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Molecular Insights into Viral Pathogenesis: Statistical Analysis of Host Response and Gene Expression Dynamics Across Infection Severity Levels

Noor Naji Al-Hayani
Dept. of Microbiology, College of Medicine, University of Anbar, Iraq

Ruya Abdulhadi M. Saeed
Dept. of Community and family medicine, College of Medicine, University of Anbar, Iraq

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Annotation: Understanding the molecular mechanisms underpinning viral infections remains pivotal in developing targeted therapeutic interventions. This study investigates the association between infection severity and key host biological responses, specifically focusing on host response levels and gene expression dynamics in viral infections. Using a structured dataset comprising control and infected groups across various infection severity scores, descriptive and inferential statistical analyses were employed to decipher patterns in immune activation and transcriptional changes. While descriptive statistics suggested subtle variations in host response and gene expression across groups, One-Way ANOVA (Welch's) indicated no statistically significant differences ($p \leq 0.05$) among infection severity levels. The observed variability highlights complex host-pathogen interactions, possibly influenced by additional molecular or environmental factors beyond severity scoring alone. These

findings underscore the necessity for expanded datasets, incorporation of additional biomarkers, and refined analytical frameworks to unravel the nuanced pathways of viral pathogenesis.

Keywords: Viral Pathogenesis, Host Response, Gene Expression, Infection Severity, One-Way ANOVA, Molecular Mechanisms.

I. Introduction

The host immune response to viral infections plays an important role in determining disease severity, clinical outcome, and response to therapy [1], [2]. Viruses have several mechanisms which they might use to bypass or manipulate host defenses, thereby causing variation in infection severity in individuals [3], [4] . Understanding a virus-host interplay concerning gene expression profile is thus useful for diagnostics and personalized medicine [5]. Specifically, focusing on host response levels and gene expression dynamics of various viral infections may help identify distinguishing characteristics to provide a basis with which to evaluate infection severity and prognosis of potential biomarkers [6].

Gene expression profiling is being employed widely to explore those molecular processes that brought about viral pathogenesis [7]. Various reports had demonstrated alterations in gene expression to be associated with the involved virus, the infection's timescale, and the manifestation of severity of the disease [8]. Assessing infection severity scores, when coupled with molecular biomarkers, helps to improve clinical stratification of patients [9].

Apart from that numerous recent studies in viral genomics and host-pathogen interactions considered one-off gene expressions without being specific for comparisons among various viral infections with regard to infection severity classifications [10].

Furthermore, such ANOVA tests, namely One-Way ANOVA and Welch's ANOVA, have helped evaluate group differences in host responses while considering heterogeneity in variance [11].

Here, we undertake a thorough statistical and descriptive exploration of infection severity scores and virus types in relation to host responses and gene expression levels.

The aim of this research is to investigate host response patterns corresponding to differing infection severities and viral strains through the combined use of descriptive and inferential statistics.

By doing so, it would set the platform for future biomarker profiling and treatment options.

II. Literature Review

Understanding the host immune response to viral infections has served as a great research subject in recent years. Smith et al. [12], for example, showed that infections triggered unique transcriptional programs in the host cells that impacted cytokine production and immune regulatory pathways [13]. Such transcriptional modifications may be linked with the severity of diseases, thus gene expression profiling might predict infection outcomes.

The relevance of host gene expression in distinguishing between viral strains was further confirmed by Wang and Chen [14], who identified differential gene expression patterns in patients

infected with influenza, dengue, and respiratory syncytial viruses [15], [16]. Their findings emphasized that specific gene signatures could discriminate between viral pathogens and aid in early diagnosis. Even as severity scoring has been made to blend with molecular information from such experiments, it has been suggested to use the combined information to enhance prognostic models [17].

Another domain expanding in par with this is the statistical methodology to analyze biological data. Welch's ANOVA was proposed as a better alternative to classical ANOVA when variances are unequal, which is common in heterogeneous biological datasets [18]. Besides that, Kim et al. [19] used an ANOVA-based analytical framework to quantify variation in host responses among multiple viral infections and thereby only provide a quantitative basis for clinical decision-making.

