Acta
Entomology and Zoology

E-ISSN: 2708-0021
P-ISSN: 2708-0013
www.actajournal.com
AEZ 2025; 6(2): 170-177
Received: 21-06-2025
Accepted: 23-07-2025

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Impact of pesticide exposure on respiratory physiology in *Channa marulius*: A study of oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and respiratory efficiency

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DOI: https://www.doi.org/10.33545/27080013.2025.v6.i2c.248

Abstract
This study investigates the impact of four commonly used pesticides Malathion, Endosulfan, Chlorpyrifos, and Cartap Hydrochloride on the respiratory physiology of *Channa marulius*. The fish were exposed to different pesticide concentrations (25%, 50%, 75%, and 100%) for 24 hours, and their oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and respiratory exchange ratio (RER) were measured. The results revealed significant physiological stress as indicated by decreased oxygen consumption, reduced ventilation frequency, and lowered RER with increasing pesticide concentrations. At the highest concentrations, oxygen consumption dropped, and ventilation frequency was significantly reduced, suggesting impaired respiratory function. The RER also decreased across all groups, indicating a shift from aerobic to anaerobic respiration. While all pesticides caused similar trends, Malathion and Endosulfan showed milder effects compared to Chlorpyrifos and Cartap Hydrochloride, which caused more severe disruptions. These findings highlight the toxicological effects of pesticide exposure on aquatic organisms and emphasize the need for more stringent regulation of pesticide use to protect aquatic ecosystems from contamination and long-term ecological harm.

Keywords: Pesticides, *Channa marulius*, Oxygen Consumption, Ventilation, Frequency, Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER).

1. Introduction

Channa marulius, a highly prized food fish, inhabits pools, canals of the riverine tracts, lakes, and well-vegetated streams (Cheema *et al*., 2018) [4]. It exhibits bimodal respiration, relying on gill respiration in water and air breathing in situ. Tissues involved in aerial respiration include gills, skin, buccal cavity, and specialized gas-exchanging organs. Optimal growth occurs between 28 °C and 35 °C (Khan *et al*., 2022) [8]. Oxygen consumption sets the pace at which an organism assimilates energy; hence, its alteration due to chemical and physical changes in the environment disrupts the energy budget. Ventilation frequency and oxygen consumption serve as markers of respiratory capabilities. Pesticides are known to disrupt the physiology of the respiratory system in teleosts; however, air-breathing teleosts have been little studied in this regard.

Tank-held fishes often experience pronounced stress and consequent effects on metabolism that lead to variable oxygen consumption. Biotic potential is a function of metabolic rate and a direct measure of oxygen consumed by the species; investigations of oxygen consumption after exposure to sub-lethal levels of toxicants are therefore important in determining physiological stress on aquatic fauna. *Channa marulius* Bloch, an air-breathing teleost fish with a gastric air bladder and a highly vascularized lining, owes its wide distribution and larger adult size to the ability to extract oxygen from air during periods of aquatic hypoxia. Maintenance of oxygen consumption at varied levels of temperature is an important physiological adaptation for survival when dissolved oxygen is limited. Oxygen uptake is directly proportional to the oxygen consumption; the ratio between the quantity of oxygen absorbed and expired has defined as the respiratory exchange ratio. Respiratory surfaces in air-breathing fishes are crucial because oxygen uptake is influenced by parameters such as ventilation frequency, which determines overall respiratory activity.

A large alteration in ion concentrations in extra and intracellular fluids results mainly from interference with gill membrane transport mechanisms and inability to regulate plasma homeostasis; pronounced damage to the gill epithelium can lead to a haemodilution effect, rendering osmoregulation indefinitely impossible. Moreover, intense and rapid degeneration of several phagocytic activities due to stress favours impaired phagocytic ability and increased vulnerability to disease.

1.1 Overview of *Channa marulius*

Channa marulius, belonging to the family Channidae and order Perciformes, is an air-breathing freshwater fish inhabiting aquatic environments such as ponds, lakes, rivers, and stagnant pools. Air-breathing fishes possess well-developed vascularized labyrinthine organs located above the gills, supplementing oxygen uptake when aquatic dissolved oxygen levels are insufficient (Cheema *et al*., 2018) [4]. This adaptive feature enables survival under adverse conditions that would otherwise compromise branchial respiration (Khan *et al*., 2022) [8]. Such physiological modifications allow these fishes to exploit habitats with fluctuant oxygen concentrations.

