

Water Quality of the Ashaiman Reservoir and Fish culture Facilities at The Aquaculture Demonstration Centre in Ashaiman, Ghana.

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ABSTRACT

This study evaluated water quality of the Ashaiman reservoir and fish holding facilities at a hatchery close to the reservoir. Physicochemical parameters, nutrients, productivity and fish pathogenic bacteria were determined monthly. Physicochemical parameters at all sites were within suitable range for fish production. Nutrient levels were however significantly higher in the culture facilities than the reservoir ($P < 0.05$). Productivity levels and pathogens were above the suitable limit in hatchery tanks but within acceptable range in the reservoir. A water quality index (WQI) of 100.01 for the reservoir is indicative of poor quality. Pathogenic bacteria load was high and should be of concern to the fish hatchery operations.

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Introduction

Due to the increased necessity for food production, the aquaculture industry is growing rapidly, and fish represents an important source of protein and essential nutrients for human health (Gobi *et al.*, 2016). Aquaculture could be integrated into reservoir fisheries. Reservoirs have been used to provide a store of water for agriculture including aquaculture, industrial and household purposes for thousands of years and also for flood control. As a result, there have been many concerns to protect reservoirs to ensure posterity benefits from their functions.

Within the growing aquaculture industry, it is conventional that water of good quality be supplied for viable aquaculture production since poor water quality can result in low profit, low product quality and potential human health risks. Additionally, production is reduced when the water contains high concentrations of disease causing microbes that can impair development, growth, reproduction, or even cause

mortality to the cultured species. Water quality assessment therefore, borders on the measurement and monitoring of water variables such as transparency, pH, conductivity, temperature, nutrients including phosphates and nitrates, and pathogenic bacteria.

Bacterial diseases are among the most important causes of losses among fish stocks (Inglis *et al.*, 1993). Among the etiological agents of bacterial fish diseases, *Pseudomonas* and *Aeromonas* are considered to be two of the most important fish pathogens which are also human pathogenic bacteria from aquatic environment. However, these species have received little attention, although they are responsible for ulcer type diseases including ulcerative syndrome, bacteria hemorrhagic septicemia, tail and fin rot, bacterial gill rot and dropsy in fish species, usually resulting in economic losses (Gobi *et al.*, 2016).

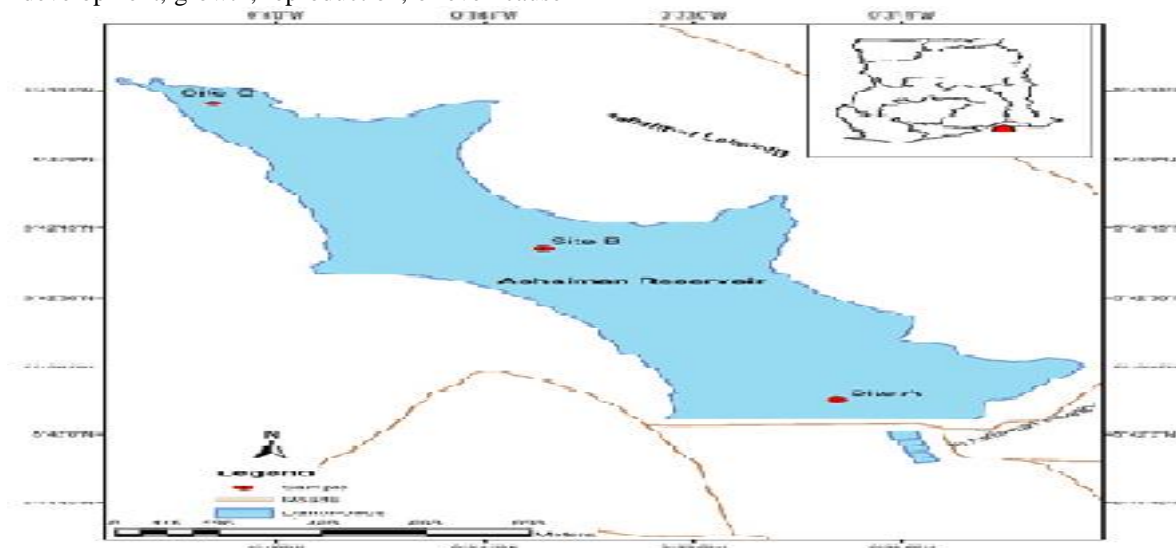


Fig.1. A Map of Ghana Showing the Ashaiman Reservoir and Sampling Sites.



