



Effect of pesticide Glyphosate on some biochemical features in cyanophyta algae *Oscillatoria limnetica*

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Abstract : The blue green alga *Oscillatoria limnetica* was isolated from lotic ecosystem. The isolated microalga species was cultivated in BG-11 media for biomass production and to test the effect of organophosphorus glyphosate on carbohydrate, total protein, shikimic acid, flavonoid and superoxide dismutase enzyme.

Adversely depleting of the cellular activities of *O. limnetica* causing by glyphosate treatments, leading to a marked decrease in the carbohydrates, proteins, flavonoid and maximum reduction was 30.980mg/l, 22.39mg/l and 0.48 μ g/g dry wt., respectively at 20mg/l of glyphosate. The shikimic acid pathway was inhibited by glyphosate, leading to an accumulation of shikimic acid. The shikimic acid content increased and the highest content was 1.38mg/l at 20mg/l. Also, superoxide dismutase enzyme activity increased along with increasing glyphosate concentrations and maximum activity was 3.14 units/ml in 20mg/l.

Keywords: pesticide ,glyphosate ,cyanophytae ,*Oscillatoria limnetica*, total protein ,shikimic acid ,SOD, flavonoid.

Introduction

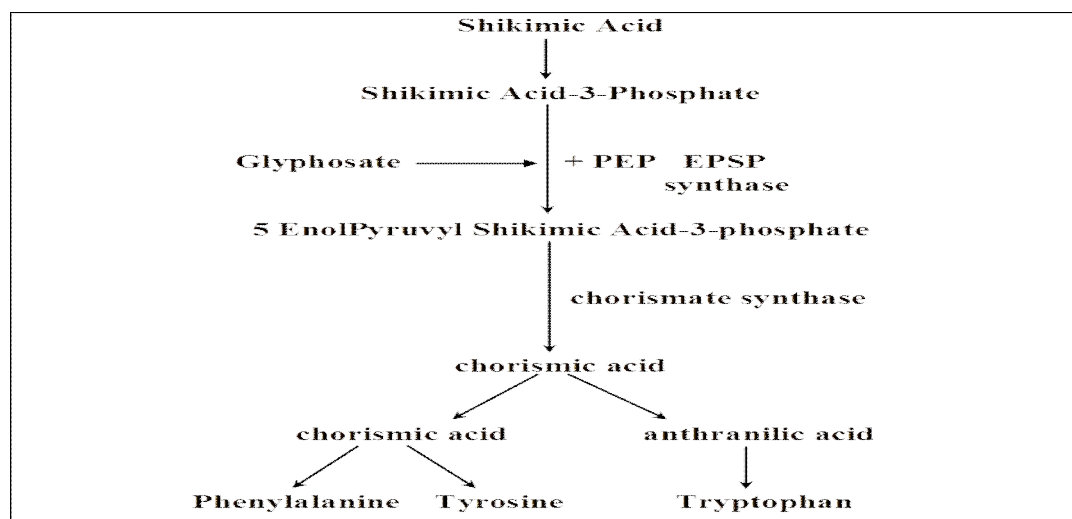
Large amounts of pesticides enter aquatic ecosystems as a result of agriculture. Adverse effects of pesticides on non-target plants are of particular concern because of the annual, widespread, and increasingly worldwide use of these chemicals¹. Algae are essential components of aquatic ecosystems. They produce oxygen and organic substances on which most other life forms depend by providing food for other organisms, including fish and invertebrates. Toxic chemical effects on algae can directly affect the structure and function of an ecosystem, resulting in oxygen depletion, and decreased primary productivity². Pesticides can affect the structure and function of aquatic communities through changing species composition of an algal community³.

Among pesticides, glyphosate-based herbicides (GBHs), such as Roundup (R), are the most frequently used worldwide, and their residues are common contaminants of ground and surface water⁴ and in food and feed⁵. This is partly due to pre-harvest desiccation treatment of non-transgenic cereals with GBHs⁵, but more intensively because they are sprayed on the 80% of genetically modified plants that are engineered to tolerate GlyBH⁶ and, thus, contain its residues⁷.

Glyphosate is the active ingredient of more than 750 different broad-spectrum herbicides⁸. As a consequence, glyphosate jumped to a leading position among commercial pesticides from the 1970s. GlyBH use is still increasing every year⁹. Glyphosate acts on the shikimate pathway in plants through the inhibition of the 5-enolpyruvylshikimate-3-phosphate synthase (EPSPS) enzyme¹⁰, which is involved in the metabolism of aromatic amino acids.

