

Print ISSN : 0972-8813
e-ISSN : 2582-2780

[Vol. 24(1) January-April 2026]

Pantnagar Journal of Research

(Formerly International Journal of Basic and
Applied Agricultural Research ISSN : 2349-8765)



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CONTENTS

Indian mustard: Phytoremediation tool for soil health management (Review)	1
M.L. DOTANIYA, C.K. DOTANIYA, KULDEEP KUMAR, JAKIR HUSSAIN, R.K. DOUTANIYA, H.M. MEENA and MANJU LATA	
From profile to problems: A study on socio-economic status and constraints of rural women in dairy farming	14
ADITI PATHAK and ARPITA SHARMA KANDPAL	
Diversification and intensification in rice–wheat cropping system for enhancing productivity under <i>Tarai</i> zone of Uttarakhand	20
PESALA SANTHA KUMAR, DINESH KUMAR SINGH, SUBHASH CHANDRA, ROHITASH SINGH and AJEET PRATAP SINGH	
Sensor based nitrogen application impact on productivity, economics and nutrient uptake in maize	25
AMIT BHATNAGAR and AJAY KUMAR	
Association of germination and seedling vigour attributes with green forage yield in oat (<i>Avena sativa</i> L.) genotypes through correlation and path coefficient analysis	31
DEVYANI RAMOLA, AKRITI BALLABH SANSKRITI JOSHI, MANISH MEHRA and BIRENDRA PRASAD	
Genetic divergence and yield trait impact in French bean (<i>Phaseolus vulgaris</i> L.)	43
BHAWANA MAMGAIN, B.P. NAUTIYAL, S.C. PANT, VAISHALI THAPA, HEIGRUJAM RIYASANA and MAYANK	
Arabic-gum based edible coatings preserving the post-harvest quality of Guava fruits	48
ESHA TEWARI and OMVEER SINGH	
Efficacy of catechol and plant growth regulators on the vegetative growth and flowering of African Marigold (<i>Tagetes erecta</i> L. cv. Pusa Narangi Gaiinda)	59
SURYANSH SRIVASTAVA, AFSAR AHMAD, MD. RAMJAN and KHAN BILAL MUKHTAR AHMED	
Host response of diverse pulse genotypes to root-knot nematode (<i>Meloidogyne incognita</i>)	67
SAROJ YADAV, EKTA RATHORE and ANIL KUMAR	
Effect of egg size on egg quality traits, fertility, hatchability and day-old chick weight	75
ISLAM UDDIN SHEIKH, AZMAT ALAM KHAN, ARNAB JYOTI KALITA, SHEIKH ADIL HAMID, IRFAN AKRAM BABA, HENNA HAMADANI, BUSHRA ZAFFER and INSHA AFZAL	
Pathomorphological studies on verminous pneumonia in a Gaddi goat	81
SWASTI SHARMA, SONALI MISHRA and R.D. PATIL	
Pathological findings in congestive heart failure in dog: A case report	85
MUNISH BATRA and STUTI SINGH	

Histopathological and haematological evaluation of the ameliorative effect of piperine on quinalphos-induced subacute toxicity in Swiss Albino Mice PREETI SINGH, VINOD KUMAR, PREETI BAGRI and DEEPIKA LATHER	89
Phytochemical screening and antioxidant activities of locally available medicinal plants PREETI BAGRI, VIJEYTA TIWARI, ARCHANA LOHIYA and VINOD KUMAR	99
Natural Farming Inputs (NFIs) as sustainable alternatives for enhancing the growth and development of Chickpea (<i>Cicer arietinum</i> L.) SHAIFALI and A.K. SHARMA	108
Integrating Bayesian Calibration, Hierarchical Spatial Regression, and Structural–Temporal Models to Explain and Predict Wheat Yield in the Tarai–Bhabar Belt of Uttarakhand, India NEHA BHATT and VINOD KUMAR	114
Phytochemical characterization and immuno-antioxidant potential of <i>Moringa oleifera</i> leaf extract in chicken lymphocytes ANAMITRA RUJ, SONU AMBWANI and LATA PALIWAL	128
Biochemical changes associated with triclosan exposure in the freshwater fish <i>Cyprinus carpio</i> MADHU SHARMA, YASHPAL, RIJUL RANA, DEEKSHA, DEEPIKA THAKUR and TARANG KUMAR SHAH	140
Assessment of awareness among respondents towards Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana: A study in Haryana MEGHA GOYAL, SUMAN GHALAWAT, MINAKSHI, ATUL DHINGRA and MINI	148
Youth perception and constraints in agri-entrepreneurship: A factor analytic study JYOTI, SUMAN GHALAWAT, MEGHA GOYAL, NEELAM KAUSHAL, SUNIL KUMAR and VIKRANT HOODA	156
Design of Object Detection Model Using Deep Learning for Autonomous Driving in Adverse Weather Conditions: A GAN-Based Restoration and Depth-Aware Fusion Framework MUMUKSHU BHATT, SUBODH PRASAD, RAJESH SINGH, ASHOK KUMAR and POOJA TAMTA	165
A novel mechanical purification approach for <i>Grewia optiva</i> Fibre-Reinforced epoxy composites: Effect of fibre geometry on structural performance DEEPA SINGH, NEERAJ BISHT, TARUN KUMAR SAXENA and KAMAL RAWAT	172
Evaluating Long-Term rainfall and temperature trends across the Shipra River basin POONAM SINGH, MOHAN LAL, DHEERAJ KUMAR, P. K. SINGH and GOVIND VERMA	184
Rainfall-runoff modelling using soft computing techniques for various watersheds of Madhya Pradesh, India SEEMA KUSHWAHA and PRAVENDRA KUMAR	196
Prevalence and associated risk factors of functional constipation among the selected adult population of Pantnagar, U.S. Nagar, Uttarakhand, India JYOTI SINGH, NEETU DOBHAI, ARCHANA KUSHWAHA, N.C SHAHI and SABBU SANGEETA	204
Tracking nutritional transitions: A comparative study of child malnutrition (0–5 years) trends across districts of Madhya Pradesh SHALINI CHAKRABORTY	212
Determinants influencing tourist selection of rural tourism destinations using Garrett Ranking Technique: Evidence from Supi village, Uttarakhand NEHA PANDEY and KAMAL UPRETI	221

Biochemical changes associated with triclosan exposure in the freshwater fish *Cyprinus carpio*

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ABSTRACT: The present study evaluated the biochemical responses of the freshwater fish *Cyprinus carpio* post sublethal exposure to triclosan. Fish were exposed to two concentrations of triclosan (0.242 mg/L and 0.484 mg/L) for 7, 14, and 21 days, followed by a 7-day recovery period under laboratory conditions. Biochemical parameters like glucose, cholesterol, aspartate aminotransferase (AST), and alanine aminotransferase (ALT) were analyzed to assess metabolic and hepatic stress responses. The results revealed significant, concentration- and time-dependent increases in glucose and cholesterol levels in the exposed groups compared to the control and solvent control groups. Similarly, the activities of hepatic enzymes AST and ALT showed marked elevations during the exposure period, suggesting possible liver dysfunction and cellular damage induced by triclosan. These biochemical alterations indicate disturbances in carbohydrate and lipid metabolism along with impairment of hepatic integrity. However, during the recovery period, most parameters showed a noticeable decline toward control values, indicating partial physiological recovery after removal of the toxicant. Overall, the findings demonstrate that triclosan exposure can induce significant biochemical disturbances in *Cyprinus carpio* and highlight the usefulness of biochemical biomarkers as sensitive indicators of aquatic pollution. This study underscores the potential ecological risks associated with triclosan contamination in freshwater ecosystems.

Key words: Biochemical parameters, *Cyprinus carpio*, Triclosan, Toxicity

Triclosan (TCS) has been widely used since 1968 as an antiseptic, disinfectant, and preservative in clinical and consumer products. It is commonly incorporated into cosmetics, household cleaning agents, and various materials, including medical devices, plastics, textiles, and kitchen utensils (Bedoux *et al.*, 2012). Due to its widespread application and persistence, TCS has become a contaminant of global concern, with its occurrence extensively reported in rivers, lakes, and estuarine environments across America, Asia, Africa, Australia, and Europe.

The toxicity of TCS has been widely reported in a diverse array of aquatic species, such as algae, daphnids, and fish (Orvos *et al.*, 2002). In aquatic environment, TCS is recognized to trigger oxidative stress by increasing the generation of reactive oxygen species (ROS), leading to mitochondrial dysfunction, as demonstrated in mammalian cell studies (Jin *et al.*, 2020; Teplova *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, TCS acts as an endocrine disruptor,

adversely affecting reproductive and developmental processes in fish (Wang and Tian, 2015; Iannetta *et al.*, 2022; Li *et al.*, 2024).

At the molecular level, TCS exposure has been shown to alter gene expression and enzyme activity related to detoxification, metabolism, and neurophysiological functions, along with cytoskeletal organization in *Labeo rohita* (Sharma *et al.*, 2022). These molecular alterations are further reflected at the physiological level, where significant alterations in haematological parameters have been reported in *Pangasianodon hypophthalmus* and *Cirrhinus mrigala* (Paul *et al.*, 2019; Dar *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, TCS has been found to induce cytogenotoxic effects in fish species such as *Danio rerio*, *L. rohita*, and *P. hypophthalmus*, indicating its potential to cause genetic damage (Parenti *et al.*, 2019; Sharma *et al.*, 2021). Recent studies further emphasize its role as a potent metabolic disruptor, causing alterations in carbohydrate metabolism, amino acid regulation, and nitrogen metabolic

processes, together with endocrine and developmental disturbances (Wang *et al.*, 2025; Das *et al.*, 2025).

In the Indian context, although studies are relatively limited, available reports indicate the widespread occurrence of TCS in aquatic systems. It has been detected in both water and sediment matrices across various regions (Ramaswamy *et al.*, 2011; Nag *et al.*, 2018; Thilakan *et al.*, 2019; Singh and Suthar, 2021; Biswas and Vellanki, 2021; Prasad *et al.*, 2024; Kumar *et al.*, 2024b). A study conducted in South Indian rivers, including the Cauvery, Vellar, and Tamiraparani rivers, reported comparatively higher environmental risk in the Cauvery River (Ramaswamy *et al.*, 2011). Notably, the occurrence of TCS has increased following the COVID-19 pandemic, likely due to the intensified use of TCS-containing personal hygiene products, with several studies reporting elevated levels in rivers and coastal ecosystems (Kumar *et al.*, 2021; Gopal *et al.*, 2021; Prasad *et al.*, 2024).

Despite growing evidence of triclosan toxicity, limited information is available regarding its sublethal effects on economically important freshwater species such as *Cyprinus carpio*, particularly under controlled exposure and recovery conditions. Therefore, the present study aims to evaluate the biochemical responses of *C. carpio* following sublethal exposure to triclosan and to assess the potential for physiological recovery after cessation of exposure. The findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of triclosan-induced toxicity and highlight the importance of biochemical biomarkers in monitoring aquatic environmental health.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Fish collection and acclimatization

Sixty specimens of freshwater fish, *Cyprinus carpio* (common carp), with an average length of 18 ± 0.5 cm and body weight of 100 ± 5.5 g, were procured from the fish farm of the Department of Fisheries, Dr. G.C. Negi College of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (DGCN-COVAS), CSK Himachal Pradesh

Krishi Vishwavidyalaya, Palampur, Himachal Pradesh, India. Prior to experimentation, the fish were acclimatized for 10 days in aerated glass aquaria with a capacity of 100 L. The aquaria were filled with dechlorinated bore-well water, and the temperature was maintained at 22–26°C, with a pH range of 7.6–7.8. Continuous aeration was provided using an air pump to ensure adequate dissolved oxygen levels.

During the acclimatization period, key water quality parameters, including pH, ammonia, total hardness, carbonate hardness, nitrite, and nitrate, were monitored regularly. The fish were fed a commercial pelleted diet once daily. The aquaria were cleaned at regular intervals to maintain optimal water quality and ensure the health and well-being of the fish.

Chemical

Analytical grade triclosan (Sigma Aldrich, USA; CAS-No. 72779-5G-F, purity $\geq 97.0\%$) was used for the study. The stock solution (10 mg/mL) of TCS was prepared by dissolving the compound in 1% dimethyl sulphoxide (DMSO) solution as solvent. From this stock solution, an appropriate quantity was taken and dissolved in experimental tanks (each containing 100 L water) to get the desired concentration of test solutions. Two Sublethal Concentrations were selected based on the previously reported LC_{50} value 0.968 mg/L for *C. carpio* (Tripathi *et al.*, 2024).

