International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (IJTSRD)
Volume 10 Issue 2, Mar-Apr 2026 Available Online: www.ijtsrd.com e-ISSN: 2456 – 6470

Ecological Impacts of Algal Blooms on Aquatic Plant Communities in Sangitarai Pond, and Kondatari Pond (Raigarh Block)

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the diversity and seasonal variation of algal species in Sangitarai Pond and Kodatari Pond, located in Raigarh Block, Chhattisgarh, India, from April 2023 to January 2024. The assessment of algal diversity was carried out using the Shannon-Wiener Index (H') and Simpson's Diversity Index (D). The results revealed that both ponds exhibited high algal diversity, with Shannon-Wiener Index values of 2.251 for Sangitarai Pond and 2.253 for Kodatari Pond. The Simpson's Diversity Index values were 0.889 and 0.890 for Sangitarai Pond and Kodatari Pond, respectively, indicating a balanced distribution of algal species in both ponds. Seasonal variations in algal density were evident, with higher densities recorded during the summer and monsoon seasons due to favourable conditions such as higher temperatures, increased sunlight, and nutrient influx from runoff. Algal density declined during the winter season, likely due to cooler temperatures and reduced nutrient availability. The findings highlight the need for effective management strategies to control algal blooms, especially during the monsoon season when nutrient loading is at its peak. Understanding the diversity and temporal trends of algal communities can contribute to better conservation and management of these aquatic ecosystems.

KEYWORDS: *Algal blooms, Diversity indices, Seasonal variation, Aquatic ecosystems.*

How to cite this paper: Rashmi Kar Sharma | Chandani Afsana | Jagannath Prasad Suryawanshi "Ecological Impacts of Algal Blooms on Aquatic Plant Communities in Sangitarai Pond, and Kondatari Pond (Raigarh Block)" Published in International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-10 | Issue-2, April 2026, pp.366-370, URL: www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd101339.pdf

IJTSRD101339

INTRODUCTION

Algal blooms are a common phenomenon in aquatic ecosystems, where algae multiply rapidly, often triggered by an influx of nutrients like nitrogen and phosphorus. While algae are a natural part of aquatic environments, their overgrowth can lead to significant ecological issues, such as a reduction in biodiversity, shifts in water chemistry, and disruption of aquatic plant communities (Paerl & Huisman, 2008; Smith et al., 1999). In ponds and lakes, an overabundance of algae can overshadow other aquatic life, decrease species diversity and create an imbalance in the ecosystem (Smith et al., 1999). These blooms are often linked to seasonal changes, with specific environmental conditions favouring algae growth at certain times of the year (Chislock et al., 2013).

Raigarh Block, located in the northern part of Chhattisgarh, India, is home to several freshwater bodies that support diverse aquatic life. Among these, two significant water bodies Sangitarai Pond and Kodatari Pond that have been experiencing a partial increase in algal growth during the warmer months. Seasonal variations within these ecosystems greatly influence the distribution and density of algal species, which in turn impacts the health of the aquatic plant communities and the overall wellbeing of the ponds (Sommer et al., 2012).

Seasonal Variations in Algal Growth

Raigarh Block experiences three distinct seasons—summer, monsoon, and winter—each bringing its own set of environmental conditions that influence algal growth. During the summer months, the region sees higher temperatures and reduced rainfall, which results in higher nutrient concentrations in the water due to limited dilution (Wang et al., 2018). This nutrient overload, specifically the excess of nitrogen and phosphorus, often triggers algal blooms (Smith et

al., 1999). The monsoon season, with its heavy rainfall and runoff, can introduce additional nutrients into the ponds, further encouraging the growth of algae (Zhang et al., 2017). In contrast, the cooler temperatures and shorter days of winter typically slow down algal growth, although low-density blooms can still occur (Chislock et al., 2013).

Both **Sangitarai Pond** and **Kodatari Pond** experience the most significant algal blooms during the summer and monsoon months. The combination of warmer water temperatures, nutrient enrichment from agricultural runoff, and increased sunlight creates an ideal environment for algae to flourish (Paerl & Huisman, 2008). These blooms can lead to reduced light penetration in the water, suppressing the growth of submerged aquatic plants, altering oxygen levels, and negatively impacting the broader ecosystem (Smith et al., 1999). Understanding these seasonal dynamics is crucial for managing the health of these vital water bodies and the communities they support (Wang et al., 2018).

Study Area

Raigarh Block, located in the heart of Chhattisgarh, India, is renowned for its scenic beauty and diverse aquatic habitats. The region is home to several ponds and small lakes that provide essential support to a wide variety of aquatic species, making it a vital area for local biodiversity. Among these water bodies, **Sangitarai Pond** and **Kodatari Pond** stand out as key contributors to the ecological health of the region, playing a significant role in maintaining the balance of local ecosystems.

