Cyanobacterium *Microcystis* Bloom in a Eutrophicated Regulating Reservoir

Ikuo YOSHINAGA1*, Tadayoshi HITOMI1, Asa MIURA1, Eisaku SHIRATANI1,3 and Tatsuo MIYAZAKI2

1 Department of Hydraulic Engineering, National Institute for Rural Engineering (Tsukuba, Ibaraki 305–8609, Japan)
2 Marine Biosystems Research Center, Chiba University (Kamogawa, Chiba 299–5502, Japan)

Abstract
The effect of the hydraulic turnover rate on dominance of the cyanobacterium *Microcystis* was examined using field data from the summer of 2001 for the Minami-shio Reservoir, a shallow eutrophic regulating reservoir in Japan, where the water outflow and storage volumes are measured hourly. A *Microcystis* bloom occurred in late summer when the daily hydraulic turnover rate decreased to 15%. The hydraulic turnover rate provided an index of nutrient supply rate, because the nutrient load was input mostly in the inflowing water and because the water body was well mixed. Field measurement results indicate that the low hydraulic turnover rate led to the *Microcystis* bloom.

Discipline: Watershed and regional resources management  
Additional key words: algal bloom, hydraulic turnover rate

Introduction
Massive growth of *Microcystis* in eutrophic freshwater systems is a serious problem. The growth of *Microcystis* produces bad-smelling and unsightly scum, preventing recreational use of water bodies, hampering the treatment of water for drinking, and clogging irrigation pipe. Some *Microcystis* species produce toxins that cause fatal poisoning of livestock and humans3,15. To predict and prevent nuisance *Microcystis* blooms in freshwater systems, it is necessary to understand the conditions that lead to *Microcystis* dominance.

Various explanations for *Microcystis* dominance have been proposed. A recent review6 lists nine factors that promote *Microcystis* dominance: resource competition, light conditions, pH/CO2 conditions, buoyancy, high-temperature tolerance, avoidance by herbivores, superior cellular nutrient storage, ammonium-N exploitation, and competition for trace elements. In addition to these explanations, water exchange can affect *Microcystis* dominance. *Microcystis* blooms often appear in still waters with low water exchange rates4,11. Furthermore, water exchange may be related to the nutrient supply, which can also be a critical environmental factor affecting *Microcystis* dominance.

Mass development of *Microcystis* frequently occurs under conditions of high water stability, particularly under stratified conditions when the nutrient supply rate is low6,13,22. On the other hand, under continuously flowing conditions and a continuous supply of nutrients, a shift in dominance from *Microcystis* to other species such as green algae and diatoms has been observed15,19,20. In laboratory competition experiments, a continuous nutrient supply does not necessarily favour *Microcystis*10,16,21.

One of the specific characteristics of regulating reservoirs for irrigation in Japan is artificial exchange of water (hydraulic turnover rate) due to paddy irrigation demand. Hydraulic turnover rate during the paddy irrigation period from the end of Apr to the end of Aug is much higher than that of the other period. Hydraulic turnover rate affects hydrodynamic conditions, which will change the environmental conditions for phytoplankton growth.

In regulating reservoirs for irrigation, the nutrient supply rate tends to be related to the hydraulic turnover rate of storage water. Thermal stratification often disappears in summer, when increased mixing is accompanied by high hydraulic turnover rates due to irrigation.
demand. In chemostat experiments in which water was thoroughly mixed, the dominance of the cyanobacterium *Microcystis* varied with the turnover rate\(^1\). To our knowledge, few studies have examined the relationship between the hydraulic turnover rate and *Microcystis* dominance in regulating reservoirs.

We suggest that the hydraulic turnover rate is a critical factor for *Microcystis* dominance in regulating reservoirs for irrigation. In a small, shallow reservoir, the hydraulic turnover rate can be considered as an index of the nutrient supply rate to the whole water body. We examined the effect of the hydraulic turnover rate on *Microcystis* dominance using field data collected during the summer of 2001 from the Minami-shio Reservoir, a shallow, eutrophic regulating reservoir for irrigation in Japan, where hydraulic turnover rates have been calculated precisely. We discuss the effects of the turnover rate and nutrient supply on *Microcystis* dominance.

