

## Behaviour of fourteen exotic ornamental fishes of Bangladesh under starved condition in aquaria

ABM Mohsin • Roni Chandra Mondal

Department of Fisheries, Faculty of Agriculture, University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi-6205, Bangladesh

Correspondence: ABM Mohsin, Department of Fisheries, University of Rajshahi; Email: [abmmohsin@yahoo.com](mailto:abmmohsin@yahoo.com)

Received: 05 Sep 2013, Received in revised form: 24 Dec 2013, Accepted: 28 Dec 2013, Published online: 29 Dec 2013

Citation: Mohsin ABM and Mondal RC (2013) Behaviour of fourteen exotic ornamental fishes of Bangladesh under starved condition in aquaria. *Journal of Fisheries* 1(1): 48-52. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17017/j.fish.74>

### Abstract

The behaviour of fourteen exotic ornamental fishes of Bangladesh under starved condition in aquaria was experimented from January to December, 2011. Fishes were belonging to 13 genera, 09 families and 4 orders. Two treatments each with three replications were used. Four different behavioural phases of fish were monitored through constant observation. Almost all the behavioural phases were seen earlier in the fishes of treatment T<sub>1</sub>. Marble angel survived more (1022±4.02 hrs; T<sub>2</sub>) than others. The lowest survival period (116±2.44 hrs; T<sub>1</sub>) was seen for albino suckermouth. Fishes were died earlier in T<sub>1</sub> than T<sub>2</sub>, due to presence or absence of aeration facilities. Water temperature, dissolved oxygen, free CO<sub>2</sub>, pH, total alkalinity, ammonia-nitrogen and chlorine level were found to be varied from 25.66±0.17 to 28.66±0.35°C, 3.80±0.06 to 4.73±0.07 mg/l, 9.21±0.05 to 11.75±0.03 mg/l, 7.13±0.05 to 7.47±0.07, 76.66±1.64 to 108.92±3.20 mg/l, 0.0010±0.0006 to 0.0133±0.002 mg/l and 0.0045±0.001 to 0.012±0.0014 mg/l, respectively. The research findings would be helpful in gathering basic knowledge on different behavioural phases through which aquarists can maintain primitive behavioural phase in their aquaria. Further research work is suggested in the aforesaid theme massively.

**Keywords:** Behaviour, water quality, ornamental fish, starved condition, aquaria

### INTRODUCTION

Changes in behavioural phases respond quickly to changes that arise in animals surrounding and may be used as early warning signals about the impaired environmental quality. A lot of external factors such as contaminants, restricted food resources, fluctuating temperature, etc. influence the fish organism and behaviour as well (Atchison *et al.* 1987). Thus, changes in external environmental conditions may evoke various behavioural responses in fishes. Starvation is usually the result of poor husbandry and, in many cases, is a sequel to environmental problems. A poorly designed or maintained system is likely to develop water quality problems with different behavioural phases among the fish (Namrata *et al.* 2011). Animals deprived of food are more likely to travel further and invest more time in search of food than satiated con-specifics (Torres *et al.*

2002), thereby utilizing energy that might otherwise have been allocated to purpose such as growth or reproduction. Additionally, starved animals may exhibit reduced anti-predatory behaviour later to gain increased access to a food source (Vadas *et al.* 1994). Specific behavioural displays in response to starvation can be highly variable, as environmental conditions (e.g. predators, refuge) (Wojdak 2009) or physiological traits, such as fat storage (Jacome *et al.* 1995), might modulate responses. Altogether, starvation generally modifies the actions related to food acquisition which in turn may have consequences for an organism's survival and behavioural interactions (Vadas *et al.* 1994). In salmonids, deprivation of food causes an increase of aggressiveness by increasing the number of aggressive encounters (Johnson *et al.* 1998). It is known that, hunger increases the concentration of the growth hormone in fish organism.

