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The effects of temperature and salinity stressors on the survival, condition, and valve closure of the Manila clam, *Venerupis philippinarum* in a holding facility

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Abstract: We investigated the response of the Manila clam *Venerupis philippinarum* to possible temperature and salinity changes in a holding facility. First, clams were exposed to four temperatures for 15 days. Valve closure and survival of clams exposed to seawater at 18°C were higher than that of those exposed to seawater at 24°C. Second, clams were exposed to six salinities for 15 days. Survival of clams exposed to two salinity fluctuation conditions (24–30 and 27–24 psu) was lower than that of clams exposed to constant 30 psu conditions. Valve closures of clams exposed to constant low salinity conditions (24 psu) and two salinity fluctuation conditions (24–30 and 27–24 psu) were higher than of those exposed to constant 30 psu conditions. Lastly, clams were exposed to two different temperatures and three different salinities conditions for 8 days. Valve closure and survival decreased significantly under the combination of 24°C and 18 psu. These results suggest that an increase in temperature or a wider range of salinity fluctuations are detrimental to the survival of the Manila clam. The synergistic effect of temperature and salinity stressors may decrease the survival period of clams compared to the effect of a single stressor.

Keywords: warming; freshening; salinity fluctuation; multiple stressors; stock holding

1. Introduction

Increased anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions have contributed to climate-related changes, such as global warming, ocean freshening, and extreme weather events, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report [1]. The global mean surface temperature is predicted to increase by 1.0–3.7°C by 2100 [2]. In addition, the number of melting glaciers, the frequency and intensity of heavy rainfall events, and the input of freshwater from rivers may increase due to global warming [3,4]. These events can affect the marine ecosystem, especially through direct effects on marine organisms in the coastal zone [5,6].

Estuaries are among the most ecologically and economically important environments and are sensitive to the effects of climate change [7,8]. Temperature and salinity are important environmental factors affecting the survival of marine benthic organisms, and increasing temperatures and decreasing salinity can act as dominant physical stressors [9]. The reported effects of an increase in temperature include changes in growth [10,11], behavior [12,13], metabolism [14,15], and mortality [12,16]. Salinity effects include abnormal endogenous rhythms [17], changes in behavior [18–20], decreased condition index [21,22], and increased in mortality [23]. Short-term temperature and salinity

stressors such as heat waves and heavy rainfall can threaten growth, recruitment, and survival at the population level [24,25]. To date, there have been many studies on the single-stressor effects, but studies on the effect of combined stressors are limited. The combination of temperature and salinity effects results in reduced energy [26], and increased mortality [27]. The combination of multiple stressors may induce both additive, synergistic, or antagonistic responses [16,28,29]. Therefore, it is important to understand the effects of both single and combined stressors to estimate the ecological impact of climate change on marine benthic animals and economic damage in aquaculture [30,31].

Bivalves are valuable biological resources in estuaries and are generally harvested when they grow to market size [9]. Once harvested, fresh bivalves are transported to the local market. However, extreme weather conditions and unforeseen problems may delay the timely transport of bivalves to the market, and bivalves can spend extended time in holding facilities [32,33]. In these situations, bivalves can face fluctuating physical stressors during the holding period [34,35]. Because the water used at the holding facilities is pumped up from the surrounding bay, the bivalves in the facility may be exposed to similar temperature and salinity conditions as those in the field [35]. Several experimental studies have investigated the influence of exposure to fluctuating physical stressors on the survival of bivalves during the holding period, and most of them focused on mussels, which are epifaunal species with a high frequency of extended exposure to the air [32–36]. Conversely, studies on clams, which are infaunal species with a relatively low frequency of exposure to the air, are very rare.

In consideration of this, we investigated the response of the Manila clam, *Venerupis philippinarum*, to possible temperature and salinity changes in a holding facility. *Venerupis philippinarum* is distributed in the northwest Pacific coasts, such as Korea, Japan, China, and the Philippines, and has been introduced to Europe and North America [37,38]. *Venerupis philippinarum* is an infaunal suspension-feeding bivalve that is an ecologically and commercially important species [37,39].

We hypothesized that the impact of climate-related events would negatively affect the survival and behavior of *V. philippinarum* in the holding facility. Three experiments were conducted to test this hypothesis. First, to determine the effect of increasing temperature, the clams were exposed to four treatments of varying temperature under constant salinity. Second, to determine the effect of decreasing salinity and fluctuations in salinity, clams were exposed to six different salinity treatments under constant temperature. Lastly, to determine the effect of the combined temperature and salinity changes, clams were exposed to two different temperatures and three different salinity conditions.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Collection and acclimation

For Experiment 1, *V. philippinarum* were collected from Gunpyeong-ri in the Yellow Sea, Korea (37°07'05.1"N, 126°36'47.5"E). For Experiment 2 and Experiment 3, *V. philippinarum* that were originally cultured from Muui-Do in the Yellow Sea, Korea (37°23'31.7"N, 126°24'56.0"E) were purchased from a local market located in Incheon, Korea (37°27'13.6"N, 126°36'22.4"E). The collected clams were transported to the laboratory in an icebox. Once in the laboratory, clams were placed in six acclimation tanks (60 L, 38 cm × 55 cm × 30 cm, W × L × H) without added food for 7–8 days. After acclimation, they were individually marked using a paint marker (Kangnam Kpi Co., Seoul, Korea), and their shell lengths were measured with digital calipers (CD-15PSX, Mitutoyo Corp., Kanagawa, Japan) to the nearest 0.01mm. Water quality was measured using a YSI pro2030 (Yellow Spring Instruments Inc., OH, USA). The water temperature was controlled using a heater (BS-3000, Dong-woo Electric, Daegu, Korea). Salinity was controlled by adding Red Sea salt (Red Sea, HO, USA) and tap water without chlorine.

2.2. Experimental setup

In each experiment, large experimental chambers (126 L, 75 cm × 80 cm × 20 cm, W × L × H) were used and continuously aerated using an air pump (YP-15A, Youngnam, Busan, Korea). In each chamber, water was pumped through a filter (EHEIM Professionel 4+ 250, EHIM GmbH & Co. KG, Deizisau, Germany) and one cooler (DAEIL DBC-150, Daeil, Busan, Korea) (Figure. 1a) and then entered via a hose to each jar containing clams in a submerged net pot (Figure. 1b). The water of the jars was overflowed into each chamber and circulated. The photoperiod followed a 12/12-h light/dark cycle.

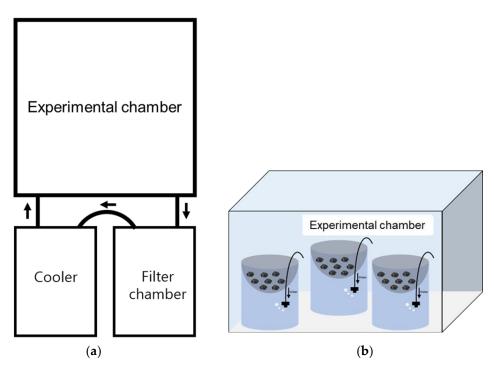


Figure 1. (a) Diagram of the experimental setup and (b) diagram of each experimental chamber.

2.2.1 Temperature (Experiment 1)

To investigate the effect of temperature on the survival and behavioral response of V. philippinarum, the first experiment was conducted from September 21 to October 5, 2018. A total of 360 clams [shell length (SL) 33.51 ± 0.095 mm: mean \pm standard error (SE)] were randomly selected from the acclimation tank, which maintained steady conditions ($T = 15^{\circ}\text{C}$, 18°C , 21°C , and 24°C ; Sal = 30 psu). Nine clams were allocated to each replicate. Ten replicates per treatment were placed inside each experimental chamber. The clams were maintained under four experimental conditions for 15 days. The water temperature of the four chambers was set at 15°C , 18°C , 21°C , and 24°C , which correspond to temperatures Manila clams in a holding tank can experience between May and August (Sea Grant Gyeonggi, Korea). An ambient salinity of 30psu was maintained throughout all four experimental conditions.

