

# Osmoregulation pattern, condition factor, and gonadal maturity level of sea urchins in the various ecosystems of Panjang Island, Jepara, Indonesia

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Manuscript received: 2 January 2024. Revision accepted: 9 February 2024.

**Abstract.** Suryanti S, Anggoro S, A'in C, Widyorini N. 2024. Osmoregulation pattern, condition factor, and gonadal maturity level of sea urchins in the various ecosystems of Panjang Island, Jepara, Indonesia. *Biodiversitas* 25: 502-509. Panjang Island has a diversity of ecosystems. It is also famous for its abundance of echinoids, especially sea urchins. Currently, research on sea urchins in Panjang Island is mostly limited to studies on the abundance and maturity of gonads. This study investigates the osmoregulation patterns, condition factors, and maturity indices of sea urchin gonads in different ecosystems that are sea urchin habitats on Panjang Island, Jepara, Indonesia. Sampling is done randomly, while the research method is a case study. The results showed that there are 2 species of sea urchins found on Panjang Island, namely *Diadema setosum* Leske, 1778 and *Echinothrix calamaris* Pallas, 1774. Analysis of osmoregulation patterns showed that sea urchins at station 1 were hyperconformers, while sea urchins at stations 2 and 3 were hypoconformers. Sea urchins at 3 stations had a positive allometric growth pattern ( $b > 3$ ) and a high condition factor ( $K > 1$ ). The average Gonadosomatic Index (GI) calculation result was 8.72%, while the type of ecosystem of the research stations influenced the color and texture of different gonads. Sea urchins are in immature, mature, and spawning stages, so the sea urchins on Panjang Island were partially spawned.

**Keywords:** Coral reefs, coral rubble, Echinoidea, growth pattern, seagrass beds

## INTRODUCTION

Panjang Island is a natural protection and breeding area for marine life with various ecosystem types, including coral reef and seagrass ecosystems. Several organisms are associated with coral reef and seagrass ecosystems, one of which is benthic. The condition of the coral reefs on Panjang Island is generally moderate, with the percentage of live coral cover ranging from 25-49% (Suryono et al. 2017). In contrast to the condition of coral reefs, the seagrass ecosystems on Panjang Island are in quite good condition, based on Pradhana et al. (2021). One of the benthic animals associated with coral reef and seagrass ecosystems is the sea urchin, which belongs to the phylum Echinodermata (Suryanti et al. 2017; Suryanti et al. 2018). In the ecosystem of coral reefs and seagrass beds on Panjang Island, there are many species of Echinodermata, especially sea urchins of the species *Diadema setosum* Leske, 1778 and *Echinothrix calamaris* Pallas, 1774 (Setyawan et al. 2014; Lutfiyani et al. 2021). Sea urchins receive special attention from the scientific world because of the ecological and nutritional functions of the various complex compounds they possess. The essential ecological function of sea urchins is as a major grazer in coastal areas. Although generally considered herbivorous, sea urchins can be classified as distinct omnivores that also prey on sessile invertebrates (Murie and Bourdeau 2021).

The level of exploitation of sea urchins is increasing, as evidenced by FAO 2019 global production statistics that the total production of sea urchins consumed worldwide in 2015 reached 71,229 tons (Karmilah et al. 2021). Due to sea urchins' limited annual reproductive cycle, sea urchin cultivation is increasingly being developed in various countries. The development of sea urchin cultivation has been characterized by an increase in population followed by research on the growth, nutrition, reproduction, and physiology of sea urchins. However, previous research on sea urchins on Panjang Island, Jepara is still limited and most only examine the abundance and maturity of sea urchin gonads. Research on the physiological response of sea urchins to the environment in Panjang Island has not been conducted. Therefore, this study will analyze the osmoregulation pattern, condition factors, and maturity level of sea urchin gonads on Panjang Island more deeply. The results of this research were conducted to complement previous research and to increase information and knowledge on the osmoregulation patterns, condition factors, and gonadal maturity levels of sea urchins in Panjang Island for academics, researchers, and the general public.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study area

Panjang is one of several islands in Ujungbatu Village, Jepara Sub-district, Jepara District, Central Java Province,

Indonesia. Sampling was conducted in 3 different ecosystems on Panjang Island, Jepara. Station 1 (06°34'34.5"S 110°37'52.9" E) is a seagrass ecosystem, station 2 (06°34'41.1"S 110°37'53. 6"E) is a coral reef ecosystem, while station 3 (06°34'44.2"S 110°37'44.1"E) is a coral reef area dominated by rubble and sand substrates. The location of the sampling area is shown in Figure 1.