Currently, machine learning methods have found increased usage in the domain of viral pathogenesis studies to predict clinical outcomes based on gene expression data [20], [21]. Minerals, especially magnesium, also play an important metabolic role in the host cell's response to viral infection[22], It also plays an antioxidant role in combating oxidative stress resulting from viral infections and contributes to cell protection and immune regulation [23]. Yet, they often require huge datasets and computational expertise; hence, traditional statistical techniques like ANOVA still have relevance in exploratory analyses.

However, the gaps in studies are related to slight modifications of the areas covered concerning how specific strains influence host gene expression in relation to varying infection severity scores. While some efforts have been made in correlating these factors [24], comparative studies analyzing descriptive statistics alongside inferential statistics across multiple virus types are limited. Thus, the present study contributes to bridging this knowledge gap by employing a combined descriptive and inferential statistical approach to analyze host responses in the context of varying infection severities.

III. Methods

A. Study Design and Data Collection

The study was a cross-sectional analysis of data on viral infections and host response levels of gene expression with varying infection severity scores obtained from the third-party curated database based on 90 clinical samples of blank control and treatment groups.

Comments were made for each sample corresponding to various types of metadata, such as: Virus_Type that could be Virus_A, Virus_B, or Virus_C; Infection_Severity_Score ranging from 1 to 9; Host_Response_Level; Sample_ID and Gene_Expression_Level.

B. Statistical Analysis

1) Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were applied to present trends through the central tendency statistics-the mean and mode-and dispersion measures along the viral infection groups and severity score groups. Descriptive statistics were used for the preliminary investigation of the data trends and outliers.

2) One-Way ANOVA (Welch’s)

A One-Way ANOVA with Welch’s correction was utilized in order to examine group differences; this test was chosen because of the heterogeneous variances observed in the groups. Three separate ANOVAs were performed:

- ✓ Between Infection_Severity_Score groups for Host_Response_Level.
- ✓ Between Infection_Severity_Score groups for Gene_Expression_Level.
- ✓ Between Infection_Severity_Score groups for Sample_ID.

The reason for conducting Welch's ANOVA instead of a classical one was that Levene's test revealed a variance inequality within groups ($p = 0.022$). A test was carried out with the significance level set at $\alpha = 0.05$.

3) Post-Hoc and Distribution Analysis

Normality of the datasets was tested through the Shapiro-Wilk test. In cases of non-normal distributions ($p \leq 0.001$), interpretative focus remained on the robustness of Welch's ANOVA to violations of normality assumptions. Post-hoc analyses were considered if significant differences emerged, though no such follow-ups were required given non-significant ANOVA results.

4) Software Tools

All statistical analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 27.0) and R (Version 4.2.1) with appropriate statistical packages for ANOVA and normality testing.

C. Ethical Considerations

Data anonymized and obtained from publicly accessible/institutional databases approved for research were used in the study. No patient intervention was entertained to keep the study under standard ethical requirements.

