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Impact of environmental pollutants and parasites on the ultrastructure of the Nile boliti, *Oreochromis auruis*

Eman Hashem Radwan¹, Amel Abd El Rahman Hassan¹, Gehan Hassan Fahmy², Salma
Sameh El Shewemi² and Sherine Abdel Salam²

¹. Damanhour University, Faculty of Science, Zoology Department, Egypt. El Gomhoria street, ElBehara, Egypt.
²Alexandria University, Faculty of Science, Zoology Department, Egypt.

Corresponding author: dr_eman_hashem@yahoo.com, eman.radwan@Sci.dmu.edu.eg, 00201001089259

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Abstract

Environmental variability has a great impact on the processes of ecological organization. Local variation probably accounts for population variation in the death rate. Marine parasites are of great importance. Incorporating environmental variation into theories of life histories for a better understanding of how environmental factors influence physiology and the resulting histories of individuals. Adult *Oreochromis auruis* were collected from, El Behiara, Egypt. The concentration of Pb, Cu, and Cd have been detected in the biota samples collected from El Behara, Egypt. The plenty of heavy metal concentration in the fish samples was found in the order Cu > Pb > Cd. A significant correlation ($p < 0.05$) was found for each of Cu, Cd, and Pb in *Oreochromis auruis*. The mean level of Pb is highly positively correlated with the mean concentration level of the activity of GPx and the mean level of the total protein as $r = 0.51$ and $r = 0.61$; while Cu is highly positively correlated with Cd, S% and the total protein as $r = 0.75$, $r = 0.65$, and $r = 0.74$; respectively. Cd is only highly significantly correlated with the total protein as $r = 0.64$. The salinity was highly correlated with both pH and the total protein as $r = -0.64$ and $r = 0.6$; respectively. The mean value of pH is highly negatively correlated with both GPx and with the total protein as $r = -0.50$ and $r = -0.52$; respectively. The activity of GPx is highly correlated with only the activity of the SOD as $r = -0.701$.

Keywords: Heavy metals, physiology, Scanning Electron Microscope fish, parasites, freshwater .

Introduction

The chemical compounds are used for controlling pests and diseases of plants; to eliminate pests that damage agricultural products are called pesticides (Gruzdyev *et al.*, 1983). The Nile has been subjected to different causes of pollution, which affect its physical, chemical, and

biological characteristics. These causes include industrial, agricultural, and municipal wastes. Industrial wastewater pollutes the environment, especially for drinking water. Pesticides are merged into water runoff and soil erosion. Pesticides can also drift during application and

harm aquatic systems samples (El- Kabbany *et al.*, 2000; Mansour *et al.*, 2001; Shukla *et al.*, 2002; Osibanjo, 2003; Jadwiga *et al.*, 2012). Wild animals are partially or completely damaged by pesticides and these animals make excellent “bio-indicator species” (Pimentel, 2005; Akhtar *et al.*, 2009).

The pollution burden in the Nile system has increased because of population increases (Abdel-Satar, 2005; Abdel-Dayem *et al.*, 2007). It is anticipated that the dilution capacity of the River Nile system will decrease as the program to enlarge irrigated agriculture moves forward and recently (MWRI, 2002). The major pollutants including oil and wastes from passengers and riverboats. The most polluted part of the Nile is the part located between Cairo and the Mediterranean Sea; the two branches of the Nile are considered the highest pollutant part (Abdo, 2004; NAWQAM, 2003). In Egypt, the climate conditions average has a wide range and the average daily temperature ranges from 13C to 38C (CAPMAS, 2007). Wastewater resulted from industry is considered the major source of Nile water pollution because of the toxic chemicals and organic charge in this wastewater. Egyptian industry uses about 7.8 billion m³/year of water, of which 4,050 million m³/year are drained into the River Nile system. There is plenty of factories (129) discharging their wastewater into the River Nile system. Effluent wastewater is often partially treated. Despite all official efforts to prevent this pollution source (NBI, 2005).

The toxicity of the fish is of unique importance because of the use of insecticides in the aquatic habitats. The present study aimed at pointing out the possible hazards resulting from heavy metals which affect the water fauna, of which fishes are considered as one of the most important group. The determination of the toxic effects of heavy metals on the Nile fish, *Oreochromis auruus* is of much importance, and to report parasites fauna is present in the studied locations. Reporting the effect of pollution and parasites on the collected fish samples by using a

scanning electron microscope was of important priority .

The contamination of sediment, water resources, and biota by heavy metals is one of the main concerns that have a considerable effect on the environmental problems worldwide because these metals are everlasting and having toxic effects on living organisms when they override a certain concentration. This is particularly true in many of the countries due to their bioaccumulation (Schuurmann and Market, 1998; MacFarlane and Burchett, 2000; Abdel-Azeem *et al.*, 2007; Kata and Ramana, 2013). Marine parasites are of great importance (Kinne, 1990; Sindermann, 1993). Many parasites affect marine fishes making them commercially less valuable and sometimes limit their populations or lead to mortalities (Rohde, 1993). Helminth parasites of marine fishes are mainly belonging to five taxa; Monogenea, Digenea, Cestoda, Nematoda, and Acanthocephala. Pathological effects of the helminths on their fish host were studied by several authors; (Whittington, 1990; Sindermann, 1993; Milinski, 1990; Hassanine, 2000 and Dezfuli *et al.*, 2002). Many parasite species survive for several years even in fish migrating between the freshwater and the sea. These facilitate the use of parasites as biological markers (Margotis, 1992).

Infection of fish with helminth parasites may be is affected by pollution. Skinner (1982) stated that marine environments polluted with ammonia, trace metals, or pesticides increase the infection of fish with monogenean trematodes. Khan and Kiceniuk (1983) and Moles and Narcoss (1998) stated that the marine environment polluted with crude oil reduces the infection of fish with intestinal helminths. They concluded that intestinal helminths can serve as a biomarker for petroleum exposure. There are good reasons for focusing on fish helminth parasites in the search for highly sensitive indicators of pollution in the marine environment (Mackenzie,1999). Helminth parasites reduce the marketability of some commercial marine fishes in several ways; the metacercariae of many species of digenean

trematodes, reduce the quality of the flesh in different species of mullets; (Kurochkin, 1985).

Material and Methods

Adult similar size and active specimen of the Nile fish were obtained from four locations from

El Behara, Egypt sent to the laboratory. The salinity and pH of the water were determined biweekly (7 replicates) from the four locations in the study period (winter, December 2016 to February 2017).



Fig. 1: The four locations of the present study El Mahmodia (El Behaira, Egypt)

Water samples (2.5 L) were collected in clean glass bottles at the water surface and 50 cm below the water surface. The bottles were capped with screw caps and the samples were immediately transferred to the laboratory for analysis .

The following physical and chemical parameters of all water samples were analyzed according to the Standard Methods for the examination of water and wastewater (APHA, 1995) . Field instruments (pH and salinity) were measured in situ using the portable, model, and rechecked in a laboratory using benchtop equipment to ensure data accuracy (APHA, 1995). Using the Atomic Absorption spectrophotometer for elements being measured (Cu, Pb, and Cd) according to (Ediger, 1973) .

The fish samples were collected randomly from the studied locations, El Mahmodia, Egypt. Fishes were collected alive or in a good condition for examination. The collected samples were transported as soon as possible to the laboratory. At least 28 specimens of each location (7 replicate) were examined in search for the parasitic

helminths.

Determination of the total protein was according to Lowry et al. (1951). Determination of glutathione peroxidase activity was due to Paglia and valentine 1967).

Helminth collection: Fishes were dissected, and the different organs such as the gills, esophagus, stomach, intestine, and rectum were placed in different Petri dishes filled with water or normal saline solution (0.065% NaCl). Each organ was opened by a fine scissor and left for some time with occasional shaking. Helminth parasites if present would become detached from the tissue of the respective organ; in some cases, the parasites were still attached to the host's tissue and by using fine needles, they get loose their grasp and can be easily picked up by using a fine glass dropper. The parasites are to be kept alive for sometimes in small Petri dishes filled with water (1% salinity) as recommended by Schroeder (1971), then examined under a compound research microscope. This step was carried out by putting the parasite between a slide and a thin coverslip (in case of Digenea and larval cestodes) or between two slides (in case of Acanthocephala), the applied pressure

is depending on the thickness of the specimen. Several fixatives were tried, but the fixative used in the present study is sublimated acetic (100ml saturated aqueous mercuricchloride+5ml glacial acetic acid). In this fixative, the helminths were fixed for 24hrs. , washed in running water for 12hrs., and then placed in an alcoholic iodine solution (5ml saturated solution of iodine in 70% alcohol+ 95ml of (70% ethyl alcohol). Staining by Alum Carmine stains (Weesner, 1968). The stained specimens were passed through an ascending series of ethyl alcohol (30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80, 90, 100%), each concentration, then clearing by xylene then mounting which is the final stage by the embedding of the parasite in suitable mounting medium (Canada balsam).

