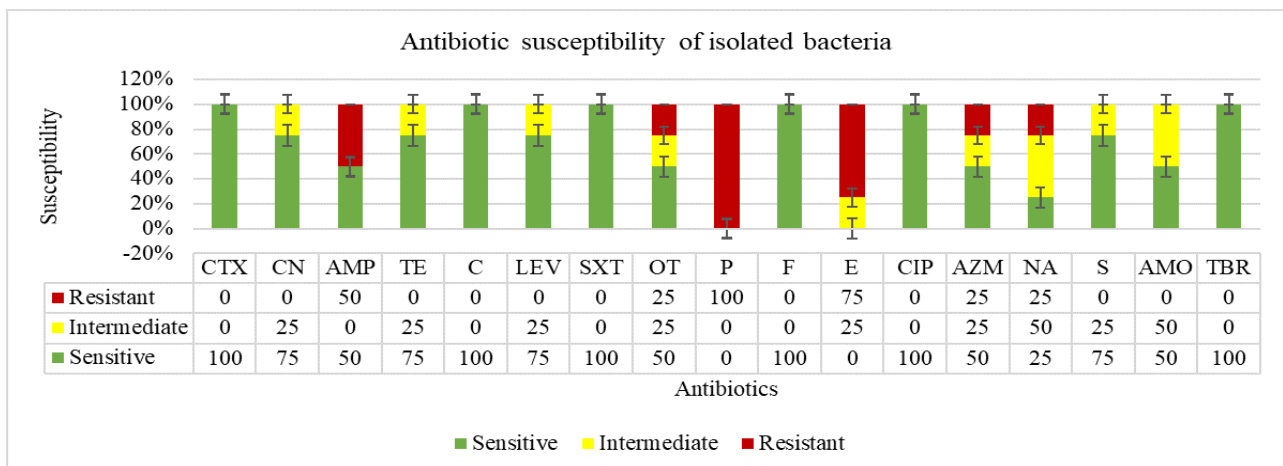


Figure 2: Antibiotic susceptibility pattern of isolated *Vibrio* spp. from the study samples; red: resistant percentage, yellow: intermediate percentage, and green: susceptible percentage. CTX = Cefotaxime, CN = Gentamicin, AMP = Ampicillin, TE = Tetracycline, C = Chloramphenicol, LEV = Levofloxacin, SXT = Sulfamethoxazole & Trimethoprim, OT = Oxytetracycline, P = Penicillin G, F = Nitrofurantoin, E = Erythromycin, CIP = Ciprofloxacin, AZM = Azithromycin, NA = Nalidixic Acid, S = Streptomycin, AMO = Amoxicillin, TBR = Tobramycin

Table 4: Antibiotic susceptibility profile of bacteria

| Isolates | Antibiotic susceptibility profiles with % | | |
|--------------------------------|---|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Sensitive | Intermediate | Resistant |
| <i>Vibrio alginolyticus</i> | CTX-C-LEV-F-CIP-SXT-S-AMO-TBR (52.95%) | CN (5.88%) | AMP-OT-TE-AZM-NA-E-P (41.17%) |
| <i>Vibrio fluvialis</i> | AMP-CTX-C-CN-LEV-F-CIP-SXT-S-AMO-TBR-OT-TE-AZM (82.36%) | NA-E (11.76%) | P (5.88%) |
| <i>Vibrio furnissii</i> | CTX-C-CN -F-CIP-SXT-TBR-TE-NA (52.95%) | OT-LEV-AZM-S-AMO (29.41%) | AMP-P-E (17.64%) |
| <i>Vibrio parahaemolyticus</i> | AMP-CTX-C-CN-LEV-F-CIP-SXT-S -TBR-OT-TE-AZM (76.48%) | NA-AMO (11.76%) | P-E (11.76%) |

