Comparative Insilco functional, structural and phylogenetic characterization of plant
Mn-Superoxide Dismutase

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Abstract

The environmental stress is jeopardizing the production as well as the survival of plants. This stress leads to the emergence of ROS, a toxic byproduct of several metabolic processes. To combat the ROS plant possess definite defense machinery, superoxide dismutase is one of the antioxidant enzymes responsible for effectively eradicating these ROS. Amongst several SOD, MnSOD is specialized in eliminating the ROS from mitochondria, a site for cellular energy production. In this study, the MnSOD from 16 plants was considered, and its physiochemical and structural properties were predicted using various computational tools. The physiochemical characterization reveals protein properties such as Mw, PI, AI, GRAVY, and II. The secondary structure and the motif analysis revealed these proteins' functional characteristics. The 3D structure of several proteins was not available, so the SWISS model was used for the homology modeling. The quality of the predicted protein structures was verified using the Ramachandran Plot, VERIFY 3D, and PROCHECK under the SAVES server. These data would provide a foundation for structural and functional characterization of potential MnSOD yet to be characterized, which is expected to enhance the knowledge about its metal binding and catalytic efficiency for future applications.

Keywords: Superoxide dismutase, Reactive oxygen species, bioinformatics, Swiss Model.

Introduction

Plants thoroughly consume oxygen during various metabolic pathways for the production

of energy. There is an escape of individual oxygen molecules during these pathways, which

contributes to the generation of highly reactive oxygen species [1, 2]. These ROS are singlet

oxygen (1O2), superoxide ions (O22), and peroxides. To a certain extent, these ROS are

beneficial to the cell, but beyond a limit, they disturb the redox homeostasis by altering DNA

and causing protein oxidation and lipid peroxidation. To overcome the oxidative stress

caused by ROS, the plant produces a series of enzymatic and non-enzymatic antioxidants [3].

Superoxide dismutase, an antioxidant enzyme, is considered the first line of defense to

scavenge the ROS by converting the singlet oxygen molecule to harmless molecules of

hydrogen peroxide, which is later catalyzed into water. These SOD have been categorized

into three classes based on different metal ions present at their active center, namely Cu-Zn

SOD, MnSOD, and Fe-SOD. Amongst them, MnSOD is of great interest as it is localized in

mitochondria, which is a major site for energy metabolism for plant cells [4].

The physicochemical and structural properties of the protein were elucidated through

computational tools. Various tools from different sources are available for a vast range of

computational analyses to identify and predict a particular protein. The traditional

experimental method for characterizing proteins from various organisms has an inevitable

drawback: time-consuming, high cost, and requires multiple machines and techniques. Hence

these issues can be tackled through Insilco approaches. Most of the necessary information for

the characterization and determining the functional and physicochemical properties are

attained through amino acid sequences. This study reported the insilico analysis functional

expression studies on MnSOD antioxidant proteins of several plant species. To get further

insights into the structural features, the modeling was performed that would provide a

suggestive idea for its molecular functions.

Materials and methods

2.1 Sequence retrieval from NCBI database

The corresponding amino acid sequences of different manganese superoxide dismutase

from 16 different plant species were retrieved from the NCBI (National Centre for

Biotechnology Information) database (https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/) in the FASTA format

for all the computational analysis. Only full-length sequences were considered for in silico

analysis. The full-length sequence of *Nerium Oleander* was identified in our lab and used for

the studies.

2.2 Physiochemical characterization

The amino acids are considered to provide an insight into the physicochemical properties

of the protein, which can be characterized to evaluate the molecular weight (Expasy compute

Mw/PI), theoretical isoelectric point (pI), its extinction coefficient [5], instability index (II –

stability of proteins) [6],   aliphatic index (AI-relative volume of protein occupied by

aliphatic side chains) [7] and grand average hydropathy[8] which were computed using the

Expasy's ProtParam server (http://us.expasy.org/tools/protparam.html).

2.3 Secondary structure prediction and motif analysis

The SOPMA (Self Optimized Prediction Method with Alignment) was used for the

secondary structure prediction of all the MnSOD proteins, which suitably predicted 69.5% of

amino acids for a state description of the secondary structure prediction. The data obtained

were curated and submitted in FASTA format for further analysis to ScanProsite

(https://prosite.expasy.org/scanprosite/) to analyze the motif present in the protein sequence.

2.4 Multiple sequence alignment and phylogenetic tree construction

The multiple sequence alignment of all the protein sequences was done using Clustal

Omega software (https://www.ebi.ac.uk/Tools/msa/clustalo/). The obtained FASTA

alignment file was used to construct a phylogenetic tree using the Neighbor-joining method

using MEGA 10.0 with a bootstrap value of 1000.

2.5 Homology modeling and structure prediction

The homology modeling was performed using Swiss Modeler software. The best match

structure with the known template was selected and analyzed further. The PDB file generated

for each protein structure through modeling was examined using the SAVES server under

which the Ramachandran plot, ERRAT plot, and VERIFY 3D were functioned to assess the

quality of the predicted protein models.

3. Results and discussion

3.1 Secondary structure prediction of MnSOD proteins

Antioxidants are a well-known and interesting set of proteins; among them, MnSOD proves

to be the primary antioxidant that involves an initial defense mechanism against various

biotic and abiotic stress. From the available data of MnSOD proteins in NCBI, 16 were

considered for further insilico analysis. One of them is *N.oleander,* which is characterized in

our lab. A graphical representation of the percentage of helices, beta-sheet, and random coils

is given in Fig 2. The results revealed that overall the percentage of α helices was

predominant in each individual MnSOD protein with the highest number in *O.sativa* (54%)

and lowest in *S.indicum* (44%), followed by random coil percentage, which was more in

H.annuus (36.4%), *S.indicum* (34.67%), *C. japonica* (34.21%) the others were in the range

of (26-30%). This significantly shows that the MnSOD protein is predominantly an alpha-

helical protein irrespective of its difference in origin. The detailed amino acid composition, as

shown in Fig 4. The composition of amino acids indicates that the MnSOD protein

predominantly consists of non-polar amino acids alanine, leucine, and glycine.

3.2 Physiochemical characterization

Physiochemical characterization is a crucial aspect of revealing insight into a specific

protein. Table 1 shows the different physiochemical properties of all the MnSOD proteins.

The total number of amino acid residues lies in the range of 229-241. The *Nerium oleander*

also lies in the same range with 228 aa residues, which were found to be similar to *C.arabica*,

N. tobaccum, *S. tuberosum*. The isoelectric point is the condition of a solution where the

amino acid produces the same amount of positive and negative charges, resulting in an

absolute zero charge on protein. The isoelectric charge of different proteins was above 7,

which predicts them to be mildly acidic proteins leaving an exception of *O.sativa* and

V.vinifera having pI below seven, making them slightly basic. The instability index for all

proteins was in a range of 27 to 38, which was below 40. In contrast, the value was 42 in

C.chinesis, which symbolize all other proteins which have an aliphatic index below 40 were

stable, and the one above 40 could be unstable [9]. All proteins showed a higher aliphatic

index, which suggested that the protein is possibly thermostable. Here the range of GRAVY

laid in between -0.114 and -0.343. Lower the range of GRAVY better would be the

interaction between protein and water [10]. The aliphatic index (AI) is defined as the relative

volume of a protein occupied by its aliphatic side chains (A, V, I, and L), which is regarded

as a confirmatory factor for the increased thermal stability of any globular proteins [7]. The

aliphatic index for all the MnSOD protein sequences ranged from 87.32 – to 95.15, which

indicates proteins with a high aliphatic index may be thermostable [11]. The extinction

coefficient of MnSODs at 280 nm lies within the range of 47900 to 54890 M–1 cm–1 w.r.t.

the concentration of Cys, Trp, and Tyr. The high extinction coefficient of *O.sativa*,

T.aestivum, and *H.annuus* indicates the presence of a high concentration of Cys, Trp, and

Tyr. These computed extinction coefficients of protein help in analyzing the possible protein–

protein and protein–ligand interactions in solution.

129 *3.3 Sequence alignment and Phylogenetic analysis*

130  The sequence alignment of all the MnSOD proteins reveals that the polypeptide chain is

131 divided into N-terminal helices and a C-terminal α/β domain. All the active sites were located

132 between these N-terminal and C terminal domains with the unique signature sequence pattern

133 D-x-[WF]-E-H-[STA]-[FY] are highly conserved throughout each protein sequence. The

134 phylogenetic tree reveals the distinct relationship amongst each protein in terms of its

135 evolutionary pattern. The whole tree was divided into two major clusters, amongst which the

136 A.*thaliana*, *T.astevium,* and *O.sativa* belonged to one cluster; the second cluster comprises of

137 all the dicots. The multiple sequence alignment and phylogenetic analysis reveal that the

138 MnSOD sequence possesses high sequence and structural similarity irrespective of their

139 monocot or dicot origin, confirming the common ancestry during Mn-SOD evolution [12,

140 13]. This evolutionary separation was further observed amongst the dicotyledons and

141 monocotyledons, similarly, as it was found in other MnSOD studies [14, 15]. The protein

142 secondary structure prediction is subjected to a crucial step for full tertiary structure

143 prediction in computational biology.

144 *3.4 Fingerprint analysis*

145  The ScanProsite was used for all the fingerprint analysis as it is a vast collection of

146 biologically meaningful signatures that are arranged in the form of patterns which are used

147 for the detection of short motif, or generalized profiles for sensitive detection of larger

148 domains. Each signature is associated with a detailed annotation that provided insights about

149 protein family, domains, or functional sites identified by the signatures. The detailed analysis

150 of all the MnSOD protein sequences revealed that these sequences comprise of following

151 families: PKC_PHOSPHO_SITE (protein kinase phosphorylation sites) that phosphorylates

152 the OH group of serine or threonine and plays a significant role in a wide range of cellular

153 processes like post-translational modification. In plants, protein phosphorylation has been

implied in responses to many signals, including light, pathogen invasion, hormones,

temperature stress, and nutrient deprivation. Activities of several plant metabolic and

regulatory enzymes are also controlled by reversible phosphorylation[16]. Followed by

CK2_PHOSPHO_SITE (casein kinase II (CKII) phosphorylation site), which is a ubiquitous

serine-threonine protein kinase highly conserved in all eukaryotes and involved in the

regulation of essential cellular processes[17]. N-myristoylation site (N-MYR) leading to the

N-terminal myristoylation, which plays a vital role in membrane targeting and signal

transduction in plant responses to environmental stress [18]. AMP_PHOPHO_SITE [AMP-

activated protein kinase (AMPK)] as AMPK plays critical role in regulating growth and

reprogramming metabolism and recently has been connected to cellular processes including

autophagy and cell polarity [19]. And lastly, the ASN_GLYCOSYLATION_SITE (N-linked

glycosylation) (Table), which is associated with Glycosylation, a significant post-

translational modification, and is known to influence protein folding, localization and

trafficking, protein solubility, biological activity and cell-cell interactions [20]. In MnSOD,

the families PKC_PHOSPHO_SITE, CK 2_PHOSPHO_SITE, N-myristoylation site,

AMP_PHOPHO_SITE, and ASN_GLYCOSYLATION_SITE were 2, 4, 6, 4 amino acid in

length, amongst them AMP_PHOSPHO_SITE was only present in 4 out of 16 species

(*G.max, T.aestivum, O.sativa,* and *A.thaliana)*[21]. The PKC_PHOSPHO_SITE was absent

in 3 species and present in rest with a signature sequence of [ST]-x-[RK], variable at 2nd

position, and more or less conserved at one and 3rd position. The CK2_PHOSPHO_SITE was

found to be absent in *O.sativa* and present in all the remaining species with a signature

sequence of [ST]-x (2)-DE]. The four amino acid length sequence was more or less

conserved in all the species, but one extra site was present in 7 species, as mentioned clearly

in Table 2. The N-myristoylation site (N-MYR) was conserved in all the species throughout

with a consensus sequence of G-{EDRKHPFYW}-x (2)-[STAGCN]-{P} in which G is the

N-myristoylation site. N-MYR controls the function of the plant protein complex SnRK1,

described as one of the most crucial plant regulatory proteins in stress and energy signaling.

This lipid modification could be involved in the control of the redox imbalances originating

from different stresses in plants [22]. On the other hand, the AMP_PHOSPHO_SITE, which

is found in humans, was only present in four species that belong to the dicot plants. The ASN

glycosylation with a consensus sequence of Asn-Xaa-Ser/Thr was conserved in the MnSOD

belonging to different plant irrespective of its diversity. N-Glycosylation is majorly involved

in numerous biological processes which comprises of folding of proteins, protein stability

including protein-protein interactions, also the glycan dependent quality assessment processes

in the endoplasmic reticulum. Data for A. thaliana and for monocots like rice strongly

indicate that complex N-glycans are crucial optimum growth under stressful conditions [23].

The recent identification of rice XYLT- deficient plants with significant growth defects at

low temperature is one example [24]. There is an extra glycosylation site present only in

Jatropha curcas and rest has one with similar pattern. Presence of more than one

glycosylation sites leads to structural heterogeneity due to large number of possible stereo-

and regio-isomers. This study provides insights about the structural and functional correlation

of different plants MnSOD in relation to plant metabolism.

3.5 3D prediction of the MnSOD proteins

The 3D structure provides an insight into the essential characteristics of the protein, so the

structural predictions were done for the protein, which lacks such data. The proteins which

requires detailed experimental structures were considered. The modeling of the three-

dimensional structure of the protein was performed by the Swiss Model, a homology

modeling program. The Ramachandran Map generated through the PROCHECK program

under the SAVES server with the refinement process assessed the stereochemical quality as

well as the accuracy of the predicted protein models. Verify 3D has depicted more than 95%

of the residues with an average 3D-1D score greater than 0.2. This demonstrated that the

folding energy patterns of the predicted models are in complete agreement and also supported

the correctness of the predicted model. The overall favored region, additionally favored and

not favored regions of the models were listed in Table 3. The main chain parameters plotted

are Ramachandran plot quality, peptide bond planarity, Bad non- bonded interactions, main

chain hydrogen bond energy, C-alpha chirality, and over-all G factor. The regions of the

quadrangle were considered for the assessment of the residues in the Ramachandran plot

analysis. The most allowed regions were shown as red regions in the graph, whereas the

additionally allowed regions were visualized as the yellow regions. The Glycine was denoted

by triangles whereas the other residues were represented by squares. The distribution of the

main chain bond lengths and bond angles were found to be within limits for these proteins.

N. oleander, J. curcusa, N. tabaccum emerges to have a stable structural moiety in

comparison to *Arabidopsis thaliana,* which was considered as the template for building the

structure. The more the favored region, the more will be the stability of the predicted model.

A good quality model would expect to have over 90% residues in the most favored region (A,

B, L) and additional allowed region. These figures which were designated by the

Ramachandran Plot, represented them to be good quality predicted models. Furthermore, the

ProSA server provides the Zscore value, which lies within the range of scores generally

found for the protein native 3D structures, determined by NMR and X-ray crystallography.

ProSA gave a Z-score value ranging from -7.26 to -8.43.

Conclusion

In this study, MnSOD protein of different plant species were selected and characterized to

deduce its Physicochemical properties by predicting there expected molecular weight,

isoelectric point (pI), EC(extinction coefficient), II(instability index), AI (aliphatic index)and

GRAVY (grand average hydropathy). For these proteins, disulphide linkages, motifs, and

profiles were predicted. The secondary structure prediction revealed that the alpha helix is

predominant in all the proteins followed by random coils. The homology modeling through

the Swiss Model gave an insight into the predicted structural aspects of these MnSOD

proteins. Therefore the computational analysis provided useful information about the

structure and functional aspects of these MnSOD proteins where the data was not available

due to the unavailability of the crystal structures.

Conflict of Interest
The authors share no conflict of interest.

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<u>**Legend of figures**</u>

Figure 1. Graphical representation of helixes, sheets, and the random coil of Mn-Superoxide

dismutase.

Figure 2. Phylogenetic tree of Mn-Superoxide dismutase proteins was constructed using

neighbor-joining method by MEGA X software.

Figure 3. Amino acid sequence alignment of MnSOD. Alpha helices and beta strands are

represented as rods and arrows .The conserved MnSOD signature sequence is shown by the box.