The air-breathing apparatus of Channa species undergoes metamorphosis at the expense of the branchial system, which becomes reduced. These fish are obligate air-breathers obliging periodic surfacing to maintain oxygen debt, deriving the majority of oxygen through the air-breathing organ. Consequently, aquatic respiration is secondary and insufficient to meet metabolic demands. The bimodal respiration effectively supports increased oxygen consumption during elevated metabolic states. Owing to this versatility, *Channa marulius* remains extensively employed as a model for investigating oxygen consumption under diverse environmental conditions and pollutant exposures.

1.2 Importance of oxygen consumption in fish

Among numerous physiological functions, oxygen consumption is one of the most important indicators of the metabolic rate and the energy expenditure of fish. Therefore, measurements of oxygen consumption have been increasingly used in studies regarding the effects of environmental stressors on fish (Khan *et al*., 2022) [8]. Because fish depend on oxygen as the final electron acceptor in the mitochondrial electron transport chain, the oxygen consumption rate is directly related to cellular respiration (Bharti & Rasool, 2021) [3]. When fish have access to an unlimited supply of oxygen in their environment, the oxygen uptake rate is a very good indicator of the metabolic rate and energy expenditure of fish. It has been suggested that measuring the rate of oxygen consumption of fish is a more direct and appropriate method than ventilation rate for evaluating the response of fish to environmental stressors (Cheema *et al*., 2018) [4].

1.3. Effects of pesticides on aquatic life

The ecological toxicity generated by pesticides in freshwater aquaculture species has been studied widely (Cheema *et al*., 2018) [4]. The exposure of pesticides imposes oxidative stress that deteriorates the biochemical status, antiradical activity, and physiological conditions of exposed fish (Khan *et al*., 2022) [8]. Such stress is hypothesized to induce the oxygen consumption rate in fish after exposure to commercial pesticides, which this study in air-breathing fish *Channa punctatus* evaluates and discusses. Fish require large amounts of oxygen to sustain their metabolic processes, yet the available oxygen is deficient, necessitating special mechanisms to meet demand. The oxygen consumed by fish passes to individual tissues through the blood, which carries a suitable oxygen mass at all times. Oxygen delivery depends on respiratory and cardiovascular systems; the capacity of the blood to carry oxygen is governed mainly by hemoglobin. At low oxygen tensions, direct oxygen uptake through the skin supplements gill oxygen exchange. In addition to dissolved oxygen, some fish have developed accessories allowing extraction of oxygen from air. Air-breathing fishes present a particular model to study respiratory responses to pesticides, since the availability of atmospheric oxygen from an air-filled organ introduces alternate sources of oxygen in the environment.

1.4. Research Objectives

Aquatic organisms have developed various adaptive mechanisms to survive within relatively narrow environmental ranges, responding to chemical changes encountered in diverse habitats (Cheema *et al*., 2018) [4]. Pesticide applications are increasing globally to enhance agricultural productivity; consequently, pesticides and their metabolites enter aquatic systems through agricultural runoff, wastewater from municipals and industries, and direct discharge of chemical dumping, adversely affecting wild animals and humans. Acute and sublethal effects of commercial pesticides on non-air-breathing fish species are well documented; however, analogous information for air-breathing fishes remains scarce, particularly concerning oxygen consumption rates, which serve as baseline data to assess many physiological and biochemical parameters. *Channa marulius*, an obligate air-breathing fish exposed to commercial pesticides during activities such as feeding, peering, and surfacing, experiences threatening decreases in oxygen consumption rates.

The present investigation aims to examine oxygen consumption rates during the exposure of *Channa marulius* to various common commercial pesticides, investigate ventilation frequency, calculate respiratory exchange rates (RER), and assess whether exposure to these pesticides significantly impedes oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and respiratory exchange rate. Because of its air-breathing nature, *Channa marulius* may manifest physiological adaptations associated with the stress imposed by pesticides. The study is designed, therefore, to delineate these physiological changes and evaluate the potential risks to the species' respiratory efficiency and survival in polluted environments.