**Materials and methods**

Field studies were carried out in Minami-shio Reservoir (36°14′N and 140°4′E), which was constructed in 1991 as a facility of the Kasumigaura Irrigation Project. The reservoir has a maximum depth of 9.0 m, a surface area of 1.2 × 10^5 m^2, and a storage volume of 5.6 × 10^5 m^3 (Fig. 1). We used the storage volume of water in the reservoir and the volume of the outflow as measured by the Kasumigaura Canal Operating & Management Office (Japan Water Agency) to calculate the hydraulic turnover rates.

Five submerged 5-kW mixers have been installed in 0.5 m depths of the reservoir as a countermeasure for algal, especially cyanobacteria, bloom by artificial mixing but *Microcystis* is still present. The mixers have a 1-m-diameter propeller that generates a horizontal water flow and circulates the surface water. In 2001, the mixers were operated from 06:00 to 18:00 from 7 Jul to 10 Sep except when it was windy (about > 5 m/s). The mixers were operated by the caretaker who belonged to the farmer association and he tried to reduce the operating time in order to reduce its running cost. These mixers partly contributed to the mixing of water.

Sampling was conducted at station A (Sta. A) and at the inlet point (Fig. 1) weekly or once every 2 weeks from May to Oct 2001. Dissolved oxygen (DO), pH and water temperature were analyzed with a multi-monitoring system (U-20, Horiba, Japan). Other temperature sensors (StowAway TidbiT, Onset, USA) recorded water temperature at 10-min intervals at depths of 0.3, 2.0, 4.0, and 6.0 m on the north side. The profile of underwater photo-synthetically active radiation (PAR) was measured on 2 Aug using LI-193SA spherical quantum sensor (LI-COR Inc., USA) at Sta. A. Water samples for determining the concentrations of nutrients and chlorophyll-\(\alpha\) were collected with a van Dorn water sampler. After sampling, collected water samples were kept at 4°C in the dark and measured within 48 h. Qualitative phytoplankton samples were collected by passing a 72-\(\mu\)m-mesh plankton net through the open water at the center and the inlet point of the reservoir.

Nutrient concentrations were measured in unfiltered samples. Chlorophyll-\(\alpha\) was estimated by spectrophotometry after filtering of the samples through glass fiber discs (GF/B, Whatman, UK) and extraction with cold 90% (v/v) acetone\(^1\). The concentration of the PO\(_4\)-P was measured by the methods of Murphy & Riley\(^9\). The concentrations of NH\(_4\)-N, NO\(_2\)-N and NO\(_3\)-N were measured by ion chromatography (DX-320, Dionex, USA). Phytoplankton species were observed at 100× magnification with an inverted microscope (DMIL, Leica, Germany) in order to determine *Microcystis* dominant periods by counting the ratio of *Microcystis* colonies to all other species.

Meteorological data, measured at intervals of an hour, were obtained from the Weather Data Acquisition System of the National Institute of Agro-Environmental Sciences, 20 km away from the reservoir.

Principal component analysis (PCA) was performed in order to determine external environmental factors for increasing chlorophyll-\(\alpha\) concentration. Meteorological
factor (wind speed and solar radiation), dissolved nutrient concentration (PO$_4$-P, NO$_2$+NO$_3$-N), and hydraulic turnover rate were supposed to be external environmental factors. Statistical analysis was carried out using three days of averaged values before the day of field measurement, since the phytoplankton growth rate is so low that the observed phytoplankton biomass was assumed to be dependent on the factors of three days before. In addition, the averaged hydraulic residential time during irrigation period was 2.7 days.

Results

The daily hydraulic turnover rate was calculated by dividing the daily out-flowing water volume by the maximum storage volume (Fig. 2). We used the maximum storage volume as the divisor because the observed water level was almost the same as the full reservoir level. From 20 Apr to 26 Aug 2001, the average daily hydraulic turnover rate was 37%. Other than this period, the average rate was a constant 15%.

The productive zone was assumed to be 2 m, since observed PAR at 2 m depth was 5 μmol·s$^{-1}$·m$^{-2}$ and further measurement in summer 2004 showed that the average value of PAR at 2 m depth was 13 μmol·s$^{-1}$·m$^{-2}$ (Max: 34, Min: 1).

Figure 3a shows the vertical profile of observed chlorophyll-a concentration. The average concentration of chlorophyll-a was 22.1 μg·L$^{-1}$. The chlorophyll-a concentration at surface increased three times in the summer of 2001.

The first peak in May was caused by phytoplankton included in inlet water, because daily inflowing volume was more than 50% of the storage volume and because the phytoplankton mainly observed in inlet water and in the reservoir was also diatom (Synedra). From these results it could be concluded that diatom included in inlet water raised the chlorophyll-a concentrations in the reservoir.

