



## Studies on the toxicity of 4- Nonylphenol on the biochemical parameters of African catfish *Clarias gariepinus* (Burchell, 1822)

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### ABSTRACT

Aquatic system is more vulnerable to the pollution as most of the toxicants are released into it. These toxicants cause harmful effects on the life of organism and create a toxic stress. Because of these stress, the physiology of the organism changes and as results of this all the metabolic activity alters. The biochemical markers are a good indicator of changes in the metabolic activity caused by the aquatic toxicants. These markers provide one of the most reliable means for assessing the stress caused by the toxicants. Keeping in view, the present study was undertaken to investigate the effects of 4-nonylphenol (4-NP) on the biochemical parameters of African cat fish, *Clarias gariepinus*. The results of the present study showed that there was decrease in the level of protein and cholesterol in the fishes exposed to different concentrations 4-NP for 10 days as compared to the control. Based on the results it can be concluded that the 4-NP alters the metabolic activity of African catfish, *Clarias gariepinus* (Burchell, 1822) in response to stress caused by the 4-NP.

**Keywords:** Biochemical markers, aquatic toxicants, 4-nonylphenol (4-NP), *Clarias gariepinus* (Burchell, 1822), protein and cholesterol.

### INTRODUCTION

The aquatic organisms are sensitive to environmental changes. They exhibit different degree of changes in the behavioral pattern when their habitat is polluted. The development of agricultural and industrial activities contributes to production of xenobiotics that can cause undesirable effects in aquatic systems depending on their toxicity and concentration (Havelková *et al.*, 2008). The widespread use of exogenous manmade chemicals not only brought adverse influence on agro ecosystems but also caused alteration in physiological processes of non-target organisms. These xenobiotics through surface runoff reaches to the unrestricted areas like ponds and rivers which alters the physicochemical properties of water and is toxic to aquatic organism and cause deleterious effect or even death to the aquatic animals. In many countries, large scale mortality of fishes has been recorded due to pesticides in water bodies as pollutants (Nikam *et al.*, 2011).

The toxicity study is essential to find out toxicants limit and safe concentration, so that there will be minimum harm to aquatic fauna in the near future. Among the several aspects of toxicity studies, the bioassay constitutes one of the most commonly used methods in aquatic environmental studies with suitable organisms. The necessity of determining the toxicity of substances to commercially aquatic forms at the lower level of the food chain has been useful and accepted for water quality management.

Fishes are valuable sources of high grade proteins, mineral and salts including calcium, phosphorus and iodine essential amino acids, omega 3 fatty acids and vitamins A, B, D and E. Fish proteins occupy an important place and it constitutes about 17-20%. Moreover, carbohydrate content of the fish flesh is very low and hence, fish can make valuable contribution to any diet (Holt, 1967). Besides providing food to man, fishes are sources of numerous byproducts such as fish liver oil, fish flour, fish silage, fish glue etc. which have medical and economic importance. That's why it must be included in human diet at least 1.3 kg per week (FAO, 1989).

However, the fish habitats are being contaminated alarmingly through a number of aquatic pollutants. Fish occupy a prominent position in the field of toxicity studies. They are continued to be an extremely reliable component of an aquatic ecosystem, serve as best bioindicators of water pollution and are the inhabitants that cannot escape from the detrimental effects of these pollutants (Neelima et al., 2016).

It is believed that the fish possess the same biochemical pathways to deal with the toxic effects of endogenous and exogenous agents as do mammalian species (Al-akel et al., 2010; Ahmad, 2011). Therefore, it is important to examine the toxic effects of xenobiotics on fish since they constitute an important link in food chain and their contamination by pesticides imbalance the aquatic system.

Biomarkers and bioindicators has been extensively used as proxies to determine responses at individual level to stressors, with biomarkers being more species-specific and with higher variability of responses compared to bioindicators (Schulz and Martins-Junior, 2001; Solé et al., 2010; Linde-Arias et al., 2008 and Barrilli et al., 2015). The integrated use of biomarkers and bioindicators is suggested as an

evaluation tool, since they are effective means to determine the impact of pollution in the aquatic environment (Reynolds et al., 2003).

