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IMPACTS OF FUNGICIDES ON BIOCHEMICAL, HAEMATOLOGICAL, HISTOPATHOLOGICAL, DEVELOPMENT, REPRODUCTION, OXIDATIVE STRESS AND BEHAVIORAL ASPECTS: A REVIEW

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AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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Review Article

ABSTRACT

Pesticides, insecticides, herbicides and fungicides are being used by farmers all over the world in order to increase their food production. Apart from agriculture, fungicides also used to treat fungal infections in case of animals. Release of these fungicides from agriculture and related areas can reach nearby water bodies, which in turn can affect aquatic fauna. The present review highlighted the ill effects of fungicides on biochemical, haematological, histopathological, development, reproduction and behavior on different life forms. Exposure to fungicides resulted in an elevated levels of plasma enzymes, serum transaminases and glucose with reduction in level of protein. Red blood cell count, white blood cell count, haemoglobin, packed cell volume, mean corpuscular haemoglobin concentration and mean corpuscular haemoglobin values were affected. Fungicides resulted in severe abnormalities on gills, liver and kidney of test species. It also affected reproduction and induced various malformations during development. It also led to the formation of reactive oxygen species, which resulted in oxidative stress. Alterations of these parameters can be used as potential biomarkers to evaluate the potential ecotoxicity of fungicide to organisms. Therefore, we should take stringent measures to minimize the use of these fungicides on agriculture and other purposes.

Keywords: Fungicides; azoxystrobin; carbendazim; edifenphos; emisan; propiconazole; tricyclazole.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Pesticides are used in agriculture to protect crops from damages caused by pests. Due to their widespread use, they are released on a large scale into the environment and in turn contaminate aquatic ecosystems. The extensive use of pesticides, insecticides, herbicides and fungicides is being promoted by Government of India to enhance the crop production to meet the demand of the growing population. Only 0.1 % of the applied pesticides reach the target pests and the remaining 99.9 % find their way to different components of the ecosystem [1].

Fungicides are pesticides intended to inhibit the growth of fungi or fungal spores. Fungicides are used for numerous purposes. In addition to agriculture, fungicides are used in industry to protect products during shipment, suppress mildews that attack painted surfaces, preserve wood, control fungal growth in paper pulps, and protect household carpet and fabric. In veterinary medicine, fungicides are commonly used for antibacterial/antiseptic treatment. Due to these wide variety of applications, humans and other animals most often encounter with these agents in their day to day life [2].

Agricultural run-off near waterbodies lead to the deposition of these pesticides in aquatic ecosystem, which affect the survival of aquatic fauna by disrupting ecological relationship between organisms and loss of biodiversity [3]. Fishes are relatively sensitive to changes in their surrounding environment including an increase in pollution. Fish health may thus reflect, and give a good indication of the health of a specific aquatic ecosystem [4]. The current review emphasized the effect of some major haematological, fungicides on biochemical, histopathological, development, reproduction and behavior on aquatic fauna.

2. ACUTE TOXICITY STUDIES

Cyproconazole exhibited a relatively low toxicity to zebrafish, with a 96-h LC50 value of 90.6 µm (26.4 mg/l) [5]. Triazoles fungicides such as Difenoconazole, Prothioconazole, Propiconazole, Tricyclazole, Epoxiconazole, and Tebuconazole were reported to be toxic to adult zebrafish, with 96-h LC50 values of 1.45, 1.83, 4.9, 11.50, 12.56, and 26.8 mg/L, respectively[6-9]. Acute toxicity of Mancozeb to freshwater fish, Oreochromis mossambicus (Tilapia) and LC50 value was found to be 11.68 mg/l [6], which corresponds with the findings of earlier workers to Punctius ticto (12.95 mg/l) and Clarius batracus adult (14.36 mg/l) and its fingerlings (14.04 mg/l) [10,11].

3. IMPACT ON BIOCHEMICAL PARAMETERS

Long-term exposure to Propiconazole resulted in higher concentration of ammonia, creatine kinase and lactate dehydrogenase on blood plasma profile of rainbow trout [12]. Elevated plasma ammonia indicated that detoxifying mechanisms were unable to convert the toxic ammonia to less harmful substances [13]. Creatine kinase catalyzes the conversion of creatine and consumes adenosine triphosphate (ATP) to create phosphocreatine and adenosine diphosphate (ADP), as a plasma marker of environmental stress [14]. Lactate dehydrogenase is a tetrameric enzyme recognized as a potential marker for assessing the toxicity of a chemical. The elevated levels of lactate dehydrogenase in the haemolymph might be due to the release of isozymes from the destroyed tissues [15]. Decrease in lactate dehydrogenase was noted while studying the biochemical effect of Tricyclazole on zebrafish. Rise in lactate dehydrogenase is due to the increase of anaerobic pathway as a result of hypoxic condition caused by the pesticide stress. Increase of the lactate dehydrogenase activity found in exposed zebrafish indicated the induction of anaerobic glycolysis to meet the required energy demands [16].