Plate 1. Aerial view of the Aquaculture Demonstration Centre, Ashaiman.

In view of this, this work was aimed at evaluating the physico-chemical and biological parameters and estimating the water quality index (WQI) of the Ashaiman Reservoir and some fish holding facilities at the Centre.

Materials and methods

Study Area

The study was carried out in Ashaiman Reservoir (Fig. 1) and Aquaculture Demonstration Centre in Ashaiman (Greater Accra Region) of Ghana. The Center (Plate 1) is enclosed between Longitude N 05.669 77 ° and Latitude W 000.05 394 and was set up 44 years ago. The main activities of the Aquaculture Demonstration Center are to produce tilapia and catfish fingerlings to out-grower fish farmers throughout the country and beyond to increase aquaculture production (Ghana Statistical Service, 2014).

Methodology

A reconnaissance survey was conducted in December where pictures were taken with a DJI Phantom 3 Professional Unmanned Aerial Vehicle. Sampling was done on monthly basis from January to March, 2017. Samples were collected from three sites on the reservoir, the Pilot Aquaculture Centre and a canal leading to the centre from the reservoir. Following guidelines stated in APHA (2012), measurements and analysis were made on physico-chemical parameters including phosphate, alkalinity, ammonia, nitrate, temperature, conductivity, pH, salinity and Dissolved Oxygen (DO). In situ measurement was done for water temperature, pH, conductivity, salinity and DO using a hand-held OAKTON PCD 650 multi-parameter probe (HANNA HI 9828, Hanna Instruments, United Kingdom) according to the Standard Methods for the Examination of Water and Wastewater APHA (2012).

Samples for nutrient analysis were collected using pretreated high-density plastic bottles (500 ml) equipped with screw caps. These were immersed gently to at least 20 cm below the surface of the water to rinse them with the water thrice and then filled to the brim in an oblique manner. These bottles were stored on ice in an iced chest and transported to the laboratory. Sampling for Chlorophyll-a analysis was achieved using sterilized (1.5 L) bottles. The bottles were lowered gently to about 20 cm below the surface of the water. For microbial sampling, sterilized and sealed bottles (500 ml) obtained from Water Research Institute (WRI) of the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) were gently immersed to 20 cm below the surface of the water (Plate 3 and 4). Samples for microbiological analysis were taken to the Microbiology Laboratory at WRI within four hours of collection.

Nutrient analysis in the laboratory was done within a 24-hour period after collection of samples to avoid further degeneration of nutrients by bacteria and phytoplankton. The

samples were allowed to thaw to room temperature and analysis was done using the HACH DR2800 Spectrophotometer following APHA (2012) procedures. Reagent blanks were made by treating an aliquot of distilled water as a sample and carrying out the full analysis. In cell blank assessment, the spectrophotometer cells were filled with distilled water and measurement taken to find the difference between sample and reference cells. Throughout the measurement and analyses of water samples, care was taken not to contaminate glassware by rinsing bottles, vials, pipettes, and other such shared instruments. For Microbiological analysis, water samples taken to WRI were immediately analyzed to ensure accuracy

Microbial Analysis

For microbiological analysis, 100 mL of the samples were filtered through 0.04 µm pore-sized filter (cellulose nitrate membranes, Whatman Laboratory Division, Maidstone, England) using a water pump (model Sartorius 16824) of a membrane filtration system in a laminar flow hood. These membranes were picked with a pair of forceps and aseptically placed up on plates with appropriate selective media ensuring that no air bubbles were trapped. at 37°C for 24 hours. All the media were prepared according to the manufacturers' instructions (Biolab, Merck, South Africa). The plates were incubated at 37°C for 24 hours using a Fisher Brand Shel Lab General Purpose Incubator (Biolab, Merck, South Africa). The colonies on the plates were enumerated, characterized, and recorded after the 24 hours using a Stuart Biocote colony counter. Centrimide Agar was used for the selective isolation of *Pseudomonas* bacteria whiles Aeromonas Agar was used for the selective differential isolation of *Aeromonas* bacteria. The results were expressed as the number of *Pseudomonas* and *Aeromonas* in 100 ml of water. The analysis was in accordance with Standard Methods for the examination of water and wastewater APHA (2012).

Data Analysis

Bar display charts showing variation from averaged values were used to represent measurements of both *in situ* and laboratory analyses of samples using Microsoft Office Excel 2016. The Microsoft Office Excel 2016 spreadsheet was used to organize the data into tables out of which graphs were generated as pictorial representation of the data based on values obtained. Microcal Origin version 6.0, a statistical tool, was used to run a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) of the data significant differences between the means. The means were compared using Tukey's HSD Test. The level of significance of 5% was adopted in all statistical analyses. For the purpose of analysis the sites in the reservoir were taken as one entity, the canal as another, and the ponds as one and the tank as one.

Results

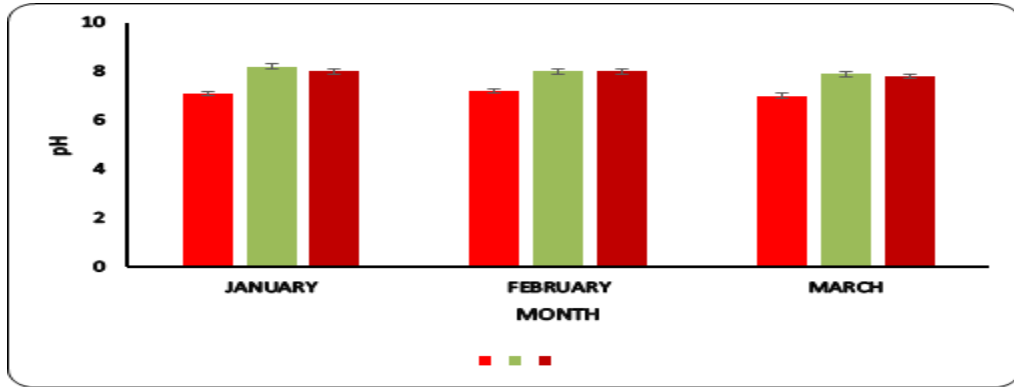


Fig 2. Monthly mean variation in pH at the different sites. Error bars indicate standard deviations.

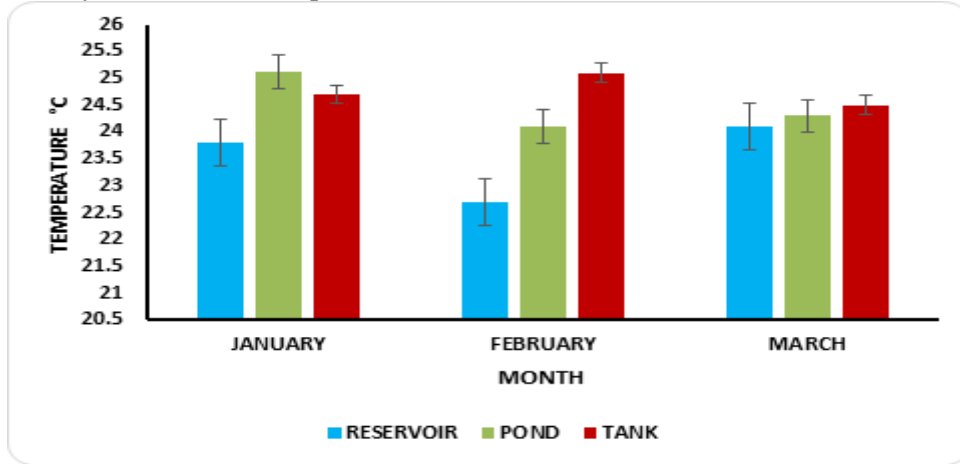


Fig 3. Monthly mean variation in temperature at the different sites. Error bars indicate standard deviations.

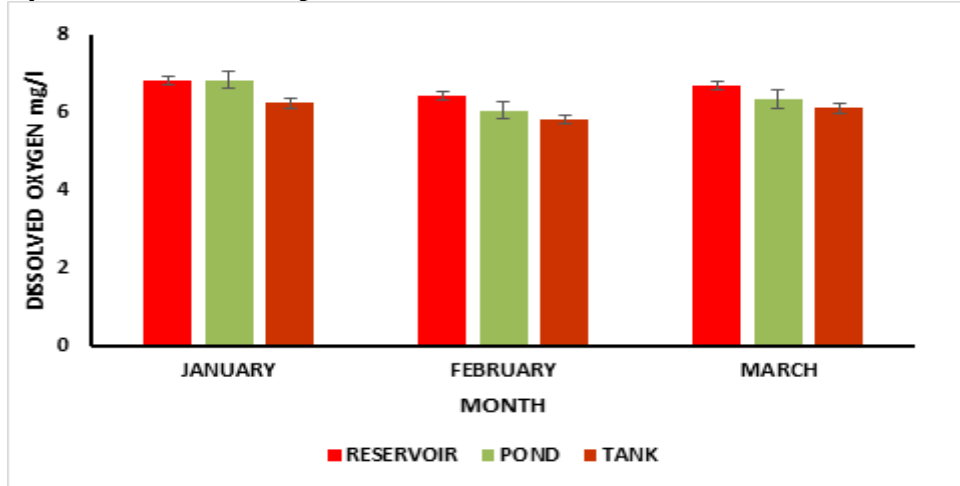


Fig 4. Monthly mean variation in dissolved oxygen at the different sites. Error bars indicate standard deviations.

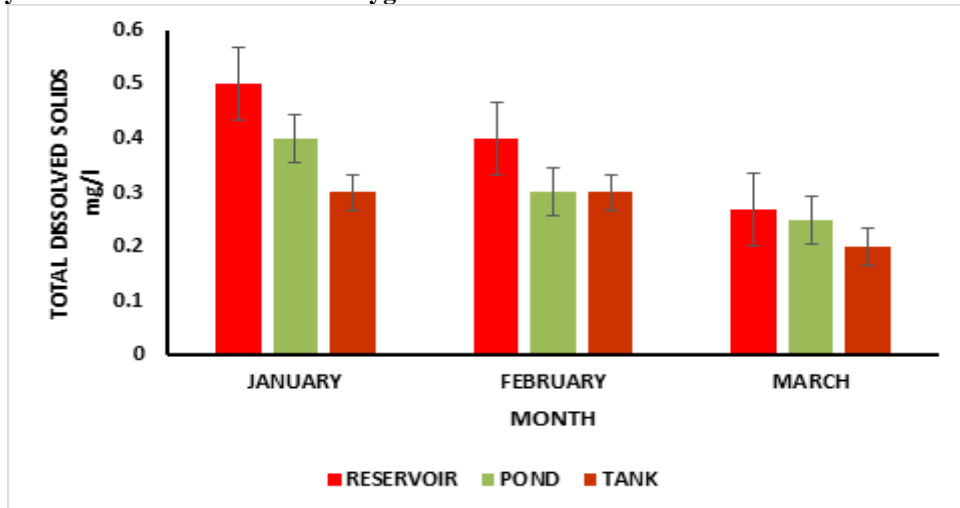


Fig 5. Monthly mean variation in total dissolved oxygen at the different sites. Error bars indicate standard deviations.

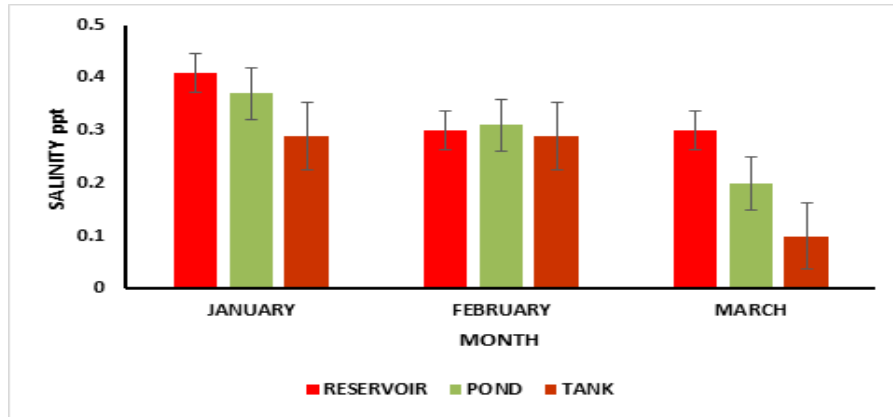


Fig 6. Monthly mean variation in salinity at the different sites. Error bars indicate standard deviations.

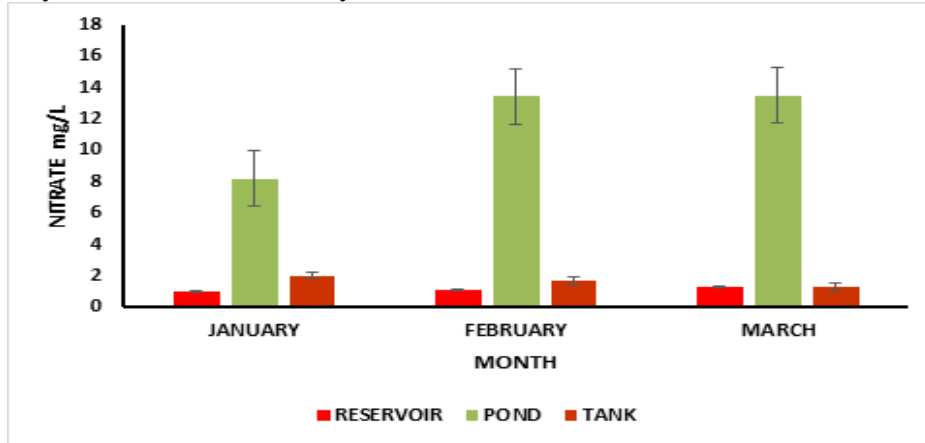


Fig 7. Monthly mean variation in nitrate at the different sites. Error bars indicate standard deviations.

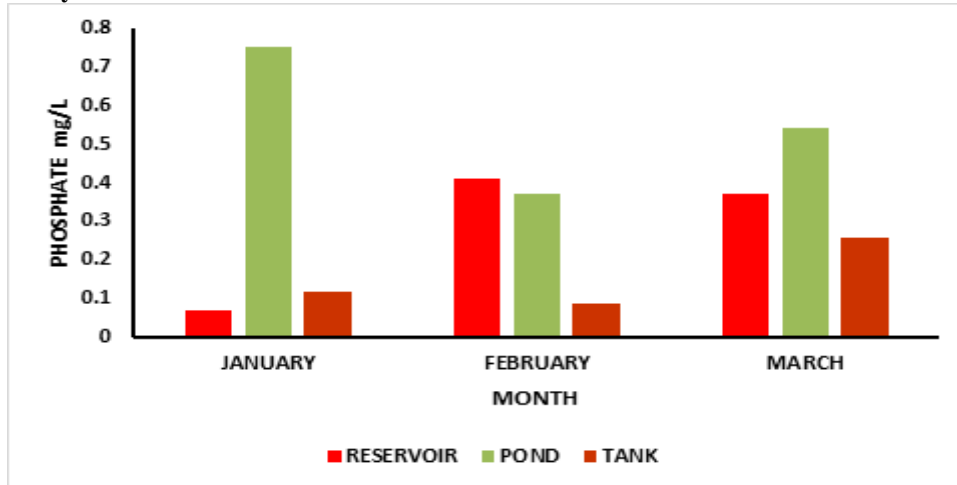


Fig 8. Monthly mean variation in phosphate at the different sites. Error bars indicate standard deviations.

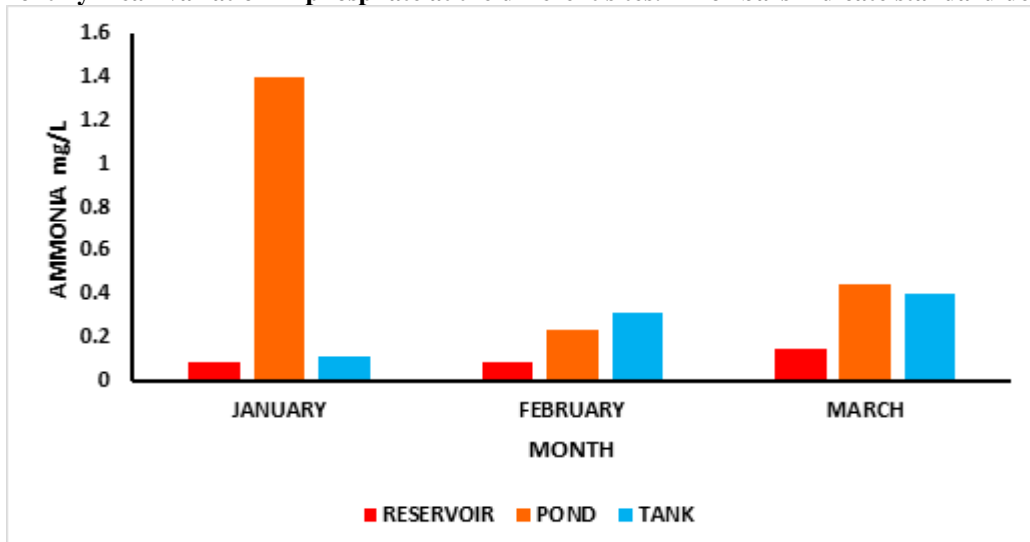


Fig 9. Monthly mean variation in ammonia at the different sites. Error bars indicate standard deviations.

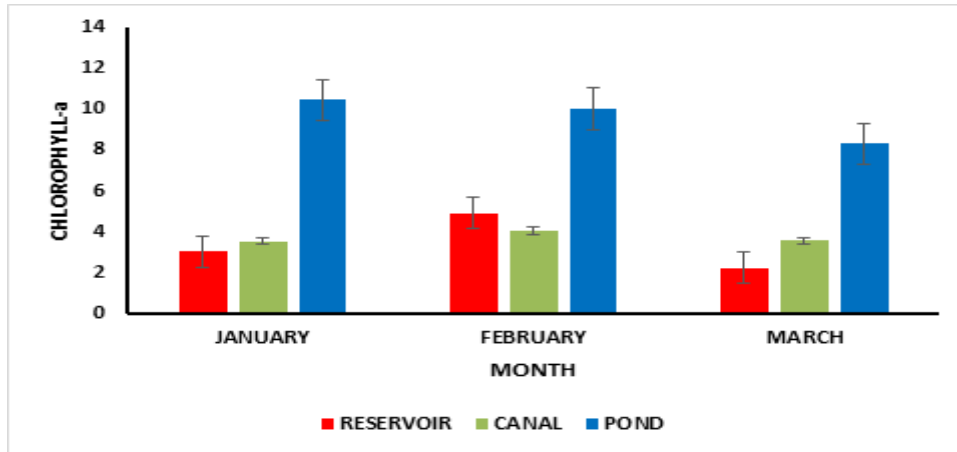


Fig 10. Monthly mean variation in Chlorophyll-a at the different sites. Error bars indicate standard deviations.

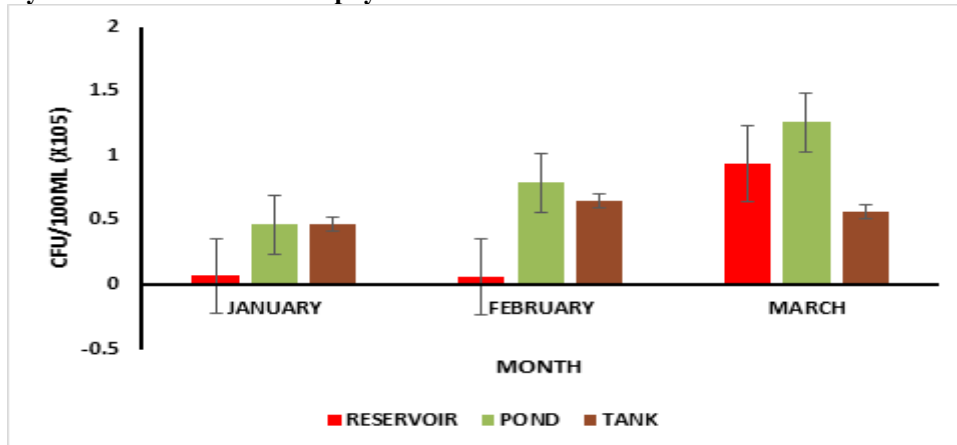


Fig 11. Monthly mean variation in *Aeromonas* sp. at the different sites. Error bars indicate standard deviations.

