

SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Utilising Mosquito Populations and Machine Learning Algorithms to Predict the Distribution of Mosquito-related Diseases – A Systematic Review

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Mosquitoes transmit various diseases and putting over half the global population at risk. The spread of mosquito-borne diseases is increasing, with outbreaks emerging in new and previously controlled areas, driven by factors like climate change and increased human mobility. Therefore, predicting mosquito populations is crucial for public health strategies, given the role of vector abundance in disease outbreaks. This systematic review aims to identify mosquito-related predictors for forecasting diseases or mosquito distribution, as well as to analyse the data sources, outcomes, and machine learning models used in the studies. **Materials and methods:** This review followed the PRISMA guidelines using PubMed and Google Scholar for literature published between January 1, 2015, and July 31, 2024. Literature and systematic reviews, studies without mosquito population data, and association or descriptive studies were excluded from this review. **Results:** Out of 309 studies retrieved from the databases, only 10 were selected for review. The model with the highest performance was Random Forest (RF) (n=3), followed by Artificial Neural Networks (ANN) (n=3). **Conclusion:** The optimal machine learning model was RF (n=3) and has demonstrated the ability to incorporate a wide range of predictors. The main factors affecting the accuracy of forecasting mosquito abundance and disease outbreaks are the selection of machine learning algorithms and their predictors. There were limitations in this study due to the exclusion of preprints and non-English language papers, as well as the use of different predictors and performance indicators in the models, which made it difficult to compare between studies. *Malaysian Journal of Medicine and Health Sciences* (2025) 21(SUPP7): 183-189. doi:10.47836/mjmhs.21.s7.22

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INTRODUCTION

Mosquitoes are vectors of various diseases, including dengue, Zika, malaria, yellow fever, and Japanese encephalitis. Over half of the global population is at risk from these diseases, and the economic impact is significant, with dengue alone costing an estimated US\$ 9 billion annually (1,2). The incidence and geographic spread of many mosquito-borne illnesses are thought to be on the rise, with new outbreaks occurring in previously unaffected areas (3,4) and resurging in regions where they had been previously eradicated (5,6). Factors such as climate change, increased transportation, and human mobility are contributing to these trends (7,8).

On the other hand, machine learning is a subset of artificial intelligence that focuses on the development of algorithms, and statistical models that enable computers to perform tasks without being explicitly programmed to do so (9). These predictor model incorporated various inputs using real world and big data to increase the accuracy (10). While most predictive models concentrate on forecasting diseases using environmental, socioeconomic, epidemiological, and demographic factors, few have integrated entomological data. For example, a systematic review by Sylvestre et al. (10) revealed that only 6 out of 119 studies included vector-based data. This scarcity is partly due to the high costs, time demands, and logistical challenges associated with mosquito sampling, particularly in remote areas (11,12).

However, accurately predicting mosquito populations is vital for assisting public health decisions and implementing preventive strategies. Given the crucial

role that mosquito abundance in an area plays in triggering disease outbreaks (2,13), forecasting these numbers is essential for thorough risk assessment. Therefore, the first aim of this systematic review was to identify all mosquito population related variables used to forecast disease or mosquito distribution, regardless of the region and population. The second aim was to analyse several features of these studies, such as the data sources, the outcome of study, the machine learning algorithms used and their performance indicators.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Data sources

The systematic review on the usage of mosquito population as predictors or outcomes in machine learning models was performed according to PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al, 2015). The indexed articles for this review were searched in the PubMed and Google Scholar databases between January 1, 2015 and July, 31 2024. The bibliographies of the included articles were also reviewed to identify any new articles that fit the criteria.

Search Strategy

The search terms were structured according to a PICO (population, intervention, comparator, and outcome) question format. The study focused on mosquito population variables, including adult index, mean adult mosquito captures, total larvae at a site, and oviposition activity. The interventions involved machine learning models like linear regression, Naive Bayes, K-nearest neighbor (kNN), and decision trees. The outcomes were predictions of disease or mosquito distribution. Therefore, search terms such as "mosquito abundance," "mosquito index," "mosquito population," "machine learning," and "predictor model" were used. These terms were selected based on search strings formulated from the exposure, subject, and outcome of the intended study. Boolean operators like "OR," "AND", and "NOT" were applied to refine or expand the search results from the databases.

