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Evaluation of Oxidative Stress and Genotoxicity Induced by Triclosan in the Freshwater Fish, *Anabas testudineus* (Bloch, 1792)

Chokki Veettil Priyatha and Kumari Chidambaran Chitra*

Endocrinology and Toxicology Laboratory, Department of Zoology, University of Calicut, Malappuram District, Kerala 673635, India

*Corresponding Author

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Abstract: The antimicrobial property of triclosan benefits human in many consumer products, while its adverse effects on non-target organisms raise environmental concern. In this study we attempted to investigate possible role of triclosan in the antioxidant defense system and genotoxicity in the fish, *Anabas testudineus*. Fish were exposed to the sublethal ($176.7 \mu\text{g L}^{-1}$) and environment concentrations (0.009 and $9 \mu\text{g L}^{-1}$) of triclosan for 4, 7, 30, and 60 days along with the control groups. Oxidative stress of triclosan was evaluated using biomarkers such as glutathione reductase, levels of reduced glutathione, hydrogen peroxide generation, lipid peroxidation, and protein carbonyl content in gonads. Besides, the frequencies of micronucleus, nucleio-cytoplasmic abnormalities, and comet assay were performed to estimate the genetic damage in the peripheral erythrocytes. Triclosan caused a significant ($P<0.05$) decrease in the activity of the glutathione reductase, and the level of reduced glutathione. However, the levels of hydrogen peroxide generation, lipid peroxidation, and protein carbonyls increased significantly ($P<0.05$) in the gonads. Micronucleus test showed a significant increase in the formation of micronucleus and other nucleio-cytoplasmic abnormalities in the peripheral erythrocytes. Furthermore, a significant ($P<0.05$) increase in the comet tail DNA per cent and tail length in the fish erythrocytes revealed the genotoxicity of triclosan. Thus, the present results suggest that triclosan exposure could induce oxidative stress, and potentially lead to DNA damage in the fish, *Anabas testudineus*.

Keywords: Triclosan, Oxidative stress, Comet assay, Micronucleus, *Anabas testudineus*

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Introduction

Pharmaceuticals and personal care products (PPCPs), which include diverse organic compounds have confirmed their presence in various environmental compartments, and exert the biological responses in several non-target organisms. Triclosan, one of the PPCPs, widely

used as an antimicrobial agent in several consumer products is continuously discharged into the aquatic ecosystems through various point and non-point sources (Li *et al.*, 2014). The United States Food and Drug Administration and the European Union have banned the use of triclosan

in few developed countries from some consumer products and reformulated with healthier alternatives (US-FDA, 2016; EU, 2016). However, the regulation of triclosan on other personal care products like liquid soaps, toothpaste, and medical devices is not enforced throughout the world (Dodson *et al.*, 2020). The bactericidal property of triclosan prevents it from several degradation steps in the wastewater sewage treatment plants and potentially escapes to reach the aquatic environment (Ricart *et al.*, 2010). The acute toxicity of triclosan in aquatic invertebrates such as zooplankton (Gonzalez-Perez *et al.*, 2018), larval midges (Martinez-Paz *et al.*, 2017), and crustaceans (Perron *et al.*, 2012) has been well established. In aquatic vertebrates, particularly in fish species, the endocrine-disrupting effects of triclosan have been evidenced by developmental and reproductive defects (Carmosini *et al.*, 2016; Song *et al.*, 2020). Triclosan exerts its toxicity by the direct action on mitochondria by disrupting mitochondrial membrane fluidity and impairment of mitochondrial uncoupling in embryos of zebrafish *Danio rerio* (Shim *et al.*, 2005). Mitochondrial dysfunction is indirectly associated with the generation of reactive oxygen species (ROS) that contribute to several pathologies in the organism (Murphy, 2013).

Environmental stressors released into the aquatic environment are known to activate the endogenous production of ROS leading to an imbalance in the pro-oxidant and antioxidant defense system in fish (Livingstone, 2001; Lushchak, 2011). The disturbances in cellular oxidative homeostasis cause oxidative stress that eventually damages the biological systems often prelude to the onset of lipid peroxidation, protein and DNA damage by inhibiting the activities of antioxidant enzymes (Lushchak, 2016). The alteration in the antioxidant defenses can be used as a diagnostic tool of oxidative stress, and also play a significant role in predicting the toxic effects of the stressors. The recommended biomarkers of oxidative stress in fish include the activities of antioxidant enzymes (Doyotte *et al.*, 1997; Pandey *et al.*, 2003), non-enzymatic

antioxidants (Parvez *et al.*, 2006), generation of hydrogen peroxide (Tkachenko *et al.*, 2013), lipid peroxidation (Yoshida *et al.*, 2013), and protein oxidation (Parvez and Raisuddin, 2005). The free radicals formed as a result of ROS production could also lead to DNA damage that is usually detected using micronucleus formation and comet tail (Beedanagari *et al.*, 2014; Hussain *et al.*, 2018).

The measurement of changes in the activities of certain antioxidant enzymes is largely used as an early warning system to elucidate the effects of toxicants. The glutathione-related enzyme activity appeared to be a relevant biomarker that attempts to find the relation between the effects of toxicants in the tissues and the response of the antioxidant defense system (Habashy *et al.*, 2019). The non-enzymatic antioxidant glutathione is a cysteine-containing peptide that prevents free radical-induced cellular or tissue damages, and is widely used as an indicator of the 'redox status' of the cell (van der Oost *et al.*, 2003). The failure in the activation of the key antioxidant enzymes namely superoxide dismutase, catalase, and glutathione peroxidase prevents the conversion of hydrogen peroxide and hydroperoxides to harmless water and oxygen molecules (Chelikani *et al.*, 2004). The low level of hydrogen peroxide generated regulates several physiological processes including signaling in cell proliferation, apoptosis, normal mitochondrial function, carbohydrate metabolism, platelet activation, and balancing the thiol-redox status in cells (Droge, 2002). However, high concentrations of hydrogen peroxide are deleterious to the cells that could lead to free radical-induced tissue damages (Clement and Pervaiz, 2001).

Free radicals primarily target lipids, the essential components of the cell membrane, and generate lipid peroxidation that leads to a profound impact on the biological systems by causing oxidative damage (Yin *et al.*, 2011). The levels of malondialdehyde, thiobarbituric acid reactive substances (TBARS), lipid hydroperoxides, and 4-hydroxyalkenals are frequently measured endpoints to detect the rate

of lipid peroxidation or oxidation of polyunsaturated fatty acids in the cells (Livingstone, 2001; Ayala *et al.*, 2014). Besides, proteins are considered as an important target of free radical attack in cells (Du and Gebicki, 2004), and the formation of protein carbonyl by oxidative modifications contributes to protein degradation and associated cellular pathologies (Dalle-Donne *et al.*, 2003). The free radical formation also leads to modifications of DNA bases, formation of abasic sites, and strand breaks that potentially damage both mitochondrial and nuclear genomes (Aitken and Krausz, 2001; Barzilai and Yamamoto, 2004).

Few researchers have identified that triclosan toxicity has been mediated through the induction of oxidative stress and DNA methylation in eggs of zebrafish (Falisse *et al.*, 2017). Besides, alteration of the antioxidant defense system and genetic damage in the liver of goldfish, *Carassius auratus* (Wang *et al.*, 2018a), and in liver and brain tissues of adult zebrafish (Gyimah *et al.*, 2020) also contribute to free radical formation. Triclosan exposure activates cellular defense mechanism for the induction of cytotoxicity in zebrafish embryos (Parenti *et al.*, 2019) while the binary mixture of triclosan and triclocarban has known to alter antioxidant enzyme activities in the embryos of silver catfish (Gomes *et al.*, 2021). Although the adverse effects of triclosan are evident in other fish species, the present study was aimed to investigate the gap of knowledge on the oxidative stress response in gonadal tissues of the native adult climbing perch, *Anabas testudineus*. The most reliable oxidative stress biomarkers were considered for the appropriate evaluation of triclosan toxicity, and genotoxic effects was also assessed using micronucleus test and comet assay.

Materials and Methods

Chemicals:

Triclosan (5-chloro-2-(2, 4-dichlorophenoxy) phenol; TCS of 97% purity), dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO; 99% purity), thiobarbituric acid, fetal bovine serum, Giemsa stain, Triton X-100, ethidium bromide, and agarose were obtained

from HiMedia Research Laboratories Pvt. Ltd, Mumbai, India. All other chemicals of analytical grade were purchased from the local commercial sources, India.

Test animal:

Healthy adult freshwater fish, *Anabas testudineus* (8 ± 1 g; 8.5 ± 0.75 cm) were randomly selected from the stock maintained in the Endocrinology and Toxicology Laboratory, University of Calicut, India. The physico-chemical features of water such as temperature 28 ± 2 °C, pH 7.4 to 7.6, dissolved oxygen 8.64 ± 0.6 mg L⁻¹, and salinity < 100 ppm, were maintained in the range throughout the study (APHA, 1998). Each group consisting of a total 10 fish per sex, in replicates were introduced into well-aerated and dechlorinated water in glass tanks (40 L; 30 cm width × 60 cm length × 30 cm depth) under a natural photoperiod (12: 12 h; light: dark). Fish were fed daily with standard fish pellets and water was renewed on every 96 h by maintaining the appropriate test concentrations. The care and use of the fish complied with the Animal Welfare Board of India and Committee for Control and Supervision of Experiments on Animals (CPCSEA) under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate change, Government of India.

Experimental setup:

Control (n=10 per group, in replicates)	Experimental (n=10 per group, in replicates)		
	Sublethal concentration (One-tenth of LC ₅₀ 96 h) (Priyatha and Chitra, 2018)	Environmentally relevant concentration (Ramaswamy <i>et al.</i> , 2011; Nag <i>et al.</i> , 2018)	
No Toxicant/Vehicle	176.7 µg L ⁻¹	0.009 µg L ⁻¹	9 µg L ⁻¹
Exposure period: 4, 7, 30 and 60 days			

Preparation and analysis of samples:

After every exposure period, fish were caught using a small dip net with the least disturbance, and blood from both sexes was collected from the caudal vein using a heparinized microsyringe. The collected fresh blood was transferred into microcentrifuge tubes for the analysis of

cytonuclear abnormalities and DNA damage. The blood smear for the micronucleus test was prepared according to the standard method of Heddle (1973) and Schmid (1975). Frequencies of cellular anomalies were classified into cytoplasmic and nuclear abnormalities (Carrasco *et al.*, 1990) and identified as described by Sumi and Chitra (2019a). The comet assay was performed according to Singh *et al.* (1988). The images were captured using a C-mount camera (Optika pro5 CCD camera) and analyzed using Open Comet-Image J, version 1.3.1 software. DNA damage was estimated based on the percentage of DNA in the comet tail and categorized into five grades ranging from 0 to 4. The tail DNA damages less than 5%, 5–20%, 20–40%, 40–95%, and more than 95% were considered as grade zero, one, two, three, and four, respectively (Collins, 2004). The total score was calculated as follows:

Total score = (% of cells in grade 0 × 0) + (% of cells in grade 1 × 1) + (% of cells in grade 2 × 2) + (% of cells in grade 3 × 3) + (% of cells in grade 4 × 4)

The ovary and testis were extirpated from 10 fish per sex from both control and treatment groups by sacrificing the animal. Gonadal homogenates (1% w/ v) were prepared in 0.9% ice-cold normal saline using a motor-driven glass Teflon homogenizer on crushed ice for 1 min, centrifuged at 800 g for 15 min at 4 °C. The gonadal supernatants were collected and used for the analysis of glutathione reductase (Carlberg and Mannervik, 1985), reduced glutathione (Moron *et al.* 1979), levels of hydrogen peroxide generation (Pick and Keisari, 1981), lipid peroxidation (Ohkawa *et al.*, 1979), and protein carbonyl content (Levine, 1990; Reznick and Packer, 1994). The total protein was estimated using bovine serum albumin as the standard (Lowry *et al.*, 1951).

Statistical analyses:

All data represented in Figures and Tables were expressed as Mean ± Standard Deviation (SD) for ten animals per sex in each group, in replicates. The mean differences between the groups were considered to be significant at $P < 0.05$ against the

control groups, which were shown as asterisks (*). Comparison of mean among the groups was performed using one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) followed by Duncan's Multiple Range as a post-hoc test using SPSS 21.0 statistical software. All biochemical analyses were carried out in triplicate to minimize the statistical errors.