The growth hormone increases metabolic demands, feeding motivation, competitive ability and aggression in fish (Petrauskiene 2002). During the time of starvation, aquaria's fishes make frequent travel vertically and horizontally inside the aquaria often increase their metabolic rate and oxygen uptake. In the process of oxygen uptake, fish always expend energy usually on ventilation and often on locomotion (Kramer 1987). These costs will vary with oxygen availability and thus different types of behavioral responses shown. The principal categories of behavioral response to reduced external availability of food and oxygen are (1) changes in activity, (2) increased use of air breathing, (3) increased use of aquatic surface respiration, and (4) vertical or horizontal habitat changes. Several authors have already been published their books and research works about behavioural phases of different tropical fishes in response to stress, toxicants, heavy metals, etc. but there was some lacking too on such information regarding behavioural phase of exotic ornamental fishes of Bangladesh under starved condition in aquaria. Thus the present study was performed for describing the different behavioural phases of exotic ornamental fishes of Bangladesh under starved condition in aquaria with special reference to water quality parameters.

## METHODOLOGY

**Duration and location of the study:** The entire research work was conducted for a period of twelve months (January 2011 to December 2011) to observe the different behavioural phases of exotic ornamental fishes of Bangladesh under starved condition in aquaria in the Fisheries Laboratory at the Department of Fisheries, University of Rajshahi, Rajshahi, Bangladesh.

**Experimental design:** The present research was set up under two treatments ( $T_1$  and  $T_2$ ), each with three replications. In each experimental treatment, fish was released at the number of three for each species under starved condition. Treatment assignment was as follows:

$T_1$ : Aquaria with no aerator facilities

$T_2$ : Aquaria with aerator facilities

The major source of water for experimental aquaria was tap water. Aquaria size (90x35x35 cm) and volume of water (approximately 65 litres) was kept same for all treatments and experiments.

**Commencement of study:** Experimental exotic ornamental fishes were collected from local aquaria shop keepers of Rajshahi, Bangladesh. Fishes were in similar size and age groups. Then fishes were acclimatized in laboratory condition for a certain period and conditioned for a week. During conditioning of fish, packed feed

feeding was also performed twice a day. After seven days, conditioned experimental exotic ornamental fishes were released into the experimental aquaria and then the experiment was begun. After that, different behavioural phases were monitored and water quality parameters were measured under starved condition in aquaria during the study period.

## Topics related to study

**Different behavioural phases of experimented fish species:** Behaviour of the experimental exotic ornamental fishes was monitored by careful observation to understand their various behavioural phases in terms of starved condition in aquaria during each experiment. The behaviour of fishes was categorized into four phases in order to make argument easier. These are: primitive phase, behaviour after releasing fish up to show abnormal behaves; acute phase, behaviours include aggression, abnormal movement and swimming; moribund phase, behaviours include unbalancing, lethargic condition etc.; and death phase, time duration from releasing of fish up to death.

During this experiment, fishes were sacrificed to death. Monitoring of behaviour was done through eye observation.

**Water quality parameters:** Physico-chemical parameters viz., water temperature, hydrogen ion concentration (pH), dissolved oxygen (DO), free carbon dioxide ( $CO_2$ ), ammonia-nitrogen ( $NH_3-N_2$ ), total alkalinity and chlorine were measured twice a week between 09.00 and 11.00 AM on each sampling day to develop idea about the condition of water quality of aquaria during each experiment. pH, DO, free  $CO_2$ ,  $NH_3-N_2$ , alkalinity and chlorine were measured by using HACH kit (FF-2).

**Data analysis:** Data related to total survival days and water quality under different experimental treatments was subjected to computer software Microsoft Excel to analyze mean and standard error ( $\pm SE$ ).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Behavioural phases:** In the present study, behavioural phase of exotic ornamental fishes was categorized into four phases based on their physical movement and aggressiveness which were changed after certain time interval under starved condition in aquaria. The findings for different experiments of exotic ornamental fishes described here through following four phases. Citation is still lacking as this type of work has not been conducted yet by other researchers. Details on the behavioural phase are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** List of experimented fishes with different behavioural phases and their duration