Selection of studies

The articles from online databases were further narrowed down based on specific inclusion and exclusion criteria. The inclusion criteria were: (i) studies that used mosquito abundance variables as predictors or outcomes in machine learning models; (ii) studies that considered any stage of the mosquito life cycle; and (iii) studies that provided clear and precise methods for developing machine learning models. The exclusion criteria were: (i) literature and systematic reviews incorporating previously published data; (ii) studies that did not include mosquito abundance variables in their machine learning models; (iii) notifications of outbreaks, clinical disease descriptions, or identification and classification of mosquito species; (iv) association or descriptive-only studies; and (v) duplicate or inaccessible articles, either

due to language barriers or lack of full-text access.

Data extraction

The initial selection by title and abstract was conducted independently by authors based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria. Articles that presented one or more terms with mosquito abundance and machine learning were included in the title selection. Subsequently, the articles were assessed comprehensively to validate the presence of relevant data usable for the systematic review. The disagreements about article inclusion were resolved through discussion between the first and second authors. The information from selected articles were extracted and compiled in Microsoft® Excel™ Open XML Spreadsheet (XLSX) format to ensure systematic and consistent compilation of data. The descriptive analysis contained information such as the article ID, author and year of publication, study location and category of variables used in study. Meanwhile the variables analysis consisted of article ID, data duration or study period, aims of study, predictor variables, outcome variable and mosquito species. Lastly, the machine learning model analysis consisted of machine learning algorithms, type of model, software used for development of machine learning, pre-processing, and machine learning performance indicators.

RESULTS

Studies included in systematic reviews

The initial search across the two databases resulted in 309 records. After screening the titles and abstracts, 261 articles were excluded, leaving 48 articles. An additional 37 articles were discarded because they were descriptive studies, systematic or literature reviews, duplicates, focused on machine learning for mosquito species identification, or had unclear methodologies. Finally, 10 publications met the strict inclusion criteria. Fig. 1 illustrates the article selection process for the systematic review, following PRISMA guidelines.

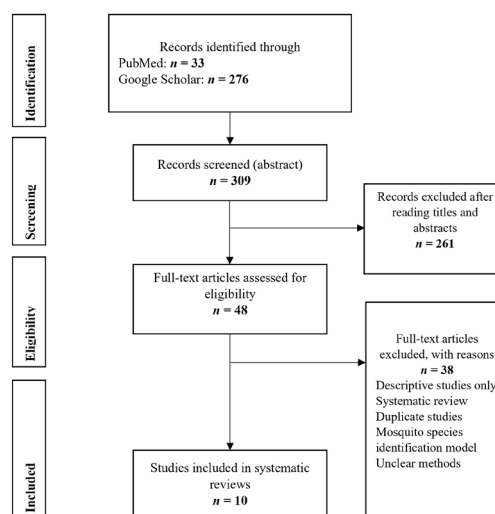


Fig. 1: Flow chart of articles selection for systematic reviews using PRISMA guidelines

Descriptive analysis of selected articles

The 10 final selected articles were published between 2015 to 2023. Furthermore, the research locations in the articles were conducted in eight different countries. More specifically, the studies were conducted at Korea (n=3), Thailand (n=2), Brazil (n=1), Greece (n=1), Portugal (n=1), USA (n=1) and Vietnam (n=1).

Variables analysis of selected articles

The predictor variables in the selected articles were grouped into seven categories. The most common variables were entomological (n=10), followed by meteorological (n=7), environmental (n=6), demographic (n=2), epidemiological (n=2), socioeconomic (n=2), and behavioural (n=1). Furthermore, the majority of the selected studies used mosquito distribution as the outcome in machine learning models (n=9). Other study has dengue morbidity rate as the outcome (n=1). Meanwhile, the mosquito species focused by selected studies were adult *Aedes* species (n=5), adult *Culex* species (n=3), generic adult mosquito species (n=2), and *Aedes* species oviposition activity (n=1).