### Procedures

Samples are taken randomly, while field samples include sea urchin samples and water media at each station. Sea urchin samples were collected at a depth of 1-2.5 m and a distance of 5-100 m from the coastal landmass. Sea urchin samples were collected using tools like claws and drag nets. The size of sea urchin samples collected varied from 41 to 379 g. The number of sea urchin samples varied depending on each station's species, density, and size composition. For example, 10 samples were collected at station 1, 17 samples were collected at station 2, and 14 samples were collected at station 3. According to the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMs) website, the collected sea urchins are then identified based on morphological characteristics. Water samples were collected at each station using a 100 ml sampling bottle. Water samples are used to measure water quality at research stations. Water quality can be used to measure factors limiting marine organisms' survival and growth.

Osmolarity measurements include milieu interieur and milieu exterieur osmolarity measurements. The osmolarity of the milieu interieur was obtained from the osmotic pressure value of the hemolymph, while the osmolarity of the milieu exterieur was obtained from the osmotic pressure measurements of seawater samples. Hemolymph of sea urchins was collected from the perivisceral coelom

with a 23-gauge syringe containing 0.1 mL. Osmolarity was measured using a Roebling automatic micro-osmometer. The sample is then weighed and dissected; the results of the section in the form of gonads and stomach contents are each separated on a separate zipper. Next, the gonads, stomach contents, and water media are weighed, labeled according to the sample code, and then preserved with ice in the cooler to prevent damage. As supporting data, electrolyte media measurements of  $\text{Na}^+$ ,  $\text{Cl}^-$ ,  $\text{Mg}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Ca}^{2+}$ , and  $\text{K}^+$  ions were also measured using an electrolyte counter osmometer. The environmental parameters calculated in this study were temperature, pH, and dissolved oxygen, measured with a Water Quality Checker, while salinity was calculated with a handheld refractometer.

### Data analysis

The OWL analysis follows the formula of Anggoro et al. (2018):

$$\text{OWL} = [\text{P Osm milieu interieur} - \text{P Osm milieu exterieur}]$$

Where:

P Osm milieu interieur = osmotic pressure of the hemolymph

P Osm milieu exterieur = osmotic pressure of the external environment

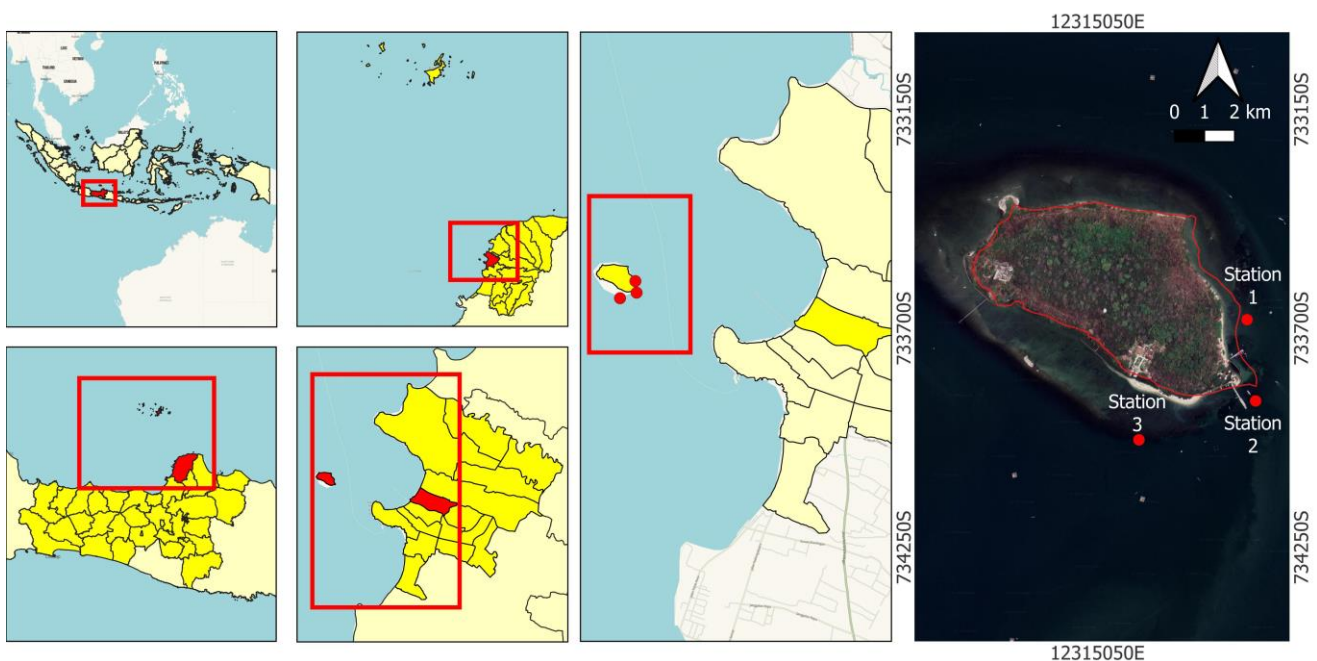
Once the osmotic work of the sea urchin was known, the conversion was made to find the range of isoosmotic salinity based on the equation of Anggoro (1992):

$$\text{Osm} = -5.4081 + 29.3489 \text{ S}$$

Where:

Osm = the osmolarity of the interstitial fluid, and

S = the external salinity



**Figure 1.** Map of study site in Panjang Island, Jepara District, Central Java, Indonesia

Analysis of the length-weight relationship follows the equation

$$W = aL^b$$

Where:

W : sea urchin weight (g)

L : diameter (cm),

a : coefficient related to body form (intercept)

b : an exponent indicating isometric growth (slope)

The b value of the length-weight relationship was tested by t-test at a 95% confidence level. The condition factor uses Fulton's equation (Suleiman et al. 2018), which is:

$$K = W/L^3 \cdot 100$$

Where:

K : condition factor

W : urchin weight (g)

L : diameter (mm)

3 : the length coefficient).

Meanwhile, the Gonadosomatic Index (GI) is derived from the ratio between the gonad weight and the total body weight of the sea urchin. The calculation and analysis of GI followed the GI evaluation  $GI = [\text{gonad wet weight (g)} / \text{sea urchin wet weight (g)}] \times 100$ . SPSS 25.0 version software was used for statistical analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Identification of sea urchin samples

Two species of sea urchins are found along the coast of Panjang Island, *D. setosum* and *E. calamaris* (Figure 2). *D. setosum* was found in large numbers and varying sizes at 3 research sites. *D. setosum* inhabits the shallow sublittoral zone (Vafidis et al. 2021); this species is widely found in large populations at depths of about 4-6 m. Large *D. setosum* is found in coral reef areas, while smaller sizes are found in sandy areas or coral fragments (rubble). The

average size of *D. setosum* at station 1 has a weight range of 47-253 g and a 5-8 cm diameter; at station 2 it ranges from 41-254 g with a diameter range of 5-9 cm, while at station 3, the weight ranges from 85-224 g, and the diameter range reaches 6-8 cm. A species of sea urchin also found on Panjang Island is *E. calamaris*, a pentagonal with white patterns on the interambulacral part (Suryanti et al. 2020); many are found in shallow waters, around rocks, and in seagrass beds. Only a few *E. calamaris* were found on Panjang Island, with 2, 1, and 5 individuals at stations 1, 2, and 3, respectively. Compared to 3 ecosystems, *E. calamaris* is most abundant in coral reef areas. The size of *E. calamaris* at station 1 is 379 and 423 gr and 11 cm in diameter. At station 2, only 1 individual weighs 280 gr with a diameter of 9.5 cm; at Station 3, there are 5 individuals with a weight range of 230-345 gr with a 9-11 cm diameter.

### Osmoregulation patterns

Echinodermata, mainly sea urchins, can live optimally at 25-30°C, 30-34 ppt salinity, and pH of 6.5-8.5. From the results of measuring the water quality on Panjang Island, pH, salinity, temperature, and dissolved oxygen (Table 1), it can be concluded that these environmental conditions follow the criteria of echinoderm living habitat.

One of the environmental quality parameters that can be a limiting factor for the survival and growth of marine organisms is salinity (Honeycutt and Pomory 2019; Permata et al. 2021). Sea urchins are osmoconformers with a limited ability to overcome large salinity gradients in the external environment (Juinio-Meñez et al. 2008; Suckling and Richard 2020). As osmoconformers, the sea urchin extracellular fluid concentration follows changes in environmental salinity through water and transepithelial ions (Castellano 2017). The results of this study show that sea urchins are osmoconformers; the concentration of milieu interieur is slightly different from the concentration of external media, so sea urchins perform osmotic regulation with hyper-conformer and hypo-conformer patterns.



**Figure 2.** A. *Echinothrix calamaris*; and B. *Diadema setosum* on the; C. Coral reef ecosystem of Panjang Island, Jepara District, Central Java, Indonesia

**Table 1.** Results of water quality measurements at the research station in Panjang Island, Jepara District, Central Java, Indonesia

Station	Ecosystem	pH	Salinity (‰)	Temperature (°C)	DO (mg L <sup>-1</sup> )
1	Seagrass beds	6,85	30	27,4	6,56
2	Coral reefs	5,62	35	31,0	6,47
3	Sand and rubble	5,99	34	30,7	6,56

Based on the osmotic work level calculation, the sea urchins at station 1 are hyper-osmoconformers, and osmoregulatory patterns occur when the osmolarity of body fluids is slightly higher than the osmolarity of the external environment. Hyper-conformers differ from hyper-regulators in that they have the ability to persist over a wide range of external salinities (Šidagytė et al. 2017). As osmoconformers, sea urchins can only tolerate salinity up to a certain level, depending on habitat conditions. Therefore, to maintain the concentration of essential electrolytes under osmotic stress, the biota perform active transport by increasing the activity of the enzyme  $\text{Na}^+\text{-K}^+\text{-ATPase}$  to survive at low salinity (Saraswathy et al. 2021). Maintaining internal ion homeostasis in hypersaline

conditions requires 20-50% of the body's metabolic energy (Jiang et al. 2000; Sabilu et al. 2021). The further the external salinity ranges from the isoosmotic salinity of the biota, the higher the energy expenditure. The comparison of media salinity and isoosmotic salinity of sea urchins on Panjang Jepara Island is visualized in Figure 3.

The results of the study at stations 2 and 3 are consistent with the results of the study at station 1, where the osmolarity of the sea urchin's milieu interieur is not always iso-osmotic with the osmolarity of the milieu exterieur. The results of the osmolarity pattern, osmotic work level (OWL), and osmoregulation pattern of sea urchins on Panjang Island Jepara can be seen in Table 2 as follows:

**Table 2.** Osmolarity, osmotic work level (OWL), and osmoregulation patterns of sea urchins in Panjang Island, Jepara District, Central Java, Indonesia