Scanning electron microscopical (SEM) study: Gills were cut into small pieces and fixed with 4% Formalin and 1% Glutaraldehyde (4F1G) fixative mixture in 0.1M phosphate buffer (pH 7.2) for 24 hours at 4°C, then the specimens were postfixed in 2% osmium tetroxide (OsO₄) in the same buffer for 2 hours at 4°C, the fixed specimens were then washed in the buffer and dehydrated at 4°C through a graded series of ethanol. Specimens were dried by the critical point drier to prevent collapse and shrinkage, then mounted on an Al-stub and coated with gold in a sputter-coating (Jeol JFC-1100E ion sputtering device). The specimens examined and photographed were made using a

Jeol scanning electron microscope (JSEM-5300) of the Faculty of Science, Alexandria University operated at 20 kV.

Statistical analysis of the data:

The data were fed to the computer and analyzed using IBM SPSS software package version 20.0. (Armonk, NY: IBM Corp). The Kolmogorov-Smirnov, Shapiro and D'agstino tests were used to verify the normality of distribution of variables, ANOVA was used to compare two groups for normally distributed quantitative variables for comparing the four studied groups and followed by Post Hoc test (Tukey) for pairwise comparison. Pearson coefficient was used to correlate between quantitative variables. The significance of the obtained results was judged at the 5% level.

Results

The present results showed the mean concentration level in freshwater, El Behaira, Egypt, and the pH of the freshwater as well as the salinity. The mean concentration level of heavy metals was reported in the tissue of the Nile river *Oreochromis auruus* in four representing locations of lake El Mahmodia, El Behara, Egypt during the period of the winter season of the year 2016-2017(December 2016-february2017).

Table (1) shows the comparison of the mean level of the heavy metals in freshwater as the mean of the highest level of Pb was reported in loc.#2, as 3 ± 0.8 followed by 2.9 ± 0.4 , 2.7 ± 0.4 and 2.3 ± 0.4 in loc.#1, loc.#4, loc.#3; respectively. The mean concentration level of Cu showed the highest level in loc.#4 as 4.1 ± 0.3 and location#2 showed the lowest mean level of Cu as 3.4 ± 0.3 whereas loc.#1 and loc.#3 were reported as 3.8 ± 0.4 and 3.4 ± 0.4 . The mean concentration level of Cd showed the highest mean level was reported in loc.#2 and loc.#3 as 1.4 ± 0.3 and 1.4 ± 0.5 whereas the mean concentration level of Cd in loc.#1 and loc.#4 were reported as 1.0 ± 0.3 and 1.1 ± 0.4 .

Table (2) represents the mean level of the pH and the salinity of the freshwater that were collected from the four locations representing lake El Mahmodia, El Behara, Egypt during the period of the study. For the salinity, the mean level ranged between 9.9 ± 0.6 in location 2 to 9.2 ± 0.5 in location 1. Location 3 and location 4 were reported as 9.5 ± 0.8 and 9.8 ± 0.6 . The mean level of the pH concentration ranged between 7.7 ± 0.3 in both loc.#3 and loc.#4 to 7.4 ± 0.4 in loc.#1 and loc.#2 was reported as 7.6 ± 0.4 .

Table (1): Comparison between the four studied locations according to heavy metals in El Behaira freshwater, Egypt

	Loc.#1 (n = 7)	Loc.#2 (n = 7)	Loc.#3 (n = 7)	Loc.#4 (n = 7)	F	P
Pb Mean ± S.D.	2.9±0.4	3.0±0.8	2.3±0.4	2.7±0.4	2.568	0.078
Median (Min.– Max.)	2.9(2.1–3.3)	3(2– 4.2)	2.4(1.6– 2.7)	2.8(2.1–3.1)		
Cu Mean ± S.D.	3.8±0.4	3.4±0.3	3.4±0.4	4.1 ^{bc} ±0.3	5.324*	0.006*
Median (Min.– Max.)	4(3.1 – 4.2)	3.4(3.1– 3.9)	3.5(2.9 – 3.9)	4(3.8 – 4.6)		
Cd Mean ± S.D.	1.0±0.3	1.4±0.3	1.4±0.5	1.1±0.4	2.483	0.085
Median (Min.– Max.)	0.9(0.6 – 1.4)	1.5(1 – 1.8)	1.3(0.8 – 2)	0.9(0.7 – 1.9)		

Table (2): Comparison between the four studied locations according to the salinity and pH of freshwater, El Behaira, Egypt

Physicochemical parameters of water, El Behara	Loc.#1 (n=7)	Loc.#2 (n=7)	Loc.#3 (n=7)	Loc.#4 (n=7)	F	P
S‰						
Mean ± S.D.	9.2±0.5	9.7±0.5	9.3±0.4	9.6±0.5	1.606	0.214
Median (Min. – Max.)	9.1(8.5– 9.8)	(9.3–11.2)	(8.8–10.8)	(9.2– 11.1)		
pH						
Mean ± S.D.	7.4±0.4	7.6±0.4	7.7±0.1	7.7±0.2	1.170	0.342
Median (Min. – Max.)	7.3 (7 – 8.1)	7.8 (7 – 8)	7.7 (7.5 – 7.9)	7.8 (7.3– 7.9)		

In table (1), the mean Cu concentration level in location (4) was highly significantly different from that of loc.#2 and loc.#3, at $F=5.324$ and $P<0.006^*$. In table (2) the pH and the salinity did not show a significant difference in the four representing locations for Lake El Mahmoudia, El Behara, Egypt during the period of study (winter 2016-2017).

Table (3) represented the SOD, GPx, and the total protein level in the fish *Oreochromis auruus* collected from El Mahmodia Lake in winter (2016-2017) from the studied locations. The mean concentration level of SOD in fish whole tissue showed a highly significant difference level at $F=6.194$ and $P<0.003^*$. The highest concentration level was reported in location 3 as $3.8±2.5$. The lowest concentration level was reported as $0.7±0.1$ in location 4 while location 1 and location 2 showed the mean concentration level as $0.8±0.1$ and $3.3±0.4$.

The mean concentration level of GPx in the fish collected from the study locations was represented as; $11.0±0.7$, $12.4±0.3$, $11.3±0.8$, and $10.4±0.4$ in loc.#1, loc.#2, loc.#3, and loc.#4; respectively. The loc.#2

showed the highest level of the activity of GPx and loc.#4 showed the lowest activity of the enzyme level of GPx as 10.4 ± 0.4 . The activity of the enzyme GPx showed a significant difference in the four studied locations representing El Mahmoudia lake at $F= 15.5$ and $P < 0.001^*$. The total protein level ranged between 4.4 ± 0.3 in loc.#4 to 5.9 ± 1.0 in loc.#2 whereas both location 1 and location 3 showed 5.5 ± 0.5 and 5.5 ± 0.8 . The mean concentration level of total protein differed significantly between the four representing locations at $F=5.414$ and $P < 0.005^*$.