Machine learning analysis of selected articles

The machine learning analysis examined the algorithms applied, the types of models developed, the software used to run these algorithms, and the performance indicators of the models. The most frequently utilised machine learning algorithms were ANN (n=5) and RF (n=5), followed by Support Vector Machine (SVM) (n=4) and kNN (n=1). Other algorithms included Classification and Regression Trees (CART), Generalized Additive Models (GAM), negative binomial regression, gradient boosting, logistic regression, decision tree, and deep learning, each appearing in one study.

The majority of the selected studies used R to develop machine learning models (n=7). Other software included MATLAB, Orange, and Python (each used in one study). The most commonly reported performance indicators were accuracy (n=6), the area under the ROC curve (n=3), and RMSE (n=2). Additional prediction indicators included correlation coefficient (R), Akaike Information Criterion (AIC), mean absolute error (MAE), mean squared error (MSE), and Nash–Sutcliffe model efficiency (NSE), each mentioned in one study. Table 1 summarised the descriptive, variables and machine learning analysis of selected studies.

Table 1: The descriptive, variables and machine learning analysis of selected studies in systematic reviews

Article ID	Descriptive		Variables		Machine learning		
	Author (year)	Location of study	Predictors	Outcome	Algorithms	Software	Performance indicator
B1	Kesorn et al. (15)	Nakhon Pathom, Ratchaburi, and Samut Sakhon, Thailand	Demographic Entomological Epidemiological Meteorological	Morbidity rate of dengue	ANN Decision tree kNN SVM: Linear, Polynomial, RBF kernel	-	Accuracy
B2	Kwon et al. (20)	Yeongdeungpo-gu, Seoul, Korea	Entomological Environmental Meteorological	Adult <i>Culex</i> species distribution	SVM RF CART	R	Accuracy
B3	Lee et al. (19)	Yeongdeungpo-gu, Seoul, Korea	Entomological Meteorological	Adult <i>Aedes</i> species distribution	ANN RF	MATLAB	RMSE Correlation coefficient (R)
B4	Ferreira et al. (14)	Porto Alegre, Brazil	Entomological Meteorological Epidemiological	Generic adult mosquito species distribution	GAM	R	Akaike Information Criterion (AIC)
B5	Chen et al. (16)	North Carolina, USA	Entomological Environmental Socioeconomic	Adult <i>Aedes</i> species distribution	ANN SVM kNN	R	Accuracy
B6	Ha et al. (21)	Hanoi, Vietnam	Demographic Entomological Environmental Meteorological	Adult <i>Culex</i> species distribution	Negative binomial regression	R	MAE RMSE
B7	Kofidou et al. (22)	Xanthi and Drama, Greece	Entomological Environmental	Generic adult mosquito species distribution	ANN: MLP ANN	R	MSE NSE RMSE
B8	Rahman et al. (23)	Nakhon Pathom, Ratchaburi, and Samut Sakhon, Thailand	Entomological Socioeconomic Behavioural Environmental	Adult <i>Aedes</i> species distribution	ANN SVM: Linear, Polynomial, RBF kernel RF kNN Logistic regression	Orange	Accuracy Area under the ROC
B9	Lee et al. (17)	Yeongdeungpo-gu, Seoul, South Korea	Entomological Meteorological Environmental	adult <i>Culex</i> species distribution	RF	R	Accuracy Area under the ROC

CONTINUE

Table I: The descriptive, variables and machine learning analysis of selected studies in systematic reviews (CONT.)