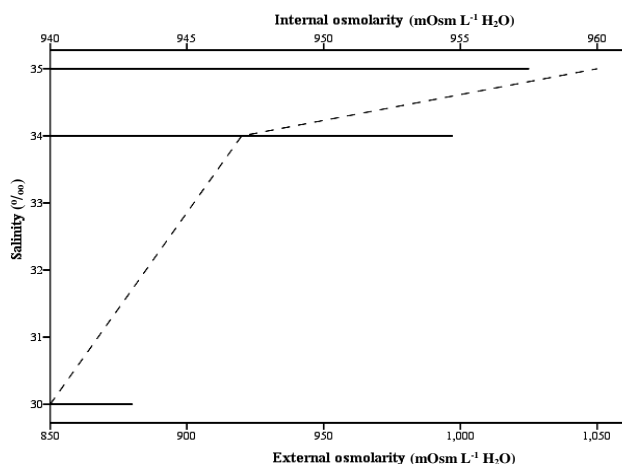
Station	Species	Sample code	Osmolarity milieu exterieur (mOsm L <sup>-1</sup> H <sub>2</sub> O)	Osmolarity milieu interieur (mOsm L <sup>-1</sup> H <sub>2</sub> O)	OWL	Osmoregulation patterns
1	<i>Diadema setosum</i>	D.1-1	880	941	61	Hyper-conformer
		D.1-2	879	939	60	
		D.1-3	879	940	61	
		D.1-4	880	939	59	
		D.1-5	879	939	60	
		D.1-6	879	940	61	
		D.1-7	879	941	62	
		D.1-8	879	941	62	
	<i>Echinothrix calamaris</i>	E.1-1	880	942	62	
		E.1-2	880	938	58	
2	<i>Diadema setosum</i>	D.2-1	1026	959	67	Hypo-conformer
		D.2-2	1026	960	66	
		D.2-3	1026	960	66	
		D.2-4	1025	959	66	
		D.2-5	1025	958	67	
		D.2-6	1026	960	66	
		D.2-7	1026	959	67	
		D.2-8	1025	959	66	
		D.2-9	1026	958	68	
		D.2-10	1026	958	68	
		D.2-11	1026	960	66	
		D.2-12	1026	959	67	
		D.2-13	1025	959	66	
		D.2-14	1026	958	68	
		D.2-15	1026	959	67	
		D.2-16	1026	959	67	
	<i>Echinothrix calamaris</i>	E.2-1	1026	961	65	
3	<i>Diadema setosum</i>	D.3-1	997	946	51	Hypo-conformer
		D.3-2	997	945	52	
		D.3-3	997	946	51	
		D.3-4	996	944	52	
		D.3-5	996	947	49	
		D.3-6	997	946	51	
		D.3-7	997	946	51	
		D.3-8	997	948	49	
		D.3-9	997	947	50	
	<i>Echinothrix calamaris</i>	E.3-1	996	948	48	
		E.3-2	996	948	48	
		E.3-3	996	947	49	
		E.3-4	997	948	49	
		E.3-5	997	948	49	

At stations 2 and 3, sea urchins perform hypoosmotic osmoregulation, so sea urchins must compensate for ion influx through hypoosmotic mechanisms (Chen et al. 2019). Several studies in aquatic invertebrates have shown that disturbances caused by hypersalinity indirectly affect tissue hypoxia or respiration rate changes (Freire et al. 2011; Rivera-Ingraham et al. 2016; Rivera-Ingraham et al. 2017). The osmotic working level (OWL) of the 3 stations ranges from 48-68 mOsm L<sup>-1</sup> H<sub>2</sub>O-1, which means that even as an osmoconformer, the internal osmolarity of the body is not the same as the osmolarity of its external medium. Research by Ventura et al. (2012) demonstrated that epithelial tissues in Echinodermata handle ions in different ways, so the internal body fluid in echinoderm osmoconformers is not very homogeneous in the osmotic adjustment of the body (Ventura et al. 2012). Sea urchins can tolerate about a 30% decrease in salinity of the external medium for 5 days but are unable to maintain large ion gradients, especially Na<sup>+</sup> and Cl<sup>-</sup> (Freire et al. 2011). The ion content of external media can influence sea urchins' high and low internal osmolarity. As supporting data, the results of electrolyte media calculations for Na<sup>+</sup>, Cl<sup>-</sup>, Mg<sup>2+</sup>, Ca<sup>2+</sup>, and K<sup>+</sup> are also presented, the results are presented in Table 3.

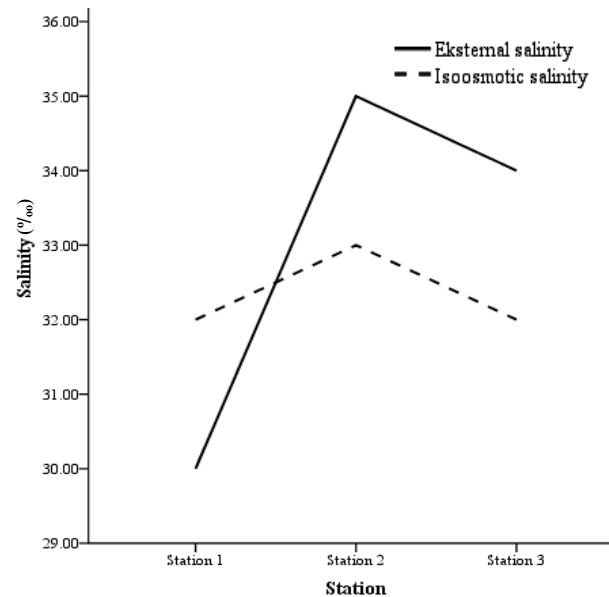
The higher the water-electrolyte content, the higher the salinity. This can be seen in the results of this study in Figure 3, where the internal osmolarity of sea urchins increases with increasing salinity. Based on the calculation results, sea urchins will perform iso-osmotic osmoregulation at salinities of 32‰ for sea urchins at stations 1 and 3 and 33‰ for sea urchins at station 2 (Figure 4).

**Table 3.** Electrolyte content in media water

Electrolyte	Station 1 (g L <sup>-1</sup> )	Station 2 (g L <sup>-1</sup> )	Station 3 (g L <sup>-1</sup> )
Na <sup>+</sup>	9.12	10.64	10.33
Cl <sup>-</sup>	16.59	19.37	18.82
Mg <sup>2+</sup>	1.11	1.30	1.25
Ca <sup>2+</sup>	0.35	0.41	0.38
K <sup>+</sup>	0.32	0.38	0.37



**Figure 3.** The relationship between salinity, external osmolarity, and internal osmolarity



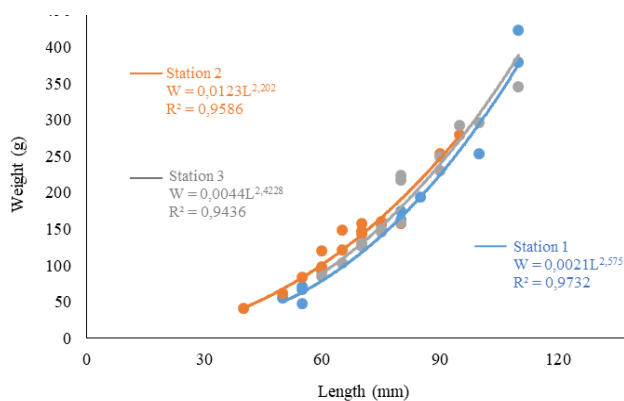
**Figure 4.** Comparison between internal salinity and isoosmotic salinity of each station in Panjang Island, Jepara District, Central Java, Indonesia

### Growth patterns and condition factors

There are 3 types of growth patterns, and this pattern can be known based on the value of *b* (weight at unit length). The growth pattern is called negative allometric (*b*<3) when the growth in length occurs faster than the growth in weight. According to Patrick et al. (2021), when growth in length and weight occurs simultaneously, it is called isometric growth (*b*=3). Suppose a *b* value greater than 3 (*b*>3) indicates a positive allometric growth pattern, where weight growth occurs faster than length growth. The results of the analysis of the growth patterns of sea urchins on Panjang Island are shown in Figure 5.

The coefficient *b*'s value at stations 1, 2, and 3 is 2.575, 2.202, and 2.4228, respectively. The growth pattern of sea urchins at 3 stations showed a negative allometric growth pattern (*b*<3), where the growth in length was faster than the growth in weight. This is following the research of Tupan and Silaban (2017) in Ambon waters, which showed that sea urchins have a negative allometric growth pattern (*b*<3). The regression analysis results showed that the relationship between the length and weight of sea urchins at stations 1, 2, and 3 has a strong relationship. This is evidenced by the high value of the coefficient of determination (*R*<sup>2</sup>), which is 0.9732, 0.9586, and 0.9436 for stations 1, 2, and 3, respectively. Moreover, several condition factors are morphometric indices used to assess the health status of fish in their environment based on their body plumpness (Olatunji 2021). Internal and external environmental conditions generally influence these condition factors, including age, sex, climate, and food availability (Das et al. 2021). Figure 6 shows the graph of the Fulton Condition Factor calculation of sea urchins at 3 stations (Figure 6) showing healthy conditions (*K*>1). The condition factor at station 1 ranged from 5.67 to 6.69, while at stations 2 and 3, the Fulton condition factor ranged from 5.90 to 7.40 and 5.25 to 6.68, respectively.