Experimental design

Fish were kept in five different groups ($n = 20$ /group)- Control (without TCS); Vehicle control (solvent, 1% DMSO); Exposed to 0.048 mg/L of TCS ($1/20^{\text{th}}$ of LC_{50}); Exposed to 0.024 mg/L of TCS ($1/40^{\text{th}}$ of LC_{50}). Sampling was done at every 7 days interval and was continued till 28 days (7, 14, 21, and 28 days). At each time interval, five fish were sampled for histopathological and biochemical analysis.

Assessment of Plasma Biochemical Parameters

To evaluate the effects of triclosan exposure on biochemical parameters, blood samples were collected from fish at 7, 14, 21 days and 7 days post-

exposure. Blood was aseptically withdrawn from the caudal vein using a heparinized syringe to prevent coagulation and ensure sample integrity. Plasma biochemical parameters including Glucose, Cholesterol, AST/SGOT, and ALT/SGPT were analyzed using commercially available diagnostic assay kits designed for serum/plasma samples. For plasma separation, blood samples were centrifuged at 10,000 rpm for 10–15 min using a Tarson Spinning MC-00 centrifuge. The separated plasma was then analyzed using a Vchem Next Biochemistry analyzer according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Statistical analysis

Data were represented as the mean $\pm$ standard deviation of the mean (SD). One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to detect a significant difference between exposed and controls, followed by Tukey's post hoc test. The statistical analysis was conducted through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows (standard version 26) software. Differences were considered significant at level of $p < 0.05$.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Exposure to triclosan caused significant alterations

in the biochemical parameters of *Cyprinus carpio* compared to the control and solvent control groups. Blood glucose levels showed a significant dose- and time-dependent increase in the treated groups. At 0.024 mg/L, glucose increased from 7 days to 21 days, while at 0.048 mg/L, it increased from 7 days to 21 days. Similarly, cholesterol levels also increased progressively with exposure duration, reaching 126.82 mg/dl at 0.024 mg/L and 165.82 mg/dl at 0.048 mg/L after 21 days. Hepatic enzyme activities, including AST and ALT, showed a marked elevation in treated fish, indicating possible liver dysfunction. AST levels increased to 136.31 μ g/L at 0.024 mg/L and 188.00 μ g/L at 0.048 mg/L after 21 days, while ALT levels rose to 39.43 μ g/L and 45.86 μ g/L, respectively. However, after the 7-day recovery period, most biochemical parameters showed a noticeable decline toward control values, suggesting partial physiological recovery following removal of the toxicant.

The present study demonstrated significant alterations in biochemical parameters of *Cyprinus carpio* following exposure to triclosan, indicating metabolic stress and hepatic dysfunction. Similar responses have been widely reported in fish exposed to triclosan, suggesting common mechanisms of toxicity (Orvos *et al.*, 2002; Dann & Hontela, 2011;

Table 1: Changes in selected biochemical parameters (Glucose, Cholesterol, AST/SGOT, and ALT/SGPT) in the blood of common carp, *Cyprinus carpio*, following exposure to sublethal concentrations of Triclosan (0.024 mg/L and 0.048 mg/L) for 7, 14, and 21 days, along with a 7-day recovery period. Values are presented as mean $\pm$ standard deviation (SD)