Table (3): Comparison between the four studied locations according to the stress enzymes and total protein in the fish *Oreochromis auruus* collected from water, El Behaira, Egypt

	Loc.#1 (n=7)	Loc.#2 (n=7)	Loc.#3 (n=7)	Loc.#4 (n=7)	F	P
GPx						
Mean \pm S.D.	11.0 ± 0.7	12.4 ± 0.3^a	11.3 ± 0.8^b	10.4 ± 0.4	15.487^*	$< 0.001^*$
Median (Min.– Max.)	11.1 (9.8– 11.9)	12.5 (12– 12.7)	11.6 (10.2 –12.3)	10.4 (9.7– 10.9)		
SOD						
Mean \pm S.D.	0.8 ± 0.1	3.3 ± 2.4	3.8 ± 2.5^a	0.7 ± 0.1^{bc}	6.194^*	0.003^*
Median (Min.– Max.)	0.7 (0.6 – 0.9)	1.9 (1– 5.9)	5.7 (0.9– 5.9)	0.7 (0.6– 0.8)		
Total protein						
Mean \pm S.D.	5.5 ± 0.5	5.9 ± 1.0	5.5 ± 0.8	4.4 ± 0.3^{bc}	5.414^*	0.005^*
Median (Min.– Max.)	5.6 (4.7– 5.9)	6 (4.5– 7.1)	5.5 (4.7– 6.7)	4.5 (4.1– 4.9)		

Table (4): Comparison between the four studied locations according to heavy metal in the tissue of *Oreochromis auruus* collected from El Behaira, Egypt

	Loc.#1 (n = 7)	Loc.#2 (n = 7)	Loc.#3 (n = 7)	Loc.#4 (n = 7)	F	P
Pb						
Mean ± S.D.	3.1 ± 0.3	3.1 ± 0.4	3.2 ± 0.5	4 ^{abc} ± 0.5	6.633*	0.002*
Median (Min.–Max.)	3.1(2.7 – 3.5)	3(2.6 ± 3.8)	3.4(2.3 – 3.7)	3.8(3.5 – 5)		
Cu						
Mean ± S.D.	4.9 ± 1	3.7 ± 0.8	4.2 ± 0.6	5.4 ^b ± 1.1	5.053*	0.007*
Median (Min.– Max.)	5.3(3.5 – 6.1)	3.9(2.6 – 4.6)	4.3(2.9 – 4.9)	5.8(4 – 6.6)		
Cd						
Mean ± S.D.	1.3 ± 0.4	1.3 ± 0.4	1.9 ± 0.5	1.6 ± 0.6	2.388	0.094
Median (Min.– Max.)	1.4(0.8 – 1.8)	1.2(1 – 2)	1.9(1.4 – 2.9)	1.7(0.8 – 2.3)		

F, p: F and p values for ANOVA test, Sig. bet. locations were done using Post Hoc Test (Tukey)

a: Statistically significant with loc.#1 -b: Statistically significant with loc.#2 -c: Statistically significant with loc.#3. *: Statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Table (4) represents the comparison between the studied locations according to the heavy metals in tissues of the Nile fish *Oreochromis auruus* collected from four representing locations in El Mahoudia, El Behara, Egypt. The mean level of Pb in tissue showed 3.1 ± 0.3 , 3.1 ± 0.4 , 3.2 ± 0.5 , and 4.0 ± 0.5 in loc.#1, loc.#2, loc.#3, and loc.#4; respectively. The level of Pb in tissue in location 4 differs significantly from loc.#1, loc.#2, and loc.#3 at $F=6.633$ and $P<0.002^*$. The Cu concentration level in the tissue was reported as 4.9 ± 1.0 , 3.7 ± 0.8 , 4.2 ± 0.6 , and 5.4 ± 1.1 in loc.#1, loc.#2, loc.#, and loc.#4; respectively. The level of Cu in location 4 differs significantly from loc.#1, loc.#2, and loc.#3 at $F=5.053$ and $P<0.007^*$. The mean level of Cd was reported in table 4 as 1.3 ± 0.4 , 1.3 ± 0.4 , 1.9 ± 0.5 and 1.6 ± 0.6 in loc.#1, loc.#2, loc.#3, and loc.#4; respectively whereas the highest level of Cd was reported in loc.#3 at $F=2.388$ and $P<0.094$.

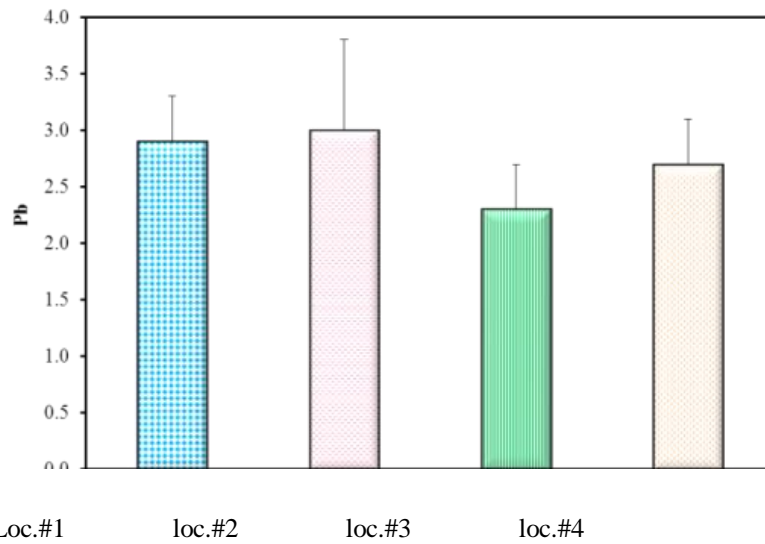


Fig. (2): Comparison between the four studied locations according to Pb in freshwater, El Behara, Egypt.

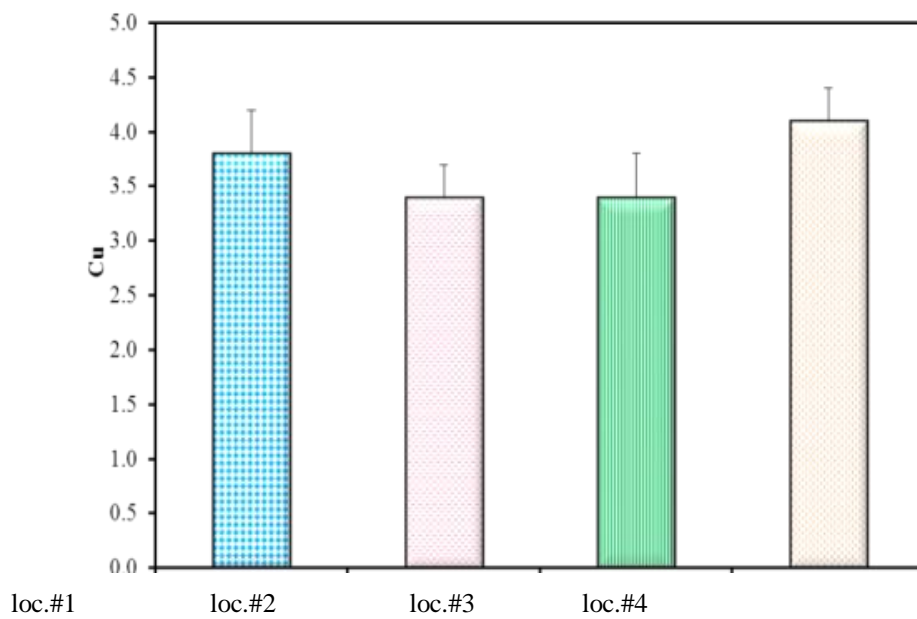


Fig. (3): Comparison between the four studied groups according to Cu in freshwater, El Behaira, Egypt.

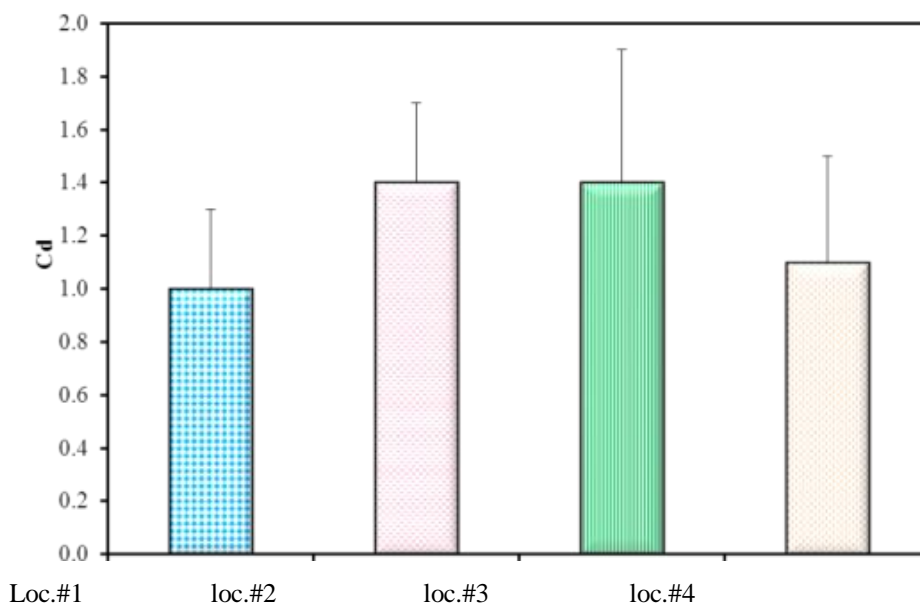


Fig. (4): Comparison between the four studied groups according to Cd in freshwater, El Behaira, Egypt.