Shikimic acid is a naturally occurring organic compound, more commonly known as its anionic form shikimate, is an important intermediate in the biosynthesis of aromatic amino acids (phenylalanine, tyrosine, and tryptophan) of plants and microorganisms wherein it operates in the biosynthesis of not just the three aromatic amino acids but also of innumerable aromatic secondary metabolites such as alkaloids, flavonoids, lignins, and aromatic antibiotics. Many of these compounds are bioactive as well as playing important roles in organism defense against biotic and abiotic stresses and environmental interactions and as such are highly physiologically important^{11,12}.

The biosynthesis of these essential substances are promoted by the enzyme 5-enolpyruvylshikimate-3-phosphate synthase (EPSPS), the target enzyme of glyphosate. This enzyme catalyzes the transfer of the enolpyruvyl moiety of phosphoenolpyruvate (PEP) to the 5-hydroxyl of shikimate-3-phosphate (S3P) to produce enolpyruvyl shikimate-3-phosphate (EPSP) and inorganic phosphate. Glyphosate resembles the transition state that transforms the reactants into products in the reaction that is catalyzed by EPSP synthase. Hence glyphosate (as a transition state analog) binds more tightly to EPSP synthase than its natural substrate and thereby prevents binding of substrate to the enzyme. This binding leads to inhibition of the enzyme and shuts down the entire pathway. Eventually this causes a deficiency in the production of the essential substances needed by the organisms to survive¹³.



Scheme (1-1): The site of inhibition of glyphosate from Dill¹⁴.

Material and Methods

Sample collection and identification

Samples of the freshwater algae were collected from artificial canal around University of Babylon in Al-Hilla city by using phytoplankton net¹⁵. Experimental cultures were incubated in BG-11 medium^{16,17} at cool white fluorescent lamps (200) $\mu\text{E}/\text{m}^2/\text{s}$ with a light/dark cycle of 16/8 h. and $26 \pm 1^\circ\text{C}$ ¹⁸. Moreover the cultures were mildly shaken by hand on alternate days¹⁹.

Pesticide

The organophosphorus pesticide used in this study is the formulation of the herbicide glyphosate commercially available as Roundup® (containing 480 g active ingredient/L of glyphosate) was obtained from Al-Farah company, Iraq.

Experimental Design

The selected algal isolates were batch-cultured in 500 ml Erlenmeyer flasks. Into each flask 200 ml of liquid culture media, BG11 medium for *O. limnetica*, was added. Glyphosate was added to the culture medium to the final concentrations 5, 10, 15, 20 mg/l. The flasks were cultivated under the conditions described above. Response of glyphosate toxicity on *O. limnetica* (at the stationary phase) was investigated by determination of

carbohydrate, total protein, shikimic acid, flavonoid and superoxide dismutase enzyme. (All analysis done in three replicates).

Estimation of Carbohydrate

Alga samples were centrifuged by cooling centrifuge at the rate of 5000 r/min for 30 min, 4 C°. The supernatant was collected and the carbohydrate determined according to²⁰ method using glucose as a standard. 1ml of each sample/ standard was pipetted into a test tube, followed by addition of 1ml of 5% phenol and 5ml of 96% sulphuric acid to each tube and shaken well. After 10 minutes, the contents in the tubes were vortexed and placed in a water bath at 25-30oC for 20 minutes. The absorbance was measured at 490nm. The amount of total carbohydrate present was calculated using the standard graph prepared²¹.

Estimation of Protein

After the centrifugation of alga samples by cooling centrifuge at the rate of 5000 r/min for 30 min, 4 C°, the supernatant was collected and the protein content of algae biomass was determined using the Bradford dye binding assay which is a spectroscopic analytical method used to determine the concentration of protein in a solution²². The Bradford assay relies on the binding of the dye Coomassie Blue G250 to protein. To protein containing extracts (100 µL) 5 ml of Bradford dye reagent was added and the contents mixed either by inversion or vortexing. The absorbance at 595nm was measured after 2min and before 1 hour. The quantity of protein was determined by interpolation from a standard curve prepared using a series of known dilution of bovine serum albumin²³.

Shikimic acid analysis

The shikimic acid concentrations (µg/ml) were evaluated following the method of ²⁴ adapted for phytoplankton. Briefly, 50 ml of filtered growth media were resuspended in 3 ml of 0.25 M hydrochloric acid and shaken. Then, the extracts were centrifuged at 25000r/min for 15 min. The supernatant (100µl) was reacted with a 1 % solution of periodic acid. After 3 h, 1 ml of 1M sodium hydroxide and 0.6 ml of 0.1M glycine were added to the samples. Absorbance was measured at 380nm²⁵.

