An Evaluation of the Performance of five Meteorological Drought Monitoring Indices over an Arid and Semi-Arid Region of Gujarat (India).

Abstract

Drought Monitoring plays an important role in drought risk assessment and management. Different meteorological drought indices are normally used to determine drought, which are essentially constant functions of rainfall and hydro-meteorological factors. A universal drought index cannot be used to evaluate the severity of drought in a specific region due to the essential difficulty of drought phenomena, hydro-climatic factors, and watershed characteristics. Classifying an appropriate drought index requires evaluating the performance of various drought indices. This study evaluated 5 meteorological drought indices for Gujarat, India utilizing a dataset from a total of 167 raingauge and climate stations having over 30 years (1986-2015 of the dataset). In various countries, several droughts' indices have been introduced and utilized. This study evaluates the effectiveness of 5 meteorological drought monitoring indices in Gujarat. The following meteorological drought indexes were chosen based on data availability: Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI), Standardized Precipitation Evapotranspiration Index (SPEI), Percent Departure from Normal (PDN), Effective Drought Index (EDI), and Reconnaissance Drought Index (RDI). The EDI is a time step independent drought indicator, with 1-, 3-, 6-, 9-, and 12-month time intervals defined for the four multi-time scale indices. This drought index was compared using several time scales of multi-time scale drought indices based on their association with the EDI. The evaluation of drought indices during the historic drought was assessed based on the occurrence and response of drought indices within the specific drought severity classes. In the present study area, the 9-month scale is suitable for comparisons of drought indices. The SPEI-9 had the highest relative occurrence in the 'severe dry' class, and it was subtle to 9-monthly rainfall in most districts. As a result of the study, SPEI-9 is considered the best drought index.

Keywords: Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI), Standardized Precipitation Evapotranspiration Index (SPEI), Percent Departure from Normal (PDN), Effective Drought Index (EDI), and Reconnaissance Drought Index (RDI).

1. Introduction

Drought is possibly the most complicated natural hazard. It is frequently defined as a short-term meteorological event caused by a lack of rainfall over an extended time in comparison to some long-term average condition (e.g., precipitation). Droughts, on the other hand, develop slowly, are difficult to detect, and have many facets in any given region. In order to successfully manage and mitigate drought, timely information about drought onset and progress is imperative. A drought index is commonly used for drought monitoring. Drought indices can be used to inform drought-severity decision-makers and, if available, to activate drought contingency plans [24]. Meteorological drought is a commonly used drought index, and it is defined as a period of decreased precipitation over a region [27]. Various meteorological drought indices have been established to calculate meteorological drought from various perspectives, with the majority of them focusing on precipitation as a major input [20]. There are 4 types of droughts: meteorological, agricultural, hydrological, and socioeconomic. Meteorological drought is defined by a prolonged decrease in precipitation compared to the long-term average. Agricultural drought is categorized by deficits in total soil moistness and is caused primarily by more precipitation. The impact of a persistent lack of precipitation on the surface and/or subsurface water supply (i.e., streamflow, reservoir and lake levels, and groundwater) is referred to as hydrological drought. Socioeconomic drought is related to the impact of meteorological, agricultural, and hydrological droughts on the socioeconomic sectors [27]. There are three types of drought indicators based on these physical datasets: meteorological drought indicators, agricultural drought indicators, and hydrological drought indicators. The most widely used meteorological drought indicators are Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI), Percent Departure from Normal (PDN), Deciles Index (DI), Effective Drought Index (EDI), Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI), Standardized Precipitation Evapotranspiration Index (SPEI) and Reconnaissance Drought Index (RDI); agricultural drought indicators are Aridity Index (AI), Moisture Adequacy Index (MAI), Crop Moisture Index (CMI), Crop Water Stress Index (CWSI); and hydrological drought indicators are Standardized Water Level Index (SWLI), Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI), Streamflow Drought Index (SDI) and Standardized Hydrological Index (SHI). The most commonly used meteorological drought indicators are the Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI), Percent Departure from Normal (PDN), Deciles Index (DI), Effective Drought Index (EDI), Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI), Standardized Precipitation Evapotranspiration Index (SPEI) and Reconnaissance Drought Index (RDI); Agricultural Drought Indicators include the Aridity Index (AI), Moisture Adequacy Index (MAI); and hydrological drought indicators are the Standardized Water Level Index (SWLI),

Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI), Streamflow Drought Index (SDI), and Standardized Hydrological Index (SHI). Among the most commonly used drought indices are the Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI) and Z-Score Index (ZSI) [22], Palmer Drought Severity Index (PDSI) [24], Standardized Precipitation Evapotranspiration Index (SPEI) [34], Moisture Anomaly Index (Z-index) [24], Surface Water Supply Index (SWSI). The rainfall anomaly index RAI [33], Deciles [11], EDI [8], RDDI [31], Perpendicular Drought Index (PDI) [11], SRI [30], CZI [40], Alley [1], and [31].

Although much research has been conducted on drought indices worldwide, very few studies have been performed in India [26], [16], [38]. Consequently, it calls for an increase in studies in these areas in different agro-climatic zones of India. Also, earlier studies neglected to determine the effects of evapotranspiration on water resources in semi-arid and arid regions by using multiple time scales such as SPEI and RDI. Due to these research gaps and increasing incidences of droughts in several parts of India. The purpose of this study was to better understand the propagation relationship between different types of drought monitoring indices in the semi-arid state of Gujarat (India**).** The present study has been conceptualized with the objectives to determine different meteorological drought indices, estimate meteorological drought using five different drought indices, and analyzing and validating a suitable drought index for the study area.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1.1 Description of the study area

Drought affects 50 million people in India each year, affecting approximately one-third of the country (NCDM2010). Large parts of northwest India fall under arid and semi-arid regions, including the state of Gujarat, which witnesses droughts every 3 to 4 years. However, the trend over the last 35 years demonstrates that the drought phenomenon occurs almost every year, resulting in scarcity and semi-scarcity conditions in some parts of Gujarat. The state is located on the western coast of India between 20° 06′ N to 24° 42′ N and 68° 10′ E to 74° 28′ E (Fig. 1). Gujarat is composed of 3 physiographic regions: Central Highlands, Western Hills, and West Coast. The physiographic division shows the wide variations in topography across the state. Gujarat is located near the Thar Desert in the north, so the majority of the land is dry. Moreover, Gujarat's topography is characterized by small hilly tracts, particularly around the Rann of Kutch. Rainfall varies from 310 to 350 mm in Kutch to 620-700 mm in

Saurashtra and north Gujarat to more than 1500 mm in south Gujarat. In nearly 99 blocks and 60% of the area, droughts are frequent.