Fishes	Different behavioural phases and their duration (ended up to hrs)					
	Primitive		Acute		Moribund	
	T <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>2</sub>	T <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>2</sub>	T <sub>1</sub>	T <sub>2</sub>
Fantail goldfish	122±	168±	168±	216±	236±	290±
<i>Carassius auratus</i>	2.73	2.55	2.36	3.87	4.31	4.63
Rainbow shark	166±	242±	264±	336±	356±	398±
<i>Epalzeorhynchus frenatus</i>	3.24	3.11	2.61	3.96	3.21	3.94
Tiger Barb	98±	146±	168±	216±	202±	256±
<i>Barbuste trazona</i>	2.41	2.35	3.88	4.12	2.88	3.45
Zebra fish	145±	166±	168±	216±	242±	306±
<i>Danio rerio</i>	2.62	1.79	2.26	3.76	2.88	3.46
Horseface Loach	45±	68±	120±	144±	216±	282±
<i>Acantopsis choirohynchus</i>	1.30	1.45	1.29	1.09	2.30	2.55
Marble Angel	483±	653±	696±	840±	836±	1022±
<i>Pterophyllum scalare</i>	3.95	4.88	4.36	3.98	4.32	4.02
Golden Gourami	293±	339±	480±	552±	596±	664±
<i>Trichogaster trichopterus</i>	3.56	4.25	4.34	4.10	4.21	4.55
Guppy	73±	92±	96±	144±	136±	242±
<i>Poecilia reticulata</i>	1.54	1.32	2.33	2.10	2.22	2.01
Black Molly	95±	162±	192±	240±	342±	402±
<i>Poecilia sphenops</i>	1.88	2.64	2.55	2.31	3.84	3.29
Swordtail	142±	190±	192±	240±	332±	396±
<i>Xiphophorus helleri</i>	2.65	2.85	2.62	2.43	3.93	3.41
Tiger Shark	263±	338±	384±	432±	472±	524±
<i>Pangasius hypophthalmus</i>	4.62	4.33	3.44	2.63	3.97	4.32
Albino suckermouth	43±	76±	72±	96±	116±	160±
<i>Hypostomus plecostomus</i>	2.33	2.54	1.73	3.96	2.44	3.87
Clown catfish	93±	141±	168±	216±	294±	376±
<i>Synodontis decorus</i>	1.16	1.25	2.44	3.47	2.98	3.78
Black skirt widow tetra	191±	263±	288±	360±	382±	444±
<i>Gymnocorymbus ternetzi</i>	1.56	2.22	3.51	3.44	4.65	4.88

**Primitive phase:** In this phase, different fish species showed different behaviours. Goldfish were gregarious and swam in grouped; rainbow shark swam back and forth, more than up and down; guppy, swordtail, widow tetra and tiger barbs were showed very active and attributed nipping behaviour of its tank mates and constantly pestered the other fish in the tank but did not harm at all; black molly and zebra fish were social, swam in grouped and spent most of the time at the surface as they are surface dwelling fish; horseface loaches were usually hide during the day but are lively and active in the evening; marble angels were well behaved and post himself at the top of the tank most of the time but occasionally they were harassed one another- but nothing serious; golden gourami swam slowly mostly in the middle to top regions of the aquarium but was also explored in the bottom region not bothered any of the other inhabitants; tiger sharks were constantly on the move and occasionally went to the surface for air; albino suckermouth catfish spent most of the time at the tank bottom and the sides of the glass and very sensitive to their environment; clown catfish often forms good sized

group and in the day time they were became shy and hardly be seen when exposure to bright light.

The duration of this behavioural phase was found lower (43±2.33 hrs; T<sub>1</sub>) for the albino suckermouth and higher (653±4.88 hrs; T<sub>2</sub>) for the marble angel. These behaviours were seen earlier in the treatment T<sub>1</sub> than the treatment T<sub>2</sub>. This might be due to the comparatively suitable water quality (especially DO and free CO<sub>2</sub>) in the treatment T<sub>2</sub> because of using aerator of that treatment and this was strongly supported by Kramer (1987).