CTX = Cefotaxime,, CN = Gentamicin, AMP = Ampicillin, TE = Tetracycline, C = Chloramphenicol,, LEV = Levofloxacin, SXT = Sulfamethoxazole& Trimethoprim, OT = Oxytetracycline, P = Penicillin G, F = Nitrofurantoin, E = Erythromycin, CIP = Ciprofloxacin, AZM = Azithromycin, NA = Nalidixic Acid, S = Streptomycin, AMO = Amoxicillin, TBR = Tobramycin

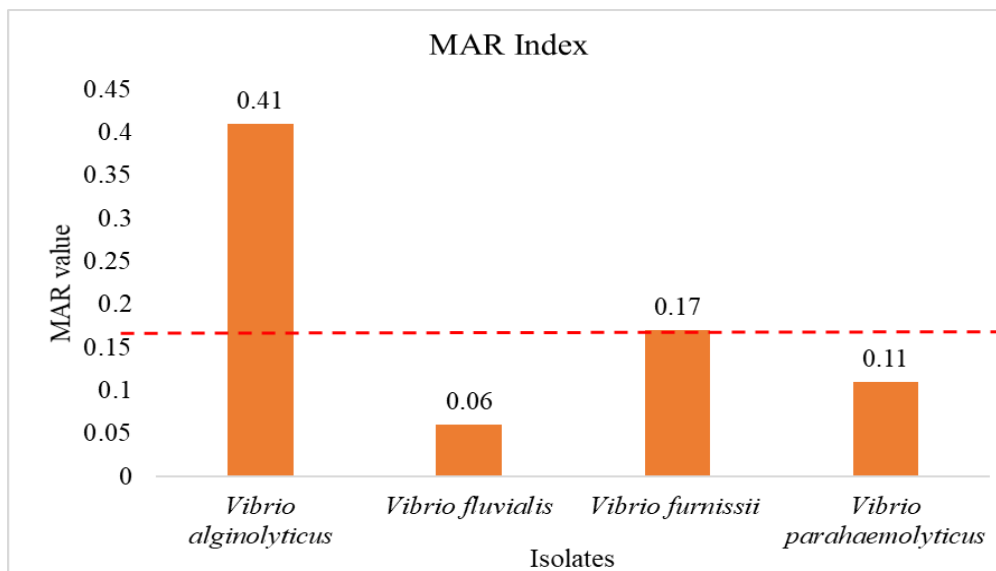


Figure 3: MAR index of isolated *Vibrio* species from shrimp hatcheries at Cox's Bazar, Dacope, Batiaghata and Debhata. Red disconnected line with value (0.17) indicates minimum value of the MAR index for a bacterial isolate to be multiple antibiotic resistant.

Discussion

In fish and shellfish hatcheries, diseases caused by a range of pathogenic bacteria, most frequently *Vibrio* spp., pose significant threats to the production (Islam et al., 2023; Hasan et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2012). This present study reports the presence of 4 *Vibrio* spp. (*V. alginolyticus*, *V. fluvialis*, *V. furnissii*, *V. parahaemolyticus*) in water samples from different shrimp hatcheries of Bangladesh, indicating that *Vibrio* is a prevalent pathogenic bacterial group in shrimp hatcheries. The previous investigation of shrimp PL nurseries which is directly linked to hatchery production of shrimp larvae, supported the present finding and reported *Vibrio* as the dominant group of bacteria (Yasinet al., 2022). Generally, *penaeid* shrimp naturally harbour bacterial species from the genus *Vibrio* (Gomez-Gil et al., 1998); of which some *Vibrio* species have been reported to have the potential to become pathogenic, and cause mortality of shrimp in a production system (Nash et al., 1992).

Among all the *Vibrio* species isolated in this investigation, the presence of *V. alginolyticus* in the samples of Cox's Bazar indicates an occurrence of vibriosis in juvenile penaeid shrimp caused by *V. alginolyticus* (Selvin& Lipton, 2003). *Vibrio alginolyticus* had also been reported to cause vibriosis from several shrimp farms in the southwestern coastal shrimp farms of Bangladesh, caused signs of illness and mortality in juvenile shrimps (Hannan et al., 2019). Therefore, *Vibrio* spp. could be transferred from hatchery to shrimp farm as most of the farm rear hatchery produced post larvae.

V. parahaemolyticus was identified as one of the strains in the present investigation, which is known as one of the causative agents of early mortality syndrome or acute hepatopancreatic necrosis disease (EMS/AHPND) in cultured shrimp. *V. parahaemolyticus* and other *Vibrio* spp. that carry *pirA* and *pirB* toxin genes in their plasmid caused AHPND in shrimps (Dong et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2018; Restrepo et al., 2018; Muthukrishnan et al., 2019). This disease has resulted in significant losses in shrimp production in China, Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia

(FAO, 2013). AHPND carrying *V. parahaemolyticus* strains had been evident in Bangladesh shrimp farms in recent years (Eshik et al., 2017; Eshik et al., 2018).

The presence of *V. furnissii* and *V. fluvialis* from the shrimp hatchery water samples; indicates uncleaned water sources of hatcheries or unhygienic handling practices by the hatchery workers of technicians, as *V. furnissii* and *V. fluvialis* have been detected in the stool samples from diarrhea patients (Zhou et al., 2024).

On the other hand, *Vibrio* infections in human beings were frequently linked to consuming tainted seafood (Janda et al., 1988), which indicates that shrimp can be a carrier of human pathogens. Outbreaks and isolated cases of human gastroenteritis had been linked to *V. furnissii* (Schirmeister et al., 2014, Janda et al., 1988, Magalhães et al., 1993, Hickman et al., 1994, Lam et al., 1985). Additionally, the intestines of healthy brown shrimp and aquatic marine habitats are reported to harbor *Vibrio furnissii* (Janda et al., 1988; Hernandez et al., 1997).

Antibiotics are intensively employed to control bacterial infections in aquaculture systems, which could be a significant cause behind the antibiotic resistance formation of bacteria (Schar et al., 2020). The sensitivity of a bacterium to a particular antibiotic is the only factor that determines how effective an antibiotic is. This study demonstrated that *V. fluvialis* showed the highest sensitivity (82.36%) towards 14 out of 17 antibiotics, which is in line with a study where this species was also sensitive to sulfamethoxazole & trimethoprim, chloramphenicol, gentamicin and so on (Okoh et al., 2015). *V. parahaemolyticus* showed 76.48% sensitivity towards 13 out of 17 antibiotics, supporting earlier research demonstrating the sensitivity of this shellfish-isolated *Vibrio* species to ampicillin, cefotaxime, chloramphenicol, ciprofloxacin, and gentamicin (Yasin et al., 2022; Tan et al., 2020; Letchumanan et al., 2019). *V. parahaemolyticus* isolated from seafood, including shrimp, grouper, shellfish, and small mackerel, showed extreme resistance to ampicillin (82.09–88%) and penicillin (92.54–100%) (Srinivasan and Ramasamy, 2009; Letchumanan et al., 2015; Tan et al., 2017; Amalina et al., 2019). In addition to these antibiotics, some *V. parahaemolyticus* isolates from different sources have been reported to resistant to erythromycin, cefotaxime, chloramphenicol, gentamicin and nalidixic acid (Hasanuzzaman et al., 2025; Yasinet al., 2022; Tan et al., 2020; Letchumanan et al., 2019);