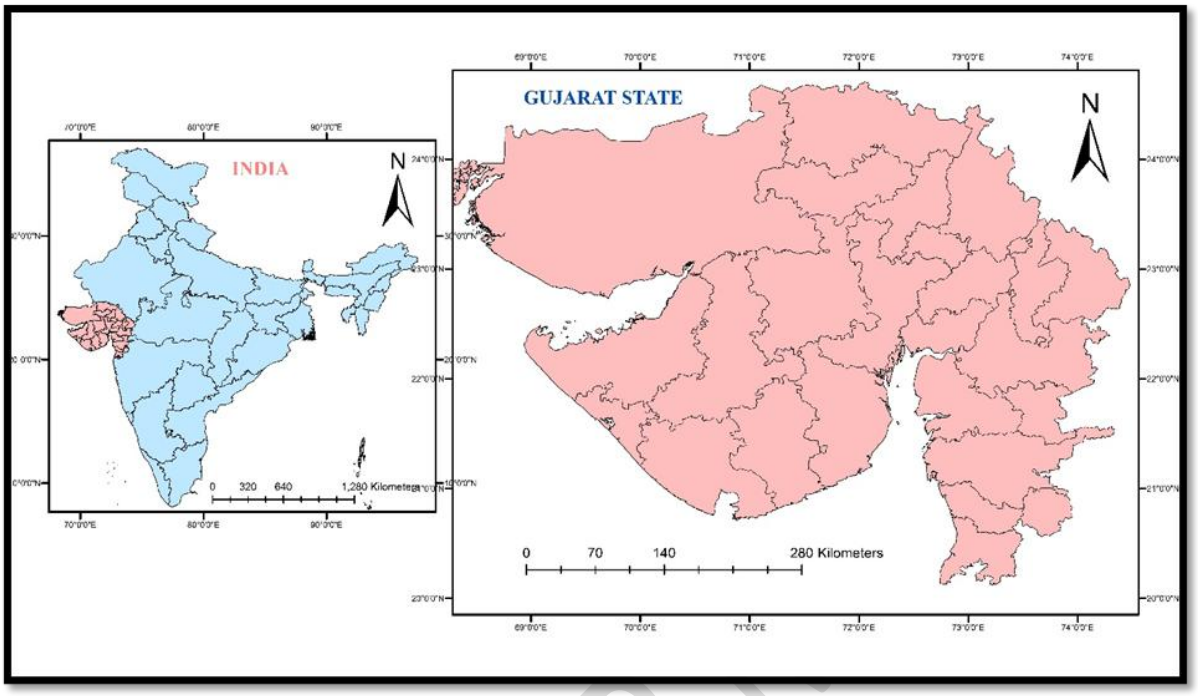


Fig. 1 Location Map of Study Area Gujarat (India)

2.1.2 Sources of data collection

To analyze the PDN, RDI, EDI, SPEI, and, SPI data from 167 meteorological stations in Gujarat over the period 1986 to 2015 was collected. The data included daily rainfall, Minimum/Maximum temperature, and relative humidity. This daily data collected from 167 stations over 30 years was converted into monthly rainfall. These meteorological observation data are collected from State Water Data Centre (SWDC), Gandhinagar, Gujarat

2.2 Meteorological Drought Monitoring Indices

2.2.1 Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI)

The SPI was developed by [22], for drought monitoring. Among the indices that can express rainfall over a given period, it is recommended by the (WMO) for worldwide use. The gamma distribution was found to fit climatological precipitation time series well. The method used for this calculation was as follows:

$$SPI_{ij} \approx X_{ij} - \mu_{ij} \ \sigma_{ij} \qquad (1)$$

Where SPI_{ij} is the SPI of the i^{th} month at j_{th} time-scale, X_{ij} is the precipitation total for the i^{th} month at j^{th} time-scale, μ_{ij} and σ_{ij} are the long-term mean and standard deviation related with the i^{th} month at j^{th} time-scale.

2.2.2 Standardized Precipitation Evapotranspiration Index (SPEI)

Vicente-Serrano [36], developed the Standardized Precipitation Evapotranspiration Index, (SPEI). SPEI can be calculated as standardized values of the monthly difference series probability distribution function. The log-logistic distribution can be used over multiple timescales, including 1, 3, 6, 9, and 12-months. Therefore, it is possible to analyze both short and medium-term droughts [19]. It is mathematically expressed as follows:

$$D_i = P_i - PET_i \qquad (2)$$

The calculated 'D' values are aggregated at different time scales as:

$$D_n^k = \sum_{i=0}^{k=1} (P_{n-i} - PET_{n-i} \qquad (3)$$

Where, k (months) denotes the timescale of the aggregation, and n denotes the calculation month. SPEI is calculated similarly to SPI. However, a three-parameter distribution is needed to standardize D-series as D-values can have negative values. Globally, the 3-parameter log-logistic distribution is a better fit for SPEI at all-time scales using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov, test [36]. The drought severity classification supported SPEI values is comparable to the SPI classification and it will be outlined at multiple scales.

2.2.3 Reconnaissance Drought Index (RDI)

Reconnaissance Drought Index (RDI) was developed by [33], to monitor the severity of meteorological droughts. RDI was categorized as a general meteorological index for the drought calculation. It is calculated using the ratio of cumulative precipitation and evapotranspiration values (PET). The RDI's initial value is calculated by computing a ratio 'a_k' between precipitation in a specific area and total potential evapotranspiration for each consecutive period of the k months in a year [38].

It is mathematically expressed as:

$$a_k = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{j=k} Pij}{\sum_{j=1}^{j=k} PETij} \qquad (4)$$

Where, P_{ij} and PET_{ij} represent precipitation and potential evapotranspiration for the jth month of the i^{th} year, respectively. In several locations, the values of '*ak'* have been found to follow either lognormal or Gamma distribution. This ratio is standardized using the same equations that were used to standardize SPI to get RDI values. It has an equivalent drought severity, classification as that of SPI and it may be outlined at multiple scales.

2.2.4 Effective Drought Index (EDI)

The effective drought index (EDI) was formulated by [8], which is an effectively non-parametric, index. Originally developed for daily time steps, it can also be used on a monthly scale [8]. It is based on the concept of effective precipitation (EP), which is a function of the current and previous day's rainfall, but with lower weights [Eq. (5)]. Eq. (5) shows that the EP, which is the most essential feature of EDI, is calculated using the concept of available water as a function of precipitation and time. According to EP, today's precipitation contributes 100% (weight of 1) to the available water, whereas the second day's contribution is less (weight of 0.85) and the next day's contribution is even less (weight of 0.77), and so on, with the contribution of precipitation from a year ago being the least (weight of 0.000423). This duration is either 365 days, a representative value of the total water resources available or stored for a longer period, or it can be 16 days, a representative of a short period. A similar decay of available water resources over time is also observed in rainfall-runoff models [9]. It is noteworthy that rainfall-runoff models exhibit a similar effect on EP in representing the decay of available water resources over time [9]. In this manner, drought risk can be robustly analyzed due to water scarcity conditions [10].

$$Ep_i = \sum_{n=1}^{i}[(\sum_{m=1}^{n} P\mathrm{m}) / n]$$

$$= P1\left(1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{3} + \cdots + \frac{1}{365}\right) \qquad (5)$$

$$+ \mathrm{P2}\left(1 + \frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{3} + \cdots + \frac{1}{365}\right) + \cdots + P365\left(\frac{1}{365}\right)$$

$$\approx P_1 + 0{:}85P_2 + 0{:}77P_3 + \ldots + 0{:}000423P_{365}$$

In addition, the following equations were used to create EDI:

$$DEP_i = EP_i - MEP \qquad (6)$$

$$EDI_i = \frac{DEPi}{ST\ (\mathrm{DEPi})} \qquad (7)$$

Where, MEP is the mean EP, ST is the standard deviation derived for each day's deviation of EP (DEP), and 'i' is the particular day.

EDI requires at least 30 years of data. Like other indices, EDI is a standardized index, which facilitates the comparison of severity between two regions despite different climates. It has also similar severity classes as those of SPI [7].

