



## Innovations in Shrimp Aquaculture: Optimizing Seaweed Biostimulants as an Integrated Approach to Disease Prevention

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Received: Dec. 3, 2024

Accepted: Feb. 10, 2025

Online: March 26, 2025

#### Keywords:

Aquaculture,  
Biostimulant,  
Lipid metabolism,  
Microbial dynamics,  
Shrimp health

### ABSTRACT

This study investigated the use of seaweed-derived biostimulants as a natural, sustainable solution to enhance shrimp health and resilience. The research was conducted over 12 days, during which shrimp were stocked at a density of 150 individuals per treatment. Biostimulants were applied in dosages ranging from 29 to 3,013 gs, adjusted to match shrimp growth stages and metabolic requirements. Microbial parameters, including total *Vibrio* count (TVC), total bacterial count (TBC), and TVC/TBC ratio, were assessed to evaluate microbial community dynamics. Lipid droplet coverage in shrimp hepatopancreas tissue was examined microscopically to determine metabolic health. The results revealed significant changes in microbial and metabolic parameters in response to biostimulant application. On Day 3, TVC was high ( $9.2 \times 10^3$  CFU) with a low TVC/TBC ratio (3.54%), indicating a less dominant role of *Vibrio* spp. By Day 9, the TVC/TBC ratio increased to 67.11%, suggesting a shift in microbial dominance influenced by biostimulant application. Lipid droplet coverage improved from 0–30% on Day 3 to 40–70% from Day 6 onwards, reflecting enhanced metabolic health. The findings demonstrate that seaweed biostimulants not only promote lipid metabolism but also influence microbial population dynamics, potentially reducing disease risks. These dual benefits position seaweed biostimulants as a promising, eco-friendly tool for sustainable shrimp aquaculture. Further research is recommended to explore long-term applications and the interaction with environmental factors. This study highlights the potential of integrating biostimulants into aquaculture practices to mitigate disease challenges and to enhance shrimp productivity in an environmentally sustainable manner.

### INTRODUCTION

Shrimp aquaculture is a critical component of global seafood production, significantly contributing to food security and economic development. However, the

industry faces numerous challenges, particularly disease outbreaks caused by pathogenic bacteria such as *Vibrio* spp., which can lead to substantial economic losses (Hellequin *et al.*, 2020; Islam *et al.*, 2021; Raj *et al.*, 2022). The prevalence of these bacterial infections necessitates innovative approaches to enhance shrimp health and resilience against such threats.

Recent advancements in aquaculture management have underscored the potential of natural compounds, particularly seaweed-derived biostimulants, to bolster shrimp health. These biostimulants are rich in bioactive compounds, including polysaccharides, polyphenols, and essential nutrients, which have been shown to improve immune responses, promote metabolic health, and modulate microbial communities (Mannino *et al.*, 2020; Campobenedetto *et al.*, 2021; Patkowska *et al.*, 2022). For instance, seaweed extracts from species like *Ascophyllum nodosum* have demonstrated significant benefits in enhancing plant growth and resilience under stress conditions, suggesting similar potential applications in aquaculture (Yakhin *et al.*, 2017; Staropoli, 2024). Despite these promising findings, the optimal application strategies and the underlying mechanisms through which these biostimulants exert their effects on shrimp health remain inadequately explored (D'Addabbo *et al.*, 2019; Xing *et al.*, 2023).

This study aimed to evaluate the efficacy of seaweed biostimulants as an integrated approach to disease prevention in shrimp aquaculture. Specifically, it focused on their impact on microbial dynamics, lipid metabolism, and overall shrimp health. Understanding these interactions is crucial for developing sustainable and practical solutions to enhance shrimp productivity while minimizing reliance on chemical treatments (Calvo *et al.*, 2014; El-Nakhel, 2023; Arun *et al.*, 2024). The application of seaweed biostimulants not only promises to improve shrimp health but also aligns with the growing demand for sustainable aquaculture practices that mitigate environmental impacts (Galambos *et al.*, 2020; Deolu-Ajayi *et al.*, 2022; Han *et al.*, 2022).

The integration of seaweed-derived biostimulants in shrimp aquaculture presents a viable strategy for enhancing shrimp health and productivity. As research continues to uncover the complex interactions between these biostimulants and shrimp physiology, it is anticipated that such innovations will play a pivotal role in addressing the challenges faced by the aquaculture industry (Sandepogu *et al.*, 2019; Caradonia *et al.*, 2021; Ma *et al.*, 2022).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

### Study period and location

This research was conducted in October 2024, focusing on shrimp aquaculture systems. The study aimed to evaluate the effect of seaweed biostimulants on shrimp health parameters, including total *Vibrio* count, total bacterial count, TVC/TBC ratio, and lipid droplet percentages.

### The experimental design

The experimental design was structured to evaluate the effects of seaweed biostimulants on shrimp health. A uniform stocking density of 150 shrimp per treatment was maintained throughout the study. Observations were carried out at intervals of 3, 6, 9, and 12 days after stocking. The application of biostimulants was adjusted based on the growth stages and metabolic requirements of the shrimp, with dosages ranging from 29 to 3,013g per treatment.

### Biostimulant preparation

The preparation of biostimulants from seaweed involves extracting bioactive compounds using a water-based solvent extraction method, which is crucial for ensuring the quality and effectiveness of the final product. This method allows for the retention of essential bioactive compounds, such as phenolic compounds, which are known for their antioxidant properties and beneficial effects on plant health (Campobenedetto *et al.*, 2021). Following extraction, the solution is filtered to remove impurities, and it is stored at 4°C to maintain its stability until application, ensuring that the biostimulant retains its efficacy (Spann & Little, 2011). The significance of using a water-based extraction method lies in its ability to preserve the bioactive compounds that contribute to the biostimulant's effectiveness. Seaweed extracts, particularly from species like *Ascophyllum nodosum*, are rich in growth-promoting substances such as auxins, cytokinins, and betaines, which play a vital role in enhancing plant growth and stress tolerance (Kocira *et al.*, 2019; El-Nakhel, 2023). The careful preparation and storage of these extracts are essential for maximizing their potential benefits in agricultural applications (Kocira *et al.*, 2020).

Moreover, the application of biostimulants derived from seaweed has been shown to improve various physiological aspects of plants, including root development and nutrient absorption, which are critical for plant health and productivity (Banakar *et al.*, 2022; Han *et al.*, 2022). The stability of the biostimulant during storage is particularly important, as it ensures that the bioactive compounds remain effective when applied to crops, thereby enhancing their resilience to environmental stressors (Ertani *et al.*, 2018). In conclusion, the method of preparation and storage of seaweed-derived biostimulants is integral to their success in agricultural applications. By employing a water-based solvent extraction method and maintaining proper storage conditions, the quality and effectiveness of these biostimulants can be preserved, leading to improved plant health and productivity (Arafa *et al.*, 2013; Krawczuk *et al.*, 2023).

### Shrimp sampling

Shrimp samples were collected systematically at each observation interval. Representative specimens were taken from the culture tank to ensure consistent analysis

across treatments. The samples were handled carefully to minimize stress and were promptly processed for microbial and lipid droplet analyses.

### **Microbial culture and count**

Microbial analysis in aquaculture, particularly for shrimp, is essential for monitoring the health and safety of the cultured organisms. In this study, shrimp samples were aseptically collected, and bacterial counts were obtained through standard laboratory procedures involving serial dilution and plating on agar media. Selective agar was employed for the quantification of *Vibrio* spp., while non-selective agar was utilized for determining the total bacterial count (TBC) (Kriem *et al.*, 2015; Silva *et al.*, 2018). The plates were incubated at 28°C for 24–48 hours, allowing for the growth of bacterial colonies, which were then enumerated as colony-forming units (CFUs) (Kim & Lee, 2017).

The microbial counts obtained from these analyses were crucial for evaluating the bacterial community composition within the shrimp culture system. The total *Vibrio* count (TVC) was quantified using selective media specifically designed for *Vibrio* spp., ensuring accurate detection and enumeration of these bacteria, which are known to be pathogenic and can significantly impact shrimp health (Lara-Anguiano *et al.*, 2013; Chumpol *et al.*, 2016). The TBC was determined through standard plate count methods, where samples were serially diluted and plated on non-selective agar to capture a broad range of bacterial species (Manan *et al.*, 2022; Tarh *et al.*, 2023). The ratio of TVC to TBC was calculated as a percentage, providing a measure of the dominance of *Vibrio* spp. relative to the overall bacterial population. This assessment is vital for monitoring microbial dynamics and their potential impact on shrimp health, as high levels of *Vibrio* spp. can lead to diseases such as vibriosis, which is associated with significant mortality in shrimp populations (Costa *et al.*, 2015; Hirshfeld, 2023). The methodologies employed in this microbial analysis, including the use of selective and non-selective media, are critical for understanding the microbial dynamics within shrimp aquaculture systems. By accurately quantifying *Vibrio* spp. and total bacterial counts, this study aimed to provide insights into the health status of shrimp and the potential risks posed by pathogenic bacteria (Yen *et al.*, 2020; Kabiraj *et al.*, 2020).

### **Lipid droplet examination**

Lipid droplet examination in shrimp hepatopancreas tissues is a critical method for assessing metabolic health. In this study, hepatopancreas tissues were fixed in formalin to preserve their structure, followed by staining with Sudan Black, which enhances lipid visualization (Takeungwongtrakul *et al.*, 2013). The prepared samples were then examined under a microscope to analyze lipid droplet size and distribution. This methodology is well-established in the field of aquaculture research, providing insights into the physiological state of shrimp and their metabolic processes (Zhou, 2023).

The use of Sudan Black staining is particularly effective for highlighting lipid droplets, allowing researchers to quantify and assess the size and distribution of these droplets within the hepatopancreas (Li *et al.*, 2022). This is crucial because the hepatopancreas plays a significant role in lipid metabolism, including the synthesis and storage of lipids, which are essential for energy production and overall health in shrimp (Huang *et al.*, 2020). For instance, studies have shown that alterations in lipid accumulation can indicate changes in shrimp health status, particularly in response to dietary modifications or environmental stressors (Xu *et al.*, 2017; Li *et al.*, 2022).

Moreover, the examination of lipid droplets can reveal the impact of various factors, such as dietary composition and stress conditions, on shrimp physiology. For example, research has demonstrated that specific dietary components can influence lipid droplet formation and distribution in the hepatopancreas, thereby affecting the shrimp's growth and immune response (Yu *et al.*, 2022; Loya-Rodríguez *et al.*, 2023). The analysis of lipid droplet characteristics, including their size and abundance, provides valuable information regarding the metabolic health of shrimp and can serve as a biomarker for assessing their overall well-being in aquaculture systems (Colombo *et al.*, 2020; Shi *et al.*, 2020). The examination of lipid droplets in the hepatopancreas of shrimp using formalin fixation and Sudan Black staining is a robust approach for evaluating metabolic health. This process not only enhances our understanding of lipid metabolism in shrimp but also aids in monitoring their physiological status in aquaculture settings (Xie *et al.*, 2019; Xie *et al.*, 2020).

### Data analysis

All collected data were analyzed and presented as mean values accompanied by their standard deviations to indicate variability within the treatments. The relationship between biostimulant dosage, microbial counts, and lipid droplet coverage was evaluated using regression analysis to determine trends and potential causal links. Correlation techniques were applied to assess the strength and direction of associations among the variables, providing insights into the effectiveness of biostimulant application in influencing microbial dynamics and shrimp metabolic health.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

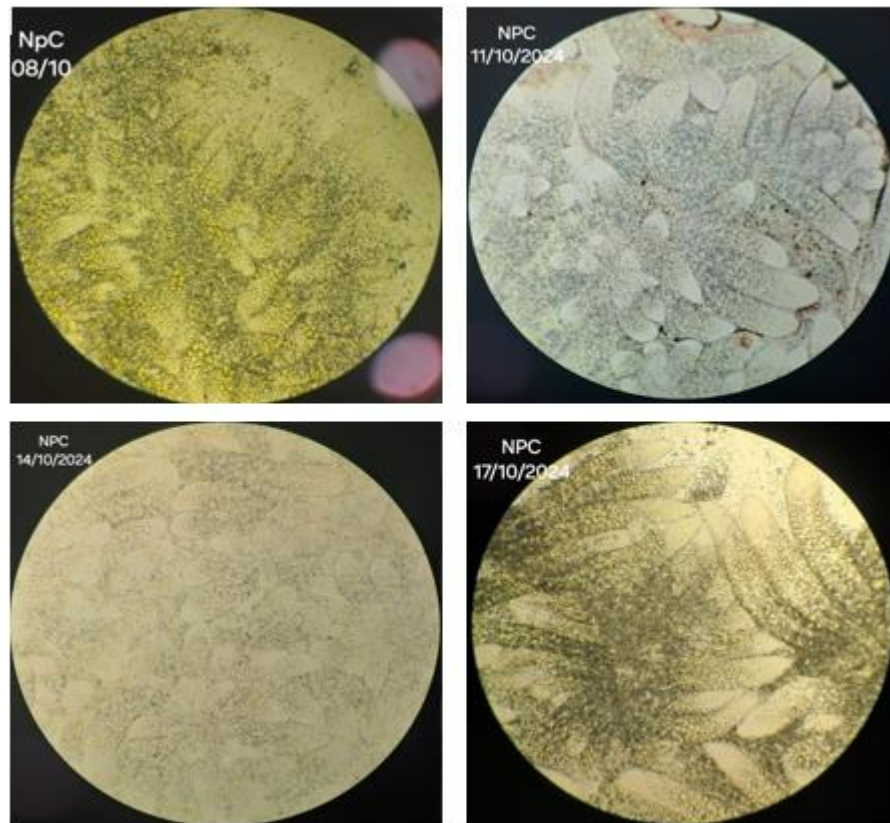
The results of the study are summarized in Table (1), highlighting the effects of seaweed biostimulants on microbial counts and lipid droplet coverage in shrimp.

The application of seaweed biostimulants has been shown to have significant effects on microbial populations and lipid droplet distribution in shrimp. Research indicates that total *Vibrio* counts (TVC) and total bacterial counts (TBC) can vary across culture days, reflecting dynamic microbial interactions influenced by biostimulant dosage (Sudaryono *et al.*, 2018; Abbas *et al.*, 2023). For instance, on Day 3, a high TVC of  $9.2 \times 10^3$  CFU

was recorded alongside a low TVC/TBC ratio of 3.54%, suggesting that *Vibrio* spp. played a less dominant role in the bacterial community at that time. However, by Day 9, the TVC/TBC ratio increased to 67.11%, coinciding with a higher biostimulant dose of  $3.0 \times 10^3$  g. This shift may indicate a change in microbial dominance driven by nutrient availability or competitive exclusion effects induced by the biostimulant (Immanuel *et al.*, 2010).

**Table 1.** Effect of biostimulant on microbial counts and lipid droplet coverage

Culture days	Biostimulant (gs)	Total <i>Vibrio</i> count (TVC)	Total bacterial count (TBC)	TVC/TBC ratio (%)	Lipid droplet coverage (%)
3	29	$9.2 \times 10^3$	36.77%	3.54	0–30
6	$2.8 \times 10^3$	$12.9 \times 10^3$	1.79%	10.00	40–70
9	$3.0 \times 10^3$	$1.8 \times 10^3$	67.11%	3.10	40–70
12	$3.0 \times 10^3$	$2.0 \times 10^3$	35.50%	4.04	40–70



**Fig. 1.** Lipid droplet coverage in the hepatopancreas of shrimp during the research

Furthermore, lipid droplet coverage in the hepatopancreas of shrimp increased significantly from 0–30% on Day 3 to 40–70% from Day 6 onwards (Table 1 & Fig. 1). This enhanced lipid accumulation correlates with higher biostimulant dosages, suggesting that the bioactive compounds in the seaweed extract support improved metabolic health in shrimp (**Sivagnanavelmurugan et al., 2012**). The stable lipid droplet coverage observed from Day 6 to Day 12 implies a sustained positive impact of biostimulant application on energy storage and utilization, which is critical for shrimp health and growth (**Sirirustananun et al., 2011**).

Indonesia has a variety of plants that contain numerous bioactive compounds beneficial for health (**Islamy et al., 2024a, b, c; Serdiati et al., 2024**). The biostimulant used in this study was derived from seaweed, which is known for its rich composition of bioactive compounds, including polysaccharides, polyphenols, vitamins, and minerals (**Islamy et al., 2024d**). These compounds have been recognized for their ability to enhance plant and animal growth by stimulating biological processes. In shrimp aquaculture, seaweed biostimulants are applied to improve metabolic health, boost immune responses, and promote overall well-being. The bioactive compounds within the biostimulant function by modulating cellular pathways that regulate stress responses, immune function, and lipid metabolism. Additionally, they are believed to help in the modulation of microbial communities in the aquaculture environment, contributing to disease prevention (**Kilawati et al., 2024**). The application of seaweed biostimulants has been shown to reduce bacterial populations, particularly *Vibrio* spp., which are commonly associated with disease outbreaks in shrimp. By improving shrimp resilience to environmental stressors and pathogens, the biostimulant supports the sustainable and healthy growth of shrimp in aquaculture systems.

The increasing dosage of biostimulants, ranging from 29 to 3013g, demonstrated a clear relationship with microbial count dynamics and shrimp metabolic indicators. While higher doses supported lipid metabolism, they also appeared to influence the microbial community structure, particularly the dominance of *Vibrio* spp. (**Muahiddah & Diamahesa, 2022**). These findings indicate that seaweed-based biostimulants can act as dual-function agents, promoting shrimp health through enhanced metabolism while potentially modulating microbial populations to prevent disease outbreaks (**Rudi et al., 2019**). Further studies are warranted to explore the long-term effects of these biostimulants and their interactions with additional environmental factors (**Tinte et al., 2022**).

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated the potential of seaweed-derived biostimulants as an effective and sustainable tool for improving shrimp health in aquaculture systems. The application of biostimulants significantly influenced microbial dynamics, as indicated by

changes in total *Vibrio* count (TVC), total bacterial count (TBC), and TVC/TBC ratios, which showed a modulation of the bacterial community. Additionally, lipid droplet coverage in shrimp hepatopancreas tissues increased, reflecting enhanced metabolic health and energy storage. The results highlight the dual benefits of biostimulants in reducing disease risk through microbial regulation and improving shrimp physiology. These findings suggest that integrating biostimulants into aquaculture practices could mitigate the dependency on chemical treatments, thus promoting environmental sustainability. Further research is recommended to explore the long-term effects of biostimulants and their interactions with different environmental and management conditions to optimize their application in shrimp aquaculture.

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