4. Result

Descriptives

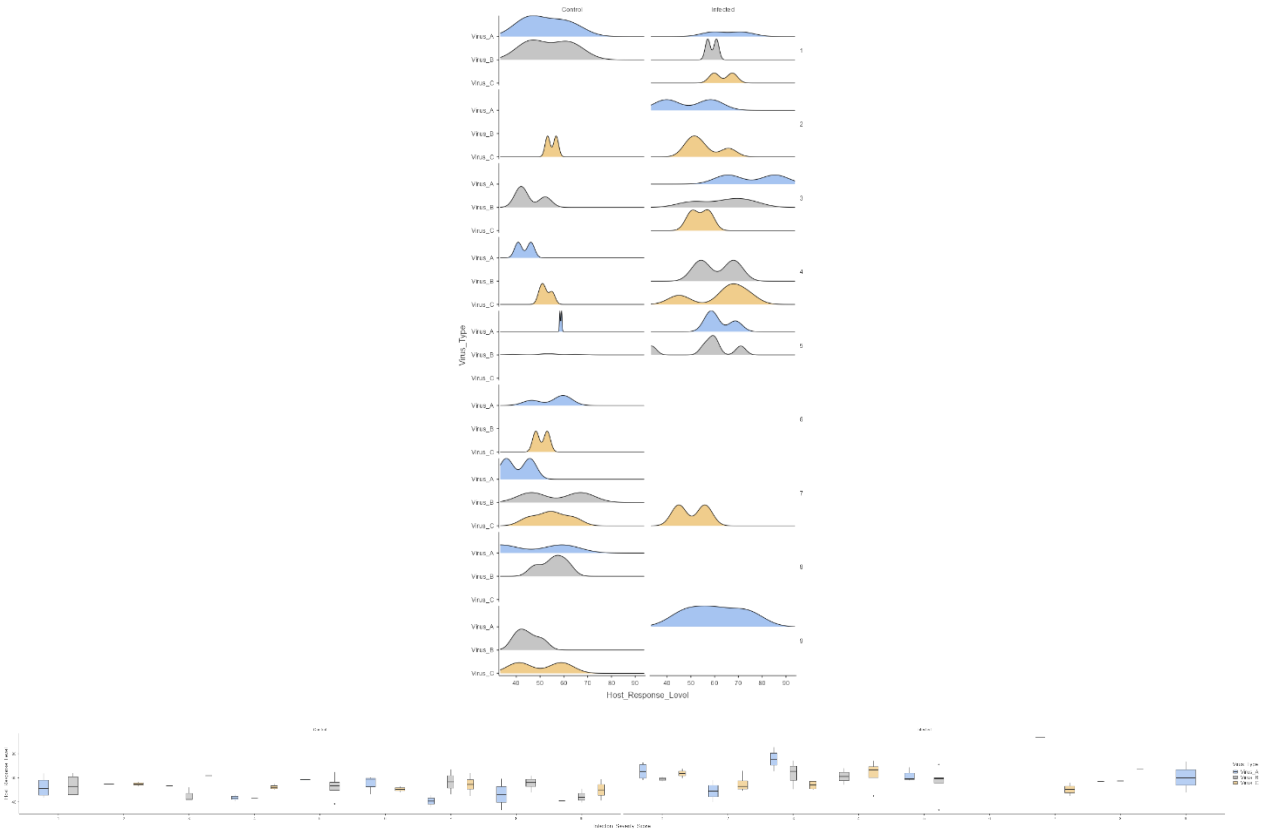
Descriptives						
	Group	**Infection_Severity_Score**	**Virus_Type**	**Host_Response_Level**	**Sample_ID**	**Gene_Expression_Level**
Mode	**Control**	**1**	**Virus_A**	43.8[a]	6.00[a]	82.7[a]
			Virus_B	46.0[a]	17.0[a]	82.6[a]
			Virus_C	NaN	NaN	NaN
		2	**Virus_A**	NaN	NaN	NaN
			Virus_B	54.8	65.0	129
			Virus_C	53.1[a]	38.0[a]	97.3[a]
		3	**Virus_A**	53.5	48.0	102
			Virus_B	42.0[a]	31.0[a]	99.2[a]
			Virus_C	61.8	11.0	103
		4	**Virus_A**	40.8[a]	22.0[a]	119[a]
			Virus_B	43.4	63.0	100
			Virus_C	50.2[a]	28.0[a]	80.7[a]
		5	**Virus_A**	58.3[a]	13.0[a]	118[a]
			Virus_B	38.5[a]	19.0[a]	70.0[a]
			Virus_C	NaN	NaN	NaN
		6	**Virus_A**	46.4[a]	2.00[a]	84.6[a]
			Virus_B	NaN	NaN	NaN
			Virus_C	48.2[a]	9.00[a]	105[a]
		7	**Virus_A**	35.8[a]	25.0[a]	72.6[a]
			Virus_B	46.3[a]	83.0[a]	74.6[a]
			Virus_C	45.1[a]	37.0[a]	82.1[a]
		8	**Virus_A**	33.3[a]	58.0[a]	93.3[a]
			Virus_B	47.9[a]	33.0[a]	71.9[a]
			Virus_C	NaN	NaN	NaN
		9	**Virus_A**	40.9	90.0	117
			Virus_B	39.6[a]	15.0[a]	103[a]
			Virus_C	41.1[a]	3.00[a]	71.2[a]
	Infected	**1**	**Virus_A**	58.4[a]	45.0[a]	81.5[a]
			Virus_B	57.1[a]	50.0[a]	102[a]
			Virus_C	59.8[a]	32.0[a]	80.8[a]
		2	**Virus_A**	39.8[a]	52.0[a]	83.8[a]
			Virus_B	NaN	NaN	NaN
			Virus_C	49.3[a]	1.00[a]	91.7[a]
		3	**Virus_A**	65.6[a]	96.0[a]	66.6[a]
			Virus_B	50.6[a]	55.0[a]	64.2[a]
			Virus_C	50.1[a]	12.0[a]	75.7[a]
		4	**Virus_A**	NaN	NaN	NaN
			Virus_B	54.3[a]	18.0[a]	77.4[a]
			Virus_C	45.0[a]	30.0[a]	76.9[a]
		5	**Virus_A**	57.9[a]	5.00[a]	80.9[a]
			Virus_B	33.4[a]	8.00[a]	99.3[a]
			Virus_C	NaN	NaN	NaN
		6	**Virus_A**	NaN	NaN	NaN