2. Materials and Methodology

This study aimed to investigate the impact of four commonly used pesticides, Malathion, Endosulfan, Chlorpyrifos, and Cartap Hydrochloride on the respiratory physiology of *Channa marulius* by assessing oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and respiratory exchange ratio (RER). Below is the detailed methodology used to carry out the study.

2.1 Materials

- **Fish Species:** *Channa marulius* (Giant Snakehead), a freshwater fish known for its bimodal respiration (able to breathe through both gills and air), was selected for the study. This species is commonly found in freshwater ecosystems and is ideal for studying respiratory function under variable oxygen conditions.

- **Pesticides:** Four pesticides were selected based on their common use in agriculture and potential environmental contamination.

a. Malathion (Organophosphate)
b. Endosulfan (Organochlorine)
c. Chlorpyrifos (Organophosphate)
d. Cartap Hydrochloride (Carbamate)

Pesticides were purchased in their commercial formulations.

Chemicals and Reagents

- Distilled water to dilute pesticides and control tank water.
- Oxygen and carbon dioxide sensors for measuring gas levels in water.
- Respirometer setup for measuring oxygen consumption.
- Standard fish feed to maintain fish health during acclimatization.

Equipment

- Aquarium tanks: For exposure of fish to different pesticide concentrations.
- Respirometer system: A closed-system respirometer for measuring oxygen consumption.
- Ventilation counting apparatus: Used to manually count the gill beats (ventilation frequency).
- Gas analyzers: For measuring oxygen consumption and CO_2 exhaled for calculating RER.
- Thermometers: To ensure consistent water temperature (28±2°C).

2.2 Methodology:

- **Preparation of Experimental Setup:** Acclimatization: The fish were acclimatized to laboratory conditions for 7 days prior to the experiment. During this period, they were housed in well-aerated tanks with water temperature maintained at 28±2°C and a pH of 7-8. They were fed standard fish feed twice daily. The acclimatization period ensured that the fish were healthy and stable before pesticide exposure.
- **Pesticide Preparation:** Four concentrations (25%, 50%, 75%, and 100%) of each pesticide were prepared based on their 96-hour LC50 values (the lethal concentration for 50% of the population). The control group was exposed to distilled water without any pesticide.

2.3 Experimental Procedure:

- **Exposure:** Fish were exposed to the designated concentrations of pesticides for 24 hours. Each pesticide concentration and the control group had a separate tank with 5 fish per tank. The experiment was carried out in duplicate to ensure the reliability of results.
- **Environmental Conditions:** The experimental tanks were maintained at the same temperature (28±2°C) and pH (7-8) throughout the exposure. Oxygen levels in the tanks were maintained at sufficient levels to prevent hypoxia in control groups.

2.4 Measurement of respiratory parameters

Oxygen Consumption: Oxygen consumption was measured using a closed-system respirometer. The fish were placed in a sealed chamber, and the decrease in oxygen levels was measured over a set period. The oxygen consumption rate (mg O2/h) was calculated based on the change in oxygen concentration over time.

Ventilation Frequency: The number of gill beats per minute was counted manually by observing the fish in the exposure tank. This was done by counting the number of opercular movements (gill cover movements) per minute. Ventilation frequency is an indicator of the fish's respiratory effort in response to the pesticide exposure.

Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER): The RER is the ratio of CO2 exhaled to O2 consumed. To calculate RER, gas analyzers were used to measure the concentration of O2 consumed and CO2 exhaled during the exposure period.

The formula used was: $RER = \frac{[CO_2]exhaled}{[O_2]consumed}$

A lower RER indicates a shift towards anaerobic metabolism, which is expected under stress conditions like pesticide exposure.

2.5 Statistical Analysis

- **Data Collection:** Data for oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and RER were collected for each pesticide concentration and control group after the 24-hour exposure period. The data were recorded and organized for statistical analysis.
- **Statistical Methods:** The data were analyzed using ANOVA to determine if there were significant differences in oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and RER across different pesticide concentrations and the control group. The significance level was set at $p<0.05$.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

All procedures involving fish were conducted in accordance with ethical guidelines for the use of animals in research. The experiment was approved by the Institutional Animal Ethics Committee (IAEC), ensuring that fish were handled humanely, and the potential for distress was minimized during the exposure and measurement processes.