Glycogen content of muscle decreased very much due to the action of the Imidacloprid in freshwater fish, *Aplocheilus lineatus* [17]. Fishes exposed to Dimecron and Ziram were also reported decrease in glycogen to meet the energy requisites for muscular activity [18].

small concentration Exposure to even a of Tricvclazole resulted in hyperuremia and hypercholesterolemia indicating altered carbohydrate, lipid and protein metabolism in the fish Channa punctatus [19]. Lipid and carbohydrate metabolism as well as several enzymatic activities such as gammaglutamil transpeptidase, alanine aminotransferase (AIAT) and alkaline phosphatase (AP) are affected in zebrafish as a consequence of the exposure to the fungicide Tebuconazole [20]. Levels of lactate, cholesterol and triglycerides also showed an increase during the exposure period. Effect of Emisan on Channa punctatus noticed a marked reduction in the levels of lipid, an elevation in cholesterol and acid and alkaline phosphatase. The elevated hepatic cholesterol levels are indicative of liver damage, and disruption of its normal functioning. [21]. Increased hepatic levels of acid and alkaline phosphatases in Channa *punctatus* may be due to degeneration of hepatocytes and rupture of lysosomes, resulting in their accumulation in the liver.

A significant increase in values of glucose was noted in Clarias gariepinus when treated with Clotrimazole [22]. Sattanathan et al. [23] revealed a significantly higher blood glucose level on exposed Oreochromis niloticus to Copper oxychloride. This is in agreement with Li et al. [13] while studying long term effect of Propiconazole on rainbow trout. Sancho et al. [20] also arrived at similar conclusion while studying effect of Tebuconazole on zebrafish. The disrupted carbohydrate hyperglycemia indicates metabolism probably after the elevated glycogenolysis. The hyperglycemia is a reliable indicator of environmental stress due to general secondary response of intoxicated fish.

Melefa et al. [22] observed a reduction in total serum protein in *Clarius gariepinus* after exposure to Clotrimazole. A significant decrease in total serum proteins after exposure may be due to liver damage where most of plasma protein synthesis usually occurs in the liver. This is in agreement with Palanikumar et al. [1] while studying the effect of Carbendazim on milkfish, *Chanos chanos*. Similar observations were reported by Ram et al. [21] and Gafar et al. [24] while determining the effect of Emisan on *Channa punctatus* and Edifenphos on *Oreochromis niloticus*. Similar studies were noted by Pandit and Rani [19] and Sattanathan et al. [23] on exposing *Channa* to Tricyclazole and *Oreochromis mossambicus* to Copper oxychloride.

There was decrease in muscle protein in Aplocheilus lineatus due to increased rate of proteolytic activity or repeated breakdown of proteins to yield energy due to stress [17]. A significant increase in the levels of aminotransferase alanine (ALT), aspartate aminotransferase (AST), alkaline phosphatase (ALP) were reported by Melefa et al. [22] on exposing Clarias gariepinus to Clotrimazole. Gafaar et al. [24] revealed a significant increase in serum ALT and AST and ALP at the beginning of the experiment, these findings supported the hypothesis that the increased serum transaminases (ALT and AST) may reflect hepatic toxicity which leads to extensive liberation of the enzymes into the blood circulation. Li et al. [13] also reported an increase in activity of AST, ALT and ALP in rainbow trout exposed to Propiconazole.

4. IMPACT ON HAEMATOLOGICAL PARAMETERS

Generally, a decrease in nonspecific immunity of the fish due to pesticide exposure leads to alterations in haematological parameters. Furthermore, the decrease in the haematological parameters might have resulted from disruptive action of the pesticides on the membranes and cell viability. Melefa et al. [22] showed significant decrease in red blood cell (RBC), haemoglobin (Hb) and packed cell volume (PCV) in the *Clarius gariepinus* when exposed to Clotrimazole. Ghane et al. [25] also determined the haematological impact of Paclobutrazol (PBZ) to fingerling of tilapia, *Oreochromis mossambicus* and observed similar decrease in RBC, Hb and PCV. Similar results were noted by Hemalatha et al. [26] while studying the effect of Propiconazole on *Labeo rohita*. Lysing or shrinkage of erythrocytes due to pesticide action on the erythropoietic tissue may lead to a reduction in haemoglobin and haematocrit [27].

Shahi and Singh [28] demonstrated decreases in haemoglobin (Hb), mean corpuscular haemoglobin (MCH), mean corpuscular haemoglobin concentration (MCHC), and red blood cell (RBC) levels in *Clarias batrachus* when exposed to sub lethal concentration of Mancozeb. This results were in agreement with [29] while studying the impact of Curzate on *Oreochromis niloticus*. Li *et al* [13] proved these changes in blood parameters in rainbow trout intoxicated with Propiconazole. The haemolytic and destructive effects of the pesticides on blood cells was supported by Gafaar et al. [24] after studying effects of Edifenphos on *Oreochromis niloticus*.

Pandit et al. [30] demonstrated that total erythrocyte number, haemoglobin, packed cell volume, basophils, neutrophils, monocytes and thrombocytes decreased significantly while erythrocyte sedimentation rate increased significantly on exposure of *Channa* to Tricyclazole. It seems that due to the toxicity of Tricyclazole, haemopoietic organs get affected and become unable to release normal RBCs in circulation and thus can be held responsible for a decline in erythrocytes. Reduction in haemoglobin is directly caused not only by the enhanced haemoglobin destruction but also by the reduced synthesis of haemoglobin.

Significant increase in WBC was noted by Hemalatha [26] on *Labeo rohita* exposed et al. to Propiconazole.Melefa et al. [22] showed a significant elevation in WBC number of Clarias intoxicated with Clotrimazole. Pandit et al. [30] also came to similar findings in case of Channa punctatus exposed to Tricyclazole. Similar observation was revealed by Sattanathan et al. [19] on exposing Oreochromis mossambicus to Copper oxychloride. This finding is in agreement with Shahi and Singh [28] on exposure Clarias Mancozeb. Observation of to on Propiconazole intoxicated rainbow trout showed a significant increase in leucocyte count [13]. The observed elevation of WBC count indicates a protective mechanism against fungicide toxicity or the activation of immune system to manage the stress caused by pesticides.

5. IMPACT ON HISTOPATHOLOGY

Jia et al. [31], Ibtissem et al. [32] and Ben Amara et al. [33] reported changes in liver tissue due to the hepatocyte damage. Oxidative stress and the activation of caspase-3 in apoptotic pathways are two characteristic reasons for agrochemicals-induced toxicity [34]. Abnormalities induced by Azoxystrobin and fungicide Captan were observed in zebrafish and rainbow trout liver such as cellular vacuolization, partial necrosis and congestion around the central vein [35]. Boran et al. [36] results are also supported by Gafaar et al. [24] following the exposure of *Oreochromis niloticus* on Edifenphos; Vivek et al. [37] on intoxicated *Ophiocephalus leucopunctatus* with tricyclazole; and Ram and Sathyanesan [21] on *Channa punctatus* with Emisan.

Boran et al. [36] found that Captan exposed gills of rainbow trout had hypertrophy and necrosis of epithelium, separation of epithelium from lamellae (epithelial lifting), lamellar fusion, hyperplasia and the space under the epithelium filled with eosinophilic findings, material. Apart from above Melanomacrophage centers, intercellular edema and splenic necrosis were also noted on Captan exposed fish. Similarly, necrosis of epithelium, lamellar fusion, hyperplasia and lamellar edema were also observed in Oreochromis niloticus exposed with Edifenphos [24].

Captan exposed rainbow trout had tubular necrosis, shrinkage of glomeruli, renal tubular degeneration and hyaline droplets degeneration [36]. Gafaar et al. [24] observed congestion, diffuse granular and vacuolar degenerative changes and focal hyaline droplet degeneration following exposure of Oreochromis niloticus to Edifenphos. Nephrocalcinosis, cellular rupture and decrease in Bowmann's space, illustrated of deleterious effect Tricyclazole the on Ophiocephalus. [37]. Similar observations were noted by Tabassum et al. [38] on exposing Channa punctatus with Propiconazole.

6. EFFECT ON DEVELOPMENT AND REPRODUCTION

Pericardial edema, yolk sac edema, tail deformation and spine deformation were observed in Cyproconazole-treated embryos [39]. Similar observations were noted by Souder et al. [40] when zebrafish was treated with Propiconazole. This is in agreement with Mu et al. [9] when dealing with developmental toxicity of Difenoconazole in zebrafish embryos after 96-h exposure. Similar observations were reported by studying developmental toxicity of Triadimefon [41] and Penconazole in zebrafish embryos [42]. Kim et al. [43] reported malformations such as pericardial edema, spinal lordosis, and head edema in zebrafish embryos/larvae treated with Benomyl fungicide.

Li et al. [44] confirmed that Fluquinconazole exposure interferes with the early embryonic development of zebrafish by reducing the expression of representative marker genes and increasing oxidative stress. Exposure to the Succinate dehydrogenase inhibitor (SDHI) fungicides such as Isopyrazam, Penthiopyrad and Sedaxane also induce developmental malformation in zebrafish [45,46]. Zhang et al. [47] observed that Zoxamide induced teratogenicity in the form of bent tails, curved spines, and shortening of the body in zebrafish. Similar to zoxamide-exposed fish, Carbendazim exposed fish also exhibited a reduction in body length and severe impairments to the cytoskeleton and skeletal system [48].

Sounders et al. [49] revealed that relatively high doses of Triticonazole induced deformities, impaired oxidative respiration and altered locomotor activity in early developmental stages of zebrafish. Exposure to Propiconazole significantly inhibited the development and reduced locomotor activity of zebrafish embryos and larvae [50]. Skolness et al. [51] found that Propiconazole inhibited steroidogenesis in female fathead minnow which inturn leads to decreased plasma concentration of 17β estradiol and vitellogen, affecting the development as well as release of oocyte.

Cao et al. [35] indicated that Azoxystrobin had adverse effects on egg production, the fertilization rate, the gonadosomatic index and hepatosomatic index, sex steroid hormones and vitellogin concentrations, gonadal and hepatic histology, and the relative mRNA levels of the tested genes in the HPG axis and liver of adult zebrafish. These results suggested that widespread application of Azoxystrobin might negatively affect fish Similar results reproduction. reported that Trifloxystrobin, one of the strobilurin fungicides, induced significant up-regulation of vitellogin genes in the larvae of medaka [52].

7. OXIDATIVE DAMAGE

Significant increase was observed in all antioxidant parameters (superoxide dismutase (SOD), glutathione peroxidase (GPx), glutathione reductase (GR), glutathione S-transferase (GST), reduced glutathione (GSH), malondialdehyde (MDA)) on treatment of crayfish with Penconazole[53].A decrease in GSH was detected when *Chaos chaos* was intoxicated with Carbendazim[1]. Tricyclazole induced production of reactive oxygen species, apoptosis and metabolic disturbance in zebrafish liver was reported by Qiu et al. [54].

Propiconazole, which directly act on the cell membrane can induce lipid peroxidation in larval zebrafish as a primary effect [55]. It is reported that exposure to Prothioconazole also caused lipid peroxidation and induced oxidative damage in zebrafish [56]. Jiang et al. [57] reported the accumulation of reactive oxygen species in zebrafish on treating with Azoxystrobin. Accumulation of reactive oxygen species in zebrafish with Azoxystrobin was also noted by Hans et al. [58]. Similarly, Carbendazim also induced lipid peroxidation in Chanos chanos [1].

Kumar et al. [59] observed a reduction in mitochondrial bioenergetics which induced oxidative stress, decreased standard body length and a reduction in movement in Strobilurins-exposed zebrafish. Souders et al. [40] demonstrated that Propiconazole can induce hypopigmentation in zebrafish, disrupt mitochondrial bioenergetics, and can alter locomotor activity. This result is in agreement with Wang et al. [60] when zebrafish was intoxicated with Fluazinam. Azoxystrobin induced mitochondrial dysfunction in larval zebrafish and liver of adult zebrafish by significantly decreasing mitochondrial complex III activity, ATP concentration and transcription of cyt b [61]. Olsvik et al. [62] also arrived at similar conclusion in Atlantic salmon smolt with Azoxystrobin.

8. IMPACT ON BEHAVIOUR

Valadas et al. [63] reported that exposure to Propiconazole disrupted normal fish behavior by decreasing the number of crossings, entries, and time spent in the top, and increased the time spent in the bottom area of the tank. Hypo/hyper-activity in a dose specific manner were exhibited by Fluazinam treated zebrafish [60]. Larval zebrafish exhibited hypoactive swimming behavior upon exposure to 250 mg/L of Pyraclostrobin [64]. Sivastava and Singh [65] reported that Propiconazole showed significant behavioral changes such as hyperactive movement, hypomovement, vertical position and loss of equilibrium in *Clarias batrachus*.

There is a close relationship between agrochemicals and cardiovascular diseases [66]. Exposure to Penconazole [67] and Tebuconazole [68] affected normal functioning of myocardial cells in male adult rats. Triadimefon also induced cardiovascular toxicity in case of zebrafish [69]. Fenbuconazole exposure also affected the cardiac development and function in zebrafish larvae [70].

9. CONCLUSION

These review revealed the biochemical, haematological, histopathological, development and reproduction and oxidative damage caused by various fungicides on non-target organisms. Therefore, serious concern has to be taken towards the potential damage of fungicides to organisms and its use in agricultural practices. Use of biological fungicides instead of chemical ones can minimize the risk to non-target organisms.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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