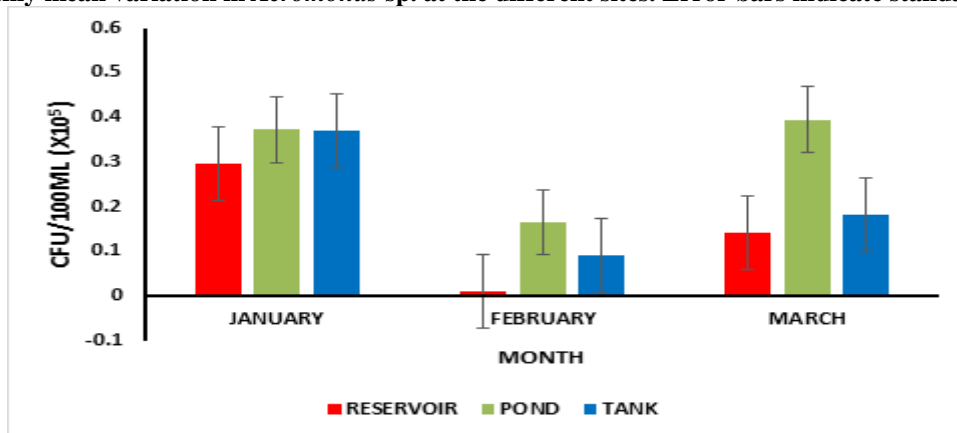


Fig 12. Monthly mean variation in *Pseudomonas* sp. at the different sites. Error bars indicate standard deviation.

Assessment of water quality standard from water quality index (WQI)

In order to ascertain the level of quality of the Ashaiman Reservoir, a water quality index was developed using their corresponding physico-chemical and biological parameters as described by Ramakrishnaiah *et al.* (2009).

Discussion

Dissolved oxygen in water is of prime importance for maintenance of aquatic life. It reflects the physical and biological processes prevailing in the waters (Solanki *et al.*, 2007). The reservoir had higher dissolved oxygen levels as compared to the culture facilities. This could be attributed to the fact that the reservoir had a larger surface area as compared to the culture facilities (pond and tank), as a result, flushing in the reservoir may be higher as compared to the tank and pond. Also, decomposition of unutilized feed introduced into the pond and tank could have also accounted for the low levels of dissolved oxygen recorded in the culture facilities.

Temperature obtained during this study fell generally within the range (22.7- 25.1 °C), which according to (Tessema *et al.*,2014) is suitable for tropical fish production. However, the highest temperatures were recorded in the ponds and tanks (25.12 and 25.1) respectively, which could be attributed to low water level and high air temperature (Thirupathaiah *et al.*,2012).

The pH limit for protection of aquatic life is 6.0 to 8.5 (ISI, 1974). However, Tessema *et al.* (2014), stated that the desirable range of pH for tropical fish is 6.5-9 and all the values recorded for the reservoir and the culture facilities fell within this pH range. With means varying between a moderately low value of 7.0 in the reservoir to a slightly higher value of 8.9 in the culture facilities, the slight increase in pH in the culture facilities may be due to the occurrence of high photosynthetic activity and decomposition of autochthonous matter which increases the nutrient concentration at higher temperature.