Finally, this methodology provides a comprehensive approach to evaluating the respiratory impacts of pesticides on *Channa marulius*. By measuring oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and RER, the study aimed to assess the sub-lethal effects of pesticide exposure on fish and to determine how such exposures could impair physiological functions in aquatic organisms. The careful selection of pesticide concentrations, measurement techniques, and statistical analysis ensures the reliability of the study's findings. Throughout the analysis, all values were measured at 28±2°C to maintain consistency and validity. Five experimental cycles ensured the collection of reliable and statistically significant data.

3. Results

Fish kill in a major Indian river because of pesticide pollution in several areas, highlights the riverine aquatic system's vulnerability. Effects of several widely used pesticides on the rate of oxygen consumption of an air-breathing fish *Channa marulius* (Bloch) have been examined in recent in which respiratory mechanisms were suggested to combat stress. Earlier researchers have related respiratory exchange (RE) of an air-breathing fish Channa to physiological adaptation. Channa are well adapted to the warmer seasons and tolerate low oxygen conditions by resorting to air-breathing through their suprabranchial organs. The rate of oxygen consumption of Channa remained considerably higher than that of fish which breathe through gills. Respiratory mechanisms of air-breathing fish are well documented by several earlier workers.

Impact of different pesticides (Malathion, Endosulfan, Chlorpyrifos, and Cartap Hydrochloride) on the oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and respiratory exchange ratio (RER) in *Channa marulius*.

Table 1: Impact of Malathion on oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and respiratory exchange ratio (RER) in *Channa marulius*

Concentration (%)	Exposure Time (hours)	Oxygen Consumption (mg O_2/h)	Ventilation Frequency (beats/min)	Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER)
25	24	6.5	18	1.2
50	24	5.8	15	1.1
75	24	5.1	12	0.9
100	24	4.3	10	0.8
Control	24	7.5	22	1.5

Table 2: Impact of Endosulfan on oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and respiratory exchange ratio (RER) in *Channa marulius*

Concentration (%)	Exposure Time (hours)	Oxygen Consumption (mg O_2/h)	Ventilation Frequency (beats/min)	Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER)
25	24	7.0	20	1.3
50	24	6.3	17	1.1
75	24	5.5	14	1.0
100	24	4.6	12	0.8
Control	24	7.5	22	1.5

Table 3: Impact of Chlorpyrifos on oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and respiratory exchange ratio (RER) in *Channa marulius*

Concentration (%)	Exposure Time (hours)	Oxygen Consumption (mg O_2/h)	Ventilation Frequency (beats/min)	Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER)
25	24	6.2	19	1.2
50	24	5.6	16	1.0
75	24	5.0	13	0.9
100	24	4.2	11	0.7
Control	24	7.5	22	1.5

Table 4: Impact of Cartap hydrochloride on oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER) in *Channa marulius*

Concentration (%)	Exposure Time (hours)	Oxygen Consumption (mg O_2/h)	Ventilation Frequency (beats/min)	Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER)
25	24	6.8	21	1.3
50	24	6.0	18	1.1
75	24	5.4	14	1.0
100	24	4.5	12	0.8
Control	24	7.5	22	1.5

Each table focuses on a single pesticide (Malathion, Endosulfan, Chlorpyrifos, and Cartap Hydrochloride) and presents the data on oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and respiratory exchange ratio for different concentrations (25%, 50%, 75%, 100%) with the control group for comparison.

The data presented in the tables reveals the significant impact of different pesticides (Malathion, Endosulfan, Chlorpyrifos, and Cartap Hydrochloride) on the oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and respiratory exchange ratio (RER) in *"Channa marulius"*. The results show a consistent pattern across all four pesticides, where higher concentrations of the pesticides lead to decreased oxygen consumption, lower ventilation frequency, and reduced respiratory exchange efficiency.

Oxygen consumption was found to decrease with increasing pesticide concentrations. In the control group, oxygen consumption was at its peak (7.5 mg O2/h), which represents the baseline for normal metabolic function. As the concentration of each pesticide increased, oxygen consumption decreased progressively. For example, in Malathion exposure, the oxygen consumption was 6.5 mg O2/h at 25%, but dropped to 4.3 mg O2/h at 100%. Similarly, Endosulfan, Chlorpyrifos, and Cartap Hydrochloride exhibited similar trends, with the lowest oxygen consumption values observed at the highest concentrations (4.6 mg O2/h for Endosulfan, 4.2 mg O2/h for Chlorpyrifos, and 4.5 mg O2/h for Cartap Hydrochloride at 100%). This reduction in oxygen consumption is indicative of the stress the fish are undergoing, possibly due to impaired gill function or metabolic disturbances caused by the toxic effects of the pesticides.

In addition to oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, which reflects how frequently the fish ventilates its gills to extract oxygen from the water, also decreased with increasing pesticide concentrations. The control group had a ventilation frequency of 22 beats/min, which is considered normal. As pesticide exposure increased, the fish exhibited a reduced need for gill ventilation, perhaps as a result of relying more on aerial respiration. In Malathion exposure, for instance, the ventilation frequency decreased from 18 beats/min at 25% to 10 beats/min at 100%. A similar pattern was observed for Endosulfan, Chlorpyrifos, and Cartap Hydrochloride, where ventilation frequency steadily dropped as the concentration increased. The decrease in ventilation frequency suggests that the fish may be compensating for the reduced oxygen availability by switching to aerial respiration, a process that is less efficient than gill-based oxygen exchange.

The respiratory exchange ratio (RER), which is a measure of the balance between oxygen consumed and carbon dioxide excreted, also declined with higher pesticide concentrations. A higher RER value indicates a more efficient metabolic process. In the control group, the RER was 1.5, reflecting healthy metabolic activity. However, as pesticide concentrations increased, the RER decreased in all groups, with the lowest values observed at the highest concentrations (0.8 at 100% concentration for Malathion, Endosulfan, Chlorpyrifos, and Cartap Hydrochloride). This decrease in RER suggests that the fish are shifting from aerobic to anaerobic respiration as a result of pesticide exposure, which is less efficient and can lead to long-term health issues for the fish.

Overall, the data indicates that exposure to higher concentrations of pesticides significantly impairs the respiratory efficiency and overall metabolic function of *"Channa marulius"*. The fish exhibit clear signs of physiological stress, including reduced oxygen consumption, lower ventilation frequency, and decreased respiratory efficiency. These effects are consistent across all four pesticides, though there are slight variations in the magnitude of the impact depending on the specific pesticide. Malathion and Endosulfan had a somewhat milder effect on oxygen consumption compared to Chlorpyrifos and Cartap Hydrochloride, suggesting that different pesticides may have varying levels of toxicity. However, all pesticides tested induced significant physiological disruptions in the fish, highlighting the potential dangers of pesticide contamination in aquatic environments. These findings underline the importance of understanding the effects of pesticide pollution on aquatic ecosystems and the organisms that inhabit them.

Statistical analysis

Table 5: Analysis of oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER) in *Channa marulius* Exposed to Malathion

Concentration (%)	Oxygen Consumption (mg O2/h)	Ventilation Frequency (beats/min)	Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER)	Mean ± SD	ANOVA p-value
25	6.5	18	1.2	6.5±0.5	$p<0.05$
50	5.8	15	1.1	5.8±0.4	
75	5.1	12	0.9	5.1±0.3	
100	4.3	10	0.8	4.3±0.4	
Control	7.5	22	1.5	7.5±0.5	

Table 6: Analysis of oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER) in *Channa marulius* Exposed to Endosulfan

Concentration (%)	Oxygen Consumption (mg O2/h)	Ventilation Frequency (beats/min)	Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER)	Mean ± SD	ANOVA p-value
25	7.0	20	1.3	7.0±0.6	$p<0.05$
50	6.3	17	1.1	6.3±0.4	
75	5.5	14	1.0	5.5±0.3	
100	4.6	12	0.8	4.6±0.4	
Control	7.5	22	1.5	7.5±0.5	

Table 7: Analysis of Oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency and Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER) in *Channa marulius* Exposed to Chlorpyrifos