Article ID	Descriptive		Variables		Machine learning		
	Author (year)	Location of study	Predictors	Outcome	Algorithms	Software	Performance indicator
B10	Ceia-Hasse et al. (18)	Madeira, Portugal	Entomological Meteorological	<i>Aedes</i> species oviposition activity	Classical machine learning: ANN RF Extreme Gradient Boosting Tree Deep learning: Convolutional Neural Networks (CNN) Deep Convolutional Long Short-Term Memory networks Residual Networks Inception Time networks	Python R	Accuracy Area under the ROC

Best model algorithm and predictor in selected studies
 The best-performing machine learning model across the 10 studies was the RF algorithm (n=3). The second-best machine learning model was ANN (n=2). Other machine learning algorithms, such as the GAM, kNN, binomial regression, and Extreme Gradient Boosting Tree, were each found to have the highest predictive power in one study.

The most significant variables for predicting mosquito-borne diseases and mosquito abundance in the selected studies were meteorological variables (n=6). Among these, minimum temperature was the most frequently mentioned (n=3), followed by rainfall (n=2), relative humidity (n=2), maximum temperature

(n=1), and LST (n=3). In addition to meteorological factors, entomological (n=3), environmental (n=3), demographic (n=1), and behavioural (n=1) variables were also important. The entomological variables included infection rates in larvae and female mosquitoes (n=1), previous *Ae. aegypti* vector density (n=1), and the number of mosquito eggs (n=1). Environmental factors involved landscape heterogeneity (n=1), rice cover ratio, forest cover ratio (n=1), and water area (n=1). The demographic variable was human population density (n=1), while the behavioural variable was dengue prevention practices (n=1). Table II summarised the optimal machine learning algorithm, predictors, and model's performance in selected studies.

Table II: The optimal machine learning algorithm, predictors, and performance of selected articles

Article ID	Machine learning	Predictor	Performance
B1	SVM with RBF kernel	Entomological: Infection rate in larvae Infection rate in adult female mosquito	Accuracy = 88.73%
B2	RF	Meteorological: Minimum daily temperature (Cluster 1) Maximum daily temperature (Cluster 2&3)	Accuracy: Cluster 1 = 0.80 Cluster 2 = 0.71 Cluster 3 = 0.71
B3	ANN	Mean relative humidity prior 19 days	R = 0.61 RMSE = 14.38
B4	GAM (M2)	Entomological: Previous <i>Ae. aegypti</i> vector density Meteorological: Minimum temperatures Relative humidity	AIC = 1 628
B5	kNN	Environmental: landscape heterogeneity	Accuracy: Binary = 95% Continuous = 100%
B6	Negative binomial regression	Demographical: Human population density variables Environmental: Rice cover ratio Forest cover ratio Meteorological: Centered rainfall Quadratic term rainfall	RMSE = 24.15 MAE = 16.83 RMSE = 24.15
B7	MLP ANN	Environmental: LST	MSE = 739 NSE = 0.83 RMSE = 0.162

CONTINUE

Table II: The optimal machine learning algorithm, predictors, and performance of selected articles (CONT.)

Article ID	Machine learning	Predictor	Performance
B8	RF	Behaviour: Dengue prevention practice Environmental: Rice crops Socioeconomic: House crowding index Meteorological: Cumulative minimum temperature over 56 days (Cluster 1) Cumulative rainfall over 60 days (Cluster 1)	Accuracy = 0.86 Area under the ROC curve = 0.93
B9	RF	Cumulative number of rainy days over 43 days (Cluster 1) Cumulative minimum temperature over 13 days (Cluster 2) Cumulative number of rainy days over 60 days (Cluster 2) Environmental: Extent of the residential area (Cluster 2)	Accuracy: Cluster 1 = 0.895 Cluster 2 = 0.870 Area under the ROC curve: Cluster 1 = 0.827 Cluster 2 = 0.808
B10	Deep Convolutional Long Short-Term	Entomological: Number of eggs predictor	Accuracy = 0.833