2.2.2. Salinity (Experiment 2)

To investigate the effect of different salinity conditions (low salinity and salinity fluctuations) on V. philippinarum, the second experiment was conducted from June 12 to June 26, 2020. A total of 384 clams (SL 33.52 \pm 0.091 mm: mean \pm SE) were randomly selected from the acclimation tank, which maintained steady conditions ($T = 21^{\circ}\text{C}$; Sal = 30 psu). Eight clams were allocated to each replicate. Eight replicates per treatment were placed inside the experimental chamber (Figure. 2a). The clams were maintained under six experimental conditions for 15 days. We exposed clams to the following experimental treatments at a constant temperature (21°C): (1) constant salinity (24,27, and 30 psu) and (2) fluctuating salinity (24–30, 27–24, and 30–27 psu). These salinity ranges correspond to

those experienced by Manila clams in the holding tank during the summer season (Sea Grant Gyeonggi). Fluctuating salinity was obtained using the following steps (Figure. 2): first, clams were immersed in the initial salinity chambers for 12 h. Second, the net pot was moved to the chamber with the next scheduled salinity treatment, and clams were immersed in the chambers for 12 h. The net pot was then moved to the initial salinity chamber. This procedure was repeated daily. Clams were fed 10 mL of Shellfish Diet 1800® (20,000 cells/mL; Reed Mariculture Inc., Campbell, USA) twice a day.

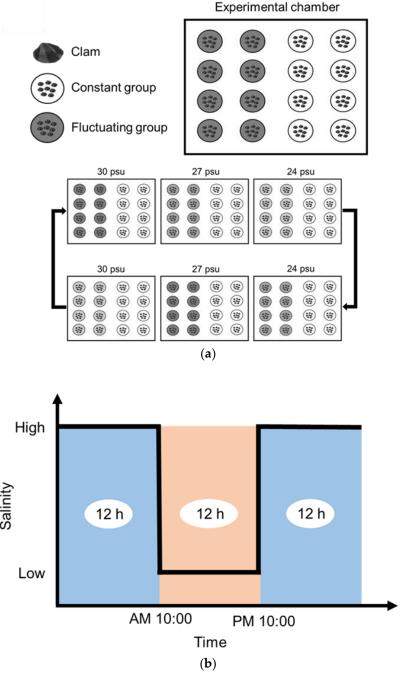


Figure 2. (a) Schematic diagram of Experiment 2 setup and (b) an example of the salinity fluctuation procedure of Experiment 2.

2.2.3. Temperature & Salinity (Experiment 3)

The results of Experiment 1 and Experiment 2 showed no significant difference in mortality between 21° C and 24° C, or between 30, 27, and 24 psu (see the Results). Thus, to investigate the combined effect of temperature and salinity on V. philippinarum, we conducted an additional experiment based on these results from October 10 to October 17,

2020. A total of 576 clams (SL 34.33 ± 0.15 mm; mean \pm SE) were randomly selected from the acclimation tank and were maintained under steady conditions ($T = 21^{\circ}\text{C}$; Sal = 24 psu). Eight clams were allocated to each replicate. Twelve replicates per treatment were placed inside each experimental chamber. The clams were maintained under six experimental conditions for 8 days. We exposed clams to the following experimental treatments with two different levels of temperature and three different levels of salinity: (1) low temperature and low salinity (LTLS, 21°C and 18 psu); (2) low temperature and middle salinity (LTMS, 21°C and 21 psu); (3) low temperature and high salinity (LTHS, 21°C and 24 psu); (4) high temperature and low salinity (HTLS, 24°C and 18 psu); (5) high temperature and middle salinity (HTMS, 24°C and 21 psu); and (6) high temperature and high salinity (HTHS, 24°C and 24 psu). The temperature and salinity treatment values were within the range of natural variations in the holding tank (Sea Grant Gyeonggi). The clams were fed 10 mL of Shellfish Diet 1800° (20,000 cells/mL; Reed Mariculture Inc.) twice a day.

2.3. Measurements

Mortality, condition index, and valve closure were measured in Experiments 1 and 2. Mortality and valve closure were measured in Experiment 3.

2.3.1. Mortality

The number of dead individuals was checked in each jar at 10:00 and 22:00 daily during the experimental period. A clam was determined as "dead" when it maintained the gaping valve or showed decreased closure power of the shell despite mechanical stimulus [9,40]. Mortality was calculated as follows:

Morality (%) =
$$\frac{No. \text{ of dead individuals}}{Original \text{ no. of individuals}} \times 100$$

2.3.2. Condition index (CI)

The condition index (CI) is an ecological and physiological indicator that is widely used to assess bivalve fitness and the effects of environmental stresses [21,36]. After each experiment, the clams were dissected and divided into tissues and shells. The tissue and shell in an aluminum dish were placed in a drying oven (VS-1202D3-S, Vision, Bucheon, Korea) at 65°C for 48 h and then weighted using an electronic microbalance (PX224KR/E, Ohaus, NJ, USA). CI was calculated according to the formula provided by Walne (1976):

$$CI = \frac{Dry \ tissue \ weight \ (g)}{Dry \ shell \ weight \ (g)} \times 100$$

2.3.3. Valve closure

During the experimental period, the number of clams closing their valves in each jar was checked daily at 09:00 and 21:00. The percentage of individuals with valve closure was calculated as follows:

$$Valve\ closure\ (\%) = \frac{No.\ of\ valve\ closure\ individuals}{No.\ of\ individuals\ in\ each\ replicate} \times 100$$

2.4. Statistical analyses

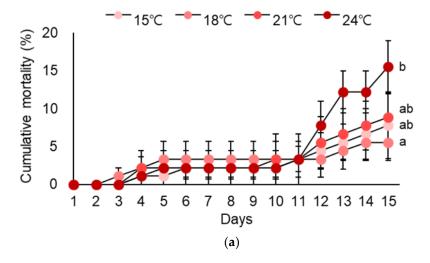
Arcsine square root transformations were performed on all proportional data (valve closure rate of clams). In Experiments 1 and 2, Mann-Whitney *U* tests were used to compare the two treatment groups, and Kruskal-Wallis *H* tests were used to compare multiple treatment groups. If there was a significant difference in the Kruskal-Wallis *H* test, Dunn's test was performed as a post-hoc test for multiple comparison analysis. In Experiment 3,

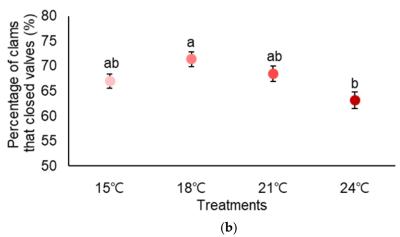
a two-way ANOVA was used to determine whether mortality was influenced by a combination of the two temperatures and three salinities. In all the experiments, a repeated-measures ANOVA was applied to determine the effects of each factor on valve closure. If there was a significant difference, Tukey's post-hoc test was applied. When sphericity (equality of variance) was violated (Mauchly's test, p < 0.05), Huynh–Feldt corrections were applied. Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS ver. 19.0 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA).

3. Results

3.1. Temperautre (Experiment 1)

There was no significant difference in mortality between treatments (Kruskal-Wallis H test; $x^2 = 6.034$, df = 3, p = 0.110; Figure. 3a). However, mortality was significantly different between the 18°C and 24°C conditions (two-tailed Mann-Whitney U test; 18°C vs. 24°C: U = 17.5, $n_1 = 9$, $n_2 = 9$, p = 0.032). The mortality rate at 24°C was the highest. There was no significant difference in CI between different temperatures (Kruskal-Wallis H test; $x^2 = 5.034$, df = 3, p = 0.169; Figure. 3c). There was a significant difference in valve closure between treatments (repeated measures ANOVA; $F_{3,32} = 3.446$, p = 0.028; Figure. 3b). Individuals were significantly more inactive at 18°C than at 24°C (Tukey's post hoc test; p = 0.018).





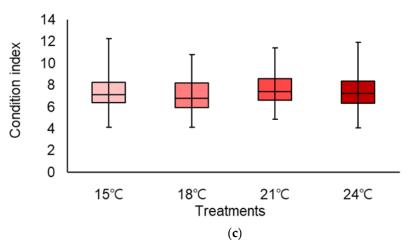
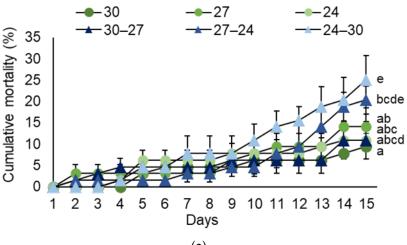


Figure 3. (a) Cumulative mortality rate (mean \pm SE), (b) the proportion of valve closure (mean \pm SE), and (c) condition index (mean \pm SE) of *Venerupis philippinarum* during exposure to different temperature (15°C, 18°C, 21°C, and 24°C) for 15 days. Different letters indicate significant differences between treatments (p < 0.05).

3.2. Salinity (Experiment 2)

There was a significant difference in mortality between treatments (Kruskal-Wallis H test; $x^2 = 12.513$, df = 5, p = 0.028; Figure. 4a). Although the mortality under constant conditions did not significantly differ between the various treatments (24 vs. 27 vs. 30 psu), mortality under fluctuating conditions did differ significantly between 24–30 psu and 30–27 psu (Dunn's test; p = 0.016). In addition, the mortality of individuals exposed to two fluctuating salinity conditions (24-30 psu, 27-24 psu) was higher than of those exposed to a constant 30 psu (Dunn's test; 24–30 psu vs. 30 psu: p = 0.005; 27–24 psu vs. 30 psu: p = 0.033). There were no significant differences in CI between the different treatments (Kruskal-Wallis *H* test; $x^2 = 2.272$, df = 5, p = 0.810; Figure. 4c). There was a significant difference in valve closure between treatments (repeated measures ANOVA; $F_{5,42}$ = 4.713, p = 0.002; Figure. 4b). The valve closure under constant conditions was significantly different between 24 and 30 psu (Tukey's post hoc test; 30 psu vs. 24 psu: p = 0.018). Valve closure under fluctuating conditions showed no significant difference between different treatments (24-30 vs. 27-24 vs. 30-27). Valve movement was significantly more inactive in individuals exposed to one constant condition (24 psu) and two fluctuating salinity conditions (24-30 psu and 27-24 psu) compared to those exposed to a constant 30 psu (Tukey's post hoc test; 30 psu vs. 24–30 psu: p = 0.022; 30 psu vs. 27–24 psu: p = 0.021).



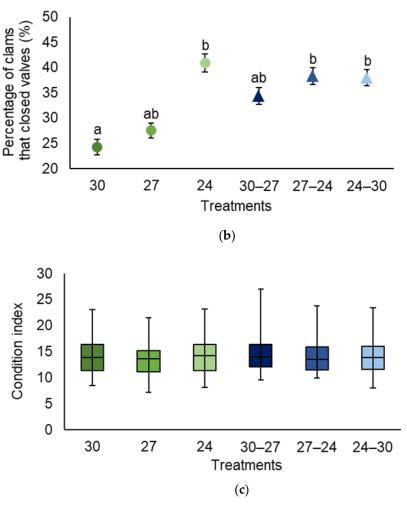


Figure 4. (a) Cumulative mortality rate (mean \pm SE), (b) the proportion of valve closure (mean \pm SE), and (c) condition index (mean \pm SE) of *Venerupis philippinarum* during exposure to different salinities (constant condition: 30, 27, and 24 psu, fluctuating condition: 30–27, 27–24, and 24–30 psu) for 15 days. Different letters indicate significant differences between treatments (p < 0.05).

3.3 Temperature & salinity (Experiment 3)

Temperature, salinity, and the interaction between the two factors significantly influenced mortality (two-way ANOVA, temperature: $F_{1,66}$ = 36.690, p < 0.001; salinity: $F_{2,66}$ = 3.533, p = 0.035; temperature × salinity: $F_{2,66}$ = 4.099, p = 0.021; Figure. 5a). After 8 days of exposure, mortality significantly increased at a water temperature of 24°C and at a salinity of 18 psu. The highest mortality was observed under the combination of high temperature (24°C) and low salinity (18 psu). Temperature, salinity, and the interaction between the two factors also significantly influenced valve closure (Figure. 5b and Table 1). The valve closure was significantly lower at a water temperature of 24°C and at a salinity of 18 psu than that at low temperature (21°C) and/or high salinity (24 psu). The lowest valve closure was observed under the combination of high temperature (24°C) and low salinity (18 psu).