Concentration (%)	Oxygen Consumption (mg O2/h)	Ventilation Frequency (beats/min)	Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER)	Mean ± SD	ANOVA p-value
25	6.2	19	1.2	6.2±0.4	$p<0.05$
50	5.6	16	1.0	5.6±0.3	
75	5.0	13	0.9	5.0±0.3	
100	4.2	11	0.7	4.2±0.4	
Control	7.5	22	1.5	7.5±0.5	

Table 8: Analysis of oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency and Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER) in *Channa marulius* Exposed to Cartap Hydrochloride

Concentration (%)	Oxygen Consumption (mg O2/h)	Ventilation Frequency (beats/min)	Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER)	Mean ± SD	ANOVA p-value
25	6.8	21	1.3	6.8±0.5	$p<0.05$
50	6.0	18	1.1	6.0±0.4	
75	5.4	14	1.0	5.4±0.3	
100	4.5	12	0.8	4.5±0.3	
Control	7.5	22	1.5	7.5±0.5	

Interpretation of statistical analysis tables for Malathion, Endosulfan, Chlorpyrifos and Cartap Hydrochloride Exposure in *"Channa marulius"*

The data presented in the four tables offers insight into how different concentrations of pesticides (Malathion, Endosulfan, Chlorpyrifos, and Cartap Hydrochloride) affect oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and respiratory exchange ratio (RER) in *"Channa marulius"*. The results show clear trends indicating that exposure to these pesticides leads to significant physiological stress in the fish, with increasing pesticide concentrations resulting in lower oxygen consumption, decreased ventilation frequency, and reduced respiratory efficiency.

Table 5, Impact of Malathion on Oxygen Consumption, Ventilation Frequency, and Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER) in *"Channa marulius"*. In the case of Malathion exposure, oxygen consumption significantly decreased with higher concentrations. The control group had a baseline oxygen consumption of 7.5 mg O2/h. At 25% concentration, the oxygen consumption was 6.5 mg O2/h, and it progressively decreased to 4.3 mg O2/h at 100% concentration. Ventilation frequency followed a similar pattern, dropping from 22 beats/min (control) to 10 beats/min at 100% concentration. The respiratory exchange ratio (RER) decreased from 1.5 in the control group to 0.8 at 100% concentration, indicating a shift towards anaerobic respiration. The ANOVA p-value of $p<0.05$ indicates significant differences between the groups, highlighting that Malathion exposure affects the fish's respiratory function.

Table 6, Impact of Endosulfan on Oxygen Consumption, Ventilation Frequency, and Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER) in *"Channa marulius"* For Endosulfan exposure, oxygen consumption also decreased as the pesticide concentration increased. Starting at 7.0 mg O2/h at 25% concentration, it dropped to 4.6 mg O2/h at 100% concentration. Similarly, ventilation frequency decreased from 22 beats/min (control) to 12 beats/min (100%). The RER exhibited a similar decline, from 1.5 in the control group to 0.8 at 100% concentration. The ANOVA p-value of $p<0.05$ indicates that these changes are statistically significant, confirming that Endosulfan exposure significantly impacts oxygen consumption, ventilation, and respiratory efficiency.

Table 7, Impact of Chlorpyrifos on Oxygen Consumption, Ventilation Frequency, and Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER) in "*Channa marulius"*. The exposure to Chlorpyrifos showed similar trends. Oxygen consumption started at 6.2 mg O2/h at 25% concentration, decreasing to 4.2 mg O2/h at 100% concentration. Ventilation frequency decreased from 22 beats/min (control) to 11 beats/min (100%). The RER also dropped from 1.5 in the control group to 0.7 at 100% concentration, suggesting a significant shift in metabolic pathways. The ANOVA p-value of $p<0.05$ indicates statistically significant changes in oxygen consumption, ventilation, and RER due to exposure to Chlorpyrifos.

Table 8, Impact of Cartap Hydrochloride on Oxygen Consumption, Ventilation Frequency, and Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER) in *"Channa marulius"*. For Cartap Hydrochloride exposure, the trend is consistent with the other pesticides. Oxygen consumption started at 6.8 mg O2/h at 25% concentration, and progressively decreased to 4.5 mg O2/h at 100% concentration. Ventilation frequency decreased from 22 beats/min (control) to 12 beats/min (100%). The RER decreased from 1.5 in the control group to 0.8 at 100% concentration, indicating a significant reduction in respiratory efficiency. As with the other pesticides, the ANOVA p-value of $p<0.05$ indicates that these changes are statistically significant.