Superoxide dismutase activity assay

O.limnetica cells were collected by centrifugation at the rate of 4500 r/min for 20min, then the supernatant was decanted. The pellets were suspended in 0.9ml phosphate buffer (pH 7.4, 0.1mol/L) and then ground in an ice-bath for five min. Homogenized solution was centrifuged at 10000 r/min for 10min at 4°C and the supernatant was used as the enzyme source²⁶ for SOD spectrophotometric assay.

SOD activity assay was performed by pyrogallol autoxidation method as described by²⁷.

Reagent:

1. Tris-buffer 50mM, pH 8.2: - this solution contains:
 - Tris-base: - dissolve 0.285g of Tris-base in small amount of DW.
 - EDTA: - dissolve 0.111g of EDTA in small amount of DW.

After the adjustment of pH to 8.2, the volume was made up to 100ml by DW.

2. Pyrogallol: - This solution must prepared freshly. Pyrogallol solution was prepared as described below and the material should be added sequentially. 100ml of DW. , 60µl of HCl and 0.0252g of pyrogallol.

Procedure:

	Sample	Control
Enzyme source	50 µl	
Tris-buffer	1 ml	1 ml
Pyrogallol	1 ml	1 ml
D.W.		50 µl
After the addition of pyrogallol, immediately read the absorbance spectrophotometrically at 420nm against blank.		

Calculation:

$$\text{SOD activity} = \frac{\% \text{ inhibition of pyrogallol}}{50\% \text{ inhibition from standard}}$$

$$\% \text{ inhibition of pyrogallol autoxidation} = \frac{\Delta A \text{ of sample}}{\Delta A \text{ of control}} \times 100\% , \text{ where}$$

ΔA of sample = Absorbance change due to pyrogallol autoxidation in the sample reaction system

ΔA of control = Absorbance change due to pyrogallol autoxidation in the control (without cell lysate)

Determination of Total Flavonoid Content

O. limnetica cells were harvested, washed with distilled water (3 times) and used for the total flavonoid determination. The algal pellets were extracted with methanol and total flavonoid was determined by a colorimetric method as described by²⁸. A 0.5 ml of each extract was made up to 1 ml with methanol. Afterwards 0.4 ml of distilled water was added, followed by 0.3 ml of 5 % NaNO₂ solution and the mixture was left for 5 min. Thereafter, 0.3 ml of (10%) AlCl₃ solution was added and allowed to stand for 6 min. Two ml of (1M) NaOH solution was added to the mixture and the final volume was adjusted to 10 ml with distilled water. The mixture was thoroughly shaken and allowed to stand for 15 min. Absorbance of the reaction mixture was read at 510nm. The concentrations of total flavonoids were determined as quercetin equivalents (mg/g of dry weight)²⁹.

$$A = 0.01069 C - 0.001163, r^2=0.9998$$

Where A is the absorbance, C is the flavonoid concentration in $\mu\text{g/g}$ of dry weight.

Statistical Analysis

General Treatment Structure was used as an experimental design. Data were analyzed to study the effect of glyphosate on *O. limnetica* and Least significant difference (LSD) was used to compare the significant difference between means at $p < 0.05$.

Results and Discussion**Effect of Glyphosate on Carbohydrate Content of *O. limnetica*.**

Carbohydrate content of *O. limnetica* was decreased when glyphosate concentration increased. The highest carbohydrate content inhibition 12.223% was recorded at 20mg/l and the lower carbohydrate content inhibition 1.113% was recorded at 5mg/l. Significant differences were recorded among all treatments (Fig. 1). This may be due to inhibition of photosynthesis and photochemical efficiency of photosystemII in cyanophyta that resulting from the photooxidation of chlorophyll a, the destruction of accessory pigments to levels below their protective threshold, together with impaired energy transfer to photosystemII reaction centers, as a consequence of transformational variations to phycobilisomes³⁰.

