

Genome wide association studies on seven yield-related traits of 183 rice varieties in Bangladesh

Nilanjan Roy^{1,2} | Acramul Haque Kabir^{1,3}  | Nourin Zahan¹ |
 Shahba Tasmiya Mouna¹ | Sakshar Chakravarty^{5,4}  | Atif Hasan Rahman⁵ |
 Md. Shamsuzzoha Bayzid⁵ 

¹Department of Biomedical Engineering, Military Institute of Science and Technology, Dhaka, Bangladesh

²Molecular, Cellular, and Developmental Biology, University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas, USA

³Department of Biomedical Engineering, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA

⁴Department of Computer Science and Engineering, University of California, Riverside, California, USA

⁵Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Correspondence

Md. Shamsuzzoha Bayzid, Department of Computer Science and Engineering, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Dhaka, Bangladesh.
 Email: shams_bayzid@cse.buet.ac.bd

Abstract

Rice genetic diversity is regulated by multiple genes and is largely dependent on various environmental factors. Uncovering the genetic variations associated with the diversity in rice populations is the key to breed stable and high yielding rice varieties. We performed genome wide association studies (GWASs) on seven rice yielding traits (grain length, grain width, grain weight, panicle length, leaf length, leaf width, and leaf angle) based on a population of 183 rice landraces of Bangladesh. Our GWASs reveal various chromosomal regions and candidate genes that are associated with different traits in Bangladeshi rice varieties. Noteworthy was the recurrent implication of chromosome 10 in all three grain-shape-related traits (grain length, grain width, and grain weight), indicating its pivotal role in shaping rice grain morphology. Our study also underscores the involvement of transposon gene families across these three traits. For leaf related traits, chromosome 10 was found to harbor regions that are significantly associated with leaf length and leaf width. The results of these association studies support previous findings as well as provide additional insights into the genetic diversity of rice. This is the first known GWAS study on various yield-related traits in the varieties of *Oryza sativa* available in Bangladesh—the fourth largest rice-producing country. We believe this study will accelerate rice genetics research and breeding stable high-yielding rice in Bangladesh.

KEYWORDS

genome wide association studies (GWAS), rice, single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP), yield-related traits

1 | INTRODUCTION

Rice (*Oryza sativa* L.) is one of the most important food crops and feeds half the world's population. Especially, this is the staple food of about 170 million people in Bangladesh, and this country has one

of the highest per capita consumption of rice. Therefore, its food security largely depends on the good harvest of rice. Future increases in rice production, required to feed a continuously growing population of this country amidst various adverse climatic conditions due to climate change and limited arable land resources, will rely primarily on

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genetic improvement of rice cultivars. Therefore, understanding the genetic basis of physiological and morphological variation in rice landraces in Bangladesh is critical for improving the quality and quantity of rice production. During the last few decades, great efforts in rice research have been made by the Bangladesh Rice Research Institute (BRRI), in association with the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) to boost rice production. However, the current effort in increasing rice production in Bangladesh is mostly based on analyzing morphological characteristics and developing hybrids with *trial-and-error*. This traditional approach is not “scalable” to investigate the tremendous genetic and phenotypic variation of thousands of rice varieties available in Bangladesh. Genome wide association studies (GWASs) may reveal important genotype-phenotype associations, which will direct the agricultural scientists towards a more informed research for breeding better rice varieties with desirable phenotypes suitable for the climate of Bangladesh.

GWASs have become a popular method to identify advantageous alleles and quantitative trait loci (QTL) associated with large-scale complex traits in rice population. Due to the growing awareness of the efficacy of GWASs in molecular dissection of traits and the abundance of genomic and phenotypic resources, many GWASs have been conducted over the past few years on various rice varieties across the world. Huang et al. (2010) performed an association study on 14 rice agronomic traits across 373 indica rice varieties and identified a total of 80 related sites. Huang et al. (2012) identified a total of 32 heading date sites and 20 grain type sites across 950 rice varieties. Zhao et al. (2011) performed a GWAS on 34 traits across 413 rice varieties from 82 countries and identified 234 associated sites. Zhang et al. (2015) analyzed 315 rice varieties from the International Core Rice Germplasm Bank to perform a GWAS on five panicle traits, and a total of 36 candidate-associated regions were detected. Yang et al. (2014) performed a GWAS on 15 traits, including 13 traditional agronomic traits and identified 141 associated loci. Then, they compared how these traits change along with the ecological environment. This led to the identification of valuable varieties and sub-groups with more favorable alleles. Biscarini et al. (2016) conducted a genome-wide association analysis for grain morphology and root architecture for temperate rice accessions adapted to European pedo-climatic conditions, and a set of 391 rice accessions was GBS-genotyped leading to 57,000 polymorphic and informative SNPs, among which 54% were in genic regions. A total of 42 significant genotype-phenotype associations were detected: 21 for plant morphology traits, 11 for grain quality traits, and 10 for root architecture traits. The results helped them to dig into the narrow genetic pool of European temperate rice and to identify the most relevant genetic components contributing to a high yield of this germplasm. Zhang et al. (2019) performed a GWAS with EMMAX for 12 agronomic traits using Ting's core collection (7,128 rice landraces from all over China and from some of the other main rice-cultivating countries collected by Li et al., 2011). Yang et al. (2019) detected SNP loci and determined related genes affecting the rice grain shape, which led to high-yielding breeding of rice. In that study, a total of 161 natural Indica rice varieties grown in southern China were used for a GWAS of grain shape-related traits. These

traits include grain length (GL), grain width (GW), 1,000-grain weight (TGW), and grain length/width (GLW). Ma et al. (2019) conducted a GWAS, and a gene called OsSNB was identified controlling the grain size in rice. Similarly, significant efforts have been made for association mapping with other yield related traits (e.g., panicle and leaf traits) (Yang et al., 2014; Yang et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2015; Zhang et al., 2019).

In this study, we performed genome-wide association studies on seven yield traits across 183 rice varieties in Bangladesh. We leverage the 3K Rice Genome Project (3K RGP) (3000 Rice Genomes Project, 2014), where 3,000 rice genomes were re-sequenced and a resulting set of over 19 million SNPs has been characterized and made accessible (3000 Rice Genomes Project, 2014; Alexandrov et al., 2015; Mansueto et al., 2017). While the previous GWAS studies provide fundamental resources regarding association mapping on various rice traits, none of them were especially targeted for Bangladeshi rice varieties. However, the grain yield-related rice traits are regulated by multiple genes, which are significantly influenced by the environment (Huang et al., 2010, 2013; Ikeda et al., 2013; Zhang et al., 2015). As such, this study will further elucidate the impact of specific environmental conditions on the association between traits and genetic variations.

2 | MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 | Rice materials

We leveraged the data from 3K RGP (3000 Rice Genomes Project, 2014) (snp-seek.irri.org), which has sequenced a core selection of 3,000 rice accessions from 89 countries. We filtered a total of 183 rice varieties of Bangladesh. Detailed information on these 183 rice varieties are provided in Supporting Information S2. We considered seven yield-related phenotypes, namely, grain length (GL), grain width (GW), grain weight (GWT), panicle length (PL), leaf length (LL), leaf width (LW), and leaf angle (LA). Out of the 183 rice varieties of Bangladesh in the 3K RGP, 168 had recorded phenotypic values for GL, GW, and GWT, while 158, 163, 160, and 84 rice varieties had values for PL, LL, LW, and LA, respectively (3000 Rice Genomes Project, 2014). Rice grain shapes are closely related to the yield and quality (Huang & Qian, 2017; Yang et al., 2019). Leaf traits are among the major determinants of plant architecture and are strongly associated to yield (Hoang et al., 2019; Pérez-Pérez et al., 2010; Tsukaya, 2004; Wang et al., 2011). Panicle, being the top organ, is an important component in the canopy and is strongly correlated with spikelet yield (Jia et al., 2019). Thus, investigating the genetic variations associated with these traits under specific conditions of Bangladesh would be fundamental to high-yield rice research in this country.

2.2 | Characterization and genotypic data of rice germplasm

The characterization and breeding of various rice accessions of Bangladeshi origin were performed over different years at IRRI, Los



Baños, Philippines (14°N, 121°E, alt. 21 m) (International Rice Genebank Operations Manual, 2021). Genetic stocks for each of the 3,000 rice accessions were generated through one or more rounds of single-seed descent purification, conducted in field or screen-house settings (3000 Rice Genomes Project, 2014). Sowing occurred between May and July. Among the 3K RGP accessions, seeding date information was available for 29 Bangladeshi rice accessions, sown between 1989–2009 over different years, mainly between May and June (see Figure S1). To capture diverse morphological and agronomic traits, characterization was conducted at three growth stages: vegetative, reproductive, and post-harvest. Leaf angle was measured during the vegetative stage, while panicle length, leaf length, and leaf width were measured in the reproductive stage. Grain trait-related information was collected in the post-harvest stage.

As part of 3K RGP, the 3,010 genomes were sequenced to an average depth of about 14×, ranging from approximately 4× to over 60×. Aligned with the Os-Nipponbare-Reference-IRGSP-1.0, the 3,010 genomes exhibited an average mapping coverage of 92% (range: 74.6% to 98.7%) (Wang et al., 2018). SNP distribution varied widely among chromosomes, with chromosomes 4, 1, and 11 having the highest count and chromosomes 9, 10, and 5 having the lowest. Predominantly, SNPs were located in intergenic areas and introns, with only 18.24% in exons, almost 40% of which were synonymous. A total of over 29 million SNPs were discovered, with over 27 million being bi-allelic and exhibiting strong concordance (>96%). Post-filtering, a core set of about 17 million SNPs was obtained covering nearly 99.9% of all SNPs with a minor allele frequency exceeding .25%. Notably, 56% of non-transposable element (NTE) genes and 91% of transposable element (TE)-related genes contained high-effect SNPs (3000 Rice Genomes Project, 2014).

2.3 | Data analysis

Various statistical analyses of the yield-related traits were performed using R (RR Core Team, 2013). We used raw phenotypic values for these statistical analyses. We computed broad-sense heritability, H^2 . The Shannon diversity index for traits was computed with the vegan package in R (Dixon, 2003).

To address the impact of covariates like environment, subpopulation, and seeding date on trait phenotypic values, we applied the Best Linear Unbiased Prediction (BLUP) model using the lmer4 package in R (Bates et al., 2014). Given the multi-environmental nature of the data used in our GWA studies, we attempted to account for potential confounding factors by including subpopulation and seeding date as covariates in the model to adjust the phenotypic values of Bangladeshi rice varieties. Our model treated rice varieties as fixed effects, while subpopulation and seeding date were considered random effects, thereby providing adjusted phenotypic values for our analysis. We used the following model where (1 s) denotes random intercepts for each unique level of the factor s . Y and X indicate the adjusted phenotypic BLUP value and raw phenotypic value of the rice varieties, respectively.

$$Y = (X \sim (1|\text{rice variety})) + (1|\text{subpopulation}) + (1|\text{seeding date}) \\ + (1|\text{rice variety} : \text{subpopulation}) + (1|\text{rice variety} : \text{seeding date})$$

To understand the genetic diversity within Bangladeshi rice varieties and the diversity compared to the 3K RGP panel, we calculated minor allele frequency (MAF), nucleotide diversity π , and Tajima's D in the 3K RG 404 K CoreSNP dataset (snp-seek.irri.org). In the 3K RGP dataset, 404 K core SNPs were filtered using a two-step linkage disequilibrium (LD) to limit the number of markers with $MAF > .01$ and a call rate of .8. We used PLINK (freq) to calculate the MAF (Purcell et al., 2007). Nucleotide diversity π and Tajima's D were calculated with VCFtools (Danecek et al., 2011). We used sliding windows of 1,000 and 100 kb for calculating the nucleotide diversity π and Tajima's D, respectively, within the Bangladeshi rice varieties and compared to the 3K RGP panel.

For GWAS, the 3K RG 29mio biallelic SNPs dataset was processed using PLINK. Filtering SNPs (missing rate < 50% and $MAF > .05$) to reduce the false-positive rate resulted in 39,40,165 SNPs. A Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium filter ($p < 10^{-6}$) was applied to exclude markers that deviate from Hardy-Weinberg equilibrium and to account for genotyping error, and exclusion of samples with kinship coefficient > .177 was applied to account for the population stratification effects (i.e., to remove first-degree relationships of the rice varieties). After excluding first-degree relationships, sample counts were 151 (GL, GW), 154 (GWT), 139 (LL), 143 (LW), 74 (LA), and 129 (PL).

To address linkage disequilibrium (LD), we pruned variants using PLINK. LD was computed within 1,500-SNP windows, and $LD > .6$ (GL, GW, LW, LA) or $> .7$ (GWT, PL, LL) resulted in SNP exclusion. Principal Component Analyses (PCA) were then performed to explore population structure. This process yielded 420,519 SNPs for GL and GW, 514,640 for GWT, 258,323 for LL, 420,375 for LW, 407,435 for LA, and 178,543 for PL.

The quantitative association test function of PLINK ($-glm$) was used to get the P values of significant SNPs. To correct for population structure, normalized PC1 and PC2 were included as covariates in the association tests. The genomic inflation factor (λ) was computed using the glm function for each GWAS feature, which quantifies the amount of the bulk inflation as well as the excess false positive rate, with values ranging from 1 to 1.10, indicating no evidence of inflation (Williams et al., 2021). A significant threshold of $\log_{10} P$ was set, where $P = \frac{1}{n}$, with n being the total number of markers used (Yang et al., 2019; Zhang et al., 2019).

Considering that GWAS hits are often not causative, but rather SNPs in LD with them, we performed genome-wide LD analysis on datasets that are not LD-pruned prior to association tests. LD decay in cultivated rice is typically between 100–200 kb (Lu et al., 2015). For GL, we extracted SNPs within 100 kb of GWAS hits, for other traits, 50 kb. PLINK was used to extract SNPs around GWAS hits and Haploview for genome-wide LD analysis (Barrett et al., 2005). LD plots were created using the R package LDheatmap (Shin et al., 2006). Annotation analysis utilized SnpEff results of 3K RGP 29mio biallelic

SNPs from 3K RGP (3000 Rice Genomes Project, 2014) (snp-seek.irri.org), while candidate gene information was sourced from the Michigan State University (MSU) Rice Genome Annotation Project Database (Kawahara et al., 2013). Data visualization was done using the Tidyverse package in R (Wickham et al., 2019).

3 | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 | Phenotypic diversity of the traits

Statistical analyses of the phenotypic diversity in the yield-related traits are shown in Table 1. The minimum and maximum GL in this population are 4.7 and 10.2, respectively, having a mean GL of 8.28 with 9.48% coefficient of variation. The CV values of various grain shape related traits range from 9.48% to 16.4%, and those of leaf and panicle traits range from 11.67% to 57.7%. These analyses suggest that this group of rice varieties represents significant variations in grain shape and other yield-related traits.

The distribution of these traits and the correlations between them are depicted in Figure 1. It suggests that these traits are normally distributed and GL, GW, and GWT are positively correlated with each other, especially GW and GWT are strongly correlated with each other. To account for the impact of various factors such as environment, subpopulation, and seeding date, we adjusted the data using BLUP. The distribution of the BLUP-adjusted data is presented in the supporting information. The linear relationship between the adjusted phenotypic values and the raw phenotypic values (presented in Figures S11 and S12) suggests that we can utilize the adjusted phenotypic values for our GWAS analysis.

We also calculated broad sense heritability, H^2 , and Shannon diversity index of the traits analyzed in this study. The values are shown in Table 1. The heritability values indicate that these traits are highly heritable and genetic influence is moderately high. The heritability of these traits, reported in previous studies (Kristantini et al., 2020; Roy & Shil, 2020), appears to be higher than what we observed in our study of Bangladeshi rice varieties. This suggests a significant influence of environmental and other factors on these

TABLE 1 Statistical analyses of the yield-related traits

Trait	Min	Max	Mean	SD	CV (%)	Heritability	Shannon diversity index
GL (mm)	4.7	10.2	8.28	.78	9.48	.47	1.3
GW (mm)	2.1	3.9	3.05	.33	1.8	.44	1.3
GWT (gm)	1.2	3.5	2.4	.4	16.4	.52	1.3
LL (cm)	2	5	3.26	.63	19.41	.68	1.3
LW (cm)	.8	2.3	1.29	.24	19.26	.73	1.32
LA (rd)	1	9	3.39	1.96	57.7	.49	1.45
PL (cm)	18	32	24.89	2.90	11.67	.42	1.3

Note: We show the minimum (Min), maximum (Max), mean, standard deviation (SD), coefficient of variation (CV), heritability and Shannon diversity index for each of the seven traits.

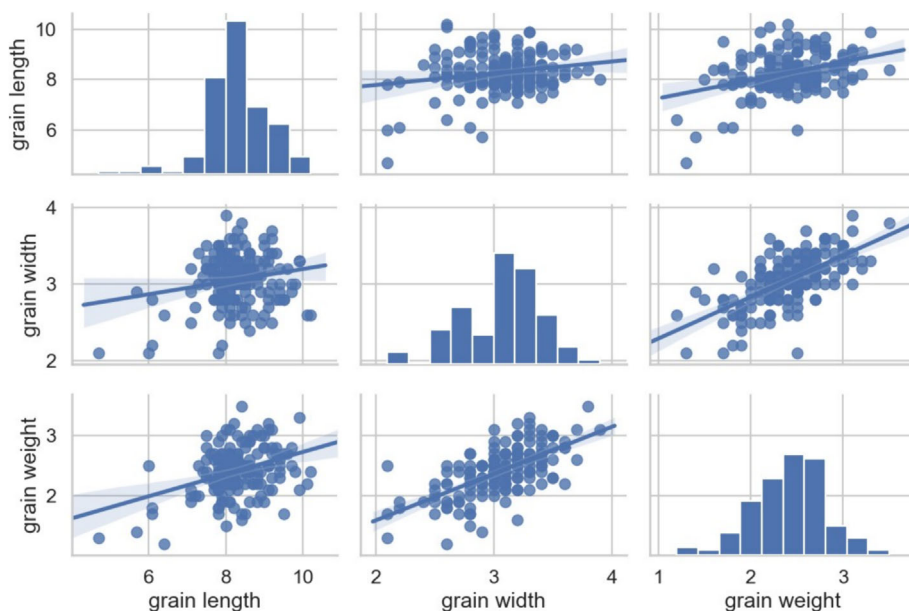


FIGURE 1 Statistical analyses of the grain shape related traits. We show the distribution and correlation scatter matrix of these three traits. GL and GW are shown in millimeter (mm), and GWT is shown in gram (gm). The blue lines in the scatter plots indicate the correlation trends.

traits within Bangladeshi rice varieties. The Shannon diversity indices indicate high diversity in the samples analyzed in this study.

3.2 | Genetic diversity analysis

In Figure 2, we present MAF distributions, comparing the MAF distributions of 3K RGP lines with those of Bangladeshi lines, and among the subpopulations of Bangladeshi varieties. Notably, 3K RGP lines show a higher density of low-frequency allele variation compared to Bangladeshi lines (Figure 2a). Moreover, 3K RGP lines exhibit a higher

distribution of variants with a frequency of .5. Figure 2b highlights ARO as having the highest prevalence of low-frequency allele variation among Bangladeshi subpopulations, followed by AUS. Both ADMIX and IND subpopulations show similar, albeit lower, densities of low-frequency allele variation compared to ARO and AUS. Notably, ADMIX and ARO subpopulations exhibit distinct peaks in the minor allele distribution plot, suggesting unique genetic variants at specific loci, which is not observed in AUS and IND subpopulations.

Figure 3 shows a comparative analysis of nucleotide diversity (π) between the 3K Rice Genome Project and Bangladeshi rice lines. Nucleotide diversity is computed along the length of each

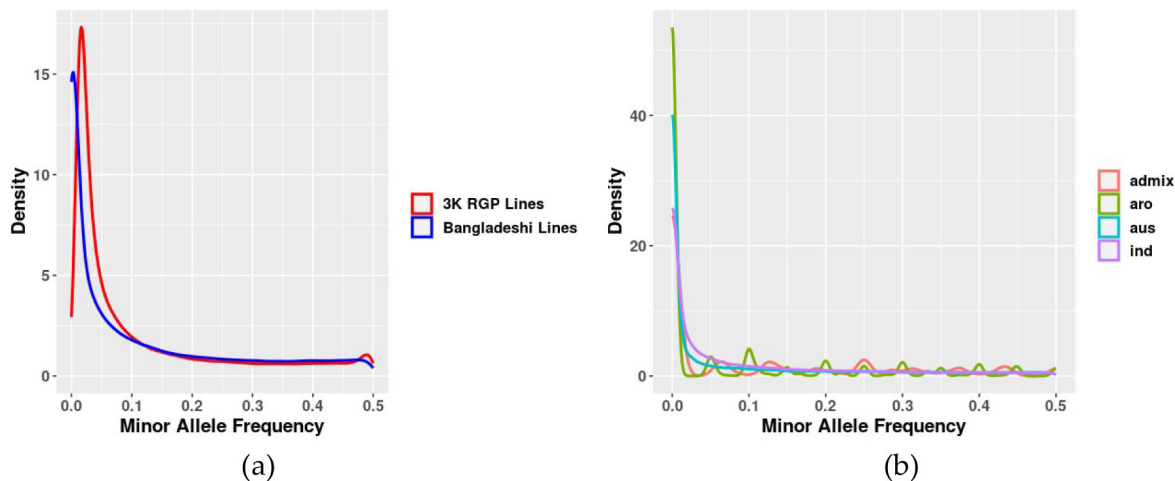


FIGURE 2 Density distribution of minor allele frequencies in rice populations. (a) The distribution of minor allele frequencies of the 3K RGP lines (excluding Bangladeshi varieties) with all the Bangladeshi lines. (b) The distribution of minor allele frequencies among the Bangladeshi lines

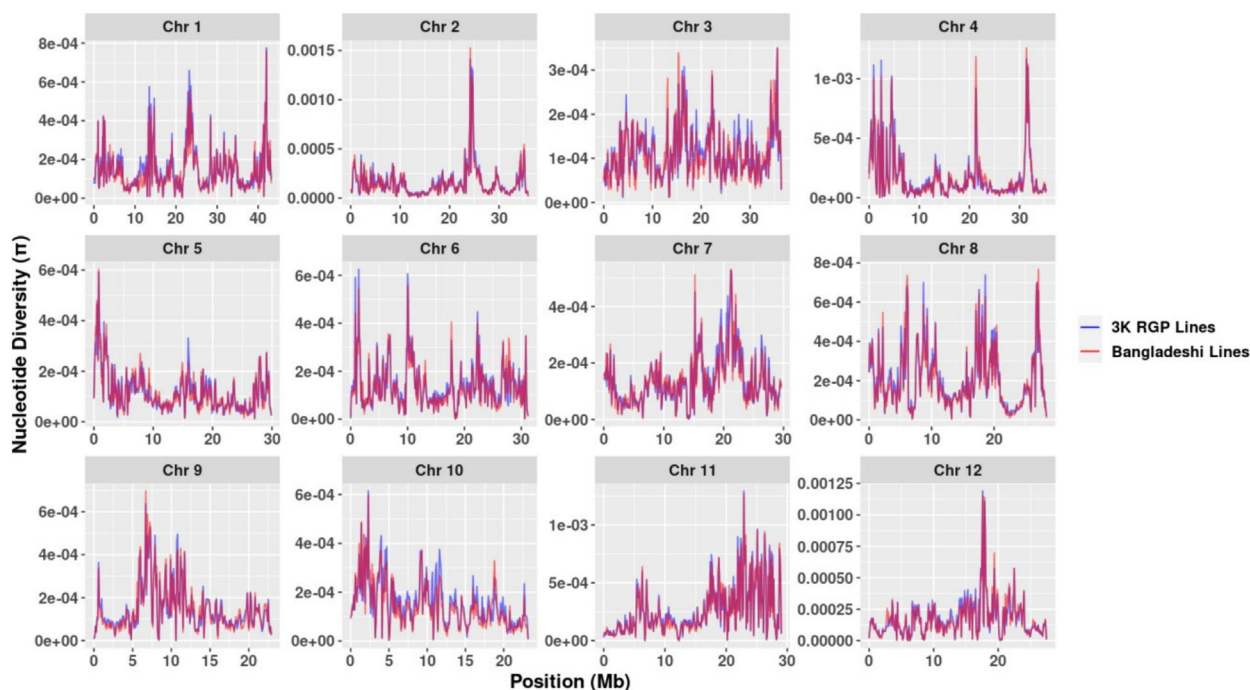


FIGURE 3 Nucleotide diversity (π) across rice chromosomes for 3K RGP and Bangladeshi lines

chromosome, measured in megabases (Mb). While the overall chromosome-wide nucleotide diversity trends are akin between the 3K RGP and Bangladeshi lines, Chr 10 exhibits notably less diversity in the Bangladeshi lines in contrast to the 3K RGP lines. This may suggest that Chr 10 is more conserved in the Bangladeshi lines. Examining specific regions, such as those near 15, 25, 40 Mb in Chr 1; 5 Mb in Chr 2; 5, 20, 30 Mb in Chr 3; 2, 15, 20 Mb in Chr 4; 15 Mb in Chr 5; 1, 10, 24 Mb in Chr 6; 21, 28 Mb in Chr 7; 10, 18 Mb in Chr 8; 12 Mb in Chr 9; 22 Mb in Chr 11; 17 Mb in Chr 12, reveals higher nucleotide diversity in 3K RGP lines compared to Bangladeshi lines. This suggests a lower level of variation in these regions within the Bangladeshi lines. Conversely, regions near 25 Mb in Chr 2; 15, 35 Mb in Chr 3; 22, 32 Mb in Chr 4; 1 Mb in Chr 5; 18, 30 Mb in Chr 6; 15, 22 Mb in Chr 7; 8, 30 Mb in Chr 8; 7 Mb in Chr 9; 20 Mb in Chr 20 exhibit higher nucleotide diversity in Bangladeshi lines, implying possible diversity in Bangladeshi rice varieties in these regions.

Figure S2 illustrates the nucleotide diversity across chromosomes in different subpopulations of Bangladeshi rice. Chromosomes 2, 4, 11, and 12 show similar nucleotide diversity patterns among subpopulations, indicating uniform allelic variations within these chromosomes. However, specific regions, such as those near 1–10, 20, 30 Mb in Chr 2; 7, 12 Mb in Chr 4; 8, 25 Mb in Chr 11; 5–10, 22 Mb in Chr 12, exhibit variations in nucleotide diversity among subpopulations. In contrast, other chromosomes display varying nucleotide diversity patterns. Specifically, regions near 30 Mb in Chr 1; 15–30 Mb in Chr 3; 0–10 Mb in Chr 5; 8, 12, 22 Mb in Chr 6; 20 Mb in

Chr 7; 0–5, 8–15, 18, 28 Mb in Chr 8; 10, 12–30 Mb in Chr 9; 3–18 Mb in Chr 10 exhibit distinct nucleotide diversity among subpopulations.

Additionally, we computed genome-wide Tajima's D to identify and compare selection signatures between 3K RGP and Bangladeshi lines (Figure S3). A notable divergence in selection patterns was observed in Chr 5, specifically in the 8–14 Mb region. Here, 3K RGP lines showed an excess of rare alleles (Tajima's $D < 0$), while Bangladeshi lines demonstrated a scarcity of rare alleles (Tajima's $D > 0$). Further investigation within Bangladeshi lines revealed distinctive selection patterns among subpopulations (Figure S3b), notably in regions near 8–15 Mb in chromosome 2 and 10–15 Mb in chromosome 8.

3.3 | Population structure

Principal component analysis (PCA) was performed based on 39,40,165 SNPs in 183 rice varieties. The first and second PCs captured 35% and 23% of the total variation respectively, indicating its highly structured nature. PCA plot of the first two principal components is shown in Figure 4, which suggests three major subgroups: indica (IND), aus (AUS), and aromatic (ARO). The principal components representing the IND samples are located in the lower left, the ARO samples are located in the upper right, and the AUS samples are located in the lower right part. There are a few admixed (intermediate type) varieties as well. We also show the genome stratification based on SNP markers using multidimensional scaling (MDS) plot (see Figure S4).

Since population stratification is observed in the samples, we adjust for population stratification while testing for associations between the SNPs and the phenotypes. We observed that the first two principal components capture 58% of the variation as well as

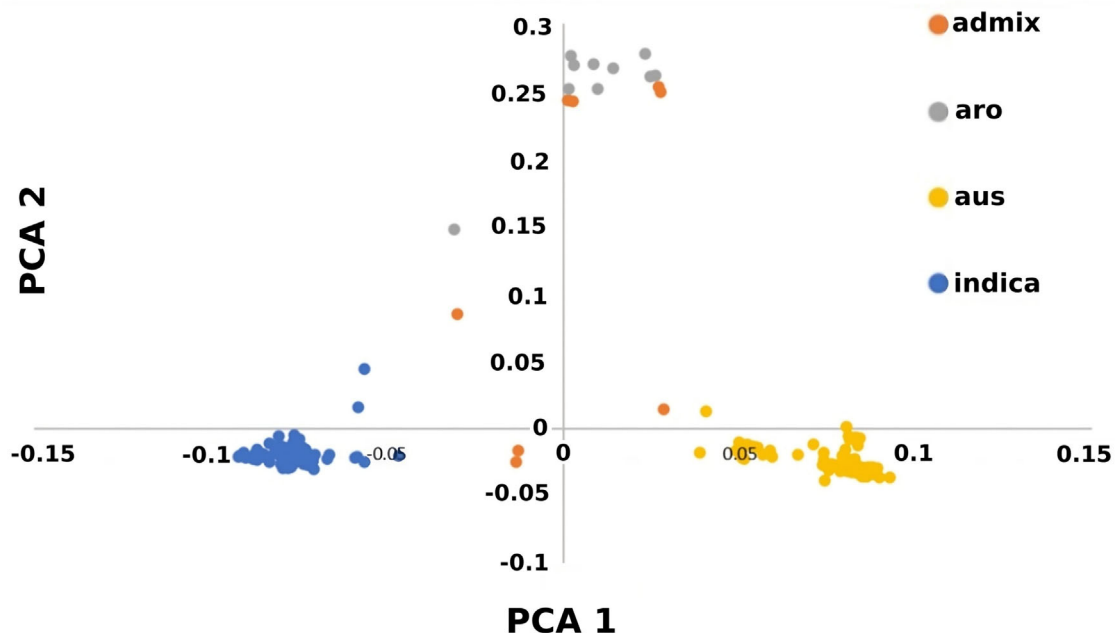


FIGURE 4 Population structure analysis using PCA. We show the PCA plot of the first two principal components of 183 rice varieties

the three main subgroups of rice varieties in our samples. So we use the first two axes of variation as covariates in the P -value calculation.

3.4 | Relative kinship among the rice varieties

The kinship matrix was calculated using a centered IBS (identity by state) method (Endelman & Jannink, 2012) in TASSEL (Bradbury et al., 2007). Notably, most of the kinship estimates were zero (or close to zero), and only a few kinship values were above .5. It suggests that these varieties are reasonably unrelated and that there is a lower possibility of any spurious relationships confounding GWAS outcomes (Zhang et al., 2019). Figure 5 shows the kinship matrix as well as histograms of the realized relationship coefficients. The distributions of off-diagonal and diagonal elements (Figures 5b,c) indicate a highly structured rice population which was also supported by our PCA analyses reported in Section 3.3.