Figure 4. Graphical representation of the percentage of amino acids present in Mn-

Superoxide dismutase protein of different plants.

Figure 5. The assessment of the Ramachandran Plot through SAVES server predicting the

allowed and disallowed region of several uncharacterized proteins.

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Table 1. Physiochemical properties of Manganese Superoxide dismutase in different plant species.

S.No.	organism	Protein accn. No.	aa	PI	Mw	II	AI	EC	GRAVY	Half life
1	*Glycine max*	ABQ52658.1	241	8.56	26.70	27.84	95.15	54890	-0.285	10
2	*Triticum aestivum*	AKH40962.1	225	8.53	24.73	27.86	91.11	54890	-0.285	10
3	*Oryza sativa*	AAA62657.1	231	6.50	24.99	31.67	92.25	53400	-0.114	10
4	*Arabidopsis thaliana*	ACF05703.1	231	8.47	25.44	29.27	89.48	47900	-0.338	10
5	*Tobacco nicotinum*	XP_016513256.1	228	7.86	25.50	37.16	89.43	53400	-0.366	10
6	*Camellia sinensis*	AJW60327.1	230	7.81	25.56	33.46	89.48	53400	-0.293	10
7	*Prunus persica*	XP_007218297.1	237	8.57	26.12	29.17	89.75	53400	-0.243	10
8	*Jatropha curcas*	NP_001295624.1	237	6.71	26.21	36.10	96.33	53400	-0.217	10
9	*Vitis vinifera*	RVW42331.1	228	6.80	25.31	28.67	90.61	53400	-0.342	10
10	*Nerium oleander*	MN365020.1	228	7.84	25.43	37.51	87.32	53400	-0.352	10
11	*Coffeaarabica*	XP_027110626.1	228	7.83	25.53	38.78	91.97	53400	-0.363	10
12	*Solanum tuberosum*	APT43085.1	228	7.13	25.33	35.60	91.14	53400	-0.313	10
13	*Capsicum bataccum*	NP_001311927.1	228	8.39	25.57	42.28	88.60	47900	-0.343	10
14	*Sesamum indicum*	NP_001306618.1	225	7.85	25.09	37.42	89.29	53400	-0.336	10
15	*Citrus japonica*	ADB10839.1	228	7.83	25.15	37.82	90.26	53400	-0.241	10
16	*Helianthus annuus*	XP_022006487.1	228	7.10	25.37	36.91	87.76	54890	-0.339	10

Table 2. Fingerprint analysis for MnSOD in plant species

Signature	Plant species	Sequence
PKC_PHOSPHO_SITE	*Glycine max*	TrK
	Oryza sativa	SrK
	Arabidopsis thaliana	S[r/s]K
	Tobacco nicotinum	SrR
	Camellia sinensis	[T/S][r/I/V/W][R/K]
	Vitis vinifera	[T/S][r/V][K/R]
	Nerium oleander	TsK
	Coffea arabica	TrK
	Solanum tuberosum	[S/T][r/W][R/K]
	Capsicum bataccum	T[k/F][K/R]
	Sesamum indicum	T[r/I]R
	Citrus japonica	TrK
	Helianthus annuus	TrK
CK2_PHOSPHO_SITE	*Glycine max*	TlpD
	Triticum aestivum	[T/S][l/K][p/G]D
	Arabidopsis thaliana	[T/S][l/A][p/I]D
	Tobacco nicotinum	S[l/K][p/G]D
	Camellia sinensis	S[l/A][p/I][D/E]
	Prunus persica	SlpD
	Jatropha curcas	S[l/A][p/I][D/E]
	Vitis vinifera	SlpD
	Nerium oleander	TlpD
	Coffea arabica	TlpD
	Solanum tuberosum	S[l/K][p/G]D

	Capsicum bataccum	S[l/A][p/I]D
	Sesamum indicum	SlpD
	Citrus japonica	[T/S][l/A][p/I][D/E]
	Helianthus annuus	TlpD
N-myristoylation site	*Glycine max*	G[G/V/I/S][G/T/H/F][I/A/V/E][T/A/N][A/H/L]
	Triticum aestivum	G[L/G][A/H][L/R/V][G/N][G/V/H]
	Oryza sativa	G[G/S][H/F][V/E][N/A][H/L]
	Arabidopsis thaliana	G[L/G/S][K/H/L][E/V/G][T/N/S/G][S/H/A/L]
	Tobacco nicotinum	G[G/S][H/L][I/E][N/A][H/L]
	Camellia sinensis	G[S/L/G/][G/H/L][L/I/E][G/N/A][L/F/H]
	Prunus persica	G[G/Q/S][H/G/M][V/G/E][N/G/A][H/E/L]
	Jatropha curcas	G[L/G][G/H][L/I][S/N][Q/H]
	Vitis vinifera	G[L/V/G/S][G/S/H/M][G/V/Q/G/E][G/S/N/A][V/Q/H/L]
	Nerium oleander	G[G/S][E/L/H][P/E/I][A/N][K/L/H]
	Coffea arabica	G[N/G/S/L][S/H/L/Q][V/I/A/G][A/N/S][F/H/L/G]
	Solanum tuberosum	G[G/S][H/L][I/E][N/A][H/L]
	Capsicum bataccum	G[G/S][H/L][I/G/E][N/S/A][H/A/V]
	Sesamum indicum	G[G/S][H/L][V/D][N/A][H/L]
	Citrus japonica	G[M/Q/G/S][G/A/H/L][K/L/V/E][S/N/A][V/K/H/L]
	Helianthus annuus	G[A/G][F/H][S/V][T/N][F/H]
AMP_PHOSPHO_SITE	*Glycine max*	KKdS
	Triticum aestivum	KKlS
	Oryza sativa	KK[m/I]S
	Arabidopsis thaliana	KKmS

ASN_GLYCOSYLATION	*Glycine max*	NHSI
	Triticum aestivum	NHSI
	Oryza sativa	NHSI
	Arabidopsis thaliana	NHSI
	Tobacco nicotinum	NHSI
	Camellia sinensis	NHSL
	Prunus persica	NHSI
	Jatropha curcas	NH/KSI/L
	Vitis vinifera	NHSI
	Nerium oleander	NHSI
	Coffea arabica	NHSI
	Solanum tuberosum	NHSI
	Capsicum bataccum	NHSV
	Sesamum indicum	NHSI
	Citrus japonica	NHSI
	Helianthus annuus	NHSI

Table 3. The statistical analysis of the predicted protein through Swiss plot and Ramachandran Plot

S.No.	Protein	Favored Region (%)	Additionally allowed Region (%)	Generously Allowed Region (%)	Disallowed Region (%)	gmqe	qmean
1.	*Coffee arabica*	92.5	6.4	0.7	0.4	0.81	-0.66
2.	*Glycine max*	92.2	6.7	0.7	0.4	0.77	-0.04
3.	*Triticum astevium*	92.5	6.4	0.7	0.4	0.8	-0.42
4.	*Vitis vinefera*	92.1	6.7	0.7	0.4	0.79	-0.45
5.	*Jatropha curcusa*	92.8	6.1	0.7	0.4	0.76	-0.27
6.	*Camellia senensis*	91.8	6.5	1.2	0.6	0.82	0.36
7.	*Nerium oleander*	92.7	6.1	0.6	0.6	0.81	0.14
8.	*Prunus persica*	91.7	7.2	0.7	0.4	0.78	-0.38
9.	*Oryza sativa*	91.9	6.7	1	0.4	0.78	-0.45
10.	*Capsicum chinesis*	92.8	6	0.7	0.4	0.81	-0.07
11.	*Solanum tuberosum*	93.2	5.6	0.6	0.6	0.8	-0.3
12.	*Sasemum indicum*	92.8	6.1	0.6	0.6	0.82	-0.36
13.	*Helianthus annus*	92.4	6.4	0.7	0.4	0.8	-0.39
14.	*Citrus japonica*	91.2	6.8	1.6	0.4	0.8	-1.11
15.	*Nicotiana tabaccum*	93.2	5.6	0.7	0.4	0.81	0.11
16.	*Arabidopsis thaliana*	91.8	7.0	0.7	0.4	0.92	0.03

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