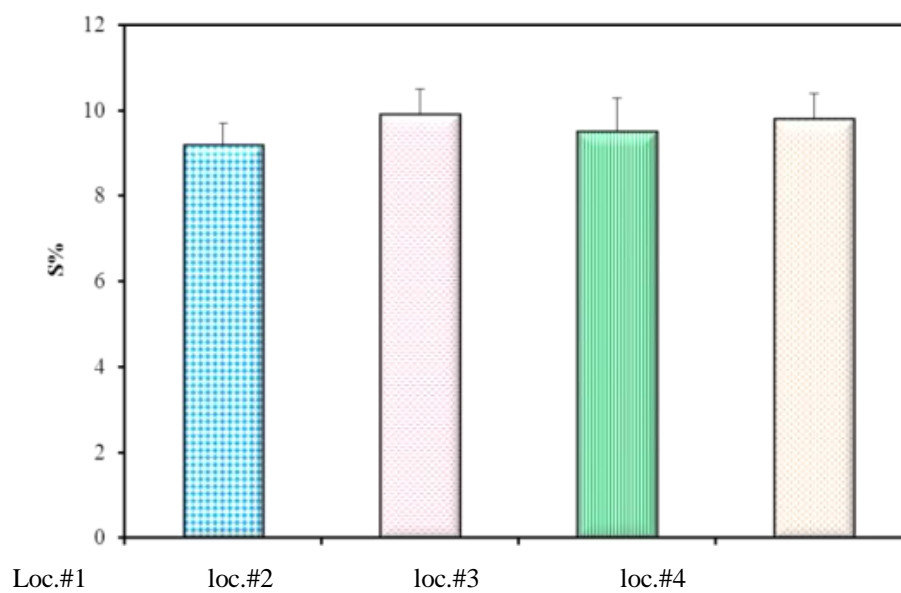


Fig. (5): Comparison between the four studied groups according to S% in freshwater, El Behaira, Egypt.

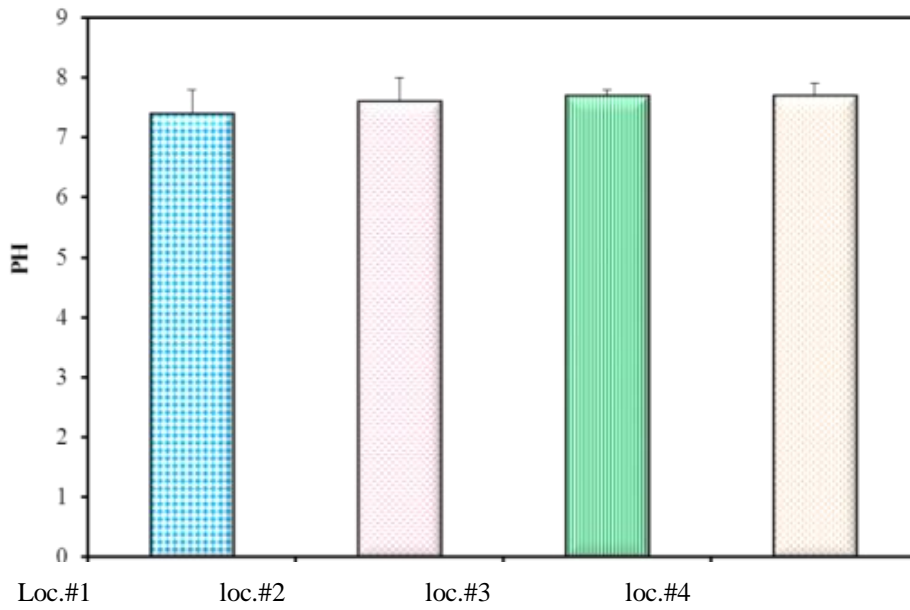


Fig. (6): Comparison between the four studied locations according to pH in freshwater, El Behaira, Egypt.

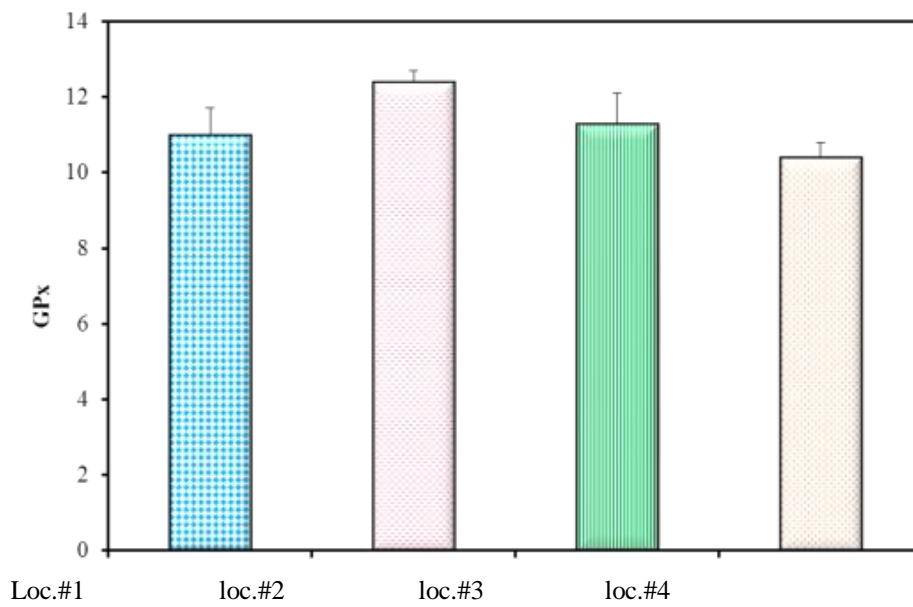


Fig. (7): Comparison between the four studied locations according to GPx in the tissue of *Oreochromis auruis* collected from El Behaira, Egypt.

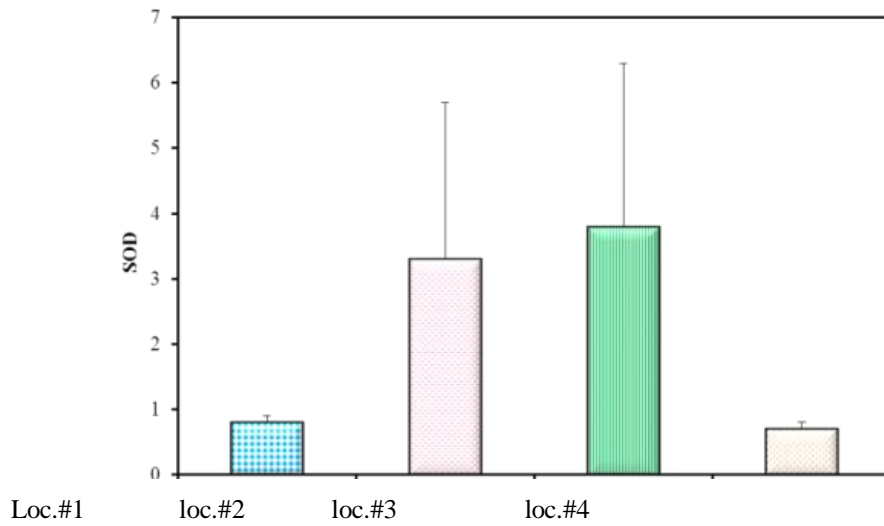


Fig. (8): Comparison between the four studied groups according to SOD in the tissue of *Oreochromis auruis* collected from El Behara, Egypt.

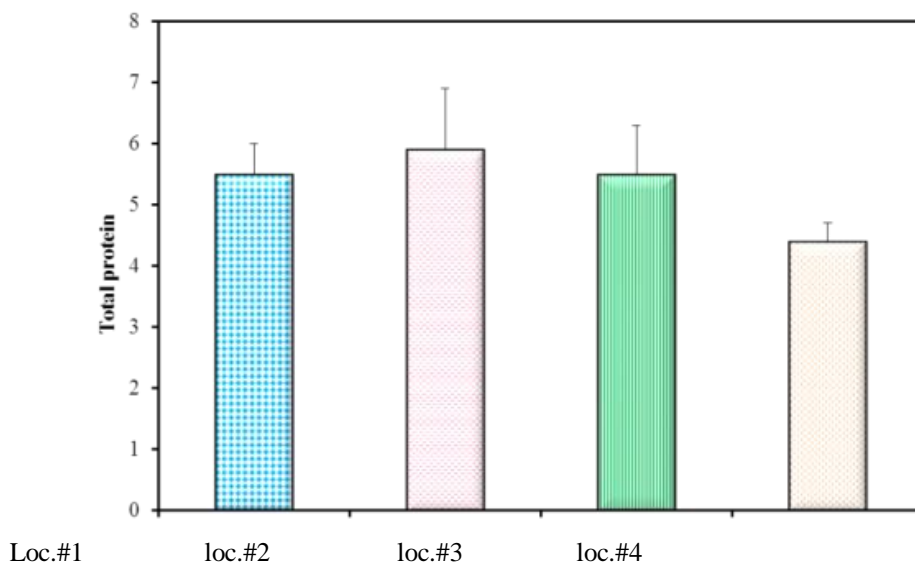


Fig. (9): Comparison between the four studied locations according to total protein in the tissue of *Oreochromis auruis* fish collected from El Behara, Egypt.

Table (5): Correlation between the different parameters in loc. # 1

		Cu	Cd	S‰	pH	GPx	SOD	Total protein
Pb	r	0.256	0.352	0.352	-0.114	0.510	-0.398	0.614
	p	0.580	0.439	0.438	0.807	0.242	0.377	0.143
Cu	r		0.752	0.653	-0.013	-0.185	0.005	0.744
	p		0.051	0.112	0.979	0.691	0.992	0.055
Cd	r			0.446	-0.180	-0.289	0.430	0.644
	p			0.316	0.700	0.530	0.336	0.119
S‰	r				-0.642	-0.350	-0.116	0.600
	p				0.120	0.442	0.805	0.155
pH	r					0.351	-0.287	0.007
	p					0.440	0.532	0.989
GPx	r						-0.388	0.073
	p						0.389	0.876
SOD	r							-0.052
	p							0.913

r: Pearson coefficient

*: Statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Table (5) shows the correlation coefficient between the heavy metals and pH and the salinity in the freshwater of lake El Mahmodia and the oxidative stress enzymes in the Nile fish *Oreochromis auruus* collected in winter (December 2016-February 2017). Pb in table 5 is highly positively correlated with GPx and the total protein as $r = 0.51$ and $r = 0.61$; respectively Cu is highly positively correlated with Cd, S‰ and the total protein as $r = 0.75$, $r = 0.65$, and $r = 0.74$; respectively. Cd is only highly significantly correlated with the total protein as $r = 0.64$. The salinity is highly correlated with both pH and the total protein as $r = -0.64$ and $r = 0.6$; respectively. The pH is highly negatively correlated with both GPx and with the total protein as $r = -0.50$ and $r = -0.52$; respectively. The activity of GPx is highly correlated with only the activity of the SOD as $r = -0.701$.

Table (8): Correlation between the different parameters in loc. # 4

		Cu	Cd	S‰	pH	GPx	SOD	Total protein
Pb	r	0.400	-0.492	-0.410	0.340	0.690	0.464	-0.385
	p	0.373	0.262	0.361	0.456	0.086	0.294	0.393
Cu	r		0.269	-0.140	0.441	0.528	0.197	0.006
	p		0.559	0.764	0.322	0.223	0.672	0.990
Cd	r			0.010	0.590	-0.558	-0.651	0.614
	p			0.983	0.163	0.193	0.113	0.143
S‰	r				-0.565	-0.471	-0.543	0.435
	p				0.187	0.286	0.208	0.330
pH	r					0.025	-0.193	0.245
	p					0.958	0.678	0.596
GPx	r						0.895*	-0.599
	p						0.006*	0.155
SOD	r							-0.635
	p							0.125

r: Pearson coefficient, *: Statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$

Table (9): Correlation between the different heavy metals in each location

		Loc.#1		Loc.#2		Loc.3		Loc.#4	
		Cu	Cd	Cu	Cd	Cu	Cd	Cu	Cd
Pb	R	0.344	0.460	-0.248	0.134	0.658	-0.880	0.558	0.351
	P	0.449	0.299	0.593	0.774	0.108	0.009	0.193	0.440
Cu	R		0.199		-0.712		-0.792*		0.781*
	P		0.668		0.073		0.034*		0.038*

r: Pearson coefficient

*: Statistically significant at $p \leq 0.05$

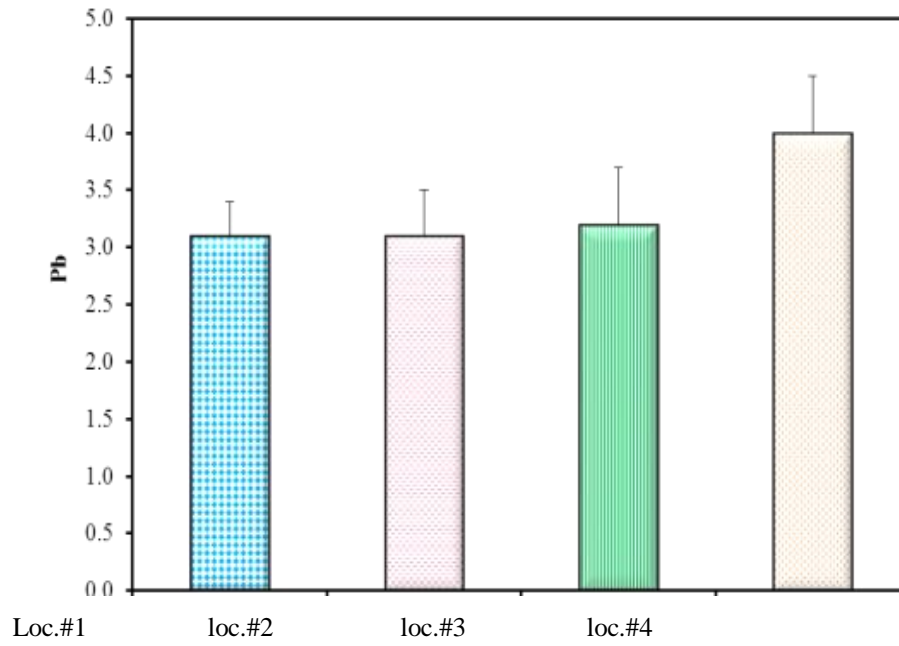


Fig. (10): Comparison between the four studied locations according to Pb in the tissue of *Oreochromis auris*

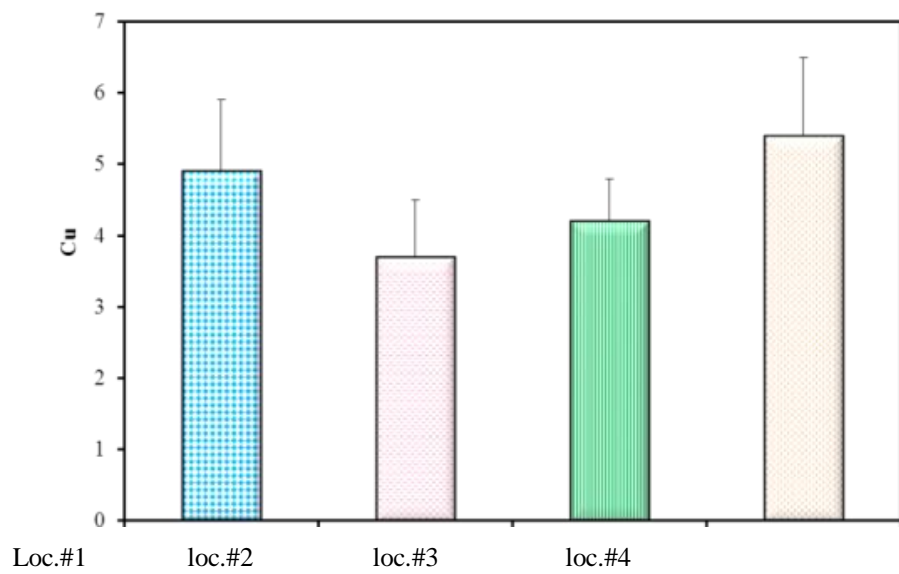


Fig. (11): Comparison between the four studied locations according to Cu in the tissue of *Oreochromis auris*

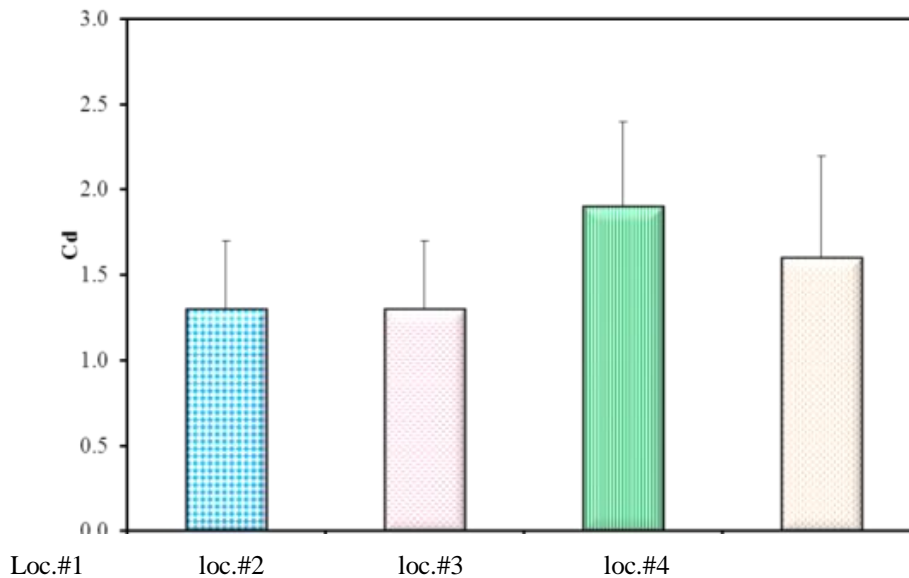


Fig. (12): Comparison between the four studied groups according to Cd in the tissue of *Oreochromis auruis*

Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) results:

The Scanning electron microscopy (SEM) of the *Oreochromis auruis*' gills collected from the four locations of El Mahmodia canal revealed normal features for both primary and secondary gill lamellae at lower and higher magnifications in loc.#1 (Fig. 13A, 14A respectively). Gill from the other sites showed some abnormal features in the form of clumping, curling, loss of alignment, and disorganization of the primary lamellae in loc.#2 (Fig. 13B); breakage of secondary lamellae in loc.# 3 (Fig. 13C) and fusion of the filaments in loc.#4 (Fig. 13C). From a closer point of view, another finding can be observed in locations from 2 to 4 as follow: fusion of the secondary gill lamellae and epithelial hypertrophy of the primary filaments, along with a loss of the filaments 'cell border and obliteration of the space between secondary gill lamellae (Fig. 14).

It is well known that pavement cells are the most abundant cell type covering the gill epithelium and its apical surface bears micro ridges. The SEM revealed that these micro ridges appeared more intensive in the distal portion of the filament when compared to the proximal one (Fig. 15). Also, chloride cells can be observed in between the pavement cells (Fig. 15). It is must notice that the micro ridges of loc.# 4 exhibited a sharp structure, but it was agglomerated, disorganized, and appeared in a different form comparing with other locations (Fig. 15). However, the micro ridges exhibited the uniform architecture and organized in loc.#3, while, it appeared less sharpened and not well defined in loc.#1. Moreover, the mucous secretion housing the inter-lamellar space between the secondary lamellae, and it was interesting to note that loc.# 4 obtain a huge amount of these secretions (Fig. 16).

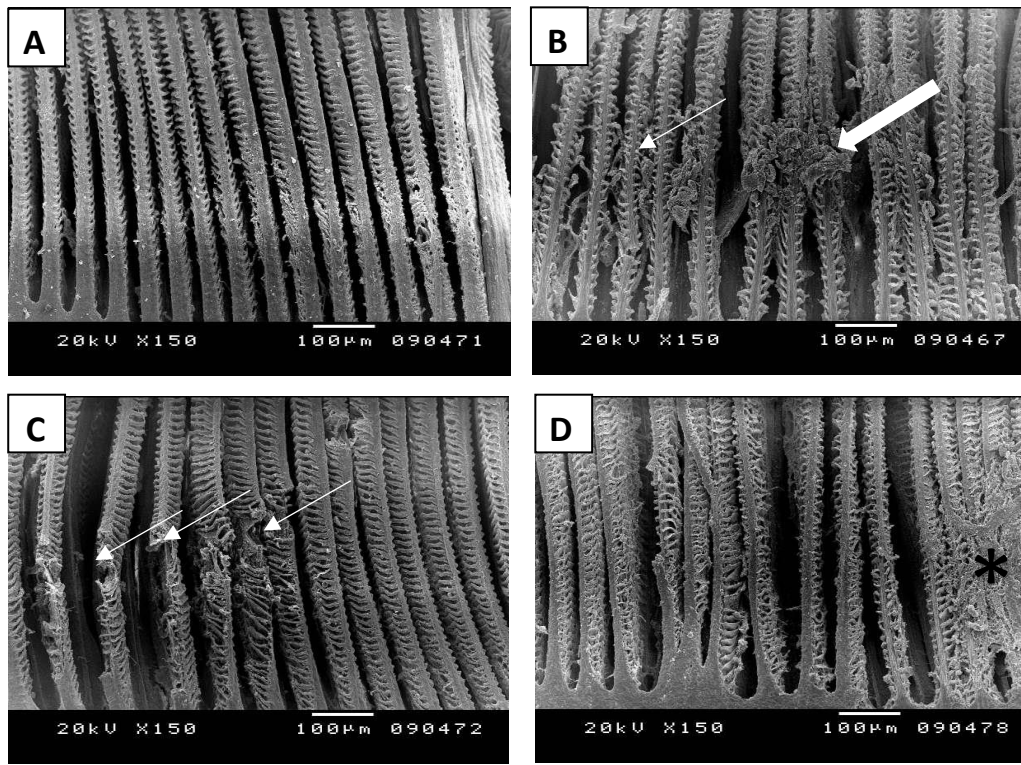


Fig. 13: Low power scanning electron micrograph showing the architecture of the gills in the different locations. A) Loc.#1, showing the approximate normal appearance of gill filaments. B) Loc.#2, showing clumping and curling filaments (thick arrow) and loss of their alignments of (thin arrow). C) Loc.#3, showing breakage of secondary lamellae (arrow). D) Loc.# 4, showing fusion of the filaments (*) (X150).

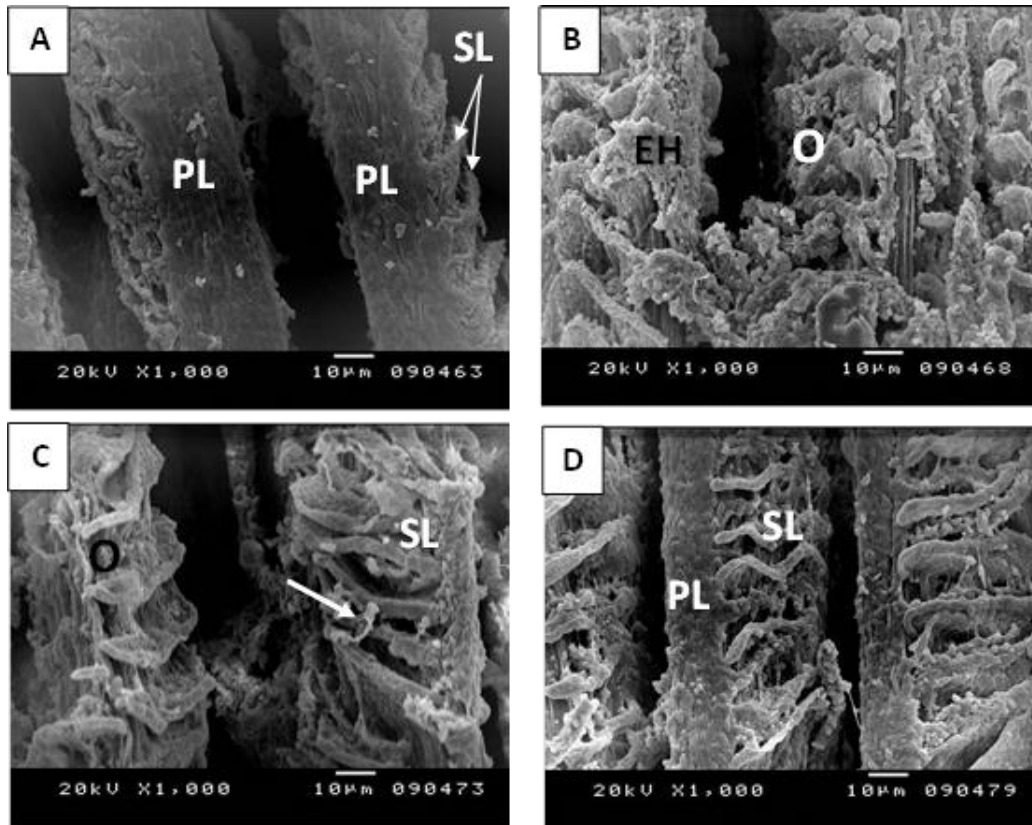


Fig. 14: Scanning electron micrograph showing the architecture of the gills in the different locations. A) Loc.# 1, showing the approximate normal appearance of gill filaments; primary lamellae (PL) with normal gill epithelium and secondary lamellae (SL). B) Loc.#2, showing epithelial hypertrophy (EH), loss of cell border, disorganization, and obliteration (O) of space between secondary gill lamellae. C) Loc.#3, showing mucous secretion (arrows), obliteration (O) of space between secondary gill lamellae and secondary lamellae (SL). D) Loc.#4, showing severe disorganization of secondary lamellae (SL), primary lamellae (PL) (X1000).