3.5 | GWAS on grain shape related traits

A total of 168 rice varieties (out of 183 Bangladeshi varieties collected from the 3K RGP) had GL, GW, and GWT values associated with them, and we used these 168 varieties for our association studies. To delineate genetic determinants of various traits in rice, we identified significant SNPs from Manhattan plots. The genomic inflation factor was calculated to test the accuracy of the GWAS models and to

mitigate false positives. In addition, Q-Q (quantile-quantile) plots were used to check whether the p values are inflated. As GWAS hits may not necessarily be within the causal genes, we executed a genome-wide linkage disequilibrium (LD) analysis for the candidate peak regions to characterize regions harboring putative candidate genes (Porcu et al., 2019). LD analyses were done with the datasets that are not LD pruned, while GWAS analyses were done with LD pruned data. These candidate peak regions (SNPs that are in LD with GWAS hits) are provided as supporting information (S4–S10). We have concentrated our LD analyses on SNPs that are correlated with GWAS hits and possess functional annotations affecting the traits we are interested in.

3.5.1 | GWAS for grain length

The Manhattan plot shown in Figure 6 reveals three noteworthy SNPs harbored in chromosomes 3, 7, and 10, corresponding to genes LOC Os03g38850, LOC Os07g11640, and LOC Os10g22620, respectively (see Table 2). Notably, these three genes encode retrotransposon proteins, a class of transposable elements known for their ability to mobilize within and across genomes, thereby contributing to genomic diversity and size variation. In the realm of plant biology, long terminal repeat (LTR) retrotransposons, a subtype of retrotransposons, have been recognized as significant contributors to genome evolution (Orozco-Arias et al., 2019). LTR retrotransposons are not only important for gene regulation but also play a crucial role in plant heat response (Papolu et al., 2022).

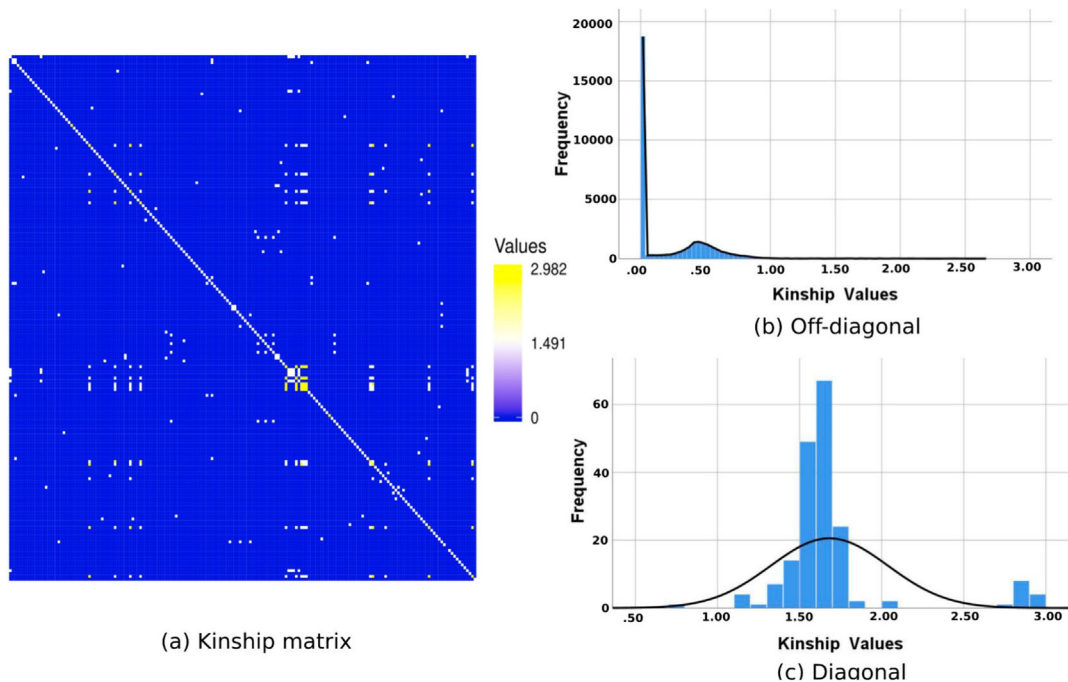


FIGURE 5 Relative kinship among 183 rice varieties. (a) A heatmap representing the kinship coefficients. (b, c) Histograms of the realized relationship coefficients, where we show the frequencies of the off-diagonal and diagonal elements in the kinship matrix, respectively

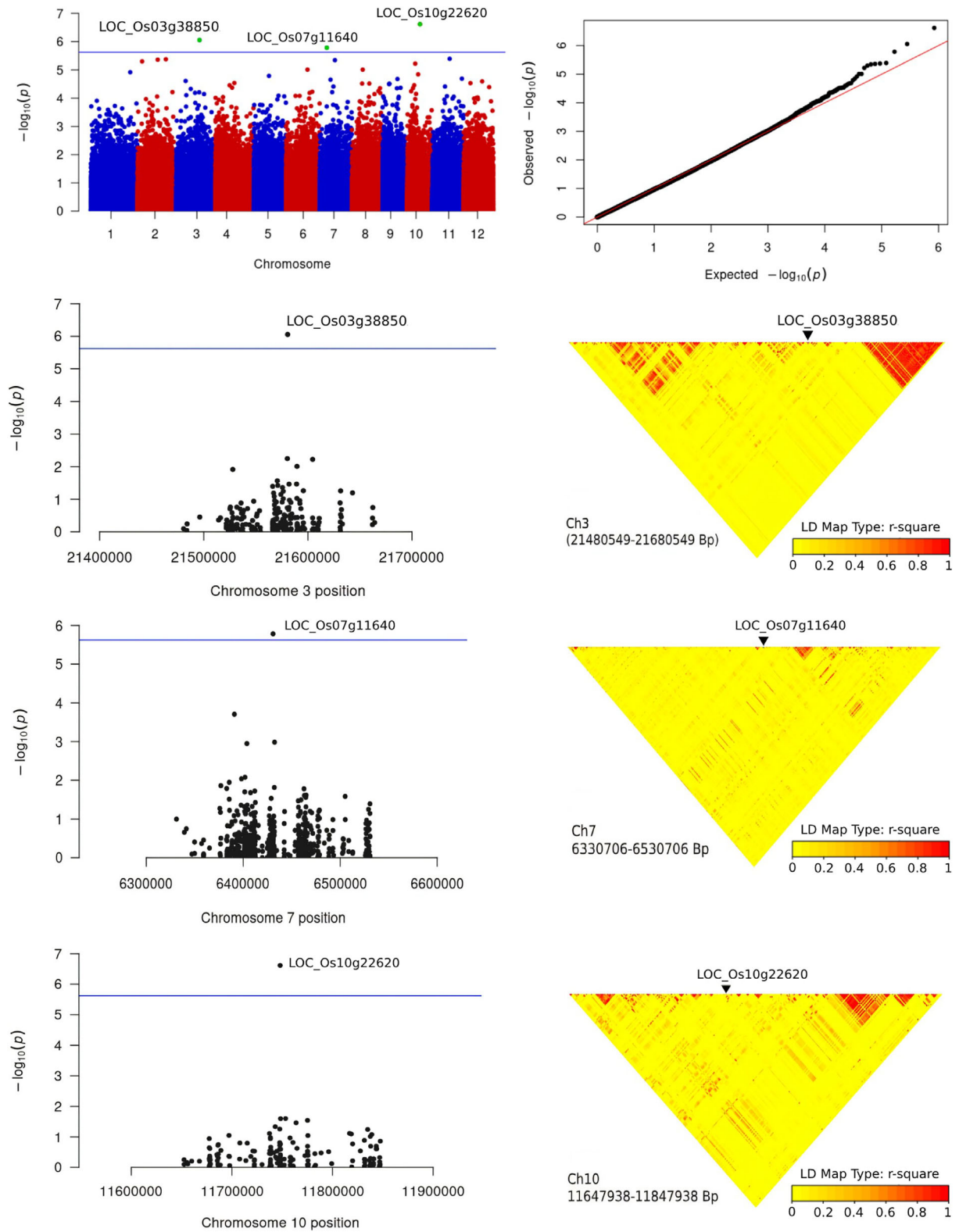


FIGURE 6 GWAS on grain length using 168 rice varieties. We show the Manhattan plots, Q-Q plots, local Manhattan plots, and LD heatmap plots. The blue lines indicate the genome-wide significant threshold. For Q-Q plots, the horizontal axis shows the log₁₀-transformed expected *P* values, and the vertical axis indicates log₁₀-transformed observed *P* values. We color the LD heatmaps with a color gradient, which varies continuously from yellow to red with increasing r^2 values.