Biochemical markers are measurable responses to the exposure of an organism to xenobiotics as well as very suitable biosensors of aquatic pollutants. Aquatic pollution can easily be detected through biomarkers, as enzymes provide one of the most reliable means of assessing the degree of exposure of animals to pollutants. Some of the biochemical alteration occurring in the body gives the first indication of the stress in the organism and hence effect on the part of the pollution (Rathod et al., 2009). The biochemical studies are good parameters which help to see the effects of toxicants on metabolism of fish (Kajare et al., 2000, Banaee et al., 2008).

Keeping in view, the present study was undertaken to investigate the effects of 4-nonylphenol on the biochemical parameters of African cat fish, *Clarias gariepinus* (Burchell, 1822).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

For the present study, the fresh water African catfish, *Clarias gariepinus* (Burchell, 1822), were selected because of its availability in local market and its convenient size. It could be safely transported and maintained easily under laboratory conditions because of its air breathing habit, its hardy nature, moreover suit the experimental work.

All the fishes used during the present study were brought from the local market. The body weight of fish ranged between 250-350 gm and their length varied between 30-37cm. The fishes were maintained in glass aquaria containing 30lit of tap water, under normal conditions of light and temperature. The fishes were fed with minced goat liver every alternate day and water changed at an interval of one day. The fishes were acclimatised for one week by keeping 6 fishes, 3 male and 3 female in one aquarium prior to their use in the experiment.

For the present study, the chemical 4-nonylphenol was purchased from Hi-Media where benzene used as a solvent (33.3mg 4-nonylphenol dissolved in 1ml of benzene). The four aquaria were taken, filled with 30 lit tap water and in each aquarium 3 male and 3 female fishes were kept. The fishes without exposure of any toxicant in one aquarium were treated as control

group and other aquaria exposed to toxicant were treated as experimental group and labelled them accordingly. The fishes from the experimental group exposed to three sub lethal concentrations (70, 100 and 130ug/lit) of 4-nonylphenol for 10 days.

For biochemical estimation of protein and cholesterol the fishes from both control and experimental group were anesthetized with the 2-phenoxyethanol. After anesthetization, blood were collected in EDTA tube by cutting caudal fin and centrifuged to collect plasma. For protein estimation Lowry's method were used whereas for the estimation of cholesterol Zakes method used.

**OBSERVATIONS AND RESULTS**

**1. Effects of 4-NP on protein concentration**

The concentration of protein in plasma of fish, *Clarias gariepinus* (Burchell, 1822) from experimental group showed the decrease in the protein concentration in both male and female as compared to the control group (Fig. 1 and 2). The protein concentration of male fish from control group showed  $17.67 \pm 0.42$  mg/dl whereas the protein concentration of male fish exposed to  $70 \mu\text{g/lit}$ ,  $100 \mu\text{g/lit}$  and  $130 \mu\text{g/lit}$  4-NP showed  $15 \pm 1.29$  mg/dl,  $14.5 \pm 1.06$  mg/dl and  $12.33 \pm 0.8$  mg/dl respectively. (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Showing the protein concentration in male fish, *Clarias gariepinus* (Burchell, 1822) exposed to different concentrations of 4-NP for 10 days.

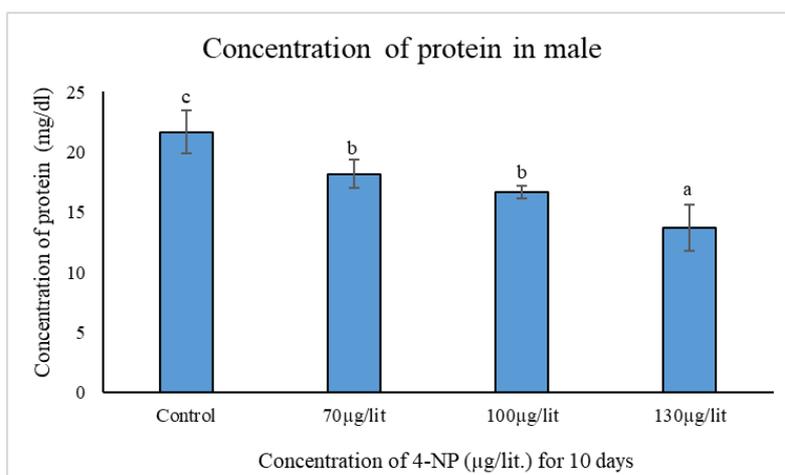
Group	Concentration of Protein (mg/dl) in Male
Control	$17.67 \pm 0.42$
70 $\mu\text{g/lit}$ 4-NP	$15 \pm 1.29$
100 $\mu\text{g/lit}$ 4-NP	$14.5 \pm 1.06$
130 $\mu\text{g/lit}$ 4-NP	$12.33 \pm 0.8$