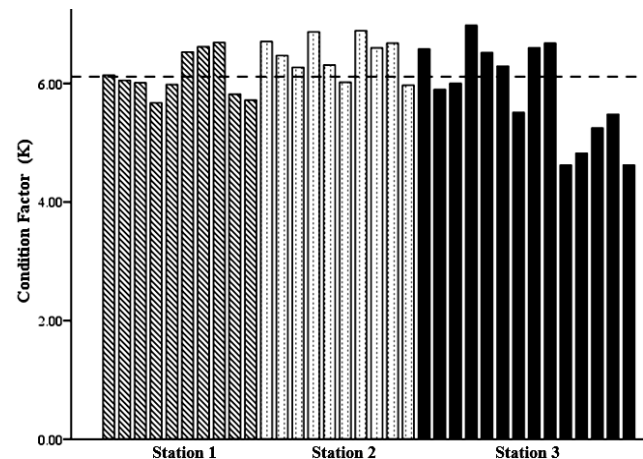


**Figure 5.** Analysis of sea urchin growth patterns on Panjang Island, Jepara District, Central Java, Indonesia

The largest average factor of sea urchin condition is found in coral reef ecosystems (6.57), followed by seagrass beds (6.12) and rubble fields (5.85). As key grazer animals, sea urchins grow well and optimally when food requirements are met and habitat conditions are suitable. The research by Suryono et al. (2017) and Pradhana et al. (2021) shows that the status of coral reefs and seagrass beds in sea urchin habitat on Panjang Island is still in good condition. In coral reef ecosystems, sea urchins are an important species as microalgal population controllers (Suryono et al. 2017; Pérez-Portela et al. 2020; Pradhana et al. 2021). In seagrass ecosystems, sea urchins are mutually symbiotic with seagrass, where sea urchins acquire a place to forage, shelter, spawn, and protect from predatory threats (Jinks et al. 2019), while seagrass-associated biota obtains energy sources from the feeding process by sea urchins (Yorke et al. 2019). The water conditions of the sea urchin habitat (Table 1) also meet the optimal water quality, except for the pH, which is slightly lower than the optimal value. Therefore, the high value of the condition factor for sea urchins living on coral reefs and seagrass beds can be attributed to the abundant availability of food and fairly good environmental conditions.

#### The gonadal maturity level of sea urchins

Early gonadal maturation indicates fish's response to physiological reproductive conditions until they develop into eggs and hatch into larvae (Hutagalung 2023). The development of sea urchin gonads can be identified by an increase in the Gonadosomatic Index (GI) value (Lutfiyani 2021). The GI values range is used to reference the maturity of the sea urchin gonads. The maximum value of GI is reached by sea urchins when it is close to the spawning time and decreases from spawning until spawning is completed (Nasrullah 2018). When the population is depleted, the GI will increase again as long as the reproductive cells increase and reach a maximum at maturity. The results of GI calculations show differences between research stations (Table 4).