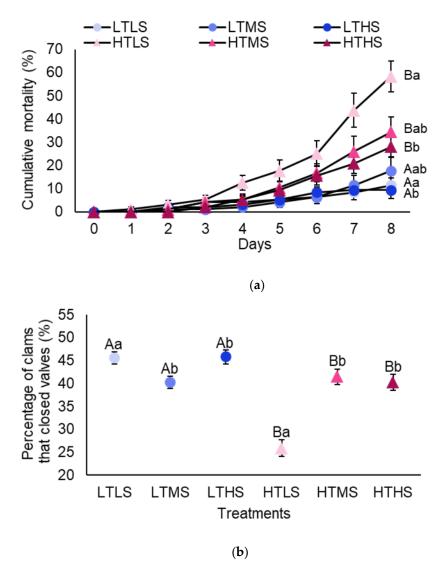


Figure 5. (a) Cumulative mortality rate (mean \pm SE) and (b) the proportion of valve closure (mean \pm SE) of *Venerupis philippinarum* during exposure to two different temperature (21°C and 24°C) and three different salinities (18, 21, and 24 psu) for 8 days. Different uppercase letters indicate significant differences between treatments for temperature, and different.

Table 1. Results of the two-way repeated-measures ANOVA for the effects of temperature and salinity on the valve closure of *Venerupis philippinarum*

	Valve closure
Within-subject effect	
Day	$F_{380.987,5.773} = 14.900$ $p < 0.001$
Day × Temperature	$F_{380.987,5.773} = 5.674$ $p < 0.001$
Day × Salinity	$F_{380.987,11.545} = 4.542$ $p < 0.001$
Day × Temperature × Salinity	$F_{380.987,11.545} = 4.932$ $p < 0.001$
Between-subject effect	
Temperature	$F_{66,1} = 28.418$

	<i>p</i> < 0.001
Salinity	$F_{66,2} = 8.584$
	<i>p</i> < 0.001
Temperature × Salinity	$F_{66,2} = 16.076$
	<i>p</i> < 0.001

4. Discussion

4.1. Temperature

A reduction in valve closure and increased mortality at 24°C compared to 18°C were observed, although the CI of clams showed no significant differences between different temperatures (15–24°C) for 15 days. The results were similar to those of a previous study on the effects of temperature on juveniles V. philippinarum [16]. The increased mortality and behavior change at 24°C may be a consequence of metabolic depression caused by high temperatures. Han et al. (2008) reported that the thermal optimum in scope for growth (SFG) for adults V. philippinarum is 20°C, and Nie et al. (2017) found a reduction in oxygen consumption of adults V. philippinarum at temperatures >25°C. The mussel Mytilus galloprovincialis has a similar trend when exposed to high temperatures, as shown by the decrease in valve closure at a temperature above 26°C, the increased mortality, and a reduction in SFG [12,14].

Broadly, bivalves are poikilothermic animals that have a low ability to generate internal temperature through metabolic processes [43], and can maintain survival using low energy compared to that used by homeothermic animals of the same weight. Valve closure is a strategy used under stress [39], which saves metabolic energy and can be implemented under short-term stress [12,20]. However, *V. philippinarum* with aragonite shells, which have higher thermal conductivity, cannot avoid extreme temperatures through valve closure [44,45]. Therefore, temperatures over the optimal range may have a negative effect on *V. philippinarum* in the holding facility.