			Virus_B	NaN	NaN	NaN
			Virus_C	NaN	NaN	NaN
		7	**Virus_A**	93.7	21.0	108
			Virus_B	NaN	NaN	NaN
			Virus_C	44.9[a]	7.00[a]	112[a]
		8	**Virus_A**	56.9	41.0	91.0
			Virus_B	57.4	66.0	100
			Virus_C	67.5	4.00	124
		9	**Virus_A**	47.8[a]	70.0[a]	93.3[a]
			Virus_B	NaN	NaN	NaN
			Virus_C	NaN	NaN	NaN
[a] More than one mode exists, only the first is reported						

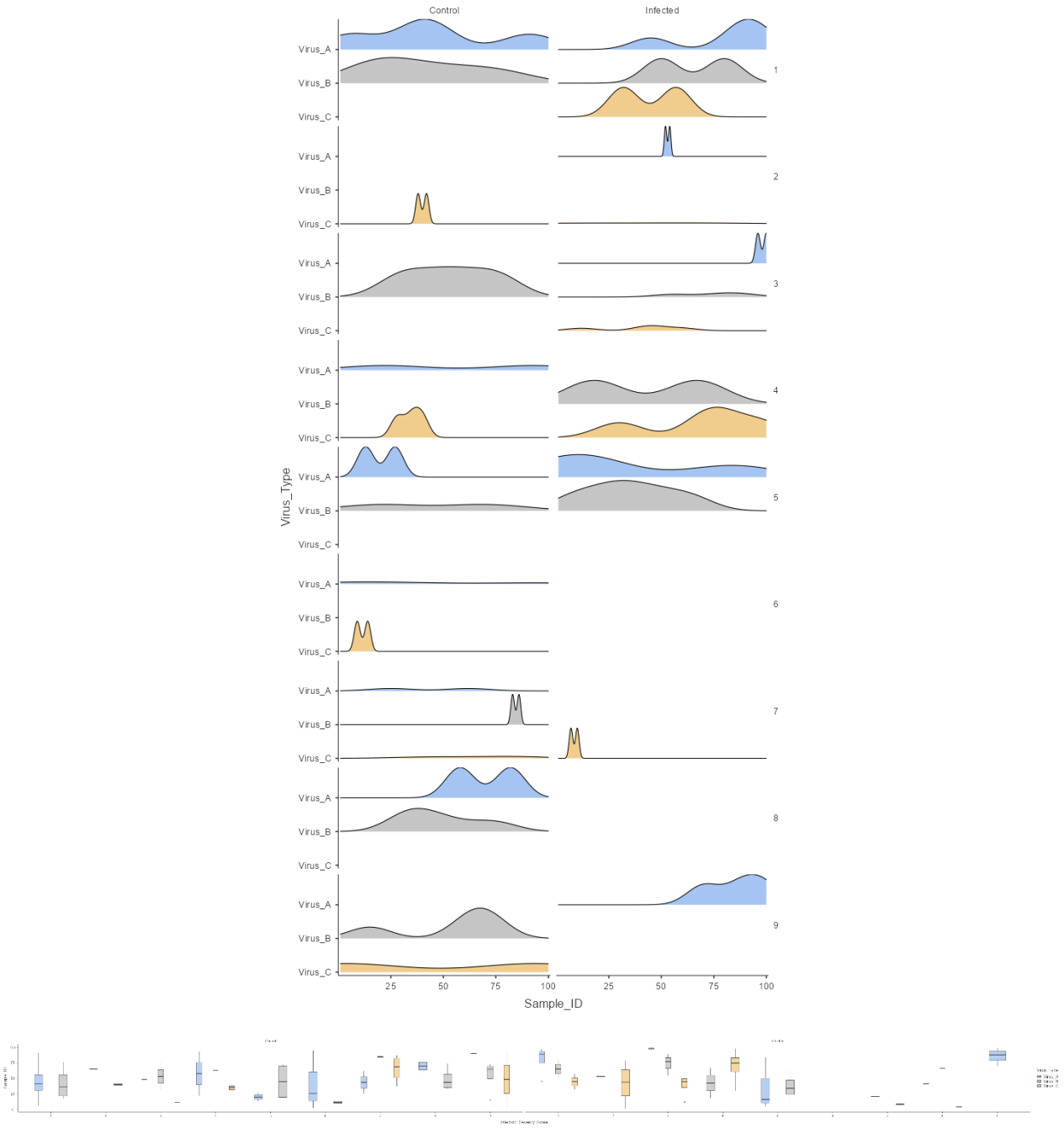
Descriptive analyses of Infection Severity versus Virus-type (Virus_A, Virus_B, and Virus_C) and Group (Control and Infected) illustrated considerable variability of Host Response Levels, Sample_IDs, and Gene Expression Levels.Several modes of the distribution exhibited multiple peaks, more so in the control group, where Virus_C values suffered from heavy sparse (NaN), thereby precluding direct comparisons. Host Response Levels in the infected group for Virus_A were often strong and thus hinting at a potentially stronger immunological activation than that of Virus_B and Virus_C. Some Infection Severity scores were examined to show a high degree of heterogeneity with several number values sharing the same frequency (marked with a superscript 'a'). While Gene Expression Levels tended to be comparatively high for the Infected group across most severity scores, supporting transcriptional upregulation during infection. At the instance of a few virus types and severity scores being missing, sampling limitations were hinted at. Such gaps necessitate access to larger datasets that would allow more robust statistical comparisons and biological inferences. The general trends-though preliminary-suggest virus-specific host response modulation. More focused studies are required for clarification of these preliminary observations.

Plots

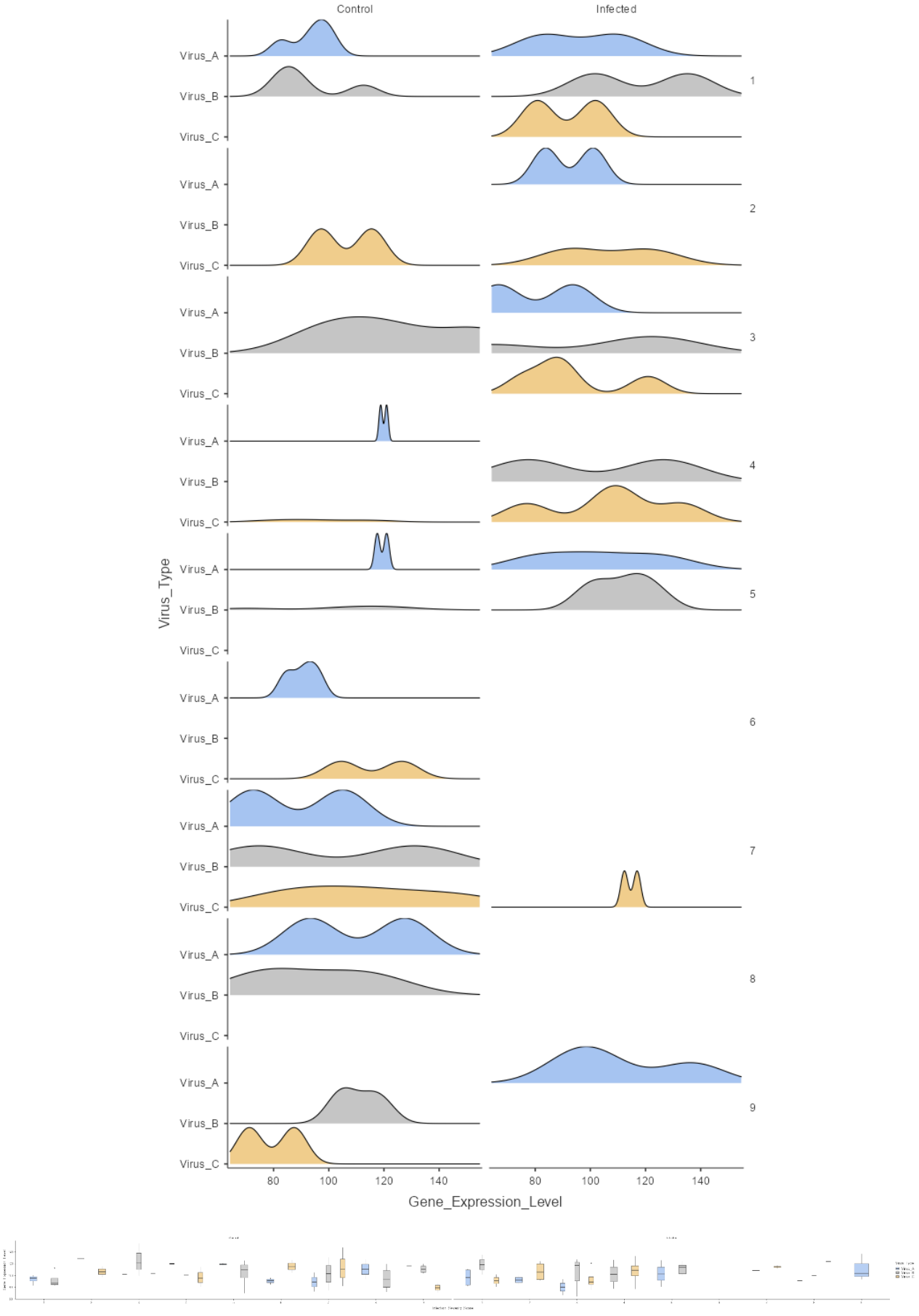
Host_Response_Level



Sample_ID


Control
Infected
Virus_A
Virus_B
Virus_C
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
Virus_Type
25
50
75
100
Sample_ID

Gene_Expression_Level



One-Way ANOVA

One-Way ANOVA (Welch's)				
	F	**df1**	**df2**	**p**
Host_Response_Level	0.632	8	32.9	0.745
Gene_Expression_Level	0.594	8	32.0	0.776
Sample_ID	1.061	8	31.9	0.414

A One-Way ANOVA with Welch's correction was applied to find a statistically significant effect of the differences between the infection severity groups over host response and other gene expression levels because of the heterogeneity in variances evident in a preliminary test.The analysis aimed to determine whether infection severity had a measurable impact on **Host Response Level**, **Gene Expression Level**, and **Sample ID** distributions. Results demonstrated that differences in **Host Response Level** across severity groups were not statistically significant (**F(8, 32.9) = 0.632, p = 0.745**). Likewise, gene-expression variation arrived at a nonsignificant result (F(8, 32.0) = 0.594, p = 0.776), meaning that those differences seen steadily and descriptively did not get reflected in statistically distinguishable group effects under the ANOVA framework. The Sample ID test as a control measure also served a nonsignificant result (F(8, 31.9) = 1.061, p = 0.414), as would be expected for randomly assigned identifiers. Further nonsignificant p-values (all $p > 0.05$) indicate that while there indeed exists some variability within the dataset, levels of severity of infection, insofar as they were operationalized here, might not be sufficiently explaining significant differences in host-pathogen interaction metrics by themselves. Such observations, however, raise the possibility of confounding biological or experimental factors that are not captured simply by scoring for severity. The caveat of nonsignificance here also highlights the opportunity for an increase in population sizes in follow-up work with the inclusion of more molecular markers and informed stratification criteria to bring out subtle-yet-biologically-relevant effects.