TABLE 2 Genome-wide lead SNPs significantly associated with various traits

Trait	CHR	SNP	BP	REF	ALT	MAF	BETA	P	Annotation	Annotation impact	Gene name	Feature type
GL	10	305233208	11747938	G	A	.09353	.099038	2.42E-07	Synonymous variant	Low	LOC Os10g22620	Transcript
	3	100788722	21580549	C	G	.09921	.0933474	8.82E-07	Missense variant	Moderate	LOC Os03g38850	Transcript
	7	218762613	6430706	G	A	.05474	.124025	1.65E-06	Synonymous variant	Low	LOC Os07g11640	Transcript
GW	10	298920933	5435663	G	A	.1469	.06384	9.85E-07	Upstream gene variant	Modifier	LOC Os10g10020	Transcript
	1	28631935	28631935	G	T	.2754	-.0547667	1.41E-06	Upstream gene variant	Modifier	LOC Os01g49860	Transcript
	11	340928053	24235496	G	C	.1605	-.0579707	2.33E-06	Downstream gene variant	MODIFIER	LOC Os11g40610	Transcript
GWT	10	313318528	19833258	T	C	.1461	-.0507026	5.22E-07	Upstream gene variant	MODIFIER	LOC Os10g37050	Transcript
	11	328631012	11938455	G	A	.0509	-.108261	1.58E-06	Upstream gene variant	MODIFIER	LOC Os11g20590	Transcript
LA	1	835992	835992	C	T	.05147	.0518615	1.62E-07	Missense variant	MODERATE	LOC Os01g02540	Transcript
	7	217859161	5527254	C	T	.3304	.0328501	8.80E-07	Upstream gene variant	MODIFIER	LOC Os07g10320	Transcript
	5	161864758	10740072	T	G	.06098	.0439348	9.21E-07	Upstream gene variant	MODIFIER	LOC Os05g18550	Transcript
LL	8	254996312	12966784	A	T	.06195	.398009	2.13E-06	Downstream gene variant	MODIFIER	LOC Os08g21690	Transcript
	12	366335297	20621634	G	A	.08882	-.313037	2.33E-06	Intron variant	MODIFIER	LOC Os12g34094	Transcript
LW	5	152906442	1781756	T	C	.1506	.0986845	9.12E-08	Upstream gene variant	MODIFIER	LOC Os05g03960	Transcript
	8	255484805	13455277	G	A	.05556	.101696	8.92E-07	Missense variant	MODERATE	LOC Os08g22320	Transcript
	1	36258426	36258426	C	A	.06835	.0881381	1.72E-06	Downstream gene variant	MODIFIER	LOC Os01g62610	Transcript
PL	6	200621836	19538716	G	A	.1173	-.934292	2.16E-06	Intron variant	MODIFIER	LOC Os06g33549	Transcript
	2	48562693	5291770	T	C	.3586	-.395901	3.20E-06	Intergenic region	MODIFIER	LOC Os02g10120-LOC Os02g10130	Intergenic region

While the specific involvement of retrotransposon proteins in grain length remains implicit in the previous studies, the broader literature underscores their impact on rice grain-related traits. A noteworthy example is the association of LTR retrotransposons with grain width, leading to the development of extra-large grains and a substantial increase in rice yield (Akakpo et al., 2020). Thus, their potential implications for key agronomic traits, including grain length, cannot be overlooked.

In our LD analysis aimed at exploring additional alleles proximal to the significant genes, an array of genes associated with grain length regulation was identified. Notably, LOC Os03g38710 (harbored in chromosome 3) was identified as encoding a serine-threonine protein kinase, suggesting potential involvement in signaling pathways pivotal to the regulation of grain length. Additionally, a cluster of genes—LOC Os03g38830, LOC Os03g38840, LOC Os03g38850, LOC Os03g38880, and LOC Os03g38890—was found to encode retrotransposon proteins, suggesting significant impact on grain lengths other grain traits in rice (Kim et al., 2014). Another noteworthy gene is LOC Os03g38930, which encodes a protein featuring a signal peptide. Previous studies suggest that signal peptides such as epidermal Patterning Factor-Like2 (EPFL2) regulate grain number, grain length, and awn development in rice (Jin et al., 2016; Xiong et al., 2022).

Our analysis also revealed a series of genes harbored in chromosome 10—LOC Os10g22550, LOC Os10g22540, LOC Os10g22620, LOC Os10g22640, LOC Os10g22650, LOC Os10g22760, and LOC Os10g22800—that are known to encode retrotransposon proteins.

The gene LOC Os10g22560 encodes a peptide transporter PTR2n, which is involved in the transport of nitrogen-containing substrates (Kitamura et al., 2012). Although not directly linked to grain length, nitrogen transport and metabolism can indirectly influence grain development and size. In rice, the PTR gene family to which LOC Os10g22560 belongs is involved in nitrate uptake and transport (Yang et al., 2020). The expression profiles of 96 PTR genes in rice have been analyzed, showing their potential role in nitrogen use efficiency (NUE) and nitrogen metabolism pathways (Yang et al., 2020). Therefore, while not directly linked to grain length, the gene LOC Os10g22560 and the PTR gene family are important for nitrogen transport and metabolism, which can influence grain development and size.

Further exploration of chromosome 7 revealed LOC Os07g11500, LOC Os07g11640, LOC Os07g11650, LOC Os07g11670, LOC Os07g11700, LOC Os07g11720, LOC Os07g11790, and LOC Os07g11800 were found to encode retrotransposon proteins, aligning with their potential impact on grain length and other grain traits in rice (Takano-Kai et al., 2009).

Our GWAS study supports previous findings as well as reveals additional chromosomal regions associated with GL. Yang et al. (2019) identified eight SNP loci in four chromosomes (3, 5, 6, and 7) to be in close association with grain length, and—among these four chromosomes—our study identified chromosomes 3 and 7 to harbor two significant loci. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2015) identified 10 SNP loci in chromosomes 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 12, which were significantly associated with GL. A study on basmati rice of Indian origin (Singh

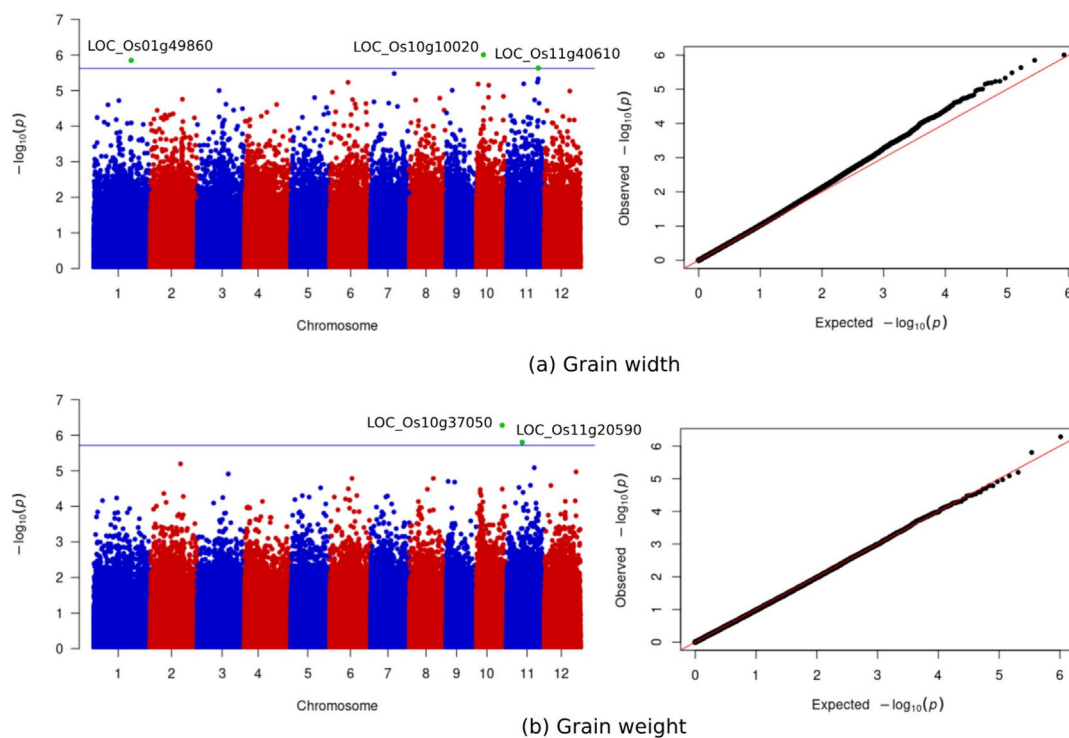


FIGURE 7 GWAS on grain width and weight using 168 rice varieties. We show the Manhattan plots and Q-Q plots for (a) grain width and (b) grain weight.

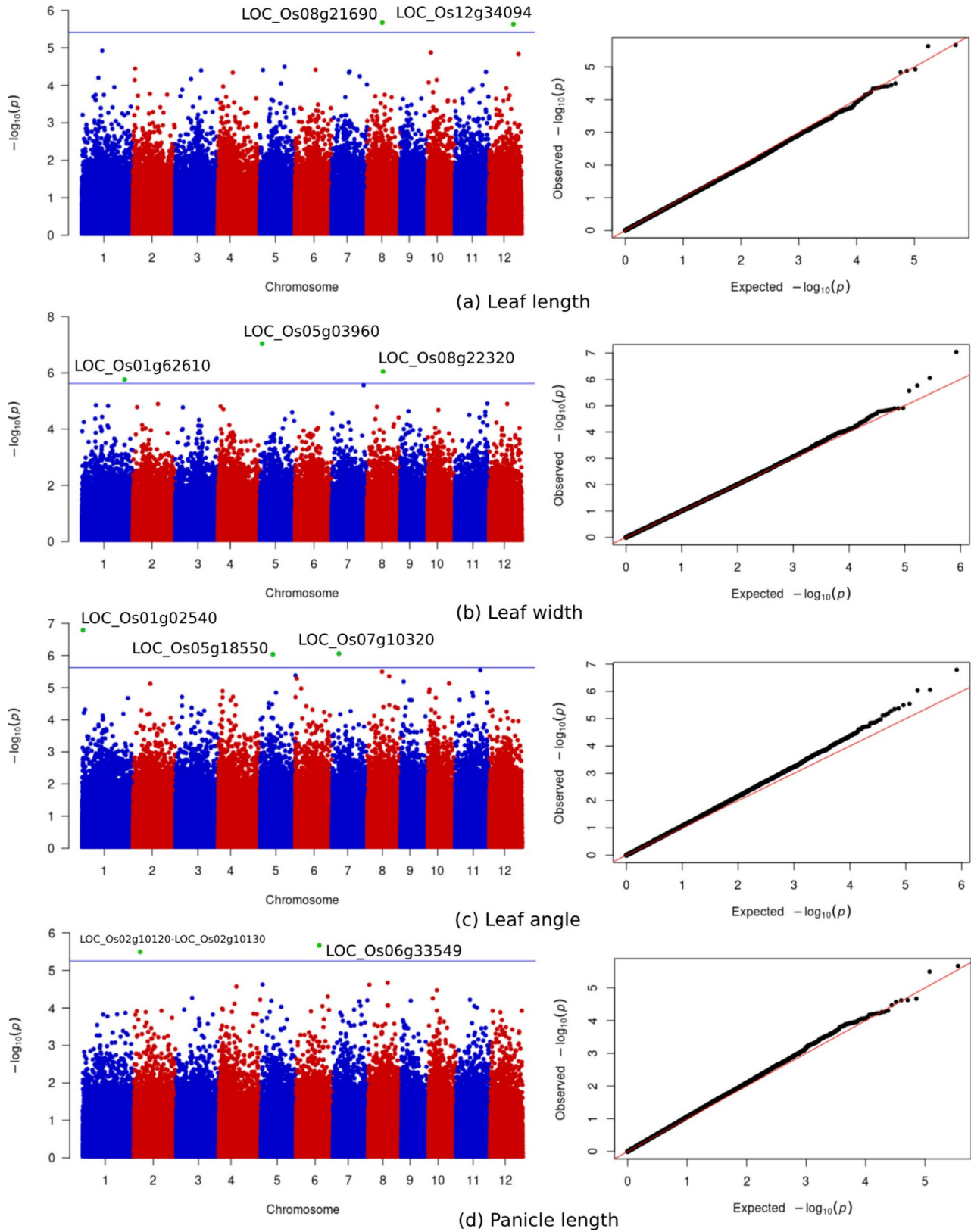


FIGURE 8 GWAS on leaf and panicle traits. We show the Manhattan and Q-Q plots for (a) LL, (b) LW, (c) LA, and (c) PL.

et al., 2012) also revealed chromosomal region 7 to be associated with GL, and an SSR (simple sequence repeat) analysis in Pakistan (Aslam & Arif, 2014) identified chromosomal regions in 3 and 7 to be in close association with grain length.

3.5.2 | GWAS on grain width (GW)

GWAS on GW revealed a triad of significant SNPs on chromosomes 1, 10, and 11, aligning with genes LOC Os01g49860, LOC Os10g10020, and LOC Os11g40610, respectively, as depicted in the Manhattan plots of Figure 7a. The gene LOC Os11g40610 in chromosome 11, encoding an early flowering protein, emerged as the most important candidate for grain width trait as early-morning flowering in rice influences grain yield (Ishimaru et al., 2022). When we looked at the other two GWAS hits in chromosomes 1 and 10 in the Rice Genome Annotation project (<http://rice.uga.edu/>), we observed that these are conserved proteins and transposon proteins respectively.

The local Manhattan plots and LD heatmaps are presented in Figure S5. LD analysis near the GWAS hit of chromosome 1 revealed zinc finger associated gene LOC Os01g49770. Zinc finger proteins are known to control cytokinin levels in the inflorescence meristem, which influences grain production (Li et al., 2013). We also observed genes nearby to the GWAS hit of chromosome 1 such as LOC Os01g49820, LOC Os01g49830, LOC Os01g49920, LOC Os01g49920, and LOC Os01g49900 are highly expressed in inflorescence meristem. Another interesting gene we found in that region is LOC Os01g49870 which encodes a transposon.

Exploring the SNPs near the GWAS hit of chromosome 10, we found LOC Os10g09990, which encodes cytokinin-O-glucosyltransferase 3 (CGT), and previous GWA studies have shown that CGT genes have significance in grain maturity (Dauda et al., 2022). Other notable genes in that region are LOC Os10g10080 (exostosin family domain), LOC Os10g10040 (cytochrome P450), and LOC Os10g10030 (OsWAK receptor-like protein kinase) as previous studies have shown their involvement in grain yield (Chen et al., 2017; Qilin et al., 2017; Usman et al., 2020). Moreover, we found a few retrotransposon proteins in this GWAS hit region (LOC Os10g09970, LOC Os10g09960, LOC Os10g09940, LOC Os10g09950, LOC Os10g09960, and LOC Os10g09950).

In chromosome 11, near the GWAS hit site, we found LOC Os11g40550 (receptor kinase), and there is evidence that Mini Seed 2 (MIS2) gene encodes a receptor-like kinase, which controls grain size and shape in rice (Chun et al., 2020). Furthermore, LOC Os11g40680 encodes BTB (broad-complex, tramtrack, and bric-¹-a-brac) protein complex that regulates the final grain size (Shalmani et al., 2023).