The second peak of chlorophyll-a concentration by Volvox was from 19 Jul to 2 Aug. On 19 Jul the chlorophyll-a concentration reached to 46 μg·L$^{-1}$ and green surface scum formed. The third peak of chlorophyll-a concentration by Microcystis was from 19 Sep to 11 Oct. The chlorophyll-a concentration began to increase on 6 Sep. During this peak, the concentration ranged between 18 and 50 μg·L$^{-1}$ at 0 and 1 m depth. On 19 Sep and 3 Oct green granular surface scum formed. After 11 Oct, the concentration had decreased markedly.

In our investigation results, Microcystis was dominant from 6 Sep to 11 Oct. The dominant period of Microcystis was defined here as the period when the ratio of Microcystis colonies to other observed species exceeded 10%, since one Microcystis colony commonly contains more than one thousand cells. During the second peak of chlorophyll-a concentration in Jul Microcystis was not dominant, but Volvox was dominant.

Microcystis blooms, defined here as the averaged chlorophyll-a concentration value at the productive zone (0 to 2 m depth) greater than 20 μg·L$^{-1}$ and the ratio of the colonies exceeding 10%, formed from 13 Sep to 11 Oct. It could be suggested that Microcystis biomass increased in Sep, since chlorophyll-a concentration, which is the index of phytoplankton biomass increased. A Microcystis bloom occurred 3 weeks after the hydraulic turnover rate decreased to 15%.

No clear thermal stratification developed (Fig. 3b). The difference in water temperature between 0 and 8 m depth was usually within 3°C. The maximum difference was 6.3°C on Jul 5. The DO concentration above 6 m depth was higher than 4 mg·L$^{-1}$ (Fig. 3c). The pH differed by less than 1 pH unit between 0 and 8 m depth (Fig. 3d). The result of a homogeneous oxygen and pH distribution with depth supported that a strong thermocline did not form. High pH and over-saturated DO during the third peak indicated a high photosynthetic rate.

Figures 3e and 3f show the concentrations of PO$_4$-P and (NO$_2$+ NO$_3$)-N. During the second peak of chlorophyll-a concentration, the concentration of PO$_4$-P at both 0 and 1 m depth was around 0.03 mg·L$^{-1}$, and the concentration of (NO$_2$+ NO$_3$)-N, 0.3 mg·L$^{-1}$, was higher than during other periods. During the third peak of chlorophyll-a concentration by Microcystis bloom, the concentration of PO$_4$-P at both 0 and 1 m depth was less than 0.01 mg·L$^{-1}$, and the concentration of (NO$_2$+ NO$_3$)-N, 0.1 mg·L$^{-1}$, was lower than during other periods. The NH$_4$-N concentration was lower than the limit of detection (0.05
Fig. 3. Time series of the vertical profile of observed data
Black dots show the sampling times and depth.
The nutrient concentration of the inlet water was constant. The inflowing water came from Lake Kasumigaura, which is hypertrophic. The average nutrient concentrations in the inlet water were NH\textsubscript{4}-N, \(<0.01\) mg\cdot L\textsuperscript{-1}, (NO\textsubscript{2} + NO\textsubscript{3})-N, 0.19 mg\cdot L\textsuperscript{-1}, T-N, 1.1 mg\cdot L\textsuperscript{-1}, PO\textsubscript{4}-P, 0.02 mg\cdot L\textsuperscript{-1}, and T-P, 0.1 mg\cdot L\textsuperscript{-1}. More than 98% of the supplied nutrients came from the inflowing water, and less than 2% came from other sources such as the load in run-off from the reservoir’s catchment (unpublished data).

Figure 4 shows the result of PCA analysis of determining factors for Microcystis dominance. As a first step, the data in May were excluded from the analysis, since diatom included in inlet water raised the chlorophyll-a concentrations in the reservoir. Secondly, the data of chlorophyll-a and dissolved nutrients were given by depth averaged (from 0 to 2 m) considering the productive zone for phytoplankton. The values for statistical analysis were given by linearly day interpolating from the depth-averaged values. Principal components analysis (PCA) was performed on the five indicator variables. The five variables explained 70.4% of the variation in the first two axes. Hydraulic turnover rate and solar radiation are the strongest axis-I variables. These variables make up the axis-I environmental gradient. Concentrations of dissolved nitrogen and phosphorus are stronger axis-II variables. The plots of Microcystis bloom are located on the impairment side of axis-I and over all of axis-II. These results pointed out that Microcystis favoured the opposite condition of axis-I variables and they were not as important as axis-II variables.

It could be interpreted that Microcystis bloomed during low hydraulic turnover rates and for a short duration of time, because the plots of the bloom are located on the impairment side of axis-I. Moreover, it could be suggested that dissolved nutrients in the surface of the reservoir were not a critical factor for Microcystis dominance since there was not a significant relationship in axis-II.

**Discussion**

Microcystis blooms often appear in eutrophic waters at high temperature. We hypothesized that the hydraulic turnover rate is a critical factor explaining Microcystis dominance in a small, shallow reservoir. To test this hypothesis, we examined the effect of the hydraulic turnover rate on Microcystis dominance using field data from the Minami-shio Reservoir, a shallow, eutrophic reservoir in Japan.

Our study showed that the period of Microcystis dominance coincided with that of low hydraulic turnover rates. When the daily hydraulic turnover rate was less than 15%, the chlorophyll-a concentration was more than 20 \(\mu\text{g} \cdot \text{L}^{-1}\), owing to a Microcystis bloom. A significant correlation was found between the chlorophyll-a concentration and a low hydraulic turnover rate (Fig. 4).

In the reservoir, the hydraulic turnover rate is an index of the nutrient supply rate, since the reservoir had three specific characteristics related to nutrient supply to whole water bodies. (1) Most nutrients were supplied from the inflowing water, and the dissolved nutrient concentrations in the inflowing water were constant. (2) Thermal stratification, which impedes vertical water movement, did not develop well (Figs. 3b & 3c). (3) The water body was nearly circular (shoreline development, the ratio of the length of the shore line to the circumference of a circle of area equal to that of the water body, = 1.3), so water could easily circulate horizontally. Thus, nutrients entering with the inlet water were distributed equally to the entire reservoir. Therefore, the hydraulic turnover rate well reflected the nutrient supply to the whole water body. Since the hydraulic turnover rate was low from the end of Aug to Oct (Fig. 2), the nutrient supply was also low. The observed dissolved nutrient depletion in the surface water column during the Microcystis bloom was consistent with a low nutrient supply rate (Figs. 3e & 3f).

![Fig. 4. PCA ordination of five indicator environmental variables for chlorophyll-a concentrations](image-url)
A low nutrient supply rate seems to cause Microcystis dominance. Mass development of Microcystis frequently occurs when the nutrient supply rate is low\(^{4,11}\). Olsen et al.\(^{10}\) found that a low phosphorus supply rate favored Microcystis in competition experiments. Kuwata & Miyazaki\(^{7}\) indicated that a low nitrogen supply rate could lead to Microcystis dominance in a simulation study, and Takeya et al.\(^{18}\) confirmed this result by chemostat experiments. The dominance of Microcystis during summer is consistent with the results of these previous studies. In addition, the 3-weeks time lag between the bloom and environmental condition sufficient for water bloom formation was the same as that of a Microcystis bloom reported by Atkins et al.\(^{1}\).

The phytoplankton composition of the inlet water was dissimilar to that of the reservoir water, and the number of phytoplankton in the inlet water was lower than that in the reservoir water. In addition, according to other studies carried out in the same water supply system, the physiological activity of phytoplankton in the inflow water is low because of high pressures during water pumping from Lake Kasumigaura into the reservoir, and water is low because of high pressures during water physiological activity of phytoplankton in the inflow studies carried out in the same water supply system, the phytoplankton in the present reservoir grew independently of the phytoplankton in the water flowing into the reservoir. In addition, the effect of the inlet water on phytoplankton composition in the reservoir was less when the hydraulic turnover rates were low.

Submerged water pumps had less effect on Microcystis dominance, because the ratio of Microcystis in the whole observed phytoplankton sample and chlorophyll-a concentration increased during the operation term.

In conclusion, low hydraulic turnover rates favored Microcystis dominance in Minami-shio Reservoir. Our result is based on field data from the reservoir, in which (1) the water balance was observed at 1-h intervals; (2) the nutrient inflow rate depended on the inflowing water volume; and (3) the hydraulic turnover rate changed drastically. Although the field data demonstrated that a low hydraulic turnover rate resulted in Microcystis dominance, mechanisms other than low hydraulic turnover rate (avoidance by herbivores, buoyancy) can lead to Microcystis dominance\(^{5,12}\). To prevent Microcystis blooms, further investigations of the mechanisms of Microcystis bloom formation are needed.

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