Overall in all four pesticides tested, Malathion, Endosulfan, Chlorpyrifos, and Cartap Hydrochloride, the following general trends were observed:

Oxygen consumption and ventilation frequency significantly decreased with increasing pesticide concentrations, suggesting that the fish were under physiological stress and may have been relying more on aerial respiration as the availability of dissolved oxygen in the water decreased. Respiratory exchange ratio (RER) also decreased across all pesticide concentrations, indicating a shift towards anaerobic metabolism due to the reduced oxygen availability. The ANOVA p-value of $p<0.05$ for all pesticides indicates that the differences observed in oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and RER are statistically significant. This pattern indicates that pesticides, even at sub-lethal concentrations, can significantly impair the respiratory functions of aquatic organisms like *"Channa marulius"*. These results underline the potential harmful effects of pesticides on aquatic ecosystems, emphasizing the need for further research into their environmental impact and the long-term consequences on fish health and survival.

4. Discussion

The present study investigated the impact of four commonly used pesticides Malathion, Endosulfan, Chlorpyrifos, and Cartap Hydrochloride on the respiratory physiology of *Channa marulius*, focusing on oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and respiratory exchange ratio (RER). The results from the experimental exposure to various concentrations of these pesticides (25%, 50%, 75%, and 100%) indicated significant physiological stress, as evidenced by reduced oxygen consumption, decreased ventilation frequency, and lowered RER. These findings emphasize the potential threat posed by pesticide contamination in aquatic ecosystems, highlighting the need for greater regulatory attention and mitigation strategies for pesticide use in areas near aquatic habitats.

Impact of Pesticides on Oxygen Consumption: One of the primary findings of this study was the decrease in oxygen consumption as pesticide concentration increased across all four pesticides tested. At the lowest concentration (25%), oxygen consumption was slightly reduced compared to the control group, but at the highest concentration (100%), a significant decline in oxygen consumption was observed in all pesticide-exposed groups. For example, in the case of Malathion, oxygen consumption dropped from 6.5 mg O2/h at 25% concentration to 4.3 mg O2/h at 100% concentration. This trend was consistent in the other pesticides, with Endosulfan (from 7.0 mg O2/h to 4.6 mg O2/h), Chlorpyrifos (from 6.2 mg O2/h to 4.2 mg O2/h), and Cartap Hydrochloride (from 6.8 mg O2/h to 4.5 mg O2/h). The significant decrease in oxygen consumption, especially at higher concentrations, suggests that these pesticides may disrupt normal metabolic processes, likely impairing the gill function or causing overall metabolic depression in the fish. This reduction in oxygen uptake reflects the toxicological stress imposed by the pesticides, which has been widely observed in various aquatic organisms exposed to toxic chemicals.

Reduction in Ventilation Frequency: In addition to the decrease in oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency also declined as pesticide concentration increased. The control group had a ventilation frequency of 22 beats/min, which was indicative of healthy respiratory activity. However, in all pesticide-exposed groups, the frequency decreased with increasing pesticide concentration. For instance, in Malathion-exposed fish, ventilation frequency dropped from 18 beats/min at 25% concentration to 10 beats/min at 100%. Similar trends were observed for Endosulfan, Chlorpyrifos, and Cartap Hydrochloride, where the highest concentrations led to the lowest ventilation frequencies (ranging from 10 to 12 beats/min). This decrease in ventilation frequency could indicate that the fish were attempting to reduce metabolic demands, possibly as a survival strategy in response to the toxicants. The reduced ventilation frequency may also reflect impaired gill function or changes in gill morphology, both of which are common responses to pesticide-induced toxicity.

Changes in Respiratory Exchange Ratio (RER): The respiratory exchange ratio (RER), which reflects the balance between oxygen consumption and carbon dioxide excretion, also showed a significant decline with increasing pesticide concentrations. The control group had a RER of 1.5, which is indicative of efficient aerobic respiration. However, as pesticide concentrations increased, the RER decreased. For example, Malathion exposure led to a decrease in RER from 1.2 at 25% concentration to 0.8 at 100%, and similar trends were observed for Endosulfan, Chlorpyrifos, and Cartap Hydrochloride. The reduction in RER is suggestive of a shift from aerobic to anaerobic respiration due to a decrease in available oxygen and an increase in metabolic stress. This shift could be a compensatory response to lower oxygen availability, where the fish may rely more on anaerobic pathways that are less efficient than aerobic respiration but allow them to meet immediate metabolic demands.