2.2.5 Percent Departure from Normal (PDN)

Percent departure from normal (PDN) is a simple and easy-to-use indicator of dry/wet conditions over a specified area and time. This indicator is used by the India Meteorological Department (IMD) to declare drought on a weekly/monthly/annual basis. PDN is calculated by estimating the deviation of rainfall from long-term averages. According to IMD, if the percent deviation of rainfall in a year from normal rainfall is 0 percent, 0-25 percent, 25-50 percent, or more than 50 percent, the drought is classified as 'No Drought,' 'Mild Drought,' 'Moderate Drought,' or 'Severe Drought.

3. Results and discussions

3.1 Selecting a suitable scale for drought indices

Following the selection of an appropriate scale, the meteorological drought indices were tested for their ability to model historical drought events. The ability of the drought indices was assessed based on their relative, frequency in the drought-severity, class and their response to rainfall variation. The term relative, frequency' refers to the percentage of the drought index that remains in a specific drought-severity, class for the duration of the study. Because drought indexes have different ranges for defining the severity of drought, events, they are divided into wet and dry classes for comparison (Table 1). Table 1 shows that the four indices, SPI, RDI, SPEI, and EDI, have the same severity classification. PDN, on the other hand, is only classified as drought or dry. To compare with other indices, the PDN classification was modified to include three wet classes. This was accomplished by adding 25% to each wet class, resulting in 'Moderately Wet,' 'Extremely Wet,' and 'Severely Wet' classes with 125 to 150 percent, 150 to 175 percent, and > 175 percent deviations from normal rainfall, respectively.

Table 1 Drought Severity Classification

Class	Values of SPI, RDI, SPEI, and EDI	Value of PDN
Extremely Wet (EW)	≥2	≥ 1.75
Severe Wet (SW)	1.5 to 1.99	1.50 to 1.75
Moderately Wet (MW)	1 to 1.49	1.25 to 1.50
Normal (N)	0.99 to 0.99	0.75 to 1.25
Moderately Dry (MD)	-1 to -1.49	0.50 to 0.75
Severely Dry (SD)	-1.5 to -1.99	0.25 to .50
Extremely Dry (ED)	≤2	≤ 0.25

Drought monitoring is an essential component of drought risk management. Various drought indices, which are functionally continuous functions of rainfall and other hydrometeorological variables, are typically used. Several drought indices have been developed and implemented in different nations. This study compares the performance, of 5 drought monitoring indices in Gujarat. The indices used in this study are Percent Departure from Normal (PDN), Effective Drought Index (EDI), Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI), Reconnaissance Drought Index (RDI), and Standardized Precipitation Evapotranspiration Index (SPEI). The comparison of indices is based on drought classes that were detected in the area over the 30 years of data.

The SPI, RDI, and SPEI indices are multi-time scale indices, whereas the EDI is a time-step independent index. PDN can also be calculated for 1, 3, 6, 9, and 12 months, with the deviation from the corresponding multi-monthly long-term mean calculated. For example, in the case of 3-month rainfall, the sum of 3-months for a specific year is compared to the long-term mean, of the sum of 3-months in India, there is a lot of seasonal variation, from one month to the next. As a result, these multi-time scale indices were defined at time scales of 1, 3, 6, 9, and 12 months [16], [41], [4], [38].

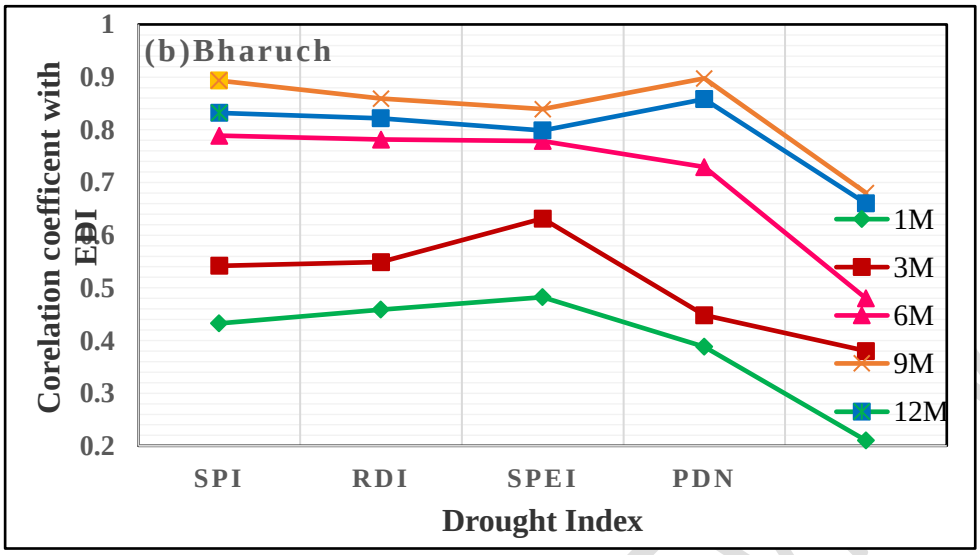
The correlation, of five-time scales (1, 3, 6, 9, and 12) of SPI, RDI, SPEI, and PDN with EDI was evaluated to select a suitable scale, for comparison [6], [24], [16], [14], [38], [5], [27], [39]. Thus, a correlation coefficient has calculated using OPOSTAT software for a five-time scale (1, 3, 6, 9, and 12) was calculated for all the 33 districts of Gujarat using the drought series. The correlation coefficient was calculated for all the 33 districts of Gujarat out of the 33 districts 7 districts has majorly affected by drought. The correlation coefficient is shown for all 7 districts (Ahmedabad, Bharuch, jamanager, Kucchh, Rajkot, Sabarkantha,

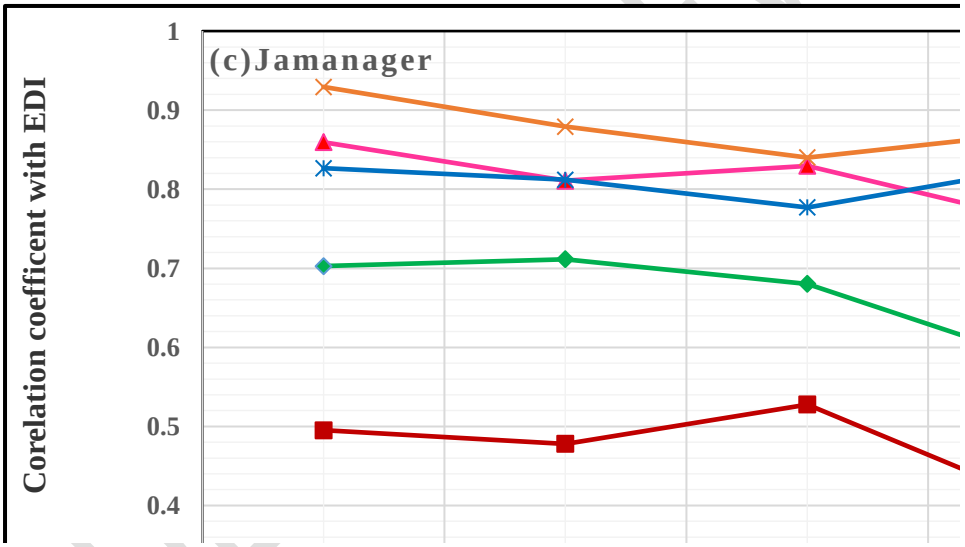
Surendranagar, Valsad) of Gujarat. Except for similar time-scale indices, the values of the EDI's correlation coefficient, with other indices are generally higher than those of all-scale indices (orange color shading). In the multi-time scale indices calculated for a given month scale, the correlation between similar time scales is greater than the correlation between dissimilar scales. In comparison to other scale indices, SPI-1 has a correlation coefficient, (r) value of more than 0.54 with RDI-1, SPEI-1, and PDN-1. In addition, correlation coefficient, values for 3, 6, 9, and 12 months of SPI are greater than 0.82, 0.85, 0.93, and 0.95, respectively, when compared to dissimilar time scales. This implies that estimates, obtained from similar time scales are only comparable, to estimates obtained from similar time scales. The correlation, between SPI and RDI, is found to be very strong ($r > 0.96$) at all month timescales. Furthermore, the fact that both SPI and RDI follow the same Gamma distribution, implies that they have at least the same values outside of the monsoon season.

