

Original Article

PRODUCTION AND CHARACTERIZATION OF EXOPOLYSACCHARIDE FROM MARINE MODERATELY HALOPHILIC BACTERIUM *HALOMONAS SMYRNENSIS* SVD III

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To study 1) Optimization of nutritional and environmental parameters to enhance the yield of EPS by *Halomonas smyrnensis* SVD III isolated from seawater, West Coast of Maharashtra, India and 2) Purification and characterization of the EPS produced.

Methods: The isolate was grown in Sehgal and Gibbons (SG) medium broth supplemented with 3% glucose, at 37 °C, 120 rpm for 7 d. Optimization of different parameters was carried out with one factor at a time approach. EPS was isolated from cell-free supernatant of the culture broth by centrifugation and precipitation using chilled ethanol, after removal of proteins by trichloroacetic acid (TCA) treatment. Characterization of the purified EPS was carried out with respect to fourier-transform infrared (FTIR) spectrum, ¹H nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectrum and mass spectrometry (MS) analysis.

Results: Two-fold increase in the yield of EPS (23 g/l) by the selected isolate was obtained by using culture conditions as 10% inoculum size having cell density of 10⁷ cells/ml, pH 6, incubation temperature 45 °C, 3% carbohydrate, 0.5% yeast extract as nitrogen source, 20% salt concentration and 7 d of incubation period. Characterization of the purified EPS suggested the presence of dominated glycosidic linkages and heptasaccharide nature of the molecule. As the present strain is halophilic, 20% NaCl was found to be optimum.

Conclusion: Optimization studies resulted in two-fold increase in the yield of EPS which is of heptasaccharide nature.

Keywords: *Halomonas smyrnensis* SVD III, Exopolysaccharide, Characterization of EPS by FTIR, MS, ¹H NMR, Glycosidic linkages, Heptasaccharide, Moderately halophilic bacterium

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INTRODUCTION

Microbial exopolysaccharides are polysaccharides produced by microbes extracellularly as capsule or slime. These microbial EPS generally are categorized into 2 broad classes namely homopolysaccharide composed of single units of monosaccharides and heteropolysaccharide composed of two or more units of monosaccharides.

Microbial EPS are non-toxic, biodegradable and renewable in nature [1]. They play an important role in protection against desiccation [2] and also useful in forming biofilms [3, 4]. Their various applications include use as gelling agents, biosurfactants, emulsifiers, viscosifiers [5-7], biosorbents [8, 9], biologically active antimicrobials, anticancer agents and antioxidants [10-13].

Dextran is the first industrial EPS produced by *Leuconostoc mesenteroides* [14] followed by the xanthan gum which is produced by *Xanthomonas campestris* as another approved food additive [15]. Many *Bacillus* species are reported for EPS production [16-20]. Production of EPS from alkaliphilic *Vagococcus carniphilus* was investigated [21].

EPS from extremophilic microorganisms especially halophiles are comparatively less reported. Production of EPS from halophilic bacteria within extreme marine habitat along with its biological activities was reviewed [6]. *Haloferax mediterranei*, a halophilic archaeon was reported for the production of EPS with excellent rheological properties and has application in oil recovery [22, 6]. EPS from *Halomonas ventosae* and *Halomonas anticariensis* has pseudoplastic behavior [23]. Moderately halophilic *Halomonas cerina* sp. nov. was isolated from saline soils in Spain which produced EPS [24].

The yield, composition and structure of the EPS vary with the microorganism and conditions of fermentation. There are different requirements of carbon, nitrogen sources, temperature, pH, minerals etc.

for different microorganisms for EPS production. The nutritional and environmental conditions influence the yield of EPS [25]. EPS yield was found to be increased when marine bacteria were grown on limited nutrients such as phosphorous, sulphur, nitrogen and potassium [26]. During optimization of EPS, the selection of carbon source plays an important role. When growth medium was amended with sucrose, the highest EPS yield was obtained from *Hahella chejuensis* isolated from Cheju Island, Republic of Korea [27]. The haloalkaliphilic microorganism, *Halomonas alkaliantartica* strain CRSS which was isolated from a saline lake in Antarctica produced maximum EPS when acetate was used as a carbon source [28]. EPS production requires high carbon content and less nitrogen quantity in the production medium [29].

EPS is characterized by analyzing the hydrolysate of EPS by High-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC), Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR), Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) etc.

EPS from the microbial origin can be used as antiviral, antitumor and immunogenic agents and also for their functional properties like gel formation and rheology. Dextran is explored as a plasma substitute and about 6% dextran with 50,000-100,000 relative molecular weight has equivalent viscosity and colloid-osmotic properties to blood plasma. Also, it can be used as non-irritant absorbent wound dressings [30]. EPS curdlan has antitumor activity. EPS is also used in encapsulated drugs and lotion because of its gel formation property. Although polysaccharides can be seen in the preparation of vaccines, some practical issues pose difficulties in this regard such as poor immune response by polysaccharide antigens. This can be addressed by chemical modification [30]. EPS from *Halomonas maura* and *H. eurihalina* has immunomodulating activity [31-34]. *H. stenophila* produced EPS having antitumor activity [35].

Due to surfactant and bio emulsifier activity of EPS, they have importance in enhancing oil recovery. As most of the oil recovery fields

are observed in saline environments, EPS from halophiles may have an advantage. Biological activities of EPS produced from marine halophilic bacteria have been reviewed [6]. *Halomonas* is the potential genus producing EPS having efficient emulsifying activity among halophilic bacteria. *Halomonas alkaliantartica*, *H. ventose*, *H. anticariensis* and *H. maura* were found to produce EPS that are proposed to have a role as an emulsifying agent in oil recovery [36, 28, 23, 32].

As compared to other extremophiles like alkaliphiles and thermophiles, less attention has been paid to halophiles. Very few researchers have carried out optimization and characterization studies on EPS of halophiles as can be seen from the literature. The present studies were aimed at exploitation of halophiles from unexplored saline environments from West Coast of Maharashtra, India; optimization of different parameters to enhance the yield of EPS and its characterization to understand its functional groups and linkages. An attempt has been made to reach to the rationale that EPS from halophilic microorganisms could be useful for recovery of oil from the ocean where there is a saline environment. Likewise, EPS from halophiles are considered to have immunomodulatory activity. Such kinds of studies are yet to be expanded and hence halophilic bacteria were selected for EPS production.

Halomonas smyrnensis SVD III was isolated from ocean water of Deobaug, West Coast of Maharashtra, India [37]. The organism was found to produce EPS. Present study was carried out to investigate the effect of various parameters on EPS production by *Halomonas smyrnensis* SVD III (GeneBank accession number-KX057990) and its characterization.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Chemicals and reagents

All the chemicals were of laboratory grade and purchased from Hi-media, Merck, SD Fine Chemicals Ltd. and Qualigens, India.

Bacterial strain

Halomonas smyrnensis SVD III isolated from ocean water collected in Deobaug, West Coast of Maharashtra, India [37] was used in the present study. The culture was stored at 4 °C on Sehgal and Gibbons (SG) medium [38]+15% NaCl concentration for further study.

EPS production

Inoculum was prepared for the production of EPS by growing the culture in SG medium to have a cell density of 10^7 cells/ml as measured by total viable count (TVC) method. The SG medium containing 3% glucose was used for the production of EPS. The composition of SG medium was casamino acids-0.75%, yeast extract-1%, potassium chloride-0.2%, trisodiumcitrate-0.3%, magnesium sulphate-2%, sodium chloride-15%, pH-7.2.

Effect of various parameters on EPS production by *Halomonas smyrnensis* SVD III was studied. The strain SVD III was cultivated in

SG medium and incubated at 37 °C, 120 rpm for 7 d. The culture was used at 10% inoculum size with 10^7 cells/ml for all experiments. Effect of one parameter was studied at a time keeping other parameters constant. All experiments were carried out in triplicate using 50 ml SG medium in 250 ml Erlenmeyer flask. At the end of each experiment, EPS was extracted and estimated gravimetrically.

Effect of temperature on EPS production was studied by varying the temperature as 25 °C, 37 °C and 45 °C. The most suitable temperature was selected to determine effect of pH (5, 6, 7, 8 and 9), incubation period (1 to 8 d), inoculum size (1%, 5% and 10%), concentration of NaCl (10, 15, 20 and 25%), concentration of carbon source (3%, 4%, 5% and 6% glucose) and nitrogen source (0.5%, 1%, 1.5% and 2% yeast extract) on production of EPS.

Isolation and purification of EPS

The culture broth was centrifuged at 8000 rpm for 10 min. The cell-free culture broth (CFCB) was collected and 20% trichloroacetic acid (TCA) added to the same. CFCB was then kept on ice for 30 min to precipitate proteins followed by the centrifugation at 8000 rpm for 10 min. The supernatant was then collected in a glass tube and two volumes of chilled ethanol added. The solution was kept at 4 °C overnight to precipitate EPS [6, 30]. The amount of EPS was calculated based on dry weight estimation by gravimetric method.

Characterization of EPS

The purified EPS was characterized using fourier-transform infrared (FTIR) spectroscopy, nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy and mass spectrometry (MS) [6, 12, 18, 31].

The purified EPS was analyzed for FTIR spectroscopy analysis. The sample was analyzed between infrared spectrum 3500-400 cm^{-1} using Bruker-TENSOR 37 IR spectrophotometer (USA). The purified EPS was subjected to NMR spectroscopy analysis using Bruker-Ascend 500 MHz (USA). Dimethylsulfoxide (DMSO) was used as a solvent system. Applications of NMR used were ^1H i.e. hydrogen-1 NMR/proton NMR in which analysis is done with respect to hydrogen-1 nuclei within the molecules of a substance, in order to determine the structure of its molecules [39]. The purified EPS was analyzed by MS using Bruker-HRMS Impact HD Q-TOF MS (USA). Parameters for this study were as follows; source type-ESI, ion polarity-positive, scan begin-50 m/z, scan end-1200 m/z.

RESULTS

In the present study, EPS was isolated and characterized from *Halomonas smyrnensis* SVD III.

Effect of different media components on the production of EPS was investigated. Effect of carbohydrate concentration was checked by using different glucose concentration as 3%, 4%, 5% and 6%. Maximum EPS yield of 10.5 g/l was obtained at 3% glucose concentration, which decreased with increase in sugar concentration (fig. 1).

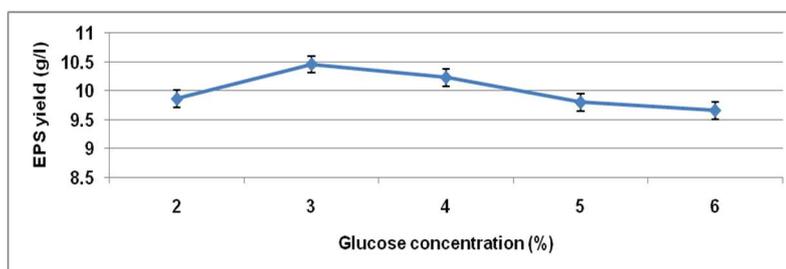


Fig. 1: Optimization of carbohydrate concentration showing 3% as the optimum concentration of glucose with 10.5 g/l yield of EPS. The number of experiments was 3 and data given in mean standard deviation (SD) and standard error (SE)

As regards effect of the incubation period, it was found that EPS yield gradually increased with incubation period up to 7th day and

then remained stationary (fig. 2). EPS yield obtained on 7th day was 10 g/l.

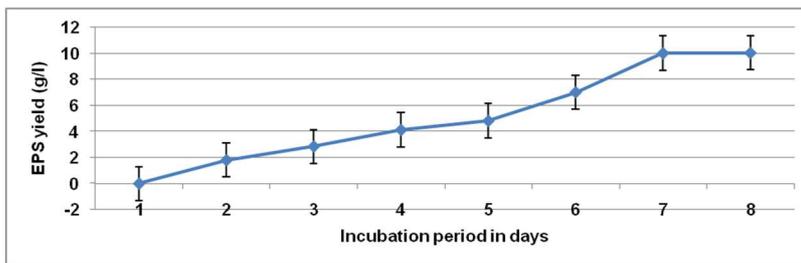


Fig. 2: Optimization of incubation period illustrating 7 d as the optimum incubation period with EPS yield of 10 g/l. The number of experiments was 3 and data given in mean SD and SE

EPS yield gradually increased with increase in inoculum size. At 10% inoculum size, EPS yield was found to be 9.75 g/l (fig. 3). Effect of different pH on EPS yield was checked and maximum EPS yield was observed at pH-6 which is 12.68 g/l followed by a gradual decrease with increase in pH value (fig. 4).