The finding of this study agreed with³¹ who used *Anabaena cylindrica*, *Chlamydomonas reihardii*, *Chlorella vulgaris*, and *Chroococcus turgidus* to explore the physiological and biochemical effects of glyphosate on algae. The common visible symptoms of glyphosate toxicity in all algal cells were bleaching effect and reduction the contents of carbohydrate. The results highly suggested that glyphosate injured the algal cells by destruction of photosynthetic pigments and resulted in lowering the contents of carbohydrate in algal cells. Identical results were stated by³² who suggested that there was a greater reduction in the level of carbohydrate (44%) observed in *Oscillatoria pseudogeminata* at the highest concentration (1000ppm) of carbaryl on the 24th day and the lesser reduction (14%) at 100ppm as compared to control. As the concentration of pesticide increases, the total carbohydrate level decreased considerably. Also, in previous studies, the inhibition of carbohydrate production in cyanophyta has been observed at high external concentrations of glyphosate^{33,34}.

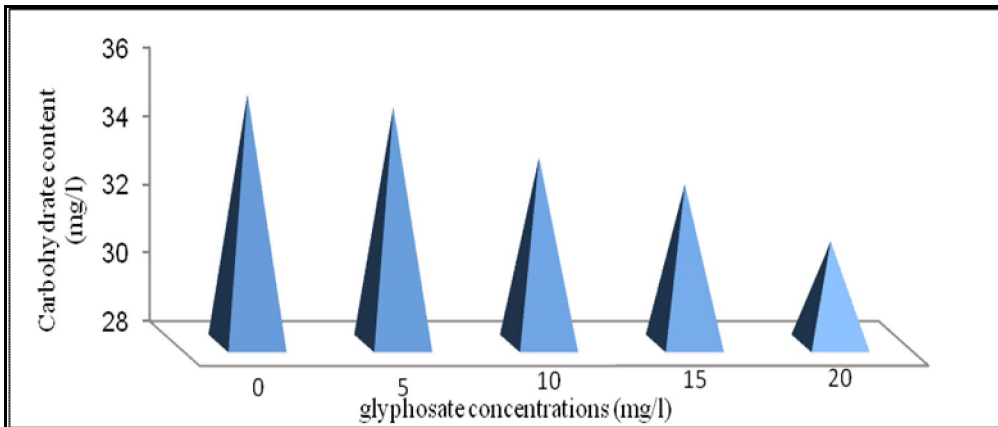


Fig. 1: Carbohydrate content of *O. limnetica* at different glyphosate concentrations (mg/l).
 *($p < 0.05$) Significant differences between control and all treatments.

Effect of Glyphosate on Total Protein Content of *O. limnetica*

The total protein content of *O. limnetica* was less than the control in 5, 10, 15 and 20mg/l. The highest protein content inhibition 37.45% was recorded at 20mg/l and the lower protein content inhibition 9.52% was recorded at 5mg/l. Significant differences were recorded among all treatments (Fig. 2). This may be due to inhibit the aromatic amino acid synthesis, which results in the inhibition of nucleic acid metabolism, protein synthesis and the abundance of proteins associated with photosystem II and the changes in protein synthesis in algae grown under stress could be due to changes in gene expression³⁵⁻³⁷. Also have observed decrease in protein may be due to the deficiency of protein synthesis or increase in the rate of its degradation of amino acids, which may be fed to tricarboxylic acid (TCA) cycle through aminotransferases probably to cope up with high energy demands in order to meet the stress condition³⁸. This study is in agreement with a study by³⁹ which reported that the soluble and insoluble proteins was decreased in *Scenedesmus* with increasing glyphosate as well as soluble proteins were decreased with increasing of glyphosate herbicide to *Merismopedia*. The same results were stated by⁴⁰ who reported that the accumulation protein decreased in *Chlamydomonas mexicana* in the presence of 15mg/l acephate and imidacloprid for 12 days. Additionally⁴¹ observed that the protein content of *Anabaena sp.* decreased beyond 2.5µg/ml of chlorpyrifos.

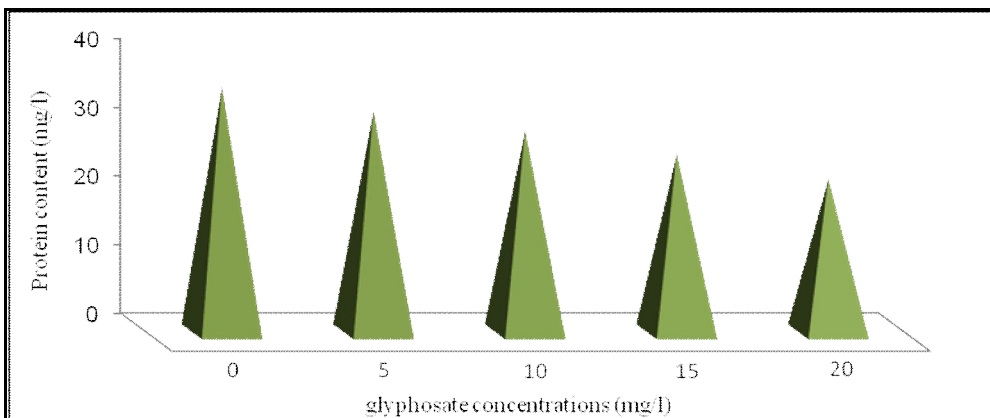


Fig. 2: Protein content of *O. limnetica* at different glyphosate concentrations (mg/l).
 *($p < 0.05$) Significant differences between control and all treatments.