DISCUSSION

Based on the studies reviewed, one of the factors that affect the efficiency of different predictive models in mosquito distribution and disease prediction is the model selection. In the modelling comparison study, several studies have demonstrated that the SVM has higher prediction accuracy compared to ANN (15,16). This is because the NN, when learning too much complexity, can result in overfitting the training set (24). Furthermore, the time lag variables had significantly affected to the performance of the ANN model (14). Nonetheless, ANN show promise in forecasting changes in mosquito populations and may outperform traditional statistical methods (17). Meanwhile, RF has shown to be the optimal model in several studies (20,23). This due to the RF model offers several advantages over other statistical methods, such as high classification accuracy, has method for determining variable importance, and the ability to model complex interactions among predictor variables (25). Therefore, RF provides a powerful alternative to traditional statistical methods for the analysis of ecological data (20). When comparing the performance between deep learning time series classification approach performed to classical machine learning methods by developing model to predict the variation in egg numbers using the same data. The deep learning time series classification demonstrated better prediction accuracy than classical machine learning (18).

The second factor affecting the efficiency of different predictive models in mosquito abundance and disease prediction is the selection of predictors. Many review studies have concluded that environmental and meteorological factors are key predictors in machine learning models. This is because both factors are crucial for predicting mosquito population. For instance, rice crops can cause major land-use changes, and a previous study reported that rice cultivation significantly impacts human health and can sharply increase mosquito abundance and vector-borne diseases (26). Conversely, a 1% increase in forest cover ratio was associated with a 97.5% reduction in mosquito abundance (21). Mosquitoes are unlikely to survive in dense forests

due to unfavourable environmental conditions (27). Forests with bushy vegetation can block sunlight, reducing the temperature of small water bodies and thereby preventing larval growth (28). Additionally, meteorological variables such as rainfall between 80 mm and 120 mm are conducive to mosquito growth and breeding (29). While some studies implied that areas with higher precipitation are more conducive to Culex mosquitoes carrying the Japanese encephalitis virus, excessive rainfall can wash away mosquito habitats and larvae (29,30). The prior entomological data as predictors also had a significant impact on the model prediction accuracy (18). This is due to the entomological data is directly associated with mosquito distribution by provides information about the presence, abundance, and behaviour of mosquito populations in specific areas over time.

Socioeconomic variables, such as the house crowding index, are also important predictors, as a higher index provides a suitable environment for human-vector contact, potentially increasing dengue transmission in Thailand and other dengue-endemic countries (23). Conversely, demographic variables like population density have shown that the decrease in mosquito populations in densely populated areas can be attributed to consistent mosquito control measures, enhanced urban planning, and improved sanitation (31,32). Meanwhile, behavioural variables such as dengue prevention practices have the highest contribution to reducing mosquito abundance, likely because the elimination of larval habitats is the simplest and most effective method of managing dengue vector populations (33). Overall, the integration of all predictors enhances model prediction accuracy.

By selecting optimal machine learning algorithms and key predictors of mosquito abundance or disease, public health systems can develop more accurate prediction models for mosquito-borne disease outbreaks. This enables better surveillance and early warning systems, preventing outbreaks from escalating. Additionally, precise predictions of mosquito hotspots or potential disease outbreaks allow for more efficient allocation of resources, such as insecticides, larvicides, and

personnel, by concentrating efforts on high-risk areas during peak transmission seasons. Most significantly, accurate forecast on mosquito abundance or disease outbreaks enables healthcare systems to shift from reactive to proactive disease management.

There were several limitations in this study. First, preprints and papers in languages other than English were not included, which may have significantly narrowed the range of studies considered for this review. Second, the selected studies employed a variety of machine learning algorithms, performance metrics, and predictor variables. These differences made it challenging to compare studies directly, limiting the ability to draw robust and consistent conclusions. To improve future research, expanding the range of databases searched and including studies in multiple languages would help broaden the evidence base. Additionally, focusing on one type of machine learning algorithm per study could help identify factors that contribute to variations within that specific algorithm type, leading to more nuanced and precise conclusions.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the choice of model and predictors can affect the accuracy of mosquito abundance and disease predictions. Random Forest models are generally effective, particularly when incorporating a wide range of predictors. Meteorological and environmental factors are consistently important but integrating socioeconomic and behavioural data can further enhance predictive performance. The study's findings contribute to the development of more accurate prediction models for mosquito abundance and disease outbreaks, which enables more proactive and effective vector control efforts.

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