**Acute phase:** In this phase, most of the experimented fish species (*viz.* rainbow shark, zebra fish, angel fish, gourami, guppy and black molly) showed aggressiveness, moving fast and driving force to other and sometimes caused harms to other (damaged and injured the fins and tails of other). Goldfish and angel fish were observed at the surface floating or gasping either for beg food or little oxygen in the water with the inclination of body axis with surface 30 to 35 degrees. Almost similar assumption was also made by William and Lewis (1970). Tiger barbs and black skirt widow tetra were hanged out in a top corner of the aquarium and then swam erratically, floated upside down. Horseface loach spent most of their time in plain glass wall of aquarium by hanging out vertically. Golden gourami flared their fins and nipped and chased at another fish or slow moving ones. Swordtail increased their swimming activity through rapid caudal peduncle and axial body movement and spent more time searching for food than in normal circumstances. This accelerated intra-specific behavior increased aggressiveness and competition with other fish and most attack occurred at the bottom water. This was strongly supported by Johnson *et al.* (1998). During this phase, tiger sharks tend to swam very fast for finding food and they injured themselves due to their mindless flight through rushing around the aquarium. In this phase, they frequently smashed into the sides of the aquarium or other fish. Albino suckermouth catfish were observed at the corner of the aquarium sucking the protective slime coat of others or being slept. Clown catfish were non-aggressive and they got along well with other fish of same species constantly touching the other fish with their barbels. The duration of this behavioural phase was found lower (72±1.73 hrs; T<sub>1</sub>) for the albino suckermouth and higher (840±3.98 hrs; T<sub>2</sub>) for the marble angel. These behaviours were seen earlier in the treatment T<sub>1</sub> than the treatment T<sub>2</sub>. This might be due to the comparatively suitable water quality (especially DO and free CO<sub>2</sub>) in the treatment T<sub>2</sub> because of using aerator of that treatment. This statement was strongly supported by Kramer (1987).

**Moribund phase:** During this phase, most of the experimented fish species became less active and felt

restlessness due to their sickness and sank to the bottom of the aquarium and lie on its side or back. The duration of this behavioural phase was found lower ( $116 \pm 2.44$  hrs;  $T_1$ ) for the albino suckermouth and higher ( $1022 \pm 4.02$  hrs;  $T_2$ ) for the marble angel. These behaviours were also seen earlier in the treatment  $T_1$  than the treatment  $T_2$ .

**Death phase:** During this phase almost all the experimented fish species became senseless at first and then floated in the water and died respectively for getting no food during the whole period of the experiment. At this phase, the colour of the fish body became dull and body size became shrank. After the study, it was found that, marble angel survived more ( $1022 \pm 4.02$  hrs;  $T_2$ ) than the other species used for the experiment in the given condition. Comparatively lower survival ( $116 \pm 2.44$  hrs;  $T_1$ ) was seen for the albino suckermouth. It was also seen that, fishes were died earlier in the treatment  $T_1$  than fishes of treatment  $T_2$ . This might be due to the comparatively suitable water quality (especially DO and free  $CO_2$ ) in the treatment  $T_2$  because of using aerator of that treatment. This statement was strongly supported by Kramer (1987).

**Water quality parameters:** During the study period water chemistry (water quality parameters) under different treatments remained favorable for all experimented fish species. Details are given in Table 2. In the present study, water temperature found to be ranged from  $25.66 \pm 0.17^\circ C$  (for *B. tetrazona*) to  $28.66 \pm 0.35^\circ C$  (for *C. auratus*). Olufeagba *et al.* (1999) found the water temperature in his study ranges from  $26-31^\circ C$  for ponds and  $26-30^\circ C$  for aquaria tanks. Water depth remained same throughout the experiment ( $20.00 \pm 0.00$  cm). The range of water depth (12-18cm) reported by William and Lewis (1970) was also closer to the value of water depth found in the present study. Dissolved oxygen and free carbon di-oxide were found to be ranged from  $3.80 \pm 0.06$  mg/l (for *B. tetrazona*) to  $4.73 \pm 0.07$  mg/l (for *T. trichopterus*) and  $9.21 \pm 0.05$  mg/l (for *P. sphenops*) to  $11.75 \pm 0.03$  mg/l (for *P. scalare*) respectively. Comparatively higher dissolved oxygen and lower free  $CO_2$  content were found in the treatment  $T_2$  than the treatment  $T_1$  in case of all experimental treatments.

Olufeagba *et al.* (1999) found the dissolved oxygen in his study ranges from 4.5-4.8mg/l for aquaria tanks which was more or less similar to the value of dissolved oxygen found in the present study. Mitranescu *et al.* (2010) found  $CO_2$  level ranges from 9-13 mg/l in studying water quality in experimental aquaria tanks with 80 % survival rate which was much closer to the value of the present study. pH varied from  $7.13 \pm 0.05$  (for *X. helleri*) to  $7.47 \pm 0.07$  (for *P. scalare*).

Baensch and Riehl (1997) recorded pH in their study ranges between 6.5-8.5 mg/l which much closer to the result of the present study. Almost similar finding was found by Mitranescu *et al.* (2010). Total alkalinity was found to be ranged from  $76.66 \pