

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHLOROPHYLL CONTENT,
VEGETATIVE TRAITS AND YIELD - RELATED TRAITS IN
SELECTED COWPEA VARIETIES.**

(Vigna unguiculata)



By

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ABSTRACT

The selection of cowpea varieties with desirable physiological and yield related traits is essential for improving productivity and developing high performing cultivars. This study examined the relationships among chlorophyll content, vegetative growth parameters and yield-related traits in six cowpea varieties (*MICPI*, *MI35*, *ANKCPI*, *WARUNI*, *DHAWALA* and *BOMBAY*) grown under field conditions using a Randomized Complete Block Design (RCBD) with three replications. Chlorophyll content was quantified using both SPAD meter readings and spectrophotometric assays while vegetative traits and yield components were recorded at 5 and 7 weeks after planting. Results revealed clear varietal differences in both physiological and yield traits. *BOMBAY* recorded the highest Chlorophyll values. *DHAWALA* exhibited the greatest plant height and canopy spread whereas *MICPI* showed the smallest stature but possessed the largest leaf area. Yield performance also differed significantly with *ANKCPI* achieving the highest grain yield per plant (39.31 ± 0.53 g) associated with a superior harvest index despite not having the highest vegetative vigor. Correlation analysis indicated a weak and negative association between chlorophyll content and grain yield ($r = -0.04$) demonstrating that higher chlorophyll content did not predict final productivity. Stomatal observations further showed varietal differences in gas exchange capacity with *WARUNI* having higher stomatal density and larger guard cells compared to the more conservative water-use strategy of *ANKCPI*. These findings exhibit substantial physiological and yield diversity among the tested cowpea varieties and identify *ANKCPI*, *DHAWALA* and *BOMBAY* as lines of particular interest for future breeding. The findings emphasize that balanced vegetative growth and efficient biomass allocation rather than maximum chlorophyll content alone is the key determinants of cowpea yield under field conditions in Sri Lanka.

Keywords: Analysis, Chlorophyll content, Correlation, Physiological diversity, Pigment content, Stomata, Photosynthetic capacity

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Approved by.....	ii
DECLARATION.....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
LIST OF TABLES.....	xi
ABBREVIATIONS.....	xii
CHAPTER 1.....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Objectives.....	3
CHAPTER 2.....	4
LITERATURE REVIEW.....	4
2.1 Introduction.....	4
2.1.1 Importance of nitrogen in agriculture.....	4
2.1.2 Environmental impact of chemical nitrogen fertilizers.....	5
2.1.3 Role and potential of BNF.....	6
2.2 Biological Nitrogen Fixation: Overview.....	6
2.2.1 Mechanisms: symbiotic vs. non-symbiotic.....	6
2.2.2 Nitrogenase enzyme activity.....	8
2.2.3 Factors affecting biological nitrogen fixation efficiency.....	9
2.3 Microbial Agents in BNF.....	9
2.3.1 Host-specific relationships.....	10
2.4. Crops Involved in BNF.....	11
2.4.1 Legumes.....	11
2.4.2 Non-legumes with associative BNF.....	12
2. 5. Environmental and Agronomic Factors.....	13
2.5.1 Soil pH, Organic matter, Moisture.....	13
2.5.2 Farming Systems and Inoculation Practices.....	13
2.6. Impact of BNF on Soil Health.....	14
2.6.1 Nutrient Cycling.....	14
2.6.2 Soil structure and Porosity.....	15
2.6.3 Soil Microbial Communities.....	16

2.7. BNF and Sustainable Agriculture	17
2.7.1 Long-term benefits	17
2.7.2 Case studies from other countries.....	18
2.7.3 Applicability to Sri Lanka	19
2.8. Challenges and Limitations.....	20
2.8.1 Efficiency, Adoption Barriers.....	20
2.8.1 Need for extension and Education.....	21
2.9.1 Genetic Improvements.....	23
2.9.2 Policies to promote BNF	24
2.10. Conclusion.....	24
CHAPTER 03	25
MATERIAL AND METHOAD	25
3.1 Introduction	25
3.2 Locations	25
3.3 Experimental materials.....	25
3.4 Experimental designs	25
3.5 Agronomic practices	27
3.5.1 Land selection and preparation.....	27
3.5.2 Sowing of cowpea Varieties	27
3.5.3 Fertilizer application.....	27
3.5.4 Irrigation and crop management.....	28
3.5.5 Weeding and pest management	28
3.5.6 Harvesting.....	28
3.5.7 Data collection	28
3.5.7.1 Growth parameters.....	28
3.5.7.1.1 Plant height	28
3.5.7.1.2 Number of leaves	29
3.5.7.1.3 Number of primary branches	29
3.5.7.1.4 Leaf area.....	29
3.5.7.1.5 Canopy width	29
3.5.8 Yield-Related Data	30
3.5.8.1 Number of Pods per Plant.....	30
3.5.8.2 Pod Length (cm)	30
3.5.8.3 Number of Seeds per Pod	30

3.5.8.4 100-Seed Weight (g)	31
3.5.8.5 Grain yield per plant	31
3.5.8.6 Chlorophyll content	32
3.5.8.6.1 Measure chlorophyll by Using a SPAD Meter	32
3.5.8.6.2 Measure chlorophyll content by Using a Spectrophotometer	32
3.5.8.7 Carotenoid content	33
3.5.8.8 Observation of Stomata characteristic	33
3.6 Data analysis	34
CHAPTER 04	35
RESULT AND DISCUSSION	35
4.1 Meteorological Data	35
4.2 Quantify chlorophyll content and carotenoid in selected cowpea varieties	36
4.3 Measure vegetative traits and yield-related traits in selected cowpea varieties	39
4.3.1 Evaluation of vegetative traits in selected cowpea varieties at 5WAP	39
4.3.2 Evaluation of vegetative and yield parameters of selected cowpea varieties 7 WAP	42
4.4 Relationship between chlorophyll content, vegetative traits and yield related traits in selected cowpea varieties at 5WAP and 7WPA	45
4.4.1 Relationship between chlorophyll content, vegetative traits in selected cowpea varieties at 5WAP	45
4.4.2 Relationship between chlorophyll content, vegetative traits and yield related traits in selected cowpea varieties at 7WAP	46
4.5 Stomata characteristics of different cowpea varieties	49
4.5.1 Visuals of Stomata characteristics of different cowpea varieties	52
CHAPTER 05	53
Future Recommendations	53
CONCLUSION	53
REFERENCES	54