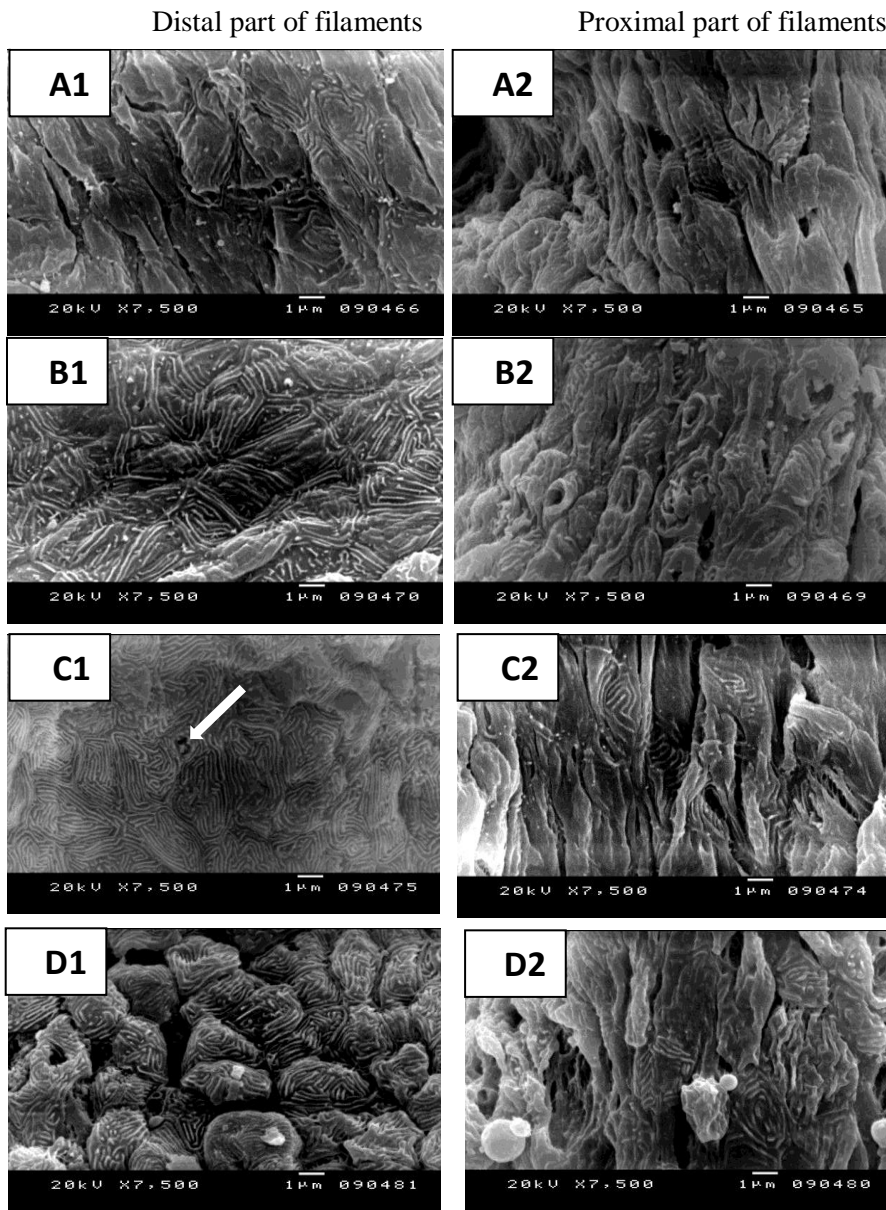


Fig. 15: Scanning electron micrograph showing Pavement cells of the proximal and distal parts of the primary gill filaments in the four different locations. Note: the micro ridges abundant in the distal part and gradually disappeared in the proximal part. A1, 2) Loc.#1 showing not defined micro ridges. B1, 2) Loc.#2 showing defined micro ridges. C1, 2) Loc.#3 showing a uniform, organized architecture of micro ridges. D1, 2) Loc.#4 showing agglomeration of sharp micro ridges, Chloride cell (arrow) (X7500).

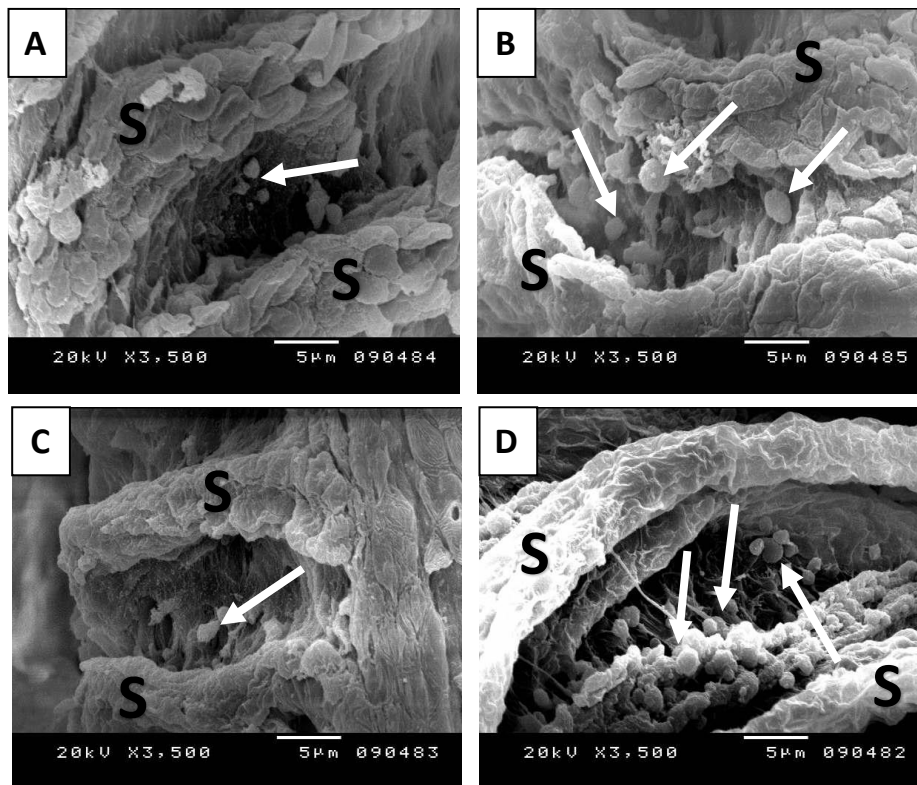


Fig. 16: Scanning electron micrograph showing the mucous secretions in the inter-lamellar area between two secondary lamellae in different locations. A) Loc.#1. B) Loc.#2. C) Loc.#3. D) Loc.# 4. Arrows indicate the mucous secretion, secondary lamellae (SL) (X3500).

Discussion

In the present study, the gills were selected for study because they perform many important functions such as respiration, acid-base balance, excretion, and osmoregulation, and they are continuously and directly exposed to the external environment. They are indicators of water quality and are used for studying the effects of environmental stressors on fish (Tkatcheva *et al.*, 2004; Vigliano *et al.*, 2006). The gill structure alterations affect their physiological functioning (Wendelaar Bonga and Lock, 2008). Gills have frequently been used in the assessment of the impact of aquatic pollutants in marine as well as in freshwater habitats (Femanders *et al.*, 2007; Miron *et al.*, 2008; Nwani *et al.*, 2010). Electron microscopy is proven to be reliable for examining the adverse effects of pollutants on the fish tissues and for assessing the effects of environmental stressors on fish structures (Palamiappan *et al.*, 2008; Mir and Channa 2009).