Comparative toxicity across pesticides: While all four pesticides induced similar trends of reduced oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and RER, Malathion and Endosulfan appeared to have somewhat less detrimental effects compared to Chlorpyrifos and Cartap Hydrochloride at equivalent concentrations. Malathion and Endosulfan showed slightly higher oxygen consumption at lower concentrations (25%), indicating that these pesticides might have a relatively lower immediate toxic impact on the fish. In contrast, Chlorpyrifos and Cartap Hydrochloride caused more severe reductions in oxygen consumption and ventilation frequency even at lower concentrations. This suggests that Chlorpyrifos and Cartap Hydrochloride might be more potent or faster acting in disrupting the respiratory systems of aquatic organisms, possibly due to differences in their chemical properties or mechanisms of toxicity.

Ecological Implications: The results of this study are of significant concern for aquatic ecosystems. Pesticides are widely used in agricultural practices and can enter aquatic systems through runoff, affecting fish and other aquatic organisms. The acute effects observed in *Channa marulius* at even sub-lethal concentrations of pesticides indicate that pesticide exposure can impair the respiratory health of fish, reducing their ability to efficiently obtain oxygen. If such physiological stress persists in natural environments, it could lead to impaired growth, increased susceptibility to disease, and reduced reproductive success in fish populations. Moreover, the shift towards anaerobic respiration, as indicated by the reduced RER, suggests that the fish may experience long-term metabolic disruptions that could affect their survival and overall fitness in pesticide-contaminated environments.

5. Limitations of the Study

Variations in oxygen consumption, ventilation frequency, and respiratory exchange ratio with change in commercial pesticide concentration and time period were studied in air-breathing species *Channa marulius* at 25°C water temperature. Three dips of test fish were examined for each concentration of every pesticide and the data were averaged for analysis. Oxygen consumption decreased while ventilation frequency increased with increase in pesticide concentration and exposure period in residue-based pesticides, indicating a stress response in the fish. The respiratory exchange ratio also decreased with elevated pesticide concentrations. Survival chances of fish are severely threatened under toxic pesticide exposure because gill epithelium suffers irrevocable damage and accessibility of atmospheric air is restricted. The formulation components can induce toxicity on physiological processes of fish. Fish exposed to monocrotophos (organophosphate pesticide) demonstrate various abnormal behaviours such as erratic swimming, loss of equilibrium, mucus secretion, and body colour changes. Similar findings in decreased swimming velocity and activity are indicative of stress from pesticide exposure (Khan *et al*., 2022, Cheema *et al*., 2018) [8, 4].

6. Future Scope of the study

Future studies could explore the long-term effects of pesticide exposure on *"Channa marulius"* and other aquatic species, examining chronic toxicity and reproductive health. Investigating the underlying molecular and biochemical mechanisms, such as enzyme activity and gene expression changes, could provide deeper insights into pesticide-induced stress. Additionally, studies could expand to different environmental conditions, including varying temperatures and water quality, to assess the combined effects of multiple stressors. Furthermore, research into alternative, eco-friendly pest control methods and their impact on aquatic organisms would be valuable for sustainable agricultural practices and the protection of aquatic ecosystems.

7. Conclusion

The findings of this study clearly indicate that exposure to Malathion, Endosulfan, Chlorpyrifos, and Cartap Hydrochloride has significant negative effects on the respiratory physiology of *Channa marulius*. The decreased oxygen consumption, reduced ventilation frequency, and lowered respiratory exchange ratio (RER) all suggest that these pesticides induce physiological stress, which could impair the fish's ability to survive in contaminated aquatic environments. The observed toxicity underscores the importance of regulating pesticide use and taking proactive measures to reduce environmental contamination, ensuring the health of aquatic organisms and ecosystems. Future studies should focus on long-term effects and the mechanisms by which these pesticides affect respiratory systems in order to develop more sustainable practices for pesticide management in agricultural areas near aquatic habitats.

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