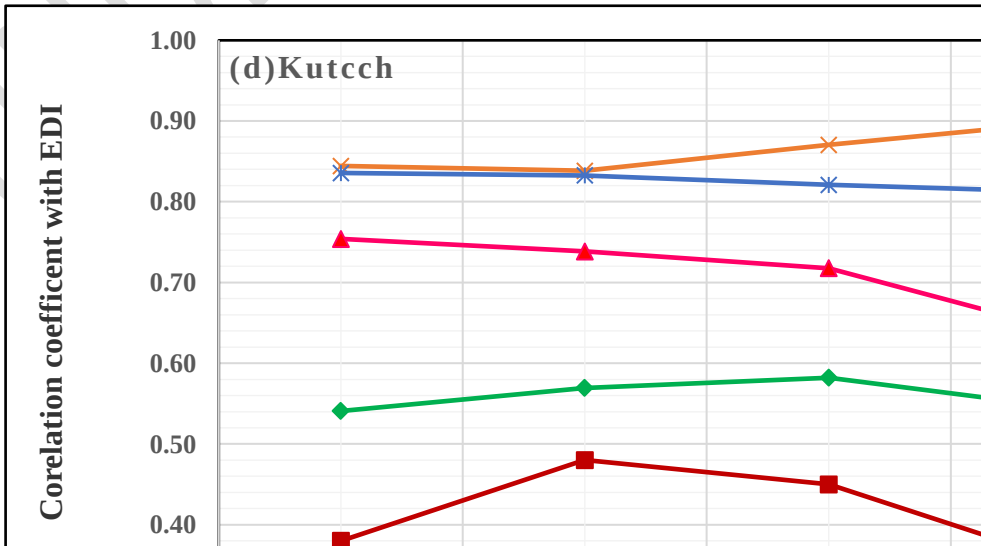
Figures 2a-f show the correlation, of the EDI with other drought indices, for 1, 3, 6, 9, and 12-month periods for all seven districts of Gujarat (Ahmedabad, Bharuch, Jamanager, Kucchh, Rajkot, Sabarkantha, Surendranagar, Valsad). The correlation, with EDI, increases from 1 month to 9 months but decreases from 12 months. For 1-, 3-, and 6-month time scales, EDI varies between 0.4 and 0.5 and 0.6 to 0.7, respectively, but is greater than 0.7 for 6-, 9-, and 12-month time scales. PDN has the lowest correlation, between 1-, 3-, and 6-month time scales, implying that PDN is only comparable to EDI at higher time scales. This finding is similar to those of [10], and [38].

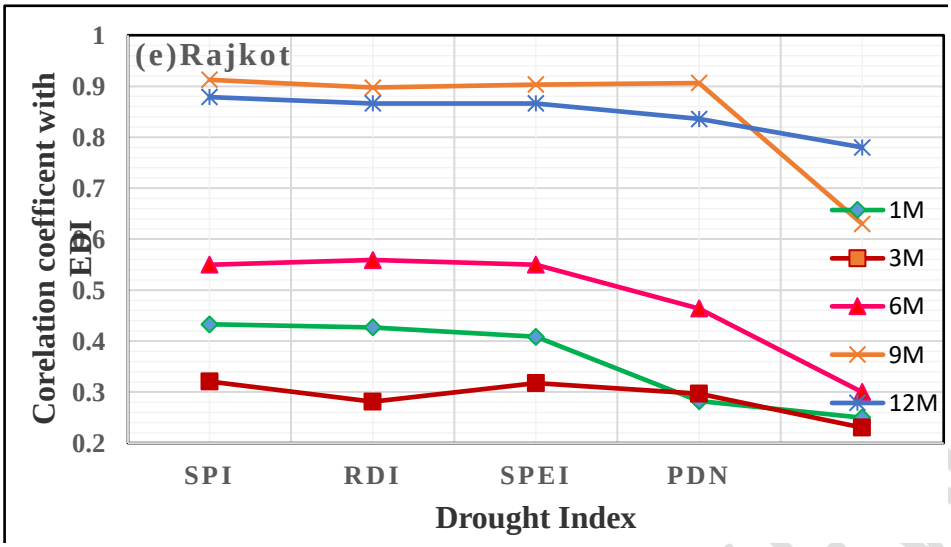
The average correlation, between drought indices for a given time scale by the different indices excluding the EDI used in this study. SPI-1 has a 0.53 average paired correlation, with RDI-1, SPEI-1, PDN-1, SPI-3, RDI-3, SPEI-3, PDN-3, SPI-6, RDI-6, SPEI-6, PDN-6, SPI-9, RDI-9, SPEI-9, PDN-9, SPI-12, RDI-12, SPEI-12, and PDN-12. Similarly, average paired correlation, values were found for all indices time scales and were plotted as shown in Fig. 3a-g. It is obvious from Fig. 3a-g that the value of average correlation, is higher for the 9-month scale. In addition, the mean average correlation coefficient, of all indices for a given scale is shown with a continuous line in Fig. 3a-g. As shown in the figure, the average correlation, is 0.53 in all 7 districts over the 1-month period (SPI = 0.59, RDI = 0.52, SPEI = 0.54, PDN = 0.51) is 0.53. It is clear from the figure that even excluding EDI, the maximum correlation value is for 9-month scales followed by 6 and 12-months. Hence, for the evaluation of drought indices, 9-month is selected, which is reasonable since a major part of India receives rainfall only after 9-months, once the monsoon is terminated in

September [24], [16], [42], [18], [15], [41], [4], [23], [38] & [24] or early October and the same is true for the study area as well.








(e)Rajkot
Corelation coefficent with EDI
1
0.9
0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
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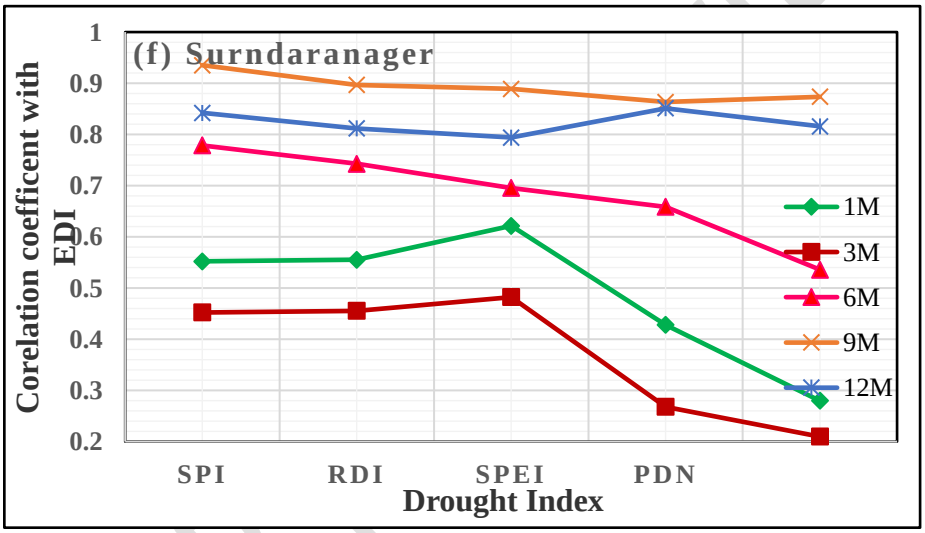
0.3
0.2
SPI
RDI
SPEI
PDN
Drought Index
1M
3M
6M
9M
12M


(f) Surndaranager
Corelation coefficent with EDI
1
0.9
0.8
0.7
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0.5
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SPI
RDI
SPEI
PDN
Drought Index
1M
3M
6M
9M
12M

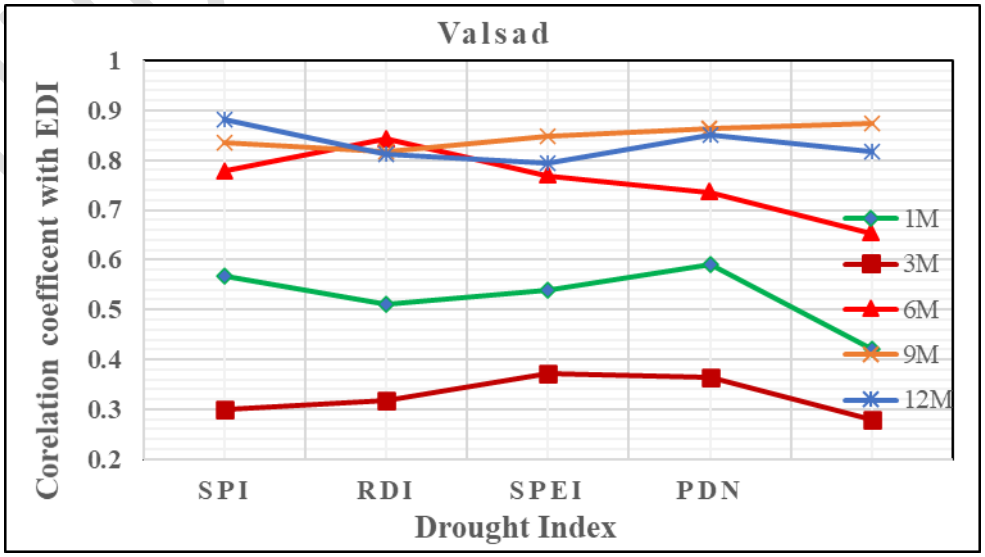
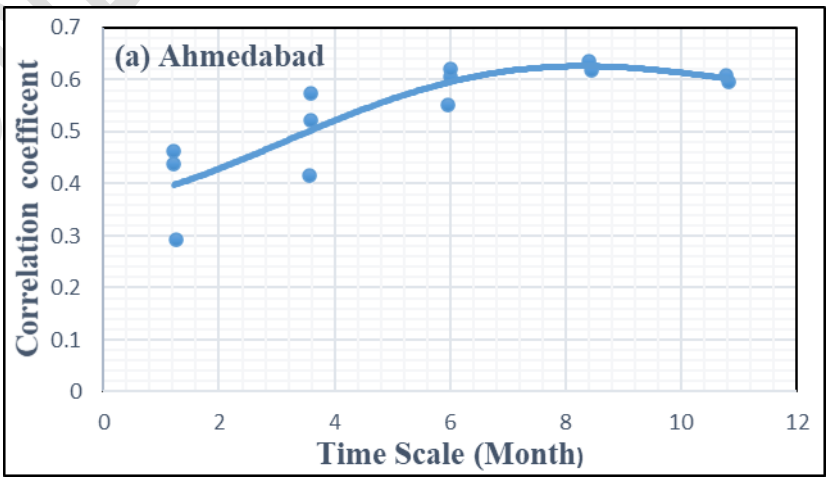

Valsad
Corelation coefficent with EDI
1
0.9
0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
SPI
RDI
SPEI
PDN
Drought Index
1M
3M
6M
9M
12M

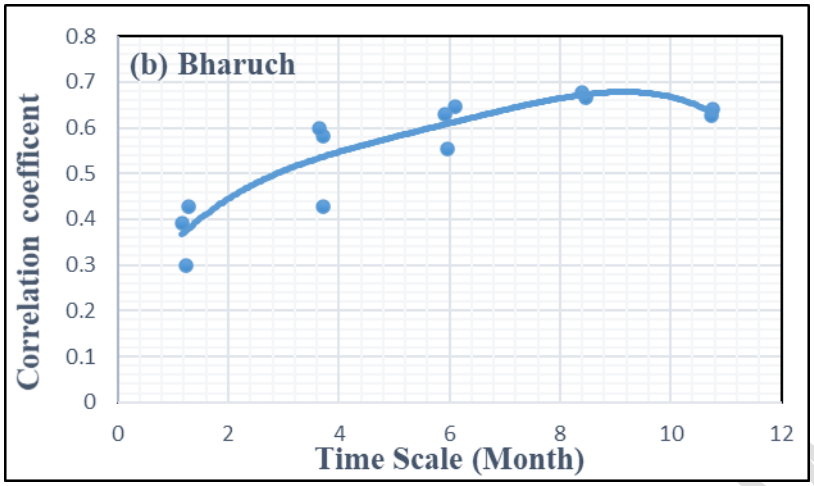
Fig. 2 Correlation, of EDI with four drought indices, for 1-month (green line), 3-month (red line), 6-month (pink line), 9-month (orange line), 12-month (blue line) at six stations: (a) Ahmedabad, (b) Bharuch, (c) Jamanager, (d) Kutcch, (e) Rajkot, (f) Surendranagar, and (g) Valsad Districts.

3.2 Performance evaluation of drought indices concerning historical droughts

According to an EIS report from the Gujarat government (EIS 2010), the study area was affected by drought with seven districts experiencing acute water shortages at least once during the study period. Furthermore, the time series of 1986-2015 was used to evaluate the performance, of selected meteorological drought indices, (SPI, RDI, SPEI, and PDN at a 9-month scale, and EDI) regarding historical droughts. The relative frequencies, of these indices during this period for the monsoon months are shown in Fig. 4a-f. During a drought period, the relative frequency, indicates the percentage of the drought index, that remains in the particular drought severity, class. Total wetness equals the sum of relative frequencies, of Extreme Wet (EW), Severe Wet (SW), and Moderate Wet (MW) classes, whereas total dryness equals the sum of relative frequencies, of Extreme Dry (ED), Severe Dry (SD), and Moderate Dry (MD) classes.

It can be seen from Fig. 4a-f that the SPI-9 has detected 45% (Jamanager district) to 85% (for Kutch district) of the months as a 'Normal' situation and a total of 10-55% in dry classes for the latter and former districts. EDI shows the least relative frequency, for total dry classes, ranging from 5% (Bharuch district) to 50% (Kutch district). On the other hand, the maximum total relative frequencies, for SPEI-9, RDI-9, and PDN-9 in dry classes, are found to be 65%, 70%, and 75%, respectively for the Kutch district.




(b) Bharuch
Correlation coefficent
0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
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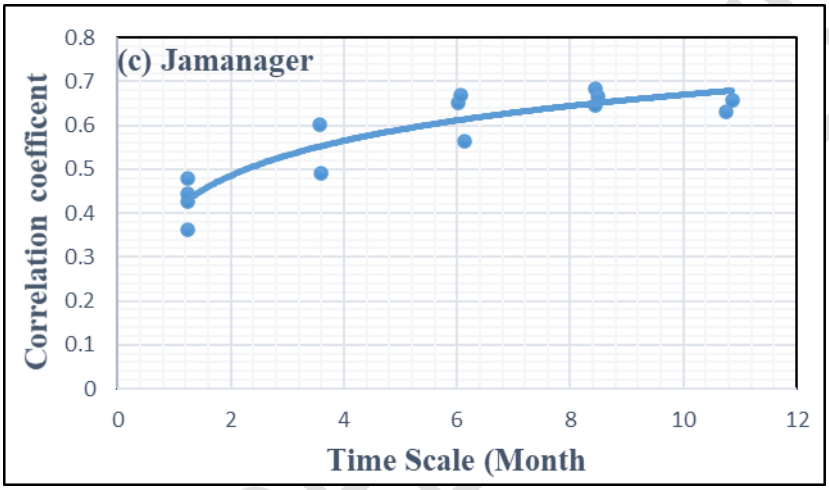
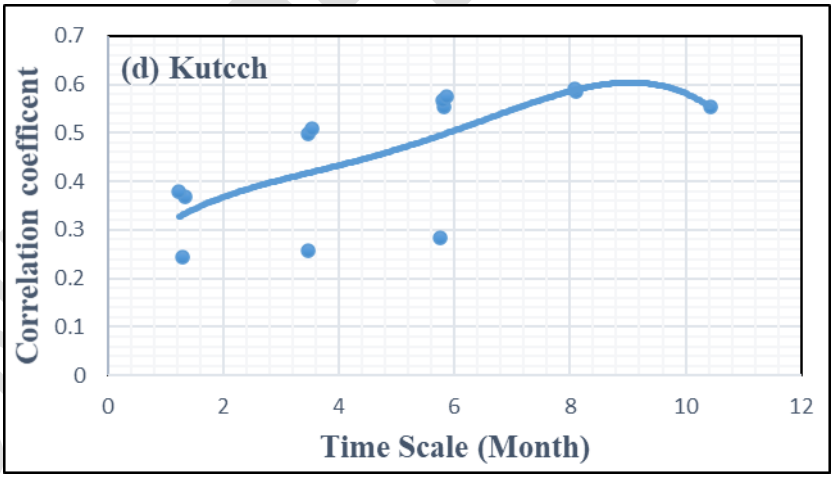
0.1
0
0
2
4
6
8
10
12
Time Scale (Month)


(c) Jamanager
Correlation coefficent
0.8
0.7
0.6
0.5
0.4
0.3
0.2
0.1
0
0
2
4
6
8
10
12
Time Scale (Month


(d) Kutcch
Correlation coefficent
0.7
0.6
0.5
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Time Scale (Month)

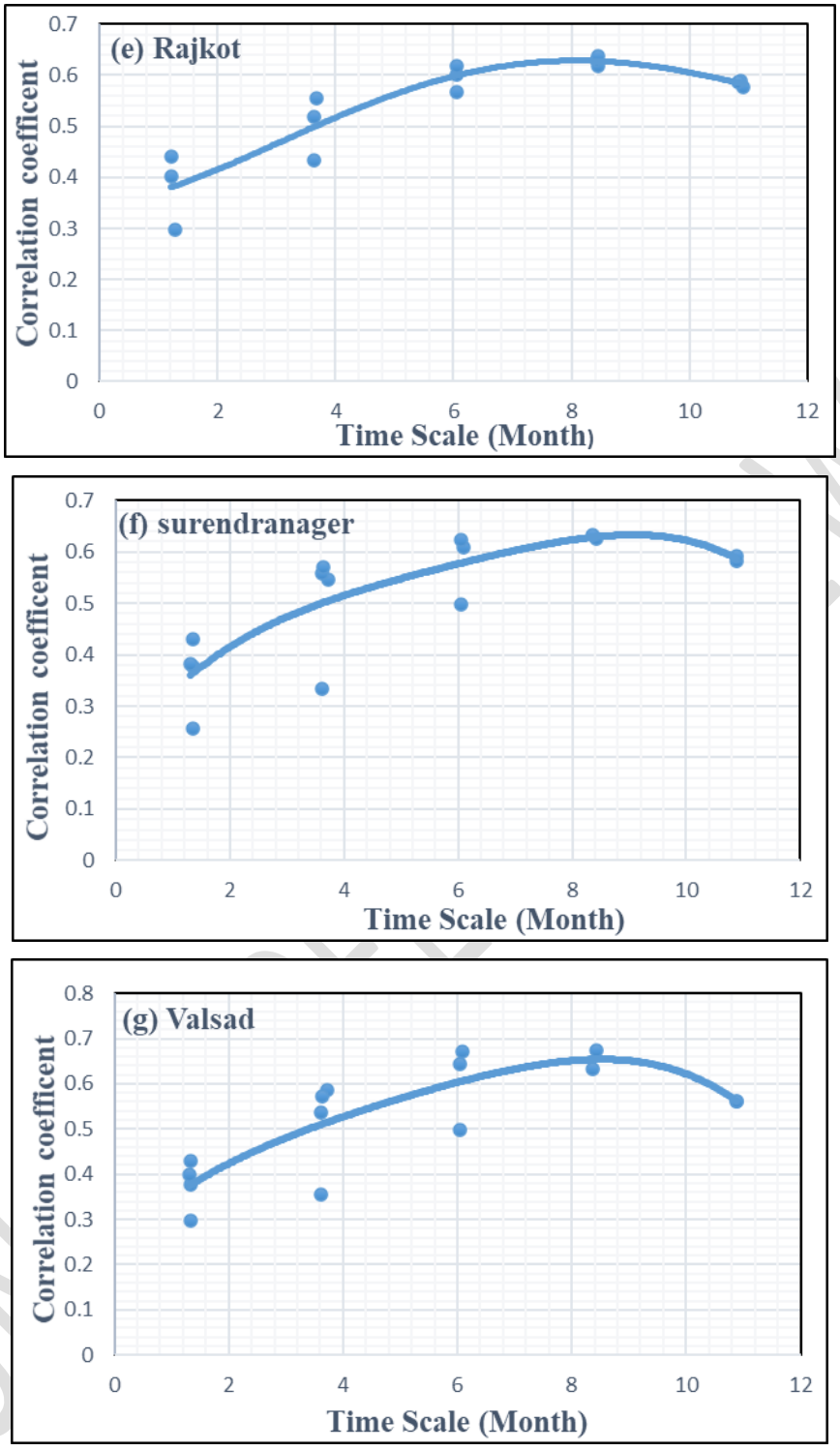
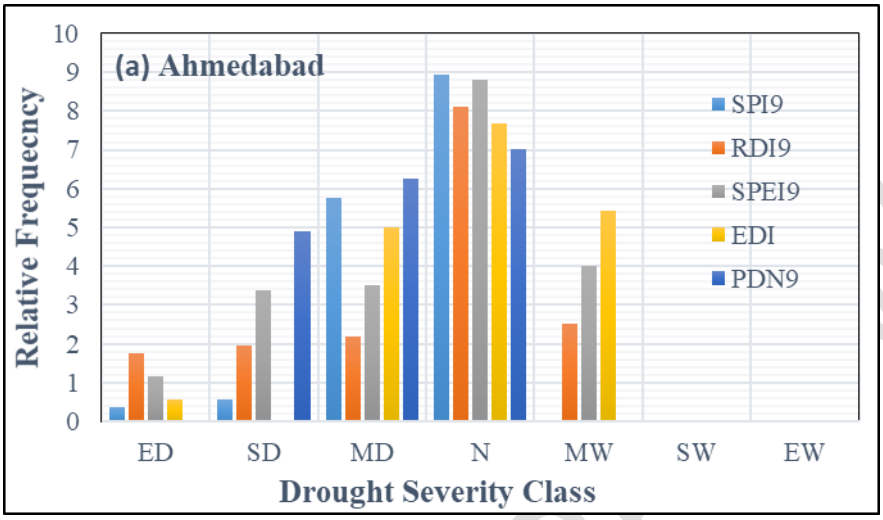
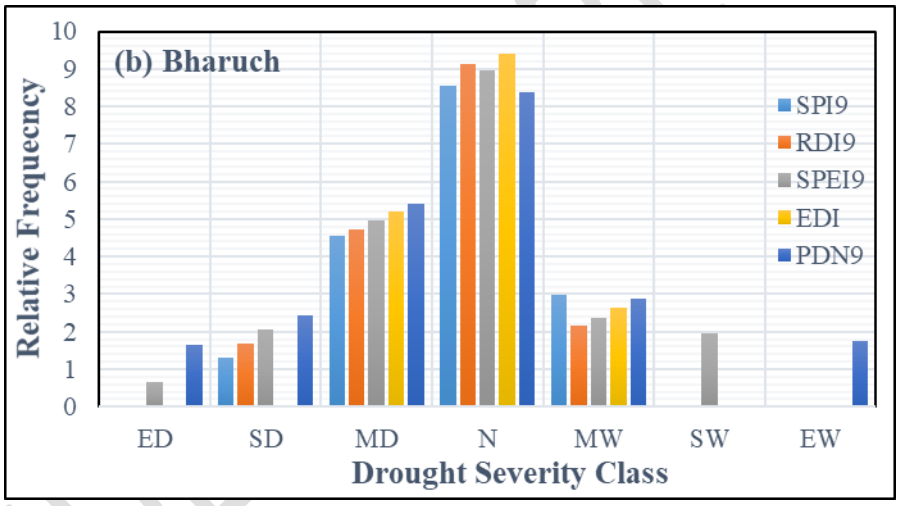