Total dissolved solids represent total mineral contents, which may or may not be toxic. A range of 0.2- 0.5ppt (200-500mg/l) was recorded for all stations which fell within the permissible limit of 500 mg/L set by the USA Environmental Protection Agency (Charkhabi and Sakizadeh, 2006). However, the highest TDS value of 0.5ppt, although acceptable, was recorded in the reservoir and this indicate the possible effects of anthropogenic sources along the reservoir, particularly as a result of domestic waste or flood from catchment area (Utang *et al.*, 2012). The low total dissolved solids recorded in the culture facilities may also indicate enough fish diversity (Utang *et al.*, 2012).

Salinity in water is due to the presence of ions such as carbonates and bicarbonates which result in the pollution of water bodies (Kumar, 2014). According to Omoniyi and Agbon (2008), salinity levels for the production of tropical fish should be less than 10ppt. Salinity levels recorded during the study were suitable for the survival of tropical fish species. The high salinity levels in the reservoir as compared to the fish culture facilities could be due to the high rate of evaporation in the reservoir. In the ponds however, regular addition of water in the ponds and tanks keeps the volume of water diluted hence salinity levels low.

Thirupathaiah *et al.* (2012) indicated that ammonia and nitrate levels lower than 0.20 mg/l and 10mg/l respectively are suitable for the growth of tropical fish as they will not have any adverse effect on fish growth. These ranges were exceeded only in the pond (1.2-1.4mg/l and 8.9-13.45mg/l for ammonia and nitrate). This could probably be due to the high feeding rate of fish that goes on in the ponds.

Phosphate levels in water could serve as an indication of pollution. Phosphate is the major limiting factor in many aquatic ecosystems and is responsible for the growth of both plankton and plants in water which in turn are used by fish as food (Reddy & Parameshwar, 2016). Studies conducted by (Zhou *et al.*, 2011) indicated that water with phosphate levels above 0.70 mg/l could have detrimental effects on fish growth as it could lead to reduced levels of dissolved oxygen. An increase in these nutrients beyond suitable levels could result in eutrophication. The high level of phosphate encountered in the ponds therefore gives much room for concern.

The water quality index estimated for the Ashaiman Reservoir during the study period indicates that the reservoir was poor. According to Ramakrishnaiah *et al.* (2009), a waterbody is said to have excellent water quality if it ranges from 0-50, good if it ranges from 50-100, poor from 100-200 and very poor from 200-300.

According to (KDHE, 2011), chlorophyll-a values in reservoirs and water holding facilities for aquaculture should not exceed 10 µg/l. Utilization of water with chlorophyll-a values higher than 10 µg/L for aquaculture can result in harmful algal blooms and anoxic conditions. The tank recorded the highest chlorophyll-a values across the months. This could possibly explain why the tank had the lowest dissolved oxygen levels. Chlorophyll-a helps in photosynthesis giving off oxygen as a by-product. At night when photosynthesis does not occur, these phytoplankton will use up the oxygen thereby lowering the dissolved oxygen levels which could have an adverse effect on the fish.

Bacteria are opportunistic pathogens and may cause mortalities when the fish are under stress (De Sousa & Silva-Souza, 2001). *Pseudomonas* and *Aeromonas* are among the major pathogenic bacteria which frequently cause economic losses in aquaculture and are associated with elevated levels of water pollution.

According to Patra *et al.* (2010), introduction of water with *Pseudomonas* and *Aeromonas* microbes higher than 1.0×10^3 cfu/100 ml is harmful for aquaculture production. High levels of bacteria in a waterbody may be as a result of biological processes and the introduction of feed and fertilizer. In this study, the high counts of these pathogenic bacteria above 1.0×10^3 cfu/100 ml is a threat to the activities at the Pilot Aquaculture Centre. The fact that these bacteria are of zoonotic essence makes it a threat both to fish and humans. Fish species may harbor these bacteria and the presence of these pathogenic organisms can pose severe health risks to consumers in general and immunocompromised individuals in particular (Mulamattathil *et al.*, 2014).

Conclusion

Physico-chemical parameters obtained from the study were within the acceptable ranges for the survival and sustainability of fisheries. Water received from the reservoir was suitable for aquaculture production though the water quality index indicated that it was polluted with respect to domestic consumption. Nutrient levels obtained at the farm were slightly above the suitable ranges and this is of concern since the Centre produces fingerlings, which are fragile and slight changes in nutrient concentrations could affect their survival.

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