As regards effect of different salt concentrations, it was observed that maximum EPS was produced at 20% salt concentration as 10.65 g/l (Fig.5). EPS production checked at different incubation temperature indicated that at a higher temperature, the yield of EPS is increased. At 45 °C EPS yield was observed as 23.95 g/l (fig. 6).

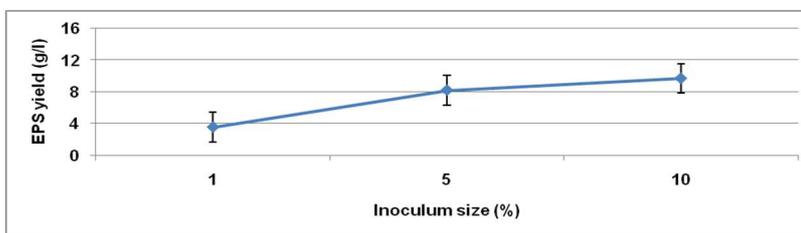


Fig. 3: Optimization of inoculum size indicating 10% inoculum size as optimum with EPS yield of 9.75 g/l. The number of experiments was 3 and data given in mean SD and SE

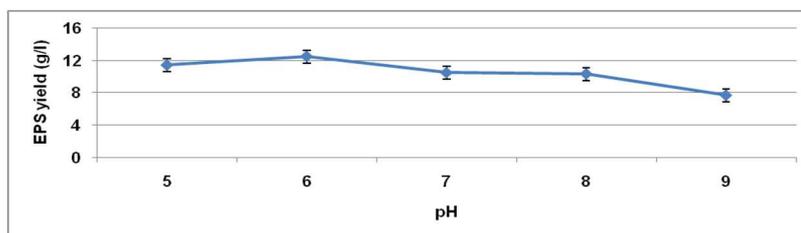


Fig. 4: Optimization of pH showing 6 as the optimum pH yielding 12.68 g/l EPS. The number of experiments was 3 and data given in SD and SE

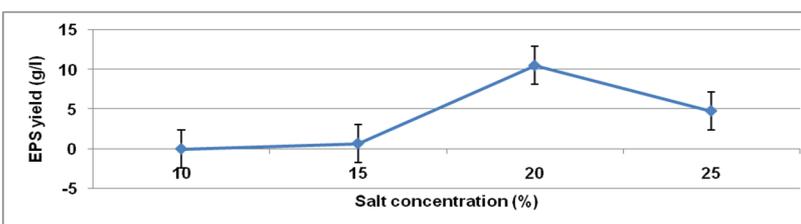


Fig. 5: Optimization of salt concentration-20% salt as the optimum with EPS yield of 10.65 g/l. The number of experiments was 3 and data given in mean SD and SE

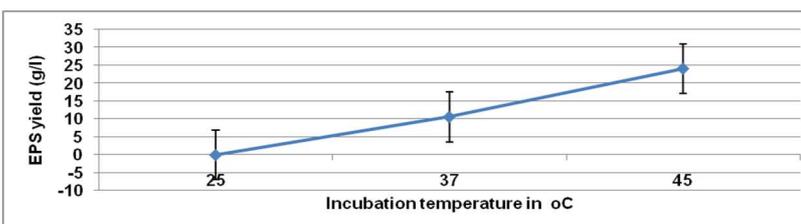


Fig. 6: Optimization of temperature indicating 45 °C temperature as the optimum with EPS yield of 23.95 g/l. The number of experiments was 3 and data given in mean SD and SE

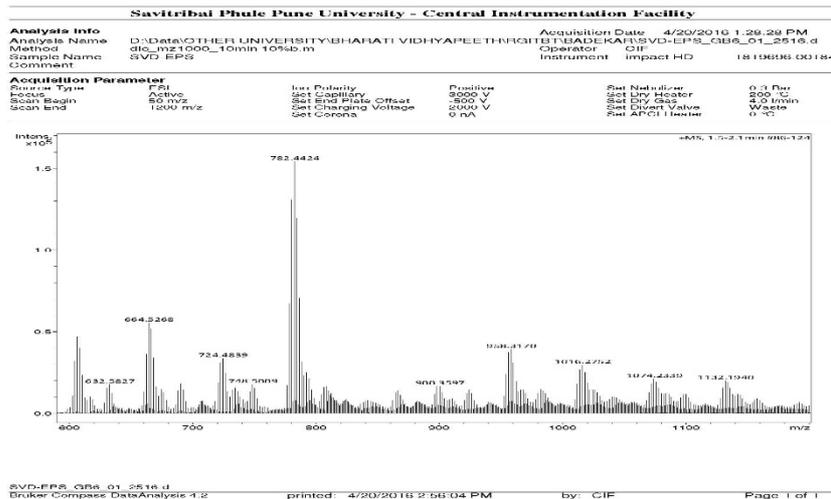


Fig. 10: Mass spectrometry analysis indicating presence of oligosaccharide in the EPS produced

DISCUSSION

EPS is known to be produced extracellular during stationary phase and hence incubation period of 7 d was found to be optimum for production of EPS. It was observed that higher temperature plays a supportive role in EPS production. Halophilic microorganisms are known to grow optimally in the temperature range of 35 °C to 55 °C. In the present study also *H. smyrnensis* was found to produce maximum EPS at 45 °C. Since nitrogen is required for only growth of the organism, 0.5% yeast extract was found to be adequate for the production of EPS. As the organism *H. smyrnensis* is moderately halophilic, 20% concentration of NaCl was found to be optimum for production of EPS. EPS is a biopolymer of carbohydrates and hence 3% concentration of glucose was found to enhance the yield of EPS. *Halomonas* sp. AAD6 isolated from soil samples from Camalti Saltern area in Turkey, when grown in the presence of sucrose in defined media, produced highest EPS production levels of 1.073 g/l [40]. This strain was further identified as *Halomonas smyrnensis* sp. nov. [41]. The present strain of *H. smyrnensis* SVD III produced maximum 23.95 g/l EPS at 45 °C temperature (fig. 6). Thus the EPS production was 24 times higher than the type strain of *H. smyrnensis* sp. nov. Characterization data of the extracted EPS from type strain of *H. smyrnensis* sp. nov. Suggested that it was a levan type of EPS while the EPS produced by the present strain of *H. smyrnensis* SVD III was of heptasaccharide nature.

Optimization of production of EPS by bacteria from extreme marine habitats has been reviewed [6]. Optimization of production of EPS and its characterization from *Ophiocordyceps dipterigena* was studied [12]. Optimization of different nutrient media for the production of EPS by *Bacillus subtilis* has been described [20]. Characterization of EPS produced by *Bacillus cereus* and *Brachybacterium* species was carried out [18]. Production of EPS by alkalitolerant and halotolerant *Vagococcus carniphilus* isolated from alkaline soda lake of Lonar, India was described, production of EPS was optimized for different environmental conditions and characterized the EPS for total carbohydrate content and monosaccharides [21]. In the present study, optimization of production of EPS from *H. smyrnensis* SVD III was studied.

Production of EPS by a moderately halophilic bacterium isolated from a salt lake in Romania was described. The production of EPS was optimized for culture conditions and composition of the culture medium. The polymer was characterized by FTIR and spectrophotometrically by measuring absorption at 260 nm and fluorescence emission at 530 nm. The EPS was found to be thermostable [42]. In the present study, the EPS produced by *H. smyrnensis* SVD III was characterized by FTIR, ¹H NMR and MS.

In the light of work carried out on the production of EPS and its characterization from different microorganisms including halophilic

microorganisms by different researchers over the globe, the EPS produced by the present strain of *Halomonas smyrnensis* SVD III thus appears to be different from the reported halophilic microorganisms.

CONCLUSION

Halomonas smyrnensis SVD III isolated from ocean water from West Coast of Maharashtra, India was found to produce 23 g/l EPS under all optimum conditions namely 3% glucose, 20% NaCl, incubation period of 7 d, pH 6, incubation temperature 45 °C, 0.5% yeast extract and inoculum size of 10%. The optimization studies resulted in two fold increase in yield of EPS. The characterization of EPS produced revealed heptasaccharide nature and dominance of glycosidic linkages (strong C-O bonds) in the polysaccharide.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

- 1) Siddharth Deshmukh: Ph. D. thesis work, conducting all the experiments, interpretation of results, writing and revising the manuscript
- 2) Pradnya Kanekar (Research co-guide): Concept and designing of experiments, interpretation of results, editing the manuscript
- 3) Rama Bhadekar (Research guide): Overall supervision on the laboratory experimental work, execution of the experimental work in the laboratory, editing the manuscript.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

Declared none

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