Results

Antioxidant status in gonads:

The activity of glutathione reductase (Fig. 1) and the level of reduced glutathione (Fig. 2) decreased significantly ($P < 0.05$) after sublethal and environmental concentrations of triclosan exposure in both ovary and testis in duration and concentration-dependent manner when compared with the respective control groups. The levels of hydrogen peroxide generation (Fig. 3), lipid peroxidation (Fig. 4), and protein carbonyl content (Fig. 5) were significantly ($P < 0.05$) increased in both ovary and testis of triclosan-exposed groups than the corresponding control groups.

Micronucleus formation:

Micronucleus test performed in the peripheral blood of control groups showed no nucleocytoplasmic abnormalities, and it showed clear cytoplasm and distinct compact nucleus (Fig. 6A, B). Triclosan exposure caused cytoplasmic and nuclear abnormalities in the peripheral blood of the fish, *Anabas testudineus*. Cytoplasmic abnormalities include vacuolated and degenerated cytoplasm (Fig. 6C), formation of sticky cells (Fig. 6D), cytoplasmic bridge (Fig. 6E), cells without cytoplasm (Fig. 6F), and granular cytoplasm (Fig. 6H). The nuclear abnormalities observed were irregular and blebbed nucleus (Fig. 6), binucleated and serrated nucleus (Fig. 6), micronucleus (Fig. 6), and notched nucleus (Fig. 6). The percentage of nuclear and cytoplasmic abnormalities increased with an increase in time and concentrations (Tables 1, 2).

Comet tail:

The control and vehicle-control groups showed 96% of Grade A comet score, which was 0.75 and

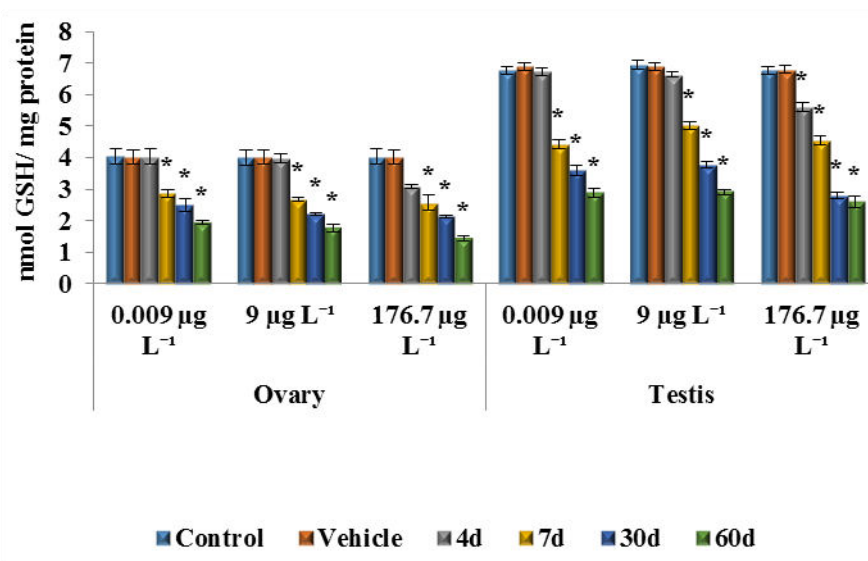


Fig. 1: Effect of triclosan on the activity of glutathione reductase in the gonads of the fish, *Anabas testudineus* (Mean $\pm$ SD; n = 10/ group, in replicates; Asterisks (*) denotes P < 0.05 against the control groups).

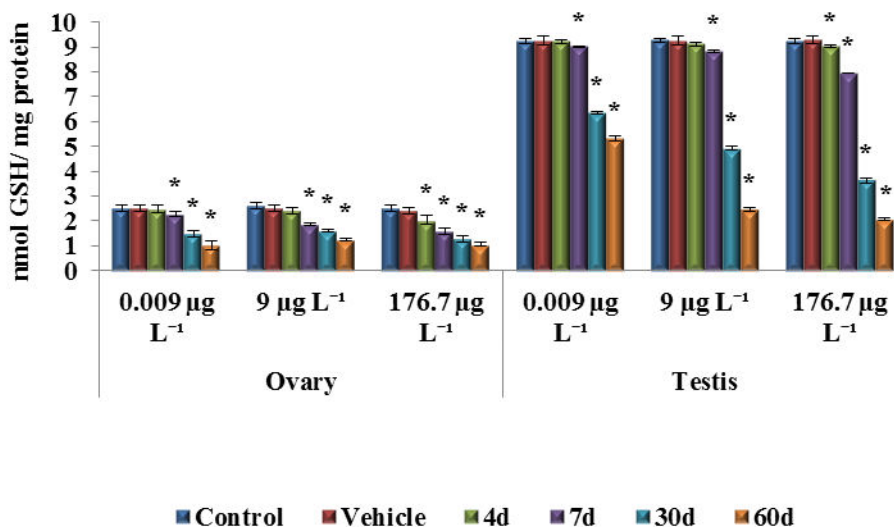


Fig.2: Effect of triclosan on the level of reduced glutathione in the gonads of the fish, *Anabas testudineus* (Mean $\pm$ SD; n = 10/ group, in replicates; Asterisks (*) denotes P < 0.05 against the control groups).

0.88 of the total scores, respectively (Table 3). In the triclosan-exposed group at 0.009 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$ concentration, there was a significant ($P < 0.05$) increase in the grades of DNA damage with an increase in the duration of exposure showing 2.21 to 14.77 of the total scores (Table 3). The grades of DNA damage were observed to increase at 9 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$ concentration of triclosan ranging from Grade 0 to Grade 3 with an increase in total score from 2.51 to 17.79 based on the duration of exposure (Table

3). In the sublethal triclosan exposure group, there was a significant ($P < 0.05$) increase in the grades of DNA damage than the environmentally relevant concentration groups (0.009 and 9 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$ concentrations) with the total score ranging between 2.82 and 18.72 based on an increase in exposure time (Table 3).

The comet parameters such as per cent tail DNA and tail length were also scored after

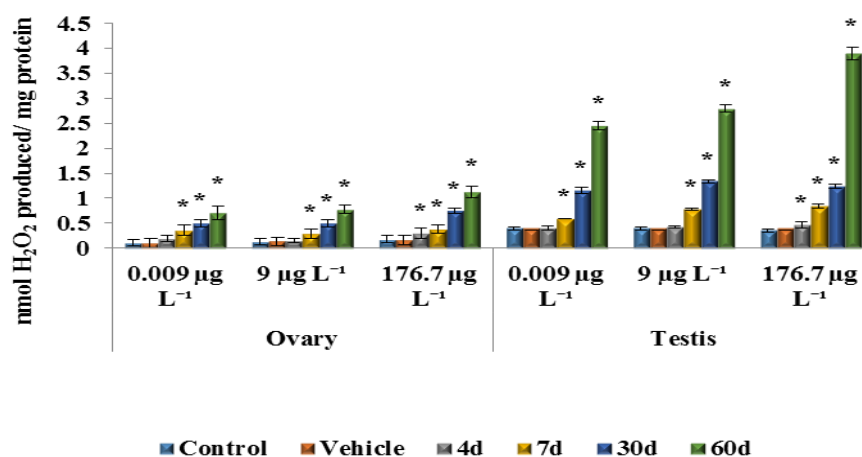


Fig. 3: Effect of triclosan on the level of hydrogen peroxide generation in the gonads of the fish, *Anabas testudineus* (Mean $\pm$ SD; n = 10/ group, in replicates; Asterisks (*) denotes P < 0.05 against the control groups).

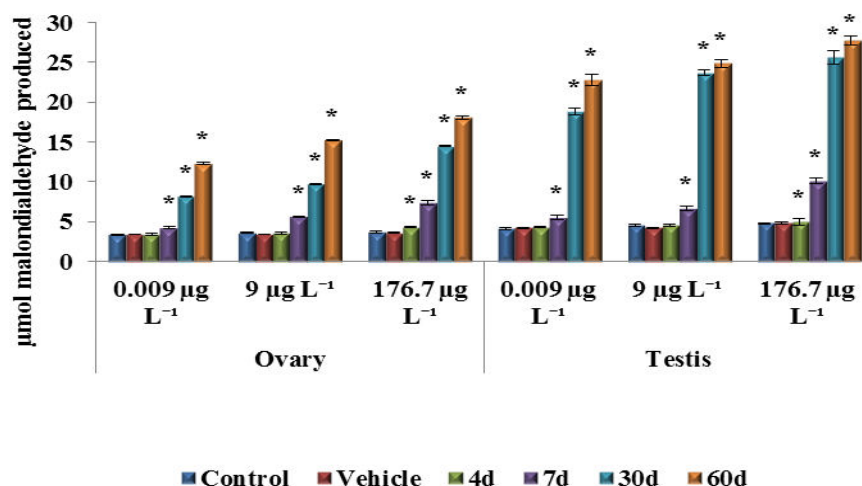


Fig. 4: Effect of triclosan on level of lipid peroxidation in the gonads of the fish, *Anabas testudineus* (Mean $\pm$ SD; n = 10/ group, in replicates; Asterisks (*) denotes P < 0.05 against the control groups).

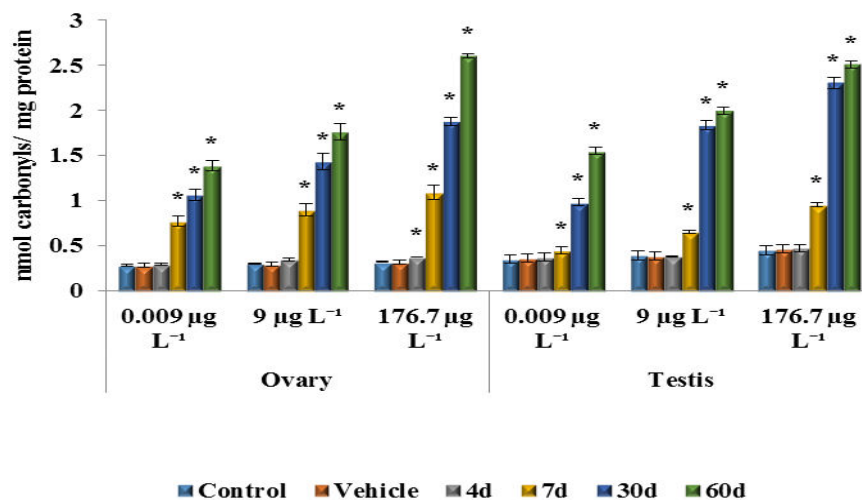


Fig. 5: Effect of triclosan on the level of protein carbonyl content in the gonads of the fish, *Anabas testudineus* (Mean $\pm$ SD; n = 10/ group, in replicates; Asterisks (*) denotes P < 0.05 against the control groups).

Table 1: Effect of triclosan on nuclear abnormalities in the erythrocytes of the fish, *Anabas testudineus* (Mean $\pm$ SD; asterisks (*) indicated significance at $P < 0.05$ against the control groups; $n = 10$ / group, in replicates; Total cells scored-1000 Nos.)

Treatment groups		Blebbled Nucleus	Notched Nucleus	Micronucleus	Irregular nucleus
Control		1.36 $\pm$ 0.26	0	0	1.47 $\pm$ 0.15
Vehicle		1.29 $\pm$ 0.10	0	0	1.45 $\pm$ 0.03
0.009 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$	4 d	3.07 $\pm$ 0.064*	1.41 $\pm$ 0.13	1.15 $\pm$ 0.02	6.54 $\pm$ 2.07*
	7 d	4.11 $\pm$ 0.364*	3.03 $\pm$ 0.33*	1.32 $\pm$ 0.21	11.69 $\pm$ 2.15*
	30 d	10.20 $\pm$ 1.014*	3.49 $\pm$ 1.32*	2.18 $\pm$ 0.53*	12.18 $\pm$ 1.64*
	60 d	12.02 $\pm$ 2.34*	5.37 $\pm$ 1.73*	3.76 $\pm$ 1.26*	21.64 $\pm$ 0.12*
9 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$	4 d	3.35 $\pm$ 0.06*	1.47 $\pm$ 0.06	1.66 $\pm$ 0.01*	7.29 $\pm$ 0.80*
	7 d	4.74 $\pm$ 1.18*	3.08 $\pm$ 0.84*	3.92 $\pm$ 1.05*	12.41 $\pm$ 1.27*
	30 d	11.51 $\pm$ 1.95*	4.76 $\pm$ 1.51*	10.08 $\pm$ 0.90*	15.47 $\pm$ 1.53*
	60 d	13.37 $\pm$ 0.11*	5.43 $\pm$ 1.98*	15.91 $\pm$ 1.20*	24.99 $\pm$ 0.39*
176.7 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$	4 d	4.511 $\pm$ 0.14*	1.68 $\pm$ 0.02	1.76 $\pm$ 0.01*	12.52 $\pm$ 0.21*
	7 d	5.66 $\pm$ 0.67*	3.67 $\pm$ 1.32*	6.09 $\pm$ 1.58*	13.75 $\pm$ 1.88*
	30 d	12.34 $\pm$ 1.26*	4.63 $\pm$ 1.17*	13.06 $\pm$ 0.62*	15.72 $\pm$ 1.60*
	60 d	14.26 $\pm$ 0.85*	5.58 $\pm$ 2.42*	18.24 $\pm$ 1.85*	27.30 $\pm$ 2.61*

Table 2: Effect of triclosan on cytoplasmic abnormalities in the erythrocytes of the fish, *Anabas testudineus* (Mean $\pm$ SD; asterisks (*) indicated significance at $P < 0.05$ against the control groups; $n = 10$ / group, in replicates; Total cells scored-1000 Nos.)

Treatment groups		Sticky cells	Cytoplasmic degeneration	Cytoplasmic vacuoles	Cytoplasmic bridge formation
Control		0.077 $\pm$ 0.24	0	0.16 $\pm$ 0.36	0
Vehicle		0.064 $\pm$ 0.20	0	0.16 $\pm$ 0.52	0
0.009 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$	4 d	0.97 $\pm$ 2.19	0	0	0.15 $\pm$ 0.47*
	7 d	13.23 $\pm$ 1.11*	0	9.65 $\pm$ 1.68*	3.76 $\pm$ 0.90*
	30 d	14.46 $\pm$ 2.74*	3.76 $\pm$ 0.68*	18.26 $\pm$ 3.66*	5.04 $\pm$ 1.40*
	60 d	17.26 $\pm$ 3.65*	9.43 $\pm$ 1.27*	25.50 $\pm$ 1.54*	11.61 $\pm$ 2.01*
9 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$	4 d	6.63 $\pm$ 1.76*	0	1.44 $\pm$ 0.26*	3.83 $\pm$ 0.80*
	7 d	10.92 $\pm$ 1.94*	5.17 $\pm$ 0.59*	6.78 $\pm$ 2.75*	4.47 $\pm$ 1.00*
	30 d	8.16 $\pm$ 2.04*	14.64 $\pm$ 1.91*	21.87 $\pm$ 2.02*	10.14 $\pm$ 1.65*
	60 d	11.57 $\pm$ 1.74*	25.12 $\pm$ 2.30*	15.86 $\pm$ 2.36*	4.35 $\pm$ 0.95*
176.7 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$	4 d	14.67 $\pm$ 1.42*	0	20.74 $\pm$ 2.84*	3.74 $\pm$ 0.66*
	7 d	32.02 $\pm$ 3.07*	13.21 $\pm$ 2.01*	25.45 $\pm$ 2.37*	6.44 $\pm$ 1.27*
	30 d	19.13 $\pm$ 1.88*	32.56 $\pm$ 1.88*	33.58 $\pm$ 0.92*	11.49 $\pm$ 0.89*
	60 d	12.86 $\pm$ 1.09*	35.27 $\pm$ 0.92*	20.46 $\pm$ 0.97*	7.79 $\pm$ 0.54*

Table 3: Grades of DNA damages after triclosan exposure in erythrocytes of the fish, *Anabas testudineus* (Mean $\pm$ SD; asterisks (*) indicated significance at $P < 0.05$ against the control groups; n = 10/ group, in replicates; Total cells scored-100 Nos.)

Treatment groups	Grades of DNA damage					Total score (%)
	Grade 0	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	
Control	96.88 $\pm$ 0.66	3.13 $\pm$ 0.66	0	0	0	0.75
Vehicle	96.33 $\pm$ 0.23	3.67 $\pm$ 0.23	0	0	0	0.88
0.009 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$	4 d	90.75 $\pm$ 0.61*	9.25 $\pm$ 0.61*	0	0	2.21
	7 d	88.42 $\pm$ 0.65*	11.58 $\pm$ 0.65*	0	0	2.77
	30 d	78.36 $\pm$ 0.99*	19.83 $\pm$ 0.49*	1.82 $\pm$ 0.49*	0	5.62
	60 d	60.94 $\pm$ 0.36*	24.25 $\pm$ 0.20*	7 $\pm$ 0.82*	7.81 $\pm$ 0.26*	14.77
9 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$	4 d	89.5 $\pm$ 0.41*	10.5 $\pm$ 0.41*	0	0	2.51
	7 d	86.25 $\pm$ 0.61*	13.75 $\pm$ 0.61*	0	0	3.29
	30 d	76.52 $\pm$ 0.72*	14.59 $\pm$ 0.79*	6.45 $\pm$ 0.22*	2.44 $\pm$ 0.15*	8.34
	60 d	57 $\pm$ 0.82*	19.59 $\pm$ 0.48*	15.47 $\pm$ 0.38*	7.94 $\pm$ 0.05*	17.79
176.7 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$	4 d	88.22 $\pm$ 0.48*	11.78 $\pm$ 0.48*	0	0	2.82
	7 d	83 $\pm$ 0.82*	14 $\pm$ 1.63*	3 $\pm$ 2.45*	0	4.79
	30 d	60.65 $\pm$ 0.89*	20.75 $\pm$ 0.61*	14.94 $\pm$ 0.36*	3.66 $\pm$ 0.08*	14.75
	60 d	54.28 $\pm$ 0.69*	23.25 $\pm$ 0.20*	12.47 $\pm$ 0.48*	10 $\pm$ 0.00*	18.72

Table 4: Effect of triclosan on the percent tail DNA, and tail length in erythrocytes of the fish, *Anabas testudineus* (Mean $\pm$ SD; asterisks (*) denotes significance at $P < 0.05$ against the control groups; n = 10/ group, in replicates)

Treatment groups		Tail DNA (%)	Tail length
Control		2.73 $\pm$ 0.60	0.43 $\pm$ 0.30
Vehicle		2.74 $\pm$ 0.77	0.43 $\pm$ 0.34
0.009 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$	4 d	3.02 $\pm$ 0.84	0.69 $\pm$ 0.35
	7 d	4.08 $\pm$ 1.73	3.57 $\pm$ 1.36*
	30 d	7.39 $\pm$ 1.64*	11.96 $\pm$ 2.21*
	60 d	18.84 $\pm$ 3.59*	29.14 $\pm$ 3.58*
9 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$	4 d	3.51 $\pm$ 0.61	0.93 $\pm$ 0.39
	7 d	4.27 $\pm$ 1.35	3.93 $\pm$ 1.83*
	30 d	8.58 $\pm$ 2.49*	13.87 $\pm$ 1.50*
	60 d	24.43 $\pm$ 2.84*	30.18 $\pm$ 2.67*
176.7 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$	4 d	3.84 $\pm$ 0.75	1.00 $\pm$ 0.34
	7 d	7.00 $\pm$ 1.94*	4.75 $\pm$ 2.19*
	30 d	16.25 $\pm$ 2.27*	14.69 $\pm$ 0.58*
	60 d	28.39 $\pm$ 3.38*	39.67 $\pm$ 3.68*

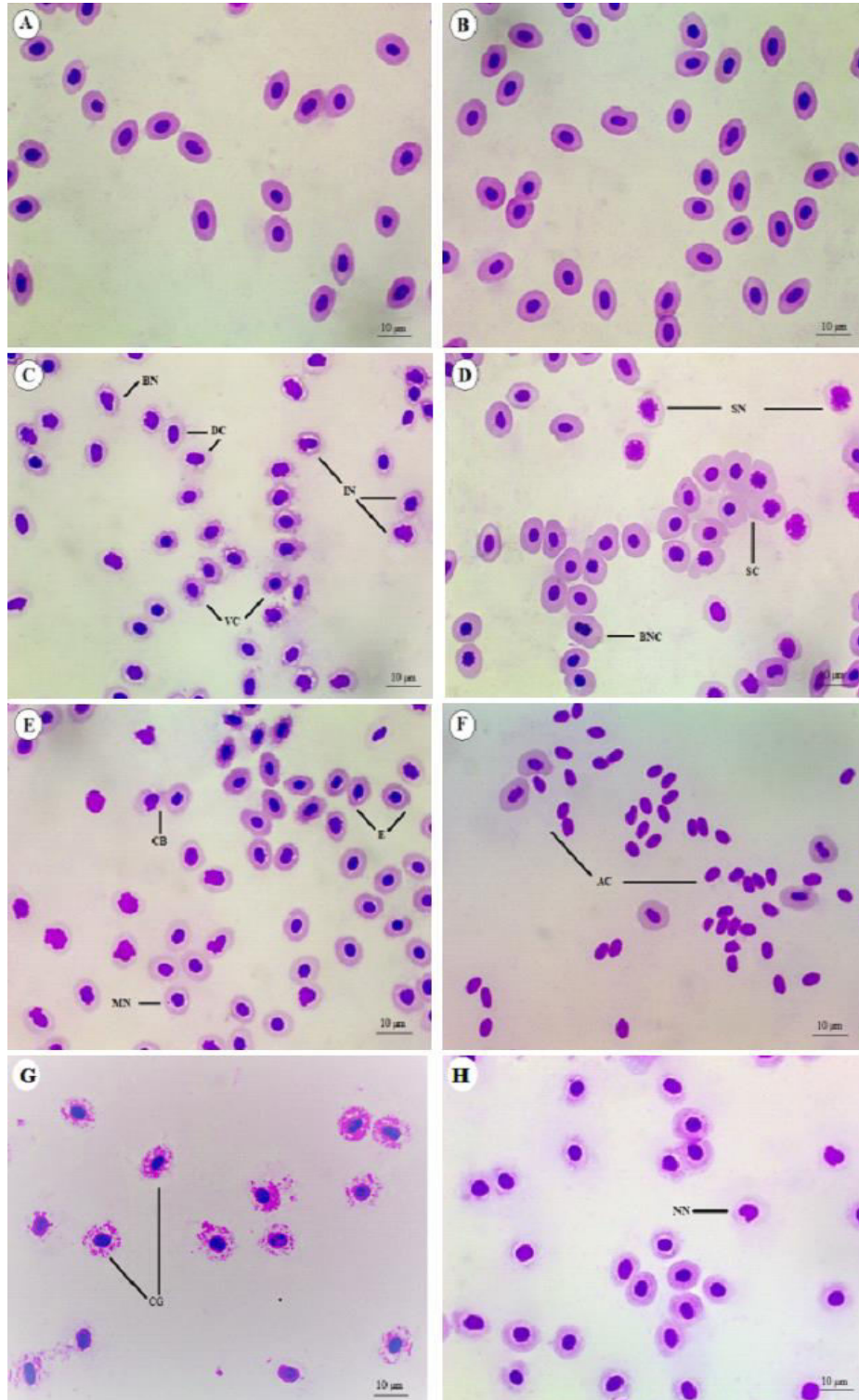


Fig. 6: Effect of triclosan showing cyto-nuclear abnormalities in the peripheral blood of the fish, *Anabas testudineus*. A-Control; B-Vehicle; C-Vacuolated cytoplasm (VC), degenerated cytoplasm (DC), irregular nucleus (IN), blebbed nucleus (BN); D-Sticky cells (SC), binucleated cell (BNC), serrated nucleus (SN); E-Cytoplasmic bridge (CB), echinocytes (E), micronucleus (MN); F-Cells without cytoplasm (AC); G-Cytoplasmic granules (CG); H-Notched nucleus (NN); Scale:10 µm.

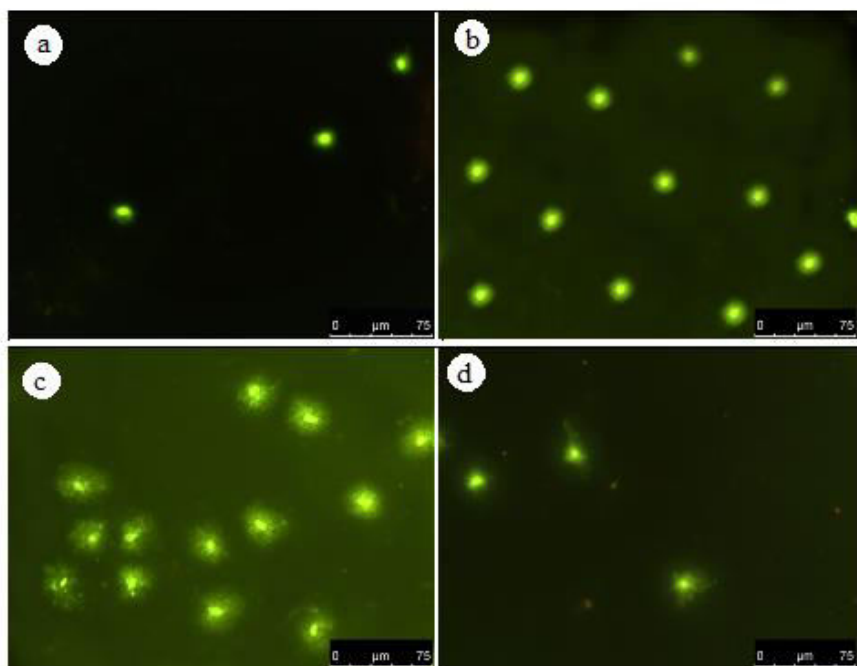


Fig. 7: Representative images of grades of DNA damage in *Anabas testudineus* (a) Grade 0-control and vehicle-control cells; (b) Grade 1; (c) Grade 2; (d) Grade 3.

triclosan exposure, which showed a significant ($P < 0.05$) increase in both the parameters and the severity of DNA damages were time- and concentration-dependent (Table 4; Fig. 7). However, control groups showed no significant differences in the per cent tail DNA and tail length.

Discussion

The ubiquity of triclosan in the aquatic environment, and its crucial role in the antioxidant defense system in various animal models gained attention to explore its toxicity in the fish model, *Anabas testudineus*. There is overwhelming evidence suggesting an association between oxidative stress and DNA damage in both mitochondrial and nuclear genomes. In this study, we have investigated that triclosan toxicity was mediated through the induction of oxidative stress in the gonadal tissues, and associated DNA damage in the peripheral erythrocytes. The inactivation of antioxidant enzymes results in the overproduction of reactive oxygen species (ROS), which are highly toxic, and cause damage to carbohydrates, proteins, lipids, and DNA thereby leading to oxidative stress (Patlevic *et al.*, 2016). The interaction of enzymatic and non-enzymatic

antioxidant defense systems protects the biological systems from the production of free radicals and their metabolites (Deponte, 2013).

In most aerobic organisms, glutathione (GSH) functions as the central redox agent by neutralizing ROS and 2-oxoaldehyde formations probably functioning together with the thioredoxin system (Kanzok *et al.*, 2001). GSH gets oxidized to its disulfide dimer, GSSG by the reaction with the free radicals or by the catalytic action of glutathione peroxidase (GPx) or glutathione S-transferase (GST) enzymes while glutathione reductase (GR) enzyme regenerates GSH through NADPH-dependent reaction (Grant, 2001). The glutathione redox system consisting of GSH, GSSG, GPx, GST, and GR is considered as the second-line of the defensive system against the oxidative stress induced by free radicals and lipid peroxides (Szalai *et al.*, 2009; Wu *et al.*, 2011). In the present study, the level of glutathione, as well as the activity of glutathione reductase, decreased in both ovary and testis of the fish in time- and concentration-dependent manner illustrating an altered redox state in the gonads. These observations were in accordance with previous findings where triclosan exposure at 50, 100, and

150 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$ concentrations to male zebrafish lowered the level of GSH along with a reduction in the activity of glutathione reductase thus GSH could not be regenerated to restore its normal level in the liver tissues (Gyimah *et al.*, 2020). Furthermore, another study has revealed that sublethal exposure of triclosan to the early-life stage of zebrafish altered the redox state of glutathione (Falisse *et al.*, 2017).

Hydrogen peroxide is one of the low molecular weight, non-radical two-electron reduction products of oxygen that emerge as a central hub in redox signaling, sensing, and regulation related to oxidative stress (Sies, 2014). Hydrogen peroxide also functions as a second messenger molecule and regulates many cellular functions including initiation of cell proliferation, differentiation and migration, maintenance of cell shape and structure, and the recruitment of immune cells (Stone and Yang 2006). However, high concentrations of hydrogen peroxide evoke growth arrest causing cell death and other inflammatory responses (Alvarez *et al.*, 2016). Superoxide dismutases are the first-line antioxidant defense enzymes that catalyze superoxide radicals into hydrogen peroxide, which is consequently converted to water and molecular oxygen by catalase or glutathione peroxidase enzymes (Wang *et al.*, 2018b). In the current study, triclosan exposure elevated the level of hydrogen peroxide generation in gonads of the fish, which indicated the failure of the antioxidant enzyme system to eliminate the oxygen-derived free radical into non-toxic compounds. It is noteworthy that phenol, the environmental stressor, similarly provoked the generation of hydrogen peroxide in serum, liver, and ovary of the fish, *Cyprinus carpio* thereby causing oxidative stress (Das *et al.*, 2016). In our laboratory, it has been proved that exposure to fullerene C_{60} nanomaterial has been shown to increase the level of hydrogen peroxide generation leading to an oxidative imbalance in the gonads of the fish, *Anabas testudineus* (Sumi and Chitra, 2019b).

Cell membranes formed of the lipid bilayer are

more susceptible to oxidative stress as the polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFA) in the membrane degrade to small, more reactive particles such as conjugated dienes, lipid hydroperoxides, and thiobarbituric acid-reactive substances (TBARS) (Janero, 1990; Halliwell and Gutteridge, 1999). The products of lipid peroxidation such as acrolein, 4-oxo-2-nonenal, 4-hydroxynonenal, and malondialdehyde exhibit free radical activity, and enhance membrane damage associated with several pathologies (Zieba *et al.*, 2000). It is well-known that about 40% of gonadal membrane lipids of fish are rich in PUFA, which forms a critical risk factor for peroxidative attack (Ebeid *et al.*, 2008). In the present study, malondialdehyde, the advanced oxidation product of lipid peroxidation, was measured as an oxidative stress biomarker in the gonadal tissues to evaluate the triclosan-induced stress. Triclosan exposure at all concentrations increased the level of lipid peroxidation in both ovary and testis of the fish suggesting that the lipophilic nature of the toxicant probably evoked free radical attack on the membrane lipids of gonadal tissue. The present results are in agreement with the findings of Gallego *et al.* (2021) who have reported an increase in the level of lipid peroxidation after ibuprofen and triclosan exposure at 25 and 50 $\mu\text{g L}^{-1}$ concentrations in striped catfish *Pseudoplatystoma magdaleniatum*. Dar *et al.* (2020) has reported a similar increase in the level of lipid peroxidation in embryos of four food fishes namely *Cyprinus carpio*, *Ctenopharyngodon idella*, *Labeo rohita*, and *Cirrhinus mrigala* after exposure to different sublethal concentrations of triclosan. In another study, exposure to triclosan alone or in combination with different polymers of microplastics has been shown to elevate the level of lipid peroxidation in the liver of zebrafish (Sheng *et al.*, 2021).

ROS generation also induces irreversible protein modification and degradation formed by the two most reactive products of lipid peroxidation namely 4-oxo-2-nonenal and 4-hydroxynonenal, which diffuses from the cell membrane into the cytoplasm and nucleus, and

react with a variety of proteins and nucleic acids (Dean *et al.*, 1997; Dalle-Donne *et al.*, 2003). Protein carbonyls were measured from the formation of a stable 2,4-dinitrophenyl (DNP) hydrazone product derived from 2,4-dinitrophenylhydrazine (DNPH) and used as a biomarker for protein oxidation elicited by ROS production (Kolgiri and Patil 2017). In the present study, triclosan exposure caused an increase in the level of protein carbonyl content in the gonads of the fish *Anabas testudineus* thus indicating oxidative modifications of protein. In another study, sublethal concentrations of triclosan increased the levels of carbonyl protein in the brain of adult zebrafish (Gyimah *et al.*, 2020). On the contrary, environmental concentrations of triclosan did not cause any alteration in the protein carbonyl content in the zebrafish embryos (Parenti *et al.*, 2019).

One of the possible consequences of free radical formation is genetic damage, in which blood was found more sensitive to genotoxicity (Garcia-Medina *et al.*, 2017). Thus, the current study monitored the genotoxicity of triclosan in the peripheral erythrocytes using micronucleus test and comet assay as biomarkers of DNA damage. The peripheral blood of the fish is widely used to evaluate the micronucleus test and comet assay since it avoids the complex cell preparation and also able to obtain repeated samples from the same animal. Micronucleus are small, round dark structures of the whole or fragments of chromosomes that were failed to incorporate into the nucleus of daughter cells during cell division (Bolognesi and Hayashi, 2011). The test for micronucleus formation detects clastogens or aneugens, which are involved in the chromosomal breakage and rearrangement or induce aneuploidy or an abnormal number of chromosomes, respectively (Al-Sabti and Metcalfe, 1995; Oliveira *et al.*, 2009; Obiakor *et al.*, 2014). The results obtained showed several nucleocytoplasmic abnormalities in the peripheral blood of the fish after triclosan exposure, which includes the formation of micronucleus, and other nuclear aberrations like irregular, binucleated, serrated

and notched nucleus. Besides, the cytoplasmic abnormalities such as vacuolated and degenerated cytoplasm, formation of sticky cells, cytoplasmic bridges, presence of cytoplasmic granules, and cells without cytoplasm were more prominent features found among the treatment groups. Echinocytes, a spiculated erythrocytes with small and numerous projections were also noted after triclosan exposure as a result of the altered membrane permeability or impaired metabolic functions, which could be caused due to the overproduction of ROS (Hale *et al.*, 2011). Micronucleus formation and other nuclear abnormalities have been reported in the liver cells of goldfish, *Carassius auratus* (Wang *et al.*, 2018a), in gill and ovary of zebrafish (Wang *et al.*, 2019), in the peripheral erythrocytes of *Oreochromis niloticus* (Vijitha *et al.*, 2017), *Pangasianodon hypophthalmus* (Paul *et al.*, 2019), and *Clarias gariepinus* (Jimoh and Sogbanmu, 2021) after triclosan exposure. The cytoplasmic anomalies observed in the current study coincided with other findings on fullerene C₆₀ nanomaterial exposure in the erythrocytes of the fish, *Anabas testudineus* (Sumi and Chitra, 2019a), and in *Oreochromis mossambicus* exposed to silicon dioxide, titanium dioxide, aluminum oxide, and iron oxide nanoparticles (Vidya and Chitra, 2018).

The primary genetic damage induced by triclosan was also evaluated by comet assay or single cell gel electrophoresis assay using specific parameters such as percent tail DNA and tail length in erythrocytes of the fish. Comet assay is widely used to detect single-strand DNA breaks, alkali labile sites, and crosslinking caused by environmental stressors in the aquatic environment (Tice *et al.*, 2000; Bolognesi and Cirillo, 2014). The amount of DNA that leaves the nucleus was known by scoring the percent tail DNA, which denotes the actual percentage of DNA damage in a particular cell, while the tail length or DNA migration represents the extent of genetic damage (Kumaravel *et al.*, 2009; Cabello *et al.*, 2018). Exposure of triclosan at all concentrations for long-term duration showed grade 3 DNA damage, and it was noted that the intensity of the

damage increased with time and concentration. A study conducted on zebrafish embryos revealed that triclosan exposure caused a slight primary genotoxic effects only at high concentrations (Parenti *et al.*, 2019). Genetic damage scored using per cent tail DNA has been found associated with the generation of ROS in erythrocytes of the Indian major carp *Labeo rohita* (Hemalatha *et al.*, 2019), and in *Oncorhynchus mykiss* (Capkin *et al.*, 2017). The tail moment and tail length scored in the hepatocytes of the goldfish, *Carassius auratus*, and adult zebrafish showed significant DNA damage only after high concentration of triclosan exposure (Wang *et al.*, 2018a; Gyimah *et al.*, 2020). The overall results of antioxidant and genotoxic parameters suggest that triclosan-induced oxidative stress in gonads thereby contributed to DNA damage in erythrocytes of the fish *Anabas testudineus*.

Conclusion

To our knowledge, this is the first study to investigate the sublethal and environmental concentrations of triclosan-induced gonadal toxicity mediated through oxidative stress, which could also impart genetic damages in erythrocytes of the fish, *Anabas testudineus*. Taken together, the evaluation of oxidative stress and cytogenetic damages provides a diagnostic and predictive tool for the environmental quality assessment.

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