Effect of Glyphosate on Shikimic acid Content of *O. limnetica*

The shikimic acid content showed a significant increase after *O. limnetica* exposed to 5, 10, 15 and 20mg/l of glyphosate (Fig. 3). This may be due to the inhibition of shikimic acid pathway by glyphosate, by competing with the enzyme 5-enolpyruvylshikimate 3-phosphate synthase (EPSPS) and that leading to the accumulation of the substrate shikimate 3-phosphate⁴²⁻⁴⁴. The result is in agreement with⁴⁵ who found that the shikimic acid content, after glyphosate exposure, showing a significant increase in phytoplankton cells exposed

to 500 and 1000 $\mu\text{g/l}$ of glyphosate. This result also proves that the shikimic acid content can be based as a biomarker of the effects of glyphosate-based herbicides on phytoplankton communities. Similarly, [46] found that the cells of *Synechocystis* 6803, grown in the presence of 1mM and 5mM isopropylamine salt for 96h, contained $135\mu\text{g}^{-1}$ shikimate compared to $53\mu\text{g}^{-1}$ in untreated cells.

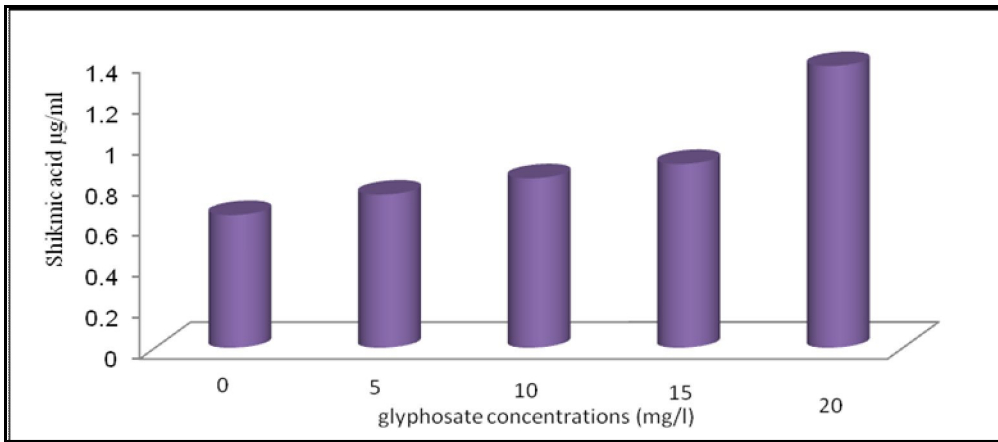


Fig. 3: Shikimic acid content of *O. limnetica* at different glyphosate concentrations (mg/l).
 *($p < 0.05$) Significant differences between control and all treatments.

Effect of Glyphosate on Superoxide Dismutase Enzyme Activity (SOD) of *O. limnetica*

Toxicity of herbicides may lead to the generation of free radicals and cyanophyta may respond to this stress by inducing antioxidant defense. SOD enzyme in *O. limnetica* grown in glyphosate (5, 10, 15 and 20 mg/l) was increased (Fig. 4). The increased activities of SOD in *O. limnetica* indicated that glyphosate stress may have stimulated the generation of reactive oxygen species which were reduced by the elevated levels of these enzymes and helped algal cells to tolerate herbicide stress^{47,48} reported that the action of glyphosate formulations may be involved in increasing the production of superoxide anions and therefore in triggering oxidative stress and antioxidant responses. In compatible with this result⁴⁹, studied the stress responses of *Anabaena cylindrical* for its to sublethal concentrations (0.75-2mM) of bentazon. They found that the activities of antioxidant enzymes such as superoxide dismutase (SOD) increased in a time and herbicide dose-response manner were higher than those in the control samples after 72 h. Other herbicides such as glufosinate⁵⁰ and paraquat⁵¹, increased SOD activities at 0.5 by 3-4 times over control cultures in the unicellular green alga *Chlorella vulgaris*. Similar results were stated by⁵² who found that enzymatic defences increased when glyphosate was present in the growth medium of *Chlorella kessleri*. Also, the enzyme SOD was stimulated significantly with increasing concentration of malathion as 18%, 38%, 53% and 93% in 25, 50, 75 and 100 $\mu\text{g/ml}$ malathion respectively compared to untreated control⁵³.

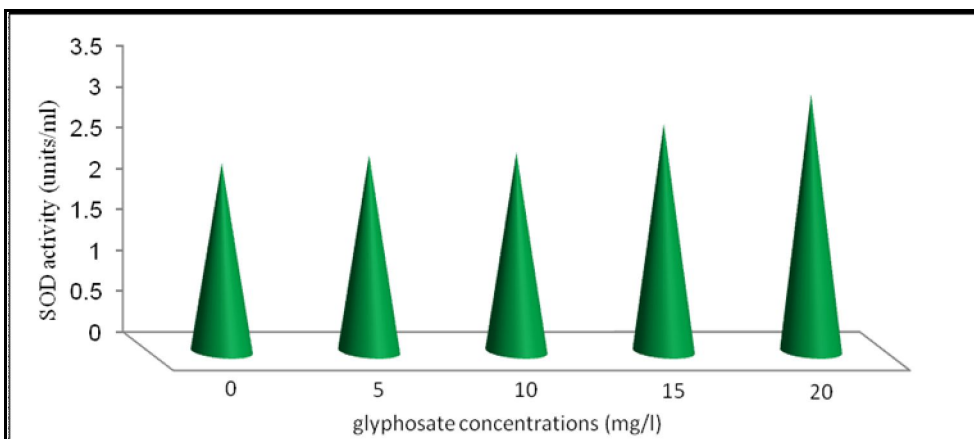


Fig. 4: SOD activity of *O. limnetica* at different glyphosate concentrations (mg/l).
 *($p < 0.05$) Significant differences between control and all treatments.

Effect of Glyphosate on Flavonoid Content of *O.limnetica*

Flavonoid content of *O.limnetica* was decreased when glyphosate concentration increased. Significant differences were recorded among all treatments (Fig. 5). This may be due to the blockage of shikimic acid pathway which leading to a deficiency of significant end products such as lignins, alkaloids, and flavonoid and a decrease in CO₂ fixation and biomass production in a dose dependent manner⁵⁴. The finding of this study agreed with⁵⁵ who observed suppressing of the biosynthesis of lipid, protein and flavonoids by different pesticides in different physiological ways⁵⁶⁻⁷⁶.

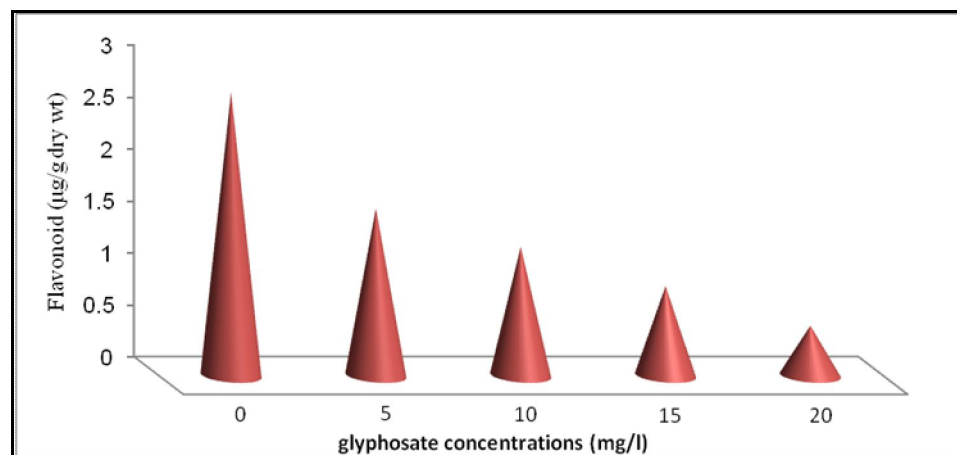


Fig. 5: Flavonoid content of *O.limnetica* at different glyphosate concentrations (mg/l).
 *($p < 0.05$) Significant differences between control and all treatments.

Conclusions

Glyphosate treatments affected the activities in the cyanophyta species by reducing the carbohydrate, total protein, flavonoid as well as increased shikimic acid and superoxide dismutase enzyme activity.

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