4.2. Salinity

Constant low-salinity conditions did not have a significant effect on mortality or CI; however, constant low salinity had a significant effect on the valve closure of the clams for 15 days. When exposed to salinities near or beyond their tolerance limits, the initial response of bivalves is valve closure. Prolonged valve closing periods may result in mortality due to increased anaerobic metabolism and reduced filtration [9,20]. However, at salinities higher than 20 psu, the metabolic activities of *V. philippinarum* can recover to the original endogenous rhythm (measured oxygen consumption rate) within 12 h [17]. In addition, several studies have reported that exposure to 24 psu is within the optimal salinity range [23,46]. Nevertheless, Parada et al. (2012) reported that long-term exposure to between 25 and 30 psu for approximately 30 days leads to severe mortality in *V. philippinarum* in the field. Our findings indicate that *V. philippinarum* can tolerate seawater at 24 psu for 15 days; however, a more prolonged exposure may lead to the accumulation of effects causing increased mortality.

Previous studies on the effect of salinity fluctuation on V. philippinarum showed that salinity above 24psu did not influence mortality or valve movement [39,48]. For instance, Arisman et al. (2017) reported that V. philippinarum exposed to 24 psu at 18°C for 30 days in a 3-h cycle per day did not show different results for mortality and immune response (measure of lysozyme activity) compared to those of individuals exposed to 34 psu. It was observed that V. philippinarum exposed to 25 psu at 17°C in a 1-day cycle for

15 days did not differ in mortality or valve closure compared to those exposed to 30 psu. However, in this study, clams exposed to 24 psu at 21°C for 12 h per day showed high mortality and valve closure. This suggests that the salinity fluctuation tolerance range for survival narrowed as the temperature increased, but further information about the metabolic response is needed to understand the combined effects of temperature and salinity fluctuation on the survival and behavior of *V. philippinarum*.

4.3. Temperature & salinity

Temperature and salinity act not only as single stressors but also as combined stressors. In this study, temperature, salinity, and the interaction between them significantly influenced mortality and valve closure. A reduction in valve closure and increased mortality at 24°C compared to that at 21°C was observed. Based on the results of Experiments 1 and 3, the 3°C temperature increase had no significant effect when clams were exposed to 30 psu. However, when the salinity was less than 24psu, the range of temperature at which V. philippinarum survived was narrowed.

Our findings support those of previous studies in that the temperature range at which the species survived became narrower as salinity decreased [27,49]. In addition, significantly increased mortality and decreased valve closure were observed after exposure to 18 psu compared to that at 21 psu and 24 psu in this study. Unlike in Experiment 2, the reasons for the low valve closure in the high-mortality condition could be that the exposure to 18 psu is close to their tolerance limit. Previous studies have reported that salinity below 20 psu induces abnormal metabolic activity and decreases the clearance rate [17,50].

Synergistic interactions between multiple stressors are common in nature [29]. In this study, clam mortality was significantly higher under the 24°C temperature when combined with the 18psu condition. The interaction between temperature and salinity had a more significant effect on mortality in shorter periods compared to their individual effects in Experiments 1 and 2, respectively, and more than 50% of clams died after 8 days of exposure. These results indicate that during the summer, when extreme climate events occur, the combination of high temperature and low salinity may cause the mass mortalities of V. philippinarum in the holding facility within 1–2 weeks.

5. Conclusions

Our study provides information on how climate-related events affect the survival and behavior of the infauna Manila clam V. philippinarum in holding facilities. The results showed that a single stressor of temperature or salinity affected behavior and that these effects can be reflected in mortality rates. Furthermore, the combination of warming and low salinity could lead to mass mortality of V. philippinarum within 8 days. Additionally, the combination of heavy precipitation events and increased temperature may affect the survival and behavior of V. philippinarum, and further studies should be conducted on the physiological response of the clams to understand the combined effect of temperature and salinity fluctuations. Based on these results, we recommend that the holding in the summer period should be 1-2 weeks, with the optimal temperature of $18-21^{\circ}$ C and the optimal salinity range of > 24 psu. Moreover, this research can help guide the planning of clam fisheries management and can be used in the design and operation of the holding facility.

6. Patents

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, H.B., J.I., S.J., B.C. and T.K.; Methodology, H.B., J.I., S.J. and B.C.; Formal analysis, H.B., J.I., S.J. and B.C.; Investigation, H.B. and J.I.; Writing – original draft preparation, H.B.; Writing – Review & Editing, T.K.; Supervision, T.K.; Funding acquisition, T.K.

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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