Zhang et al. (2015) found chromosomes 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, and 12 to harbor significant SNPs associated with GW. Yang et al. (2019) identified various regions in chromosomes 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 11 to be associated with GW. Zhang et al. (2019) discovered GS2 loci in chromosome 2 in close association with GW. Thus, our association study on GW shows similarities in chromosomal level (chromosomal

regions 1, 10, and 11) with prior studies, in addition to revealing new loci-level associations.

3.5.3 | GWAS on grain weight (GWT)

Our study identified significantly associated SNPs harbored in chromosomes 10 and 11, suggesting two potential candidate genes LOC Os10g37050 and LOC Os11g20590 (Figure 7b and Table 2). These genes encode transposon proteins. Notably, we observed significant associations with transposon gene families for GL as well.

Our LD analysis (see Figure S6) near the GWAS hit of chromosome 11 revealed a cluster of genes such as LOC Os11g20510, LOC Os11g20610, LOC Os11g20520, LOC Os11g20570, and LOC Os11g20590, encoding retrotransposon and transposon proteins.

Our study identified gene LOC Os10g36924 near the GWAS hit on chromosome 10, which encodes an aquaporin protein. Aquaporins play crucial roles in water transport and plant physiological processes. While direct links to grain weight are not evident, aquaporins' involvement in water transport suggests a potential indirect influence on grain weight by regulating plant hydration and nutrient uptake (Hayashi et al., 2015). Additionally, LOC Os10g37034 encodes a cytochrome P450 protein, known to impact grain development (Usman et al., 2020). We also noted the presence of a cytochrome gene (LOC Os10g10040) near the GWAS hit on chromosome 10 for the grain width trait.

As was observed for grain length and grain width, our association study on grain weight presents some congruent results with respect to the previous studies (Kinoshita et al., 2017; Li et al., 2020), in addition to revealing new chromosomal regions associated with grain weight.

3.6 | Results on leaf and panicle traits

We performed association studies on four other yield-related traits: panicle length and three leaf traits (leaf length [LL], leaf width [LW], and leaf angle [LA]). The Manhattan and Q-Q plots on these traits are shown in Figure 8. The LD heatmap and local Manhattan plots are shown in Figures S7–S10.

We find that two SNPs in chromosomes 8 and 12 are significantly associated with LL. Regarding LW, we see that three SNPs exceed the threshold line, located on chromosomes 1, 5, and 8, respectively. Three SNPs, harbored in chromosomes 1, 5, and 7, are observed to be significantly associated with LA. Finally, two SNPs in chromosomes 2 and 6 are found to be associated with PL. Details of the GWAS hits for these traits are shown in Table 2, SNPs that are in LD with the GWAS hits are in the supporting information (S7–S10).

4 | CONCLUSIONS

Production of high-yield strains is crucial for meeting the continuously increasing food demand of the world population. Hybrid rice has been



an effective way to meet this ever-increasing food demand in Bangladesh. Despite a significant success in rice production, Bangladesh faces many challenges in the agricultural sector as it is becoming more densely populated day by day. In addition, climate change impacts like temperature rise, uncertain weather, prolonged dry season, irregular rainfall, frequent cyclones, sea-level rise, and floods are already being felt in Bangladesh. Therefore, understanding the genetic architecture underlying yield related traits as well as the impact of environmental factors is fundamental to the advancement of rice cultivars as the performance of various rice varieties vary with varying conditions of cultivation (Sreedhar et al., 2011).

We presented genome-wide associated studies on seven important yield-related traits using 183 rice varieties in Bangladesh. These GWASs are especially targeted for the Bangladeshi rice varieties and thus consider the interactions between genetic variations underlying yield-related traits and the particular ecological environment of Bangladesh. The GWA studies for grain related traits (GL, GW, and GWT) yielded significant insights into the genetic determinants of these important agronomic traits. For grain length, significantly associated SNPs were identified on chromosomes 3, 7, and 10, corresponding to genes encoding retrotransposon proteins, known for their role in genome evolution. Similarly, GWAS for grain width revealed significant SNPs on chromosomes 1, 10, and 11, with candidate genes including a flowering and transposon proteins. The LD analysis near the GWAS hits provided further insights into the potential regulatory mechanisms, with zinc finger associated genes, highly expressed genes in inflorescence meristem, and BTB protein complex identified as candidates. Moreover, for grain weight, significant SNPs were found on chromosomes 10 and 11, with candidate genes encoding transposon proteins and aquaporin and cytochrome P450 proteins. Notably, the involvement of transposon gene families was observed across all three traits, suggesting a potential shared genetic basis.

This result could partially explain the genetic basis of correlation among the three grain-related traits (as demonstrated in Figure 1) and provide useful information for genetic improvement of these traits by marker-assisted selection (MAS) (Jena & Mackill, 2008; Steele et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 2014). As we discussed in our results section, there is discordance among the significant loci identified by various association studies performed on the same traits. Differences in sample sizes and various types of rice varieties considered in different studies may be attributed to this disagreement. Another crucial factor is the ecological environment where the considered rice varieties were grown. Therefore, this study advances the state-of-the-art in rice research in Bangladesh. However, this study is limited in scope and can be extended in various directions. We have leveraged the data from the 3K RGP project. Future studies need to collect rice materials, planted in various regions of Bangladesh under adverse ecological conditions to better elucidate the impact of specific environmental factors in genotype–phenotype association. Follow-up studies also need to investigate the candidate genes through functional genomics approach (Huang et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2008). This study is limited to seven yield-related traits. However, more information will

be gained through GWAS of rice landraces as additional phenotypes are evaluated, especially the ones that are related to the adverse ecological environments of Bangladesh. To name a few, tolerance to prolonged flood, submergence, salinity, drought, and cold are special features for various rice varieties in Bangladesh. As such, future studies need to sample a larger number of broadly representative varieties with special traits. For example, Rayada—a distinctive group of deep-water rice, totally endemic to certain area of Bangladesh and have multiple physiological features distinctly different from typical deep-water rice—could be potential resources of abiotic stress tolerance traits like flood, cold, and drought (Bin Rahman & Zhang, 2013; Glaszmann, 1987; Perez & Nasiruddin, 1974). Thus, we believe that this study will stimulate related future studies and will help identify beneficial genetic variations—which will enable the agricultural scientists to direct their efforts in developing elite varieties with desirable genetic compositions.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Md. Shamsuzzoha Bayzid and Atif Hasan Rahman conceived and designed the study; Nilanjan Roy, Acramul Haque Kabir, Nourin Zahan, Shahba Tasmiya Mouna, and Sakshar Chakravarty collected the data; Nilanjan Roy performed the genome wide association studies; Nilanjan Roy, Acramul Haque Kabir, Nourin Zahan, Shahba Tasmiya Mouna, and Sakshar Chakravarty analyzed the data; Nilanjan Roy, Acramul Haque Kabir, Nourin Zahan, Shahba Tasmiya Mouna, Atif Hasan Rahman, and Md. Shamsuzzoha Bayzid interpreted the results; Md. Shamsuzzoha Bayzid, Nilanjan Roy, Acramul Haque Kabir, Nourin Zahan, and Shahba Tasmiya Mouna wrote the first draft; Md. Shamsuzzoha Bayzid, Nilanjan Roy, and Atif Hasan Rahman prepared the final draft; Md. Shamsuzzoha Bayzid and Atif Hasan Rahman supervised the study.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was partially supported by the Research and Innovation Centre for Science and Engineering at BUET (RISE-BUET) Internal Research Grant (ID: 2021-01-016).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no competing interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The datasets analyzed in this paper are publicly available online (snp-seek.irri.org).

PEER REVIEW

The peer review history for this article is available in the supporting information for this article.

ORCID

Acramul Haque Kabir  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4899-5786>

Sakshar Chakravarty  <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-6002-5229>

Md. Shamsuzzoha Bayzid  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5640-0615>

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How to cite this article: Roy, N., Kabir, A. H., Zahan, N., Mouna, S. T., Chakravarty, S., Rahman, A. H., & Bayzid, Md. S. (2024). Genome wide association studies on seven yield-related traits of 183 rice varieties in Bangladesh. *Plant Direct*, 8(6), e593. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pld3.593>