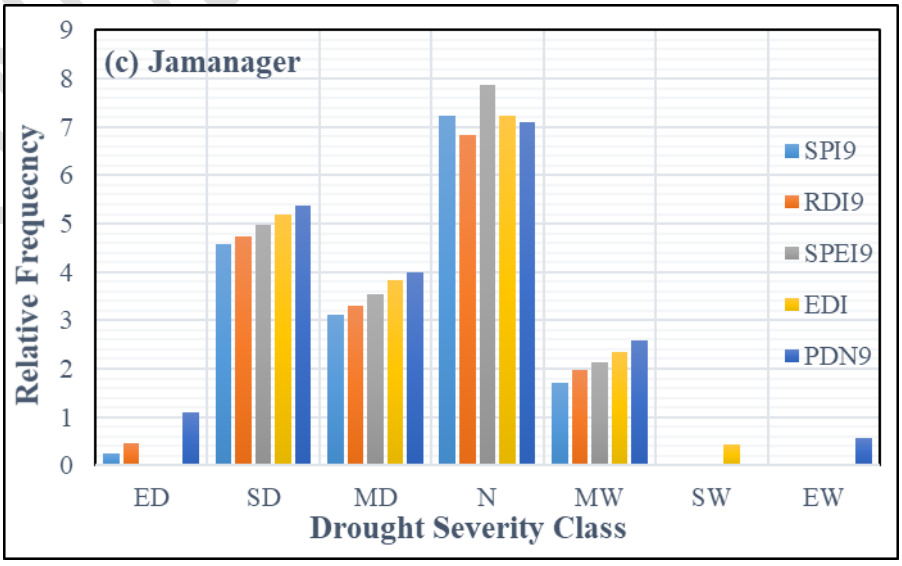
Fig. 3 Average correlation of a particular time-step drought index with all other indices time scales at: (a) Ahmedabad, (b) Bharuch, (c) Jamanager, (d) Kutcch, (e) Rajkot, (f) Surendranagar, and (g) Valsad Districts.

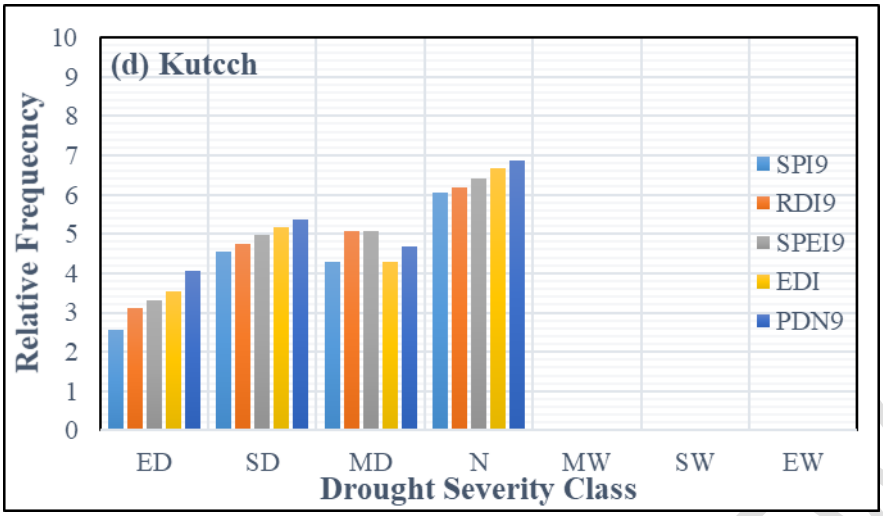
The relative frequency, in the wet classes is the main difference between these three indices. The wet classes frequency, identified by the PDN-9 varies from 0 to 25%, even though there was a dry spell, during this period (1986-2015). SPEI-9 shows the greatest