Both *V. alginolyticus* and *V. furnissii* were found sensitive (52.95%) to antibiotics; *V. alginolyticus* to cefotaxime, chloramphenicol, levofloxacin, nitrofurantoin, ciprofloxacin, sulfamethoxazole & trimethoprim, streptomycin, amoxicillin, and torbomycin; *V. furnissii* to sulfamethoxazole & trimethoprim, turbomycin, cefotaxime, chloramphenicol, ciprofloxacin, gentamicin, nalidixic acid, nitrofurantoin, and tetracycline. Similarly, *V. alginolyticus* isolated from fishes and shellfishes were found sensitive to cefotaxime, chloramphenicol, ampicillin, erythromycin, gentamycin, tetracycline, penicillin and gentamicin (Genovese et al., 2012; Kang et al, 2016; Yasinet al., 2022). *V. fluvialis* have been indicated to be resistant to erythromycin, sulfamethoxazole, cefuroxime, penicillin G, chloramphenicol, tetracycline, trimethoprim, polymyxin b

(Okoh et al., 2015); and *V. furnissii* to cefazolin, tetracycline, streptomycin (Zhou et al., 2024). *V. alginolyticus* strains isolated from mud crab hatchery were resistant to erythromycin, nalidixic acid, penicillin G, and vancomycin antibiotics (Hasanuzzaman et al., 2025). This study has opined that the susceptibility of these *Vibrio* species varied with strains, host species and environment, resulting in contradictory resistance pattern of different *Vibrio* spp., and multi-drug resistance was evolved in bacterial strains.

This study reports that *Vibrio* spp. from shrimp hatcheries in Bangladesh exhibited great resistance to penicillin G (100%), erythromycin (75%), and ampicillin (50%); and *V. alginolyticus* and *V. furnissii* displayed a pattern of multidrug resistance. The aquaculture business has suffered significant financial setbacks as a result of multiple antibiotic resistance (MAR) strains of *V. alginolyticus* (Mechriet et al., 2015; Mohamad et al., 2019). According to a prior study, *Vibrio* spp. isolated from maritime whiteleg shrimp farms had a significant incidence of tetracycline-class (38.7%) and ampicillin (45.2%) resistance, and further revealed that 29% of the isolates exhibited multidrug resistance (Reboucaset al., 2011). *V. alginolyticus* isolated from Korean oysters were showed multidrug resistant to rifampin and erythromycin (Kang et al., 2016).

To combat the evolution of antibiotic resistance in shrimp hatcheries and the shrimp industry, the implementation of appropriate measures and regulatory initiatives is strongly advised. Robust biosecurity measures with standard water quality parameters in the hatchery setting are essential, along with the implementation of alternative therapeutic agents and meticulous monitoring of antibiotic usage in both hatchery and farming contexts. Consequently, the World Health Organization (WHO) developed a Global Action Plan (GAP) based on a "One Health" strategy, which emphasizes the interconnectedness of public health, animal health, and the environment, to combat the global threat posed by antibiotic resistance (WHO, 2015). Eventually, to investigate the emergence of AMR multidisciplinary approach is a must. This study addressed the imperative public health issue that can be a threat to aquaculture, the aquatic environment and the food safety. Nevertheless, this study further, given the sample size and molecular identification, suggests meticulous investigation of antibiotic resistance mechanisms, analysis of transmission patterns, and the expression of resistance genes.

Conclusions

This study provides evidence of the occurrence of infectious *Vibrio* spp. in four shrimp hatcheries water in Bangladesh, with several isolates exhibiting resistance to commonly used antibiotics especially to penicillin (100%), erythromycin (75%), and ampicillin (50%) and amoxicillin (50%). Notably, *Vibrio alginolyticus* and *Vibrio furnissii* were shown to be multidrug resistant with MAR values of 0.41 and 0.17, respectively, which raises questions about the sustainability of shrimp hatchery production as well as possible health dangers to the general public. In order to reduce the introduction and spread of resistant bacteria, the results emphasize the critical necessity for stringent

biosecurity measures and the responsible use of antibiotics in aquaculture. Future studies should concentrate on addressing the molecular mechanisms that underlie antibiotic resistance in *Vibrio* spp., surveillance of the resistance genes dissemination within hatchery

environments, and assessing the transmission possibility of resistant strains to humans through the food chain.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declares no conflict of interest.

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