However, these ponds are increasingly impacted by human activities, particularly from agricultural practices and urbanization. The excessive use of fertilizers and runoff from agricultural fields has led to an overload of nutrients in the water, creating favourable conditions for the rapid growth of algae. Over the past few years, both **Sangitarai Pond** and **Kodatari Pond** have experienced a substantial increase in algal density, which has raised concerns about the health of the aquatic plant communities that depend on these water bodies.

The unchecked proliferation of algae is disrupting the delicate ecological balance of these ecosystems. Algal blooms can negatively affect water quality, limit the amount of sunlight that penetrates the water, and outcompete other aquatic plants for essential nutrients, ultimately endangering both plant and animal life within the ponds.

This study aims to investigate the effects of algal blooms on the aquatic plant communities of **Sangitarai Pond** and **Kodatari Pond**, focusing on how seasonal variations and environmental factors contribute to changes in algal abundance. By understanding these relationships, this research seeks to provide insights that could help in developing strategies to manage algal blooms and protect the long-term health of these valuable aquatic ecosystems in Raigarh Block.

Methodology

1. Identification of Survey Sites

The study focuses on Sangitarai Pond and Kodatari Pond located in Raigarh Block. Both ponds are selected based on their ecological significance and the presence of ongoing algal blooms.

2. Sample Collection and Identification of Algae:

Algal Samples: Samples were collected monthly across different seasons (summer, monsoon, and winter) from various locations within each pond.

Taxonomy: Algal samples were identified using traditional taxonomic methods, with emphasis on Cyanobacteria, green algae, and diatoms.

3. Water Quality Parameters

Various environmental parameters, including temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen (DO), turbidity, and nutrient levels (nitrates, phosphates), were measured to understand the factors influencing algal growth.

4. Statistical Analysis

Diversity Indices - The Shannon-Wiener index and Simpson's diversity index were used to calculate the biodiversity of algal and aquatic plant communities.

5. Anthropogenic Impact Assessment

Surveys were conducted to assess land use, pollution sources, and water quality impacts due to nearby agricultural activities.

Table -1 Algal Density and Environmental Parameters in Sangitarai Pond and Kodatari Pond (April 2023 - January 2024)

Date	Pond	Algal Density (cells/L)	Nitrate (mg/L)	Phosphate (mg/L)	Temp (°C)	pH	DO (mg/L)	Turbidity (NTU)	Season
01-Apr-23	Sangitarai Pond	8,500	3	0.2	30	7.4	5.5	30	Summer
15-Apr-23	Kodatari Pond	7,200	2.8	0.16	31	7.5	5.2	32	Summer
01-May-23	Sangitarai Pond	9,000	3.2	0.25	32	7.6	4.9	35	Summer

15-May-23	Kodatari Pond	8,400	3	0.22	33	7.7	5	38	Summer
01-Aug-23	Sangitarai Pond	15,500	4	0.35	30	7.3	4	40	Monsoon
15-Aug-23	Kodatari Pond	14,200	3.8	0.3	29	7.4	4.2	42	Monsoon
01-Oct-23	Sangitarai Pond	12,000	3.5	0.3	28	7.6	4.5	35	Monsoon
15-Oct-23	Kodatari Pond	11,500	3.2	0.28	27	7.7	4.7	33	Monsoon
01-Dec-23	Sangitarai Pond	6,700	2.5	0.2	24	7.5	5.6	22	Winter
15-Dec-23	Kodatari Pond	6,200	2.3	0.18	25	7.6	5.4	21	Winter
01-Jan-24	Sangitarai Pond	5,800	2	0.15	25	7.5	6.2	18	Winter
15-Jan-24	Kodatari Pond	5,300	1.8	0.12	26	7.6	6.4	20	Winter

Table - 2 Algal Density (cells/L) of Sangitarai Pond and Kodatari Pond (April 2023 - January 2024)

Date	Sangitarai Pond	Kodatari Pond
01-Apr-23	6,800	7,200
15-Apr-23	6,400	6,800
01-May-23	8,000	8,400
15-May-23	7,500	8,100
01-Aug-23	13,600	14,200
15-Aug-23	13,200	13,800
01-Oct-23	10,800	11,500
15-Oct-23	10,300	10,800
01-Dec-23	5,800	6,100
15-Dec-23	5,400	5,800

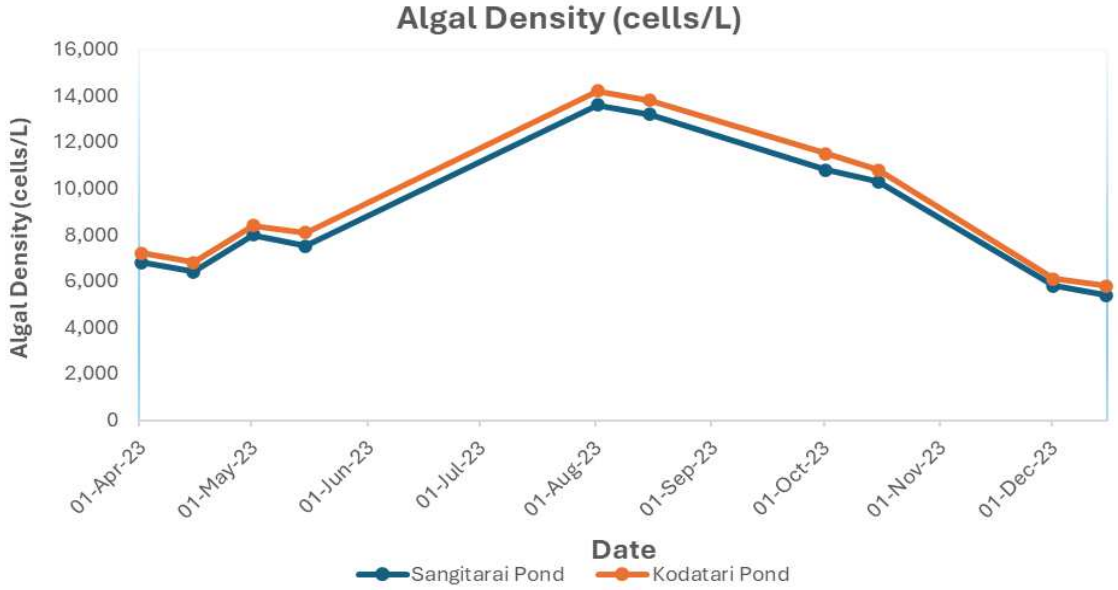

Fig -1. Histogram showing algal diversity of Sangitarai Pond and Kodatari Pond (April 2023 - January 2024)

Calculations for Shannon-Wiener Index (H') and Simpson's Diversity Index (D)
We'll calculate these indices using the given data. I'll proceed with these calculations next. Let me do that right away.

Diversity Indices Calculation Results
Sangitarai Pond
- **Shannon-Wiener Index (H')** = 2.251
- **Simpson's Diversity Index (D)** = 0.889

Kodatari Pond
- **Shannon-Wiener Index (H')** = 2.253
- **Simpson's Diversity Index (D)** = 0.890

Both ponds show high diversity with very close index values, indicating a similar level of species richness and evenness in algal density.

Different collection sites of Sangitari Pond

Different collection sites of Kodatari Pond

Figure 2 Collection of Algal blooms in different seasons from Sangitari and Kondatarai ponds (Raigarh block)

Results and Discussion

Diversity Indices Results

Based on the calculated diversity indices for **Sangitarai Pond** and **Kodatari Pond** (April 2023 - January 2024), we observe the following results

Sangitarai Pond

- **Shannon-Wiener Index (H')** - 2.251
- **Simpson's Diversity Index (D)** - 0.889

Kodatari Pond

- **Shannon-Wiener Index (H')** - 2.253
- **Simpson's Diversity Index (D)** - 0.890

Interpretation of Results

1. **Shannon-Wiener Index (H')**:

The **Shannon-Wiener Index** measures both species richness (the number of species present) and evenness (the relative abundance of species).

Values above 1.5 generally indicate high diversity, with values closer to 3 representing very high diversity. In both **Sangitarai Pond** (H' = 2.251) and **Kodatari Pond** (H' = 2.253), the index values are very close to each other and indicate a **high diversity** of algal species in both ponds.

These values suggest that both ponds support a variety of algal species with balanced distribution, ensuring a robust algal community.

2. **Simpson's Diversity Index (D)**:

The **Simpson's Diversity Index** focuses on the probability that two randomly selected individuals from the sample belong to different species. The closer the value is to 1, the higher the diversity.

Sangitarai Pond (D = 0.889) and **Kodatari Pond (D = 0.890)** both show a high value for Simpson's index, indicating a **low likelihood of dominance** by a single species and a relatively even distribution of species across the algal community.

Temporal Trends in Algal Density:

Algal density in both ponds shows **seasonal variation**, with higher algal densities during the **summer** and **monsoon** seasons. This can be attributed to **higher temperatures**, **nutrient availability**, and **increased sunlight** during these months, which are favourable for algal growth.

The **winter season** sees a noticeable decline in algal density, likely due to **lower temperatures** and reduced nutrient input from runoff.

Seasonal Comparison:

During **summer** (April - May 2023), both ponds show the lowest algal densities compared to other months, but still maintain moderate diversity indices.

The **monsoon season** (June - September 2023) shows a peak in algal density, possibly due to increased nutrient input from rainwater runoff and warmer temperatures, providing ideal conditions for algal blooms.

By **winter** (December - January 2024), algal densities decrease again, possibly due to cooler temperatures and lower nutrient availability.

Conclusion

Both Sangitarai Pond and Kodatari Pond show a high level of algal diversity, with similar seasonal patterns in algal density. The comparable values of their Shannon-Wiener and Simpson's indices indicate that both ponds support a diverse and well-balanced algal community, despite slight variations in algal density throughout the year.These findings emphasize the significant role of seasonal factors like temperature, nutrient availability, and water turbidity in influencing algal growth and sustaining biodiversity in these freshwater ecosystems. Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective management strategies to maintain the ecological health of these ponds.

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