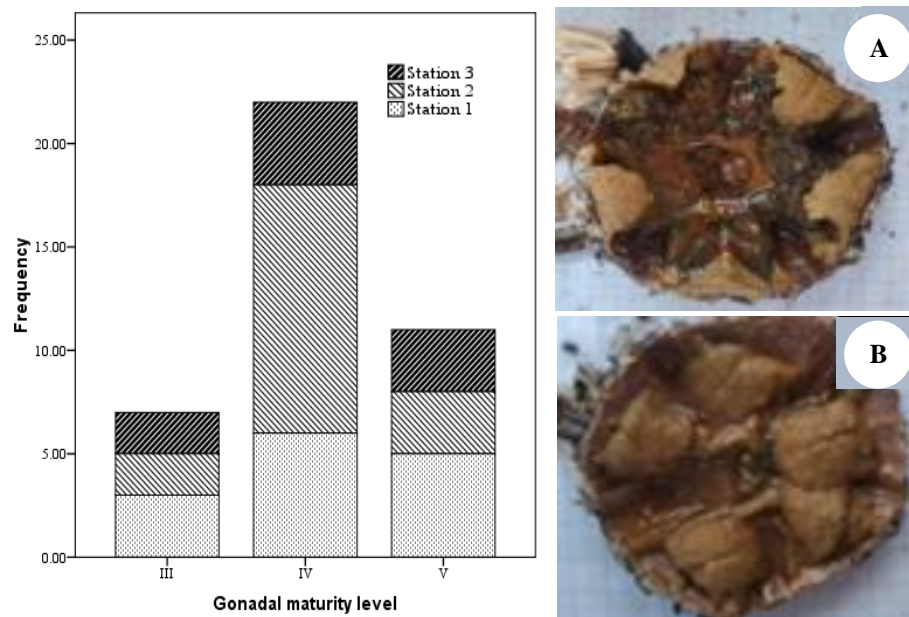


**Figure 6.** Sea urchin condition factors in Panjang Island, Jepara District, Central Java, Indonesia

The highest average GI is found at station 2, which has rubble and sand areas, followed by coral reef ecosystems, and the lowest at station 1, which has seagrass ecosystems. The color, size, and texture of the gonads classify the maturity of sea urchin gonads. The gonads color of *D. setosum* and *E. calamaris* in Panjang Island, Jepara, varies from pale yellow to greenish-yellow. The size of the gonads is quite different according to the body size of the sea urchins, while the texture of the gonads can be distinguished according to their habitat. Sea urchins that live in rubble or sand areas have gonads that tend to be easily destroyed and pale in color; the size of the gonads tends to be small. Sea urchins living in seagrass and coral reef areas have large gonads, a denser and more compact texture, and color varied from yellow to greenish-yellow. Most sea urchin samples from Panjang Island showed gonads that had reached maximum volume and size had a yellow to orange color. The maturity of sea urchin gonads consists of six developmental stages, namely developing (0), recovering (I), growing (II), premature (III), mature (IV), and spawning (V) (Tupan and Silaban 2017). Some individuals have gonads in the stages of premature (III), mature (IV), and spawning (V), indicating that sea urchins on Panjang Island have partially spawned. This is consistent with a study conducted by Puspitaningtyas et al. (2018), which found that the gonadal maturity of sea urchin species *D. setosum* and *E. calamaris* on Panjang Island in May 2017 was in the spawning stage, characterized by a tendency for the gonadal color to pale and shrink. The gonadal maturity of sea urchins on Panjang Island is shown in Figure 7.

**Table 4.** Gonadosomatic Index (GI) calculation

Station	GI range (%)	GI average (%)
1	5.63-12.73	7.54
2	3.94-23.57	9.57
3	3.48-18.82	9.05
Total GI average		8.72



**Figure 7.** The level of maturity of sea urchin gonads in Panjang Island, Jepara; A. *E. calamaris* urchin gonads; and B. *D. setosum*

Analysis of osmoregulation patterns showed that urchins from station 1 were hyperconformers, while urchins from stations 2 and 3 were hypoconformers. Sea urchins from 3 stations had a positive allometric growth pattern ( $b > 3$ ). Analysis of condition factor of Echinoidea (sea feathers) on Panjang Island, Jepara, high condition factor ( $K > 1$ ). The average result of the gonadosomatic index (GI) calculation is 8.72%. The maturity of sea urchin gonads consists of six developmental stages, which indicate that sea urchins in Panjang Island Jepara have partially spawned. This is also consistent with the research conducted by Lutfiyani et al. (2021), which states that most sea urchins in the waters of Panjang Island Jepara are premature in December-January. Therefore, combined with these research results, it can be seen that the pattern of gonad maturity levels of sea urchins in Panjang Island enters the premature period in December and partially begins to spawn in May. In future research, it is hoped to obtain an overview of the gonadal maturity of other species of sea urchins on Panjang Island with more varied research times to complete the information about sea urchins on Panjang Island.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This research is supported by funding from funds other than the APBN of the Faculty of Fisheries and Marine Sciences, Universitas Diponegoro, in 2021 with number: 383-/UN7.5.10.2/HK/2021. Thanks are also given to Winda Mega Permata for her assistance during the research.

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