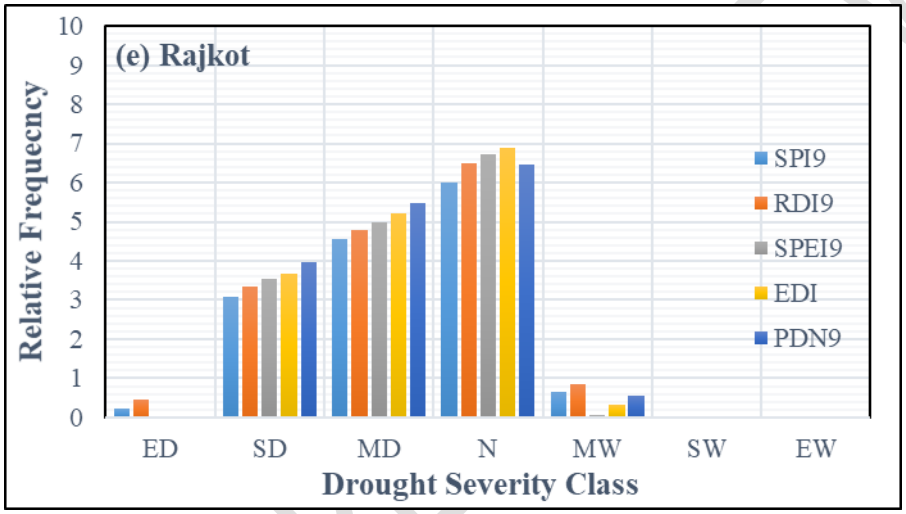
relative frequency, of 'severe dry' classes in all seven districts (Fig. 4). The performance, of PDN-9, is the worst since most of its relative frequencies, during the 1986-2015 drought spell are in the ‘Normal’ class. As a result, SPEI-9 accurately detects dry spells, in the research area.








(d) Kutcch
Relative Frequecncy
10
9
8
7
6
5
4
3
2
1
0
ED
SD
MD
N
MW
SW
EW
Drought Severity Class
SPI9
RDI9
SPEI9
EDI
PDN9


(e) Rajkot
Relative Frequecncy
10
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7
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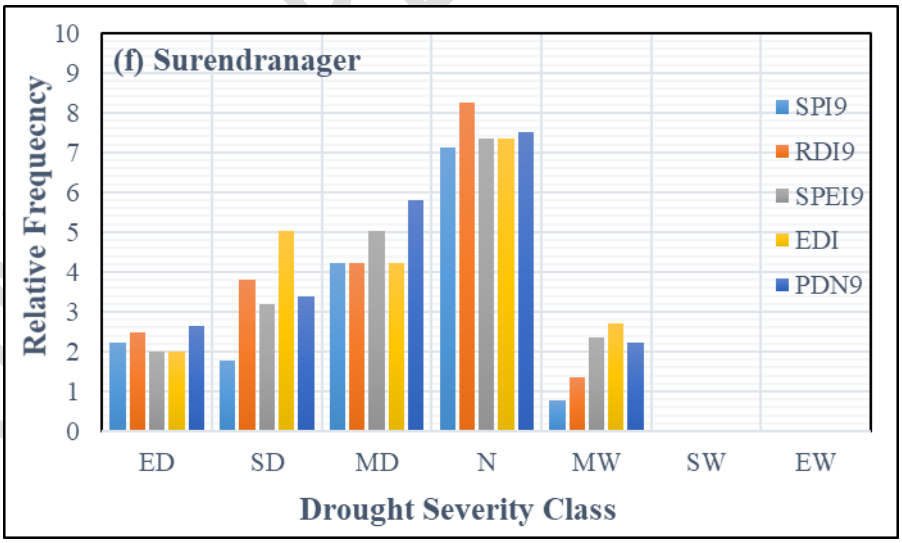
Drought Severity Class
SPI9
RDI9
SPEI9
EDI
PDN9


(f) Surendranager
Relative Frequecncy
10
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Drought Severity Class
SPI9
RDI9
SPEI9
EDI
PDN9

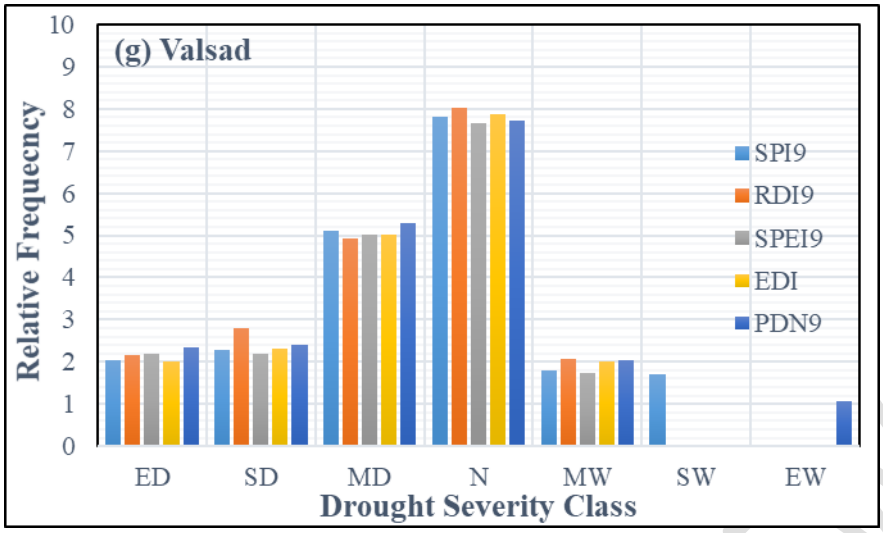

Fig. 4 In the monsoon months of the 1986-2015 dry spell, the drought frequency, classes of the selected indices were determined at (a) Ahmedabad, (b) Bharuch, (c) Jamanager, (d) Kutcch, (e) Rajkot, (f) Surendranagar, and (g) Valsad (D)

Summary and Conclusion

According to the study, parts of Gujarat in the northwestern and central regions are water-stressed and therefore more vulnerable to drought. Meteorological drought indices, have been developed as a substitute for drought monitoring to determine drought-prone areas. According to a comparison, of meteorological droughts in Gujarat, seven districts are at risk. Through the integration of multiple data sources, risk areas can be appropriately assessed, and management plans can be created to deal with hazards.

As a result of meteorological drought, selecting an appropriate drought index is essential for developing effective drought, mitigation strategies in any area or region. This study examined the evaluation, of 5 meteorological drought indices, including SPI, RDI, SPEI, PDN, and EDI, to identify a suitable drought index, for Gujarat, India. Based on the study's findings, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. A correlation matrix, based on the EDI and the 1-, 3-, 6-, 9-, and 12-month scale indices SPI, RDI, SPEI, and PDN found that all indices were strongly correlated, for similar time scales and poorly correlated, for dissimilar time scales. The 9-month scale has the highest correlation, with EDI and is among the similar scale indices, of all the month scales considered in this study.

2. As a result, the 9-month scale is best suitable, for comparing drought indices, in the study area.

3. Evaluating drought indices, during historical drought periods (1986-2015) revealed, that SPEI-9 given better than other drought indices, in identifying drought characteristics, and it has the highest relative frequency, in 'severe dry' classes in all the six districts except Bharuch.

4. According to the results, of the evaluation of drought indices, based on the 5 drought indices, the severity of drought indices, based on rainfall is in the calculation of SPEI-9, RDI-9, SPI-9, EDI, and PDN-9.

5. This finding emphasizes, the importance of the water balance, difference between rainfall and PET for effective drought monitoring, in the study area.

In general, SPEI-9 outperforms other drought indices, in detecting historical droughts and identifying drought characteristics. As a result, SPEI at a 9-month scale is recommended, in the drought monitoring system, for effective water resource planning and management in the study area. As a result, of changing climate and socio-economic conditions, it is suggested that other probabilistic distributions, for probability-based drought indices be tested in the future as a follow-up to this study. In addition, with the availability of more drought-index defining variables, a study focusing on the development of a comprehensive drought index, is recommended for the study area.

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