Parameter	C/T	7 Days	14 Days	21 Days	Recovery (7 Days)
Glucose (mg/dl)	Control	55.77 $\pm$ 3.21 ^{c1}	55.44 $\pm$ 2.15 ^{c1}	54.77 $\pm$ 3.21 ^{c1}	55.11 $\pm$ 4.31 ^{a1}
	Solvent control	55.46 $\pm$ 1.56 ^{c1}	54.46 $\pm$ 1.56 ^{c1}	55.80 $\pm$ 2.56 ^{c1}	54.13 $\pm$ 2.68 ^{a1}
	0.024 mg/L	71.56 $\pm$ 2.14 ^{b3}	87.55 $\pm$ 1.93 ^{b2}	106.71 $\pm$ 4.55 ^{b1}	39.71 $\pm$ 3.12 ^{b4}
	0.048 mg/L	95.71 $\pm$ 3.36 ^{a3}	118.19 $\pm$ 3.13 ^{a2}	141.95 $\pm$ 4.87 ^{a1}	40.10 $\pm$ 3.92 ^{b4}
Cholesterol (mg/dl)	Control	60.84 $\pm$ 1.96 ^{c1}	58.17 $\pm$ 1.37 ^{c1}	59.50 $\pm$ 1.45 ^{c1}	57.84 $\pm$ 1.61 ^{a1}
	Solvent control	59.33 $\pm$ 2.21 ^{c1}	59.33 $\pm$ 3.37 ^{c1}	60.66 $\pm$ 0.85 ^{c1}	60.00 $\pm$ 2.36 ^{a1}
	0.024 mg/L	73.79 $\pm$ 1.99 ^{b3}	102.48 $\pm$ 2.70 ^{b2}	126.82 $\pm$ 3.39 ^{b1}	59.59 $\pm$ 1.09 ^{a4}
	0.048 mg/L	84.80 $\pm$ 2.46 ^{a3}	115.62 $\pm$ 2.52 ^{a2}	165.82 $\pm$ 7.72 ^{a1}	60.00 $\pm$ 2.36 ^{a4}
AST / SGOT (μ g/L)	Control	41.93 $\pm$ 1.46 ^{c1}	41.63 $\pm$ 2.00 ^{c1}	40.93 $\pm$ 1.46 ^{c1}	42.27 $\pm$ 1.99 ^{a1}
	Solvent control	40.80 $\pm$ 2.02 ^{c1}	43.10 $\pm$ 2.72 ^{c1}	41.33 $\pm$ 1.55 ^{c1}	41.13 $\pm$ 2.17 ^{a1}
	0.024 mg/L	66.27 $\pm$ 2.67 ^{b3}	95.30 $\pm$ 3.50 ^{b2}	136.31 $\pm$ 3.86 ^{b1}	44.53 $\pm$ 2.73 ^{a4}
	0.048 mg/L	75.92 $\pm$ 3.73 ^{a3}	123.93 $\pm$ 3.80 ^{a2}	188.00 $\pm$ 4.55 ^{a1}	43.00 $\pm$ 2.17 ^{a4}
ALT / SGPT (μ g/L)	Control	13.43 $\pm$ 1.50 ^{c1}	13.73 $\pm$ 0.76 ^{c1}	13.73 $\pm$ 0.76 ^{c1}	13.73 $\pm$ 1.25 ^{a1}
	Solvent control	13.46 $\pm$ 0.97 ^{c1}	14.20 $\pm$ 0.96 ^{c1}	13.83 $\pm$ 1.33 ^{c1}	13.13 $\pm$ 0.72 ^{a1}
	0.024 mg/L	18.90 $\pm$ 0.72 ^{b3}	29.63 $\pm$ 0.95 ^{b2}	39.43 $\pm$ 1.06 ^{b1}	14.13 $\pm$ 1.35 ^{a4}
	0.048 mg/L	24.80 $\pm$ 1.49 ^{a3}	35.83 $\pm$ 1.75 ^{a2}	45.86 $\pm$ 1.62 ^{a1}	15.03 $\pm$ 0.32 ^{a4}

Values are expressed as Mean $\pm$ SD. Different superscript letters (a, b, c) within a column indicate significant differences between treatments, while different numbers (1, 2, 3, 4) indicate significant differences among exposure durations at $p < 0.05$.

Ho *et al.*, 2016). Previous studies have shown that triclosan exposure leads to significant disturbances in biochemical indices, including alterations in liver enzyme activities, lipid metabolism, and energy balance, reflecting hepatocellular damage and endocrine disruption in fish (Fang *et al.*, 2016; Witorsch *et al.*, 2014). These findings support the notion that triclosan exerts its toxic effects through disruption of metabolic and hepatic functions.

The progressive increase in glucose levels observed in the present study reflects a stress-induced hyperglycemic response, likely driven by enhanced glycogenolysis and gluconeogenesis to meet elevated energy demands. Such metabolic responses are regulated by stress hormones like cortisol and catecholamines, which stimulate glucose production and mobilization of energy reserves in fish (Iwama *et al.*, 1999; Barton, 2002). Furthermore, cortisol plays a central role in elevating circulating glucose levels by promoting hepatic gluconeogenesis and glycogen breakdown during stress conditions (Vijayan *et al.*, 2010; Mommsen *et al.*, 1999). Comparable findings have been reported in triclosan-exposed fish, where disruption of energy metabolism and oxidative stress significantly altered carbohydrate balance (Sharma *et al.*, 2021). In some cases, prolonged triclosan exposure has also resulted in fluctuations or depletion of glucose levels during recovery, indicating metabolic exhaustion and impaired homeostasis. The significantly lower glucose levels observed in the recovery group compared to control suggest a post-exposure metabolic adjustment rather than complete physiological restoration. This reduction may be attributed to depletion of energy reserves during triclosan exposure, enhanced glucose utilization for tissue repair and antioxidant defense, and possible impairment of hepatic gluconeogenesis. Similar post-stress metabolic alterations in fish have been associated with toxicant exposure and recovery phases (Kumar *et al.*, 2021; Dar *et al.*, 2024).

The increase in cholesterol levels suggests disruption of lipid metabolism and possible hepatic impairment. Although limited studies in *C. carpio* directly report cholesterol changes under triclosan exposure, available evidence indicates that triclosan interferes

with metabolic and endocrine pathways, leading to altered lipid regulation and physiological imbalance (Bouzidi *et al.*, 2023; Liu *et al.*, 2024; Sun *et al.*, 2020). Recent studies have demonstrated that triclosan exposure induces hepatic oxidative stress, inflammation, and lipid accumulation, ultimately disrupting lipid metabolic pathways in fish (Liu *et al.*, 2024; Adhikari *et al.*, 2023; Das *et al.*, 2025). Additionally, multi-omics analyses have revealed that triclosan alters genes and metabolites involved in lipid metabolism and energy homeostasis, contributing to metabolic dysfunction and liver damage (Che *et al.*, 2025). Such alterations are consistent with the observed lipid disturbances in the present study.

The significant elevation of AST (SGOT) and ALT (SGPT) activities indicates hepatocellular damage and increased membrane permeability. Similar increases in transaminase activities have been reported in triclosan-exposed fish, where metabolic enzymes such as AST and ALT showed marked elevation in a concentration-dependent manner, reflecting liver injury and tissue damage (Liu *et al.*, 2024; Zhang *et al.*, 2022; Wang *et al.*, 2021). These enzyme alterations are often associated with oxidative stress, as triclosan has been shown to impair antioxidant defense systems, reduce the activities of key enzymes such as superoxide dismutase (SOD) and catalase (CAT), and induce lipid peroxidation in fish tissues (Trivedi *et al.*, 2025; Nag *et al.*, 2025). Furthermore, recent studies using integrated biochemical and molecular approaches have confirmed that triclosan exposure triggers reactive oxygen species (ROS) generation, mitochondrial dysfunction, and hepatotoxicity in aquatic organisms, thereby reinforcing its role in liver damage (Che *et al.*, 2025; Yang *et al.*, 2023). Such biochemical disruptions are widely recognized as reliable indicators of hepatic dysfunction and toxicant-induced stress in fish. Similar increases in transaminase activities have been reported in triclosan-exposed fish species, suggesting hepatotoxic effects of this compound. A time- and dose-dependent inhibition of acetylcholinesterase (AChE) activity was observed in the brain tissue and glutathione-S-transferase (GST) activity in the liver

tissue showed a significant increase with increasing concentrations of triclosan (Seenivasan *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, triclosan exposure has been reported to cause persistent biochemical disturbances even after the removal of the toxicant, indicating prolonged toxic effects on metabolic pathways (Liu *et al.*, 2024; Li *et al.*, 2022). Such delayed or incomplete recovery has been attributed to sustained oxidative stress, mitochondrial dysfunction, and slow elimination of triclosan from fish tissues (Sharma *et al.*, 2021; Nag *et al.*, 2025). Additionally, studies have shown that even after cessation of exposure, alterations in metabolic enzymes and antioxidant systems may persist due to residual tissue accumulation and disruption of endocrine and energy metabolism pathways (Sun *et al.*, 2020; Che *et al.*, 2025). This is comparable to the partial recovery observed in the present study, where biochemical parameters tended toward normalization but may still reflect underlying physiological stress.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the similarity between the present findings and triclosan-based studies suggests that these toxicants induce biochemical alterations primarily through oxidative stress, metabolic disruption, and hepatocellular damage. The observed dose- and time-dependent changes in glucose, cholesterol, AST, and ALT highlight the sensitivity of these parameters as reliable biomarkers for assessing toxicant-induced stress in fish.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors gratefully acknowledge the State Department of Fisheries H.P. (State Adhoc Misc. 2348-46) for providing the financial support necessary to carry out the present research work. The funding assistance rendered by the Department is sincerely appreciated, as it facilitated the successful completion of this study.

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Received: April 02, 2026

Accepted: April 28, 2026