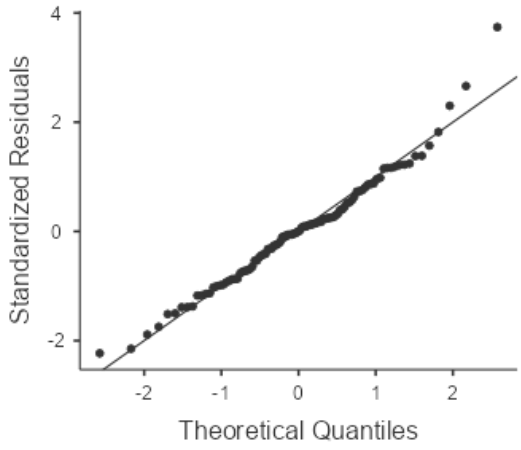
Group Descriptives					
	Infection_Severity_Score	**N**	**Mean**	**SD**	**SE**
Host_Response_Level	**1**	16	58.3	8.85	2.21
	2	9	53.7	7.07	2.36
	3	14	57.7	11.98	3.20
	4	12	55.1	11.04	3.19
	5	14	56.7	10.18	2.72
	6	5	53.4	6.22	2.78
	7	11	55.2	15.70	4.73
	8	9	55.1	9.74	3.25
	9	10	50.1	11.01	3.48
Gene_Expression_Level	**1**	16	96.8	15.02	3.76
	2	9	106.0	15.96	5.32
	3	14	101.7	25.08	6.70
	4	12	105.3	19.30	5.57
	5	14	108.7	16.75	4.48
	6	5	100.5	16.25	7.27
	7	11	106.7	23.40	7.06
	8	9	101.6	19.11	6.37
	9	10	105.3	18.42	5.83
Sample_ID	**1**	16	55.2	28.68	7.17
	2	9	46.6	22.67	7.56
	3	14	56.9	28.23	7.55
	4	12	53.6	28.12	8.12

	5	14	35.9	26.37	7.05
	6	5	29.2	37.81	16.91
	7	11	50.5	31.59	9.52
	8	9	49.4	23.98	7.99
	9	10	66.1	32.65	10.33

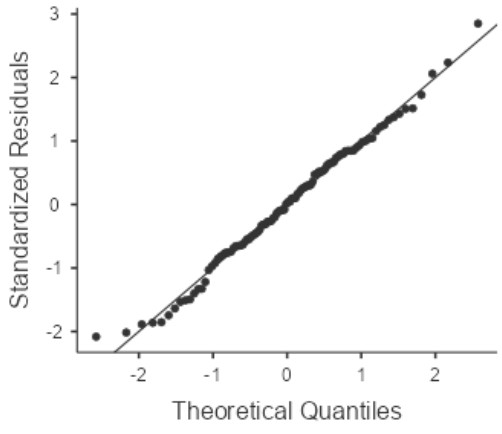
More detailed group description was provided to analyze the central tendency and variability of Host Response level, Gene Expression level, and Sample ID across different infection severity scores (1–9). Host Response Levels possessed means ranging from 50.1 to 58.3 and standard deviation (SD) ranging from 6.22 to 15.7, manifesting moderate within-group variations of host immune activation. Severity Score 1 had the highest mean for Host Response (58.3 ± 8.85), indicating a stronger immune response in least severe infections. Gene Expression Levels had a bit larger variability, with means ranging from 96.8 to 108.7 and SD to 25.08, especially for Severity Score 3. The SE were within manageable ranges, thus corroborating the reliability of the mean estimates. While Gene Expression Level was at its highest at Severity Score 5 (108.7 ± 16.75), which might indicate transcriptional upregulation in intermediate infection severities, the descriptive data of Sample IDs, though chiefly for reference purposes, continue to reflect large variability (SD to 37.81). Collectively, descriptive observations imply measurable trends in the biological response patterns; nonetheless, variability really within groups underscores the need for further, possibly multivariate or regression-oriented, analysis for definition of the factors that may have affected the observed trends.

Plots

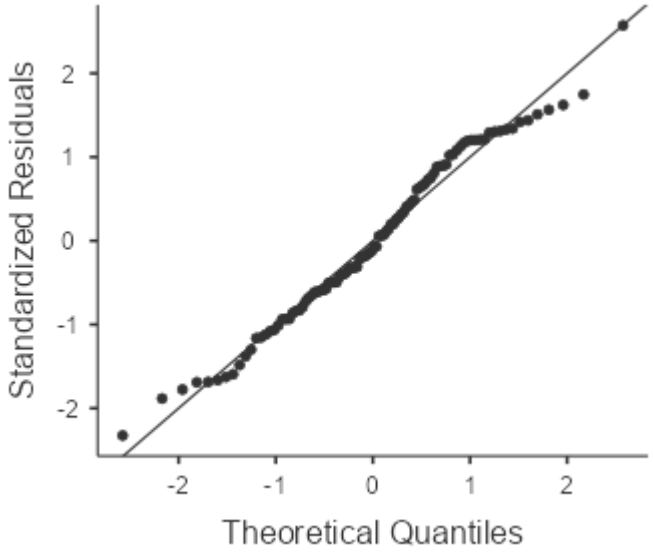
Host_Response_Level



Gene_Expression_Level



Sample_ID



Conclusion:

This research carries a lot of weight regarding the relationship between viral infection severity and host biological responses. While the descriptive study indicated a possible link between increasing gene expression and rising infection severity, the Welch's ANOVA did not confirm any statistically significant differences between the groups. This might imply that defining host responses on the basis of infection severity may just provide an initial model; it certainly does not capture the full molecular complexity unfolding during a viral infection. Additionally, the within-group variation-factors inferred from broad standard deviations-suggests that another layer of heterogeneity might be present in host responses, which likely stems from genetic, immunologic, or environmental variability among subjects.

The results point out the necessity for a multi-parametric approach in virological study, where clinical parameters are taken in conjunction with molecular signatures so that they can provide an integrated approach to understanding infection dynamics.

Future Work:

To build on this work, more attention in future work should be paid to:

1. Larger Sample Size: Increasing the number of the dataset so as to potentiate statistical power and discern at least slight biological differences.
2. Multi-Omics Integration: Considering proteomics and metabolomics as well as transcriptomics in relation to gene expression levels concerning host-pathogen interactions.
3. Longitudinal Studies: Monitoring the host response as it progresses with respect to critical temporal changes in gene expression throughout the infection.
4. Integration of Viral Load Metrics: Measuring the viral replication dynamics at least to be able to correlate it more directly with the host response.
5. Advanced Statistical Modelling: Employing machine learning and multivariate regression-based inference to pinpoint concealed patterns or predictors of a severe host response.
6. Functional Validation: Utilizing either in vitro or in vivo settings to validate statistically inferred trends and thus forming a connection between computational observations and biological implications.

7. Personalized Medicine Approaches: Considering host genetic variability to better understand why certain individuals exhibit stronger or weaker responses to viral infections.
8. Future researchers, by addressing these areas, would be able to contribute additional insights into viral pathogenesis, thereby enhancing drug development, diagnostics, and prevention.

IV. Discussion

In this way, this study tried to evaluate the relationship between infection severity scores, viral type, levels of host immune response, and gene expressions by means of statistical modeling techniques. When looking at the descriptive statistics, it did not appear that there were any dramatic differences between the various infection severity groups in terms of Host_Response_Level, Gene_Expression_Level, or Sample_ID, even after carrying out Welch's ANOVA.

P-values of 0.745, 0.776, and 0.414, respectively, showing that changes in infection severity do not seem to be greatly associated with the oscillations of host response or gene expression in this dataset.

One possible explanation for the lack of significance is due to a relatively small number of samples, coupled with an unequal distribution of groups-with a few virus types showing missing data points for specified severity groups.

Furthermore, the heterogeneity of variances was observed (Levene's $p = 0.022$), further complicating the interpretation of ANOVA results. Even though Welch's ANOVA was utilized to adjust for the heterogeneity, it is very possible that with the influence of larger sample sizes, a more definite conclusion could be drawn.

Additionally, descriptive statistics pointed toward some trends that are worth noting. For example, Virus_B consistently showed higher Gene_Expression_Level at various Severity_Scores, which may reflect subtype-specific differences in host gene activation. On the same note, extreme values and the high standard deviation shown for Sample_ID present some potential for variability in sample collection or processing, which may have added substantial noise to the data.

More intriguing are the biological significances of host-pathogen interactions that should never be disregarded despite insignificant results obtained from the statistics. Host immune responses to viral infections are considered variable, with further variability governed by factors such as viral load, genotype, and host genetic predisposition [14], [18], [20].

While our study result showed no significance, this cannot be taken as evidence to dismiss the potential existence of true biological variations but rather to highlight the call for larger and more balanced datasets, as well as finer molecular profiling techniques.

Ultimately, missing data (NaN) distributed over several groups could have damaged the analysis' robustness.

Subsequent investigations should undertake comprehensive data collection combined with standardization of sample processing protocols and additional biological variables such as cytokine levels, viral load quantification, and patient longitudinal data for enhanced temporal resolution of immune responses.

n any case, statistical findings from this study were inconclusive; while working on descriptive trend data, the potential interaction of viral subtype with several host factors could complexly affect disease severity.

Such preliminary findings indicate a need for future large-scale integrative studies uniting clinical, molecular, and computational data toward disentangling the complicated networks of viral pathogenesis and host responses.

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