(Values are expressed in Mean  $\pm$ SE)

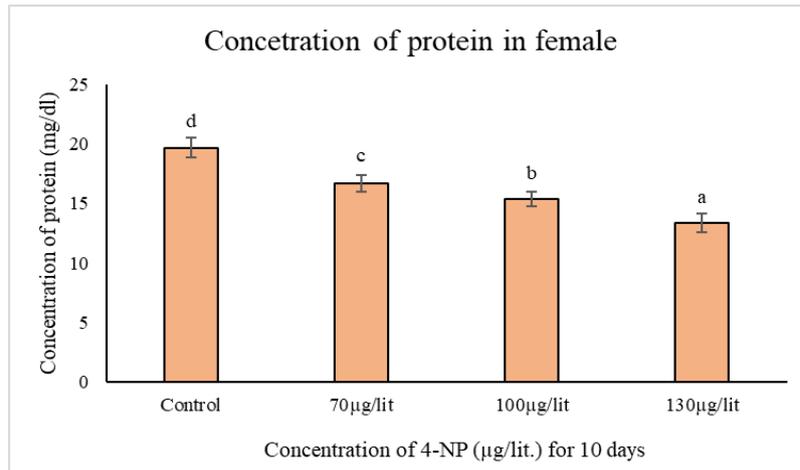
**Table 2:** Showing the protein concentration in female fish, *Clarias gariepinus* (Burchell, 1822) exposed to different concentrations of 4-NP for 10 days.

Group	Concentration of protein (mg/dl) in Female
Control	$19.67 \pm 0.8$
70 $\mu\text{g/lit}$ 4-NP	$16.67 \pm 0.67$
100 $\mu\text{g/lit}$ 4-NP	$15.33 \pm 0.61$
130 $\mu\text{g/lit}$ 4-NP	$13.33 \pm 0.8$

(Values are expressed in Mean  $\pm$ SE)



**Fig. 1:** Showing the protein concentration in male fish, *Clarias gariepinus* (Burchell, 1822) exposed to different concentrations of 4-NP for 10 days.



**Fig. 2:** Showing the protein concentration in female fish, *Clarias gariepinus* (Burchell, 1822) exposed to different concentrations of 4-NP for 10 days.

Similarly, the protein concentration of female fish from control group showed  $19.67 \pm 0.8$  mg/dl whereas the protein concentration of female fish exposed to 70 µg/lit, 100 µg/lit and to 130 µg/lit 4-NP showed  $16.67 \pm 0.67$  mg/dl,  $15.33 \pm 0.61$  mg/dl and  $13.33 \pm 0.8$  mg/dl respectively (Table 2).

**2. Effects of 4-NP on cholesterol concentration**

The concentration of cholesterol in plasma of fish, *Clarias gariepinus* (Burchell, 1822) from experimental group showed the decrease in the cholesterol concentration in both male and female as compared to the control group (Fig. 3 and 4).

The cholesterol concentration of male fish from control group showed  $277.18 \pm 9.78$  mg/dl whereas the cholesterol concentration of male fish exposed to 70 µg/lit, 100 µg/lit and 130 µg/lit 4-NP showed  $186.9 \pm 7.59$  mg/dl,  $148.27 \pm 4.57$  mg/dl and  $146 \pm 11.05$  mg/dl respectively (Table 3).

Similarly, the cholesterol concentration of female fish from control group showed  $307.63 \pm 7.37$  mg/dl whereas the cholesterol concentration of female fish exposed to 70 µg/lit, 100 µg/lit and 130 µg/lit 4-NP showed  $293.17 \pm 7.69$  mg/dl,  $267.75 \pm 5.14$  mg/dl and  $220.58 \pm 13.81$  mg/dl respectively (Table 4).

**Table 3:** Showing the cholesterol concentration in male fish, *Clarias gariepinus* (Burchell, 1822) exposed to different concentrations of 4-NP for 10 days.