In the present study the loss of alignment in the primary lamellae, as detected by SEM is indicative of an increase in the volume of non-tissue spaces of the lamellar epithelium resulting in increased diffusion distance (Fernandez and Mazon, 2003). The morphological abnormalities observed in the present study can lead to an influx of ions, inhibition of active reception of ions, and interference in the gaseous exchange. The phenomenon of epithelial hypertrophy of the primary filaments was also observed in the fish exposed to adverse water quality (Mallat, 1985) leading to the increase in the diffusion distance affecting gaseous exchange (Nowak, 1992). Cellular hypertrophy observed, could lead to a decrease in the respiratory capacity between the lamellae, impairing the diffusion of oxygen across the gills due to swollen condition of the epithelium (Ayoola, 2008a, b).

The disorganization and obliteration of the space between secondary gill lamellae are in agreement with Scwaiger *et al.* (2004) which revealed that this finding is probably induced by the incidence of severe edema. This alteration is more often encountered in freshwater fishes than in marine fishes (Mailatt, 1985), which could be because freshwater fishes are hyper-osmotic concerning the environment, increasing the volume in the edema (Machado and Fanta, 2003). Since the secondary lamellae are the site of gaseous exchange, with the blood-to-water diffusion distances less than one-micrometer inactive species (Evans, 1987), this damage could interfere with the efficiency of gas exchange (Jagoe *et al.*, 1996a.). Nonetheless, such alteration is also an example of a defense mechanism because the lifting of lamellar epithelium increases the distance between the external environment and the blood, thus serving as a barrier to the entrance of contaminants (Fernandes and Mazon, 2003). These modifications can produce adverse effects on fish health and may increase their susceptibility to secondary infectious diseases and even may cause death (Hawkins *et al.*, 1984).

A fusion of gill lamellae along with oedematous epithelial cells as observed in the present study has been also observed in fish exposed to pesticides, industrial wastes, and other organic wastes (Venkataraman *et al.*, 2007). Oedematous changes in gill filaments and secondary lamellae probably are due to increased capillary permeability (Kakuta and Murachi, 1997; Olurin *et al.*, 2006). However, the fusion of the secondary lamellae causes a decrease in free gas exchange and may play a defensive role against contamination (Khoshnood *et al.*, 2011).

Mucous cells can be efficient in seizing the toxic agents and help in preventing the entrance of these agents into the gills. In the present study proliferation of mucous secretions was seen, indicative of the function of mucous in protecting the gill epithelium from environmental impacts, infectious agents, toxic agents, and particles in suspension (Powell *et al.*, 1992; Biagini *et al.*, 2009). Also, abundant Pavement cells are covering the primary filaments, and its apical surface bears micro ridges was noticed in our scanning

micrographs, this is in agreement with Wilson and Laurent (2002) which stated that Pavement cells are the most abundant cell type covering the gill epithelium and its apical surface bears micro ridges or microvilli and are the sites of proton pump-driven sodium uptake. Besides this, the micro ridges increase the functional surface of the epithelium (Mallat, 1985). The abundance of micro ridges or the reduction of it indicates the protective ability of the gills concerning the quality and quantity of pollutants in the environment. Similar observations were made by different authors from time to time (Wong and Wong, 2000; Mazon *et al.*, 2002; Biagini *et al.*, 2009).

The variability of the environment affects processes at all levels of the organization's ecology (Dunham *et al.*, 1989). The main source of Cu and Pb in the Egyptian irrigation system, are industrial wastes (Mason, 2002). Metal levels are increased due to agricultural, industrial, and domestic activities (Kalay and Canli, 2000; Santoe *et al.*, 2005). Water quality reflects inputs from the atmosphere (Ayazi *et al.*, 2010; Zhang *et al.*, 2011).

The pH is a limiting factor for aquatic organisms. The severe changes in the pH of the water may harm aquatic organisms and affect human health. Any change in the pH affects aquatic biota. If the pH increases above this range, smaller amounts of ammonia are needed to reach a level that is toxic to fish, while when pH decreases, the acidity of the water increases affecting the fish (Murdoch, 1991).

The stream has pH values within the permissible limits of law 48/1982 (7.94–8.50) and is not harmful for aquatic life and irrigation, where the pH of most natural water ranges between 6 and 8.5 (WHO, 1993). The normal pH for irrigation water is from 6.5 to 8.4 (FAO, 1985). In Egypt and other developing countries, where environmental protection laws have not been enforced, industrial and domestic wastes are dumped randomly into water bodies. These wastes have been reported to contain toxic and hazardous substances including metals. The contamination of water resources by trace metals is of important concern because of their toxicity, persistence, and bioaccumulative nature (Ikem *et al.*, 2003). The primary sources of Cu are domestic wastewater, manufacturing processes

involving metals, steam electrical production, the dumping of sewage sludge, and atmospheric deposition. The high levels of Cu in water can be attributed to industrial and agricultural discharge (Mason, 2002).

Aquatic pollution causes a threat to the survival of aquatic organisms (Saeed and Shaker, 2008). The present results of the winter season (2016-2017) showed that the significant effect of season on water samples in all studied ecosystems as water in EL Mahmoudia stream in winter compared with summer season data of Azab *et al.* (2012). Stephenson (1987) attributed the effect of pollution to be neurotoxicity of the pollutants on the fish. The data of the present work and other data from the literature previously cited show the hazards of pollutants to fishes. From the eco-physiological point of view, the effects of pollutants on non-target species must be carefully evaluated.

In the present study, there were no parasites reported in the selected fish in El Mahmoudia, ElBehara, Egypt in the four locations represented in the present study. Hassan *et al.* (1990) described *Licithobotrys aegyptiacus* from the intestine of *Mugil Capito* (fish) caught from the Egyptian Mediterranean waters. Gupta and Tandon (1985) described *Gyliauchen indicum* from the intestine of *Engraulis hamiltoni*, a fish from India. Hassanine (2000) described *Gyliauchen Volubilis* Nagaty, 1956 from the intestine of *Siganus rivulatus*, a common fish in the northern Red Sea, Egypt.

Ramadan (1986) described *Apparyngogyliachen callyodontis* Yamaguti, 1942 from the intestine of two fish species from Red sea, Egypt. Ramadan (1983) described *Proctoeces gohari* from the intestine of *Acanthopagrus bifasciatus*, a fish from the Red Sea, Egypt. Ahmad and Dhar (1987) described *Lasiotocus guptai* from *Cynoglossus dubius*, a fish in the Arabian Sea. Viozzi *et al.* (2000) described *Steganoder szidati* from the intestine of freshwater fishes, (*Galaxias maculates* and *G. platei*) from Patagonia, Argentina. Etchegoin *et al.* (2002) described *Steganoderma valchetensis* from the intestine of *Gymnocharacinus bergi*, a freshwater fish from Patagonia, Argentina.

Thelma (2003) described *Allopodocotyle skoliorchis* from the intestine of *Parequula*

melbourensis, a fish in Australian water. Shen (1985) described *Lecithocladium dongshanensis* from the stomach of *Pseudosciaena crocea*, a fish from the East China Sea. Toman (1992) recoded *Lecithocladium chingi* Manter and Pritchard, 1960 from the stomach of *Naso vlamingli* from the Indian Ocean. Chamber *et al.* (2001) described *Lecithocladium inductor* from the intestine of *Naso vlamingi*, a fish from Australia. Nadakal *et al.* (1991) described *Dinurus hippuri* from the stomach of *Coryphaena hippurus*, a fish from India.

Poulin (2000) described that the intensity of infection with helminth parasites is directly related to the host's size. They believed that chances for certain parasitism may be greater for larger individuals which having greater surface areas, consuming more potentially parasite-laden food, and have lived longer than smaller ones. Mordvinova (1988) described *Neorhadinorhynchus myctophumi* from the intestine of *Myctophid sp.*, a fish from the World Ocean, Russia. Martens and Moens (1995) and Geets and Ollevier (1996) reported *Sclerocollum rubimaris* Schmidt and Paperna, 1978 from the fish *Siganus sutor* on the Kenyan coast.

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