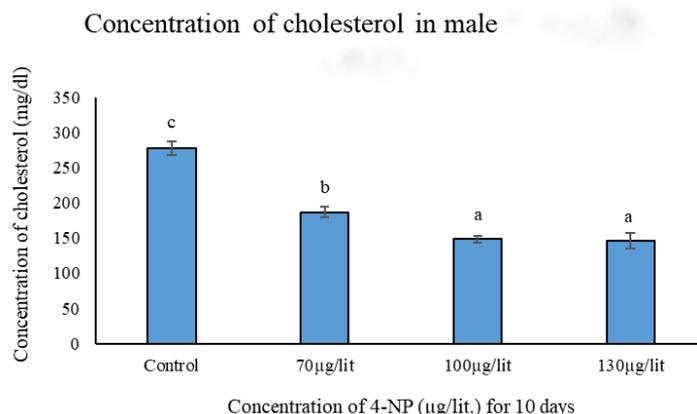
Group	Concentration of Cholesterol (mg/dl) in Male
Control	277.18 ± 9.78
70 µg /lit 4-NP	186.9 ± 7.59
100 µg /lit 4-NP	148.27 ± 4.57
130 µg /lit 4-NP	146 ± 11.05

(Values are expressed in Mean ±SE)

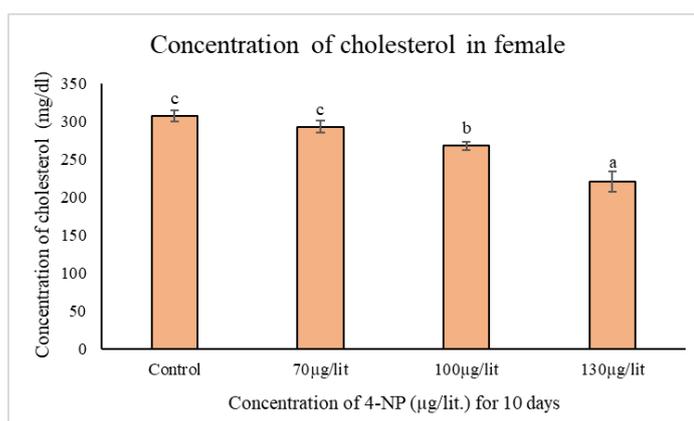
**Table 4:** Showing the cholesterol concentration in female fish, *Clarias gariepinus* (Burchell, 1822) exposed to different concentrations of 4-NP for 10 days.

Group	Concentration of Cholesterol (mg/dl) in Female
Control	307.63 ± 7.37
70 µg /lit 4-NP	293.17 ± 7.69
100 µg /lit 4-NP	267.75 ± 5.14
130 µg /lit 4-NP	220.58 ± 13.81

(Values are expressed in Mean ±SE)



**Fig. 3:** Showing the cholesterol concentration in male fish, *Clarias gariepinus* (Burchell, 1822) exposed to different concentrations of 4-NP for 10 days.



**Fig.4:** Showing the cholesterol concentration in female fish, *Clarias gariepinus* (Burchell, 1822) exposed to different concentrations of 4-NP for 10 days.

## DISCUSSION

Proteins are the macromolecules in the biological system and are derived from high molecular weight polypeptides made up from amino acids. They constitute about one fifth of an animal body on wet weight basis. The concentration of proteins in serum or plasma is a result of dynamic equilibrium between the rate of its biosynthesis and degradation process. Proteins play an important role as energy precursors for fish and other organisms under stress conditions. Changes in each of these blood components have been employed as useful general indicators of stress in teleosts (Das *et al.*, 2004).

In the present study, it has been found that there was decrease in the level of protein in the group of fishes exposed to different concentrations of 4-NP for 10 days as compared to the control group. Similar results

were reported by Senthil Kumaran *et al.*, 2011 in *Clarias gariepinus*, exposed to nonylphenol and octylphenol, Senthil Kumar and Sivasubramanian (2015) in freshwater fish *Catla catla* exposed to Ammonium sulphate, Khalid Abdullah Al-Ghanim, (2012) in *Oreochromis niloticus* after exposure of sub-lethal concentrations of malathion, Begum, (2005) in *Clarias batrachus* during exposure of cypermethrin, Olalekan (2014) in *Clarias gariepinus* exposed to Cypermethrin, Velisek *et al.*, (2012) in common carp *Cyprinus carpio* (L.) exposed to simazine, Ramesh and Saravanan, (2008) in a freshwater fish *Cyprinus carpio* exposed to chlorpyrifos, Dogan and Can, (2011) in *Oncorhynchus mykiss* exposed to dimethoate, Jaroli and Sharma (2005) in Liver of *Channa punctatus* exposed to organophosphate, Oruç and Usta, (2007) in rainbow trout, and in *Cyprinus carpio* exposed to diazinon and Saravanan *et al.*, (2012) in an Indian major carp, *Cirrhinus mrigala* exposed to Ibuprofen.

The decreased protein levels might be associated with damage of cells caused by 4-NP. The decrease in protein content under stress induced by 4-NP could also be attributed to the use of amino acids in various catabolic reactions and the 4-NP may either act by activating or inhibiting enzyme activities in the cell or destruction of the cell organelles with liberation of particular enzymes is one of the reasons to alter the expression of total proteins (Balakrishnan and Sendhilvadivu, 2018). During stress conditions organisms need more energy to detoxify the toxicant and to overcome stress. Since fish have fewer amounts of carbohydrates so next alternative source of energy is protein and lipids to meet the increased energy demand (Singh *et al.*, 2010, Lavanya *et al.*, 2011).

Under conditions of stress many organisms will mobilize proteins as an energy source *via* the oxidation of amino acids. Decreased protein level may be associated with stress mediated mobilization of proteins to fulfill an increased element for energy by the fish to cope with environmental condition exposed by the toxicant (Jenkins *et al.*, 2003). The reduction in total protein content may be due to increased proteolysis and possible utilization of their product for metabolic purposes as reported by Ravinder *et al.*, (1988).

Another reason behind the hypoproteinemia observed in the group of fishes exposed to 4-NP is oxidative stress influenced by excess reactive oxygen species (ROS) produced are known to damage proteins. The depletion of total protein content was observed in this investigation can be correlated to this fact that the 4-NP may induced oxidative stress are known to damage proteins (Zhang X *et al.*, 2005, Osman *et al.*, 2010). Depletion of proteins might also be attributed to the destruction or necrosis of cellular function and consequent impairment in protein synthetic machinery might be due to the blocking of protein synthesis, protein denaturation, or interruption in the amino acid synthesis (Vasantharaja *et al.*, 2012, Kori-Siakpere *et al.*, 2006, David *et al.* 2004 and Singh *et al.*, 2010).

Serum cholesterol is a term that includes the total level of cholesterol found in the blood stream. Measuring the level of total cholesterol includes identifying all types or classes of cholesterol that found in the system. Intestinal cholesterol absorption plays a major role in maintaining total body cholesterol homeostasis.

In the present study it has been found that there was decrease in the level of cholesterol in the group of fishes exposed to different concentrations of 4-NP for 10 days as compared to the control group. The similar findings also reported by the Logaswamy and Remia, 2009, Shakoori *et al.*, (1996), Jee *et al.*, 2005, Jipsa *et al.*, 2014, Lakshman *et al.*, 1988 and Riaz, (2018).

The reduction in the cholesterol level depends on its utilization in the manufacture of cortisol arising from stress created by the toxins (Madrid, 2012). The reduced cholesterol level may be due to the inhibition of cholesterol biosynthesis in the liver or due to reduced absorption of dietary cholesterol as reported by Kanagaraj *et al.* (1993). Shakoori *et al.*, in 1996, reported that the cholesterol decrease may be due to utilization of fatty deposits instead of glucose for energy purpose.

Decreased cholesterol levels in the present study after 10 days exposure of 4-NP may be attributed to stress-mediated mobilization of these compounds to fulfill an increased demand for energy by the fish to cope with detrimental conditions imposed by the toxicant (Jee *et al.*, 2005). 4-NP may inhibit the absolute rates of both fatty acid and cholesterol synthesis in the liver and fatty acid synthesis in the adipose tissue which leads to decrease in the level of cholesterol as found in the present study.

## CONCLUSION

The present study concludes that the 4-NP has marked effects on the biochemical parameters of the fish which ultimately causes the disturbance in the normal physiological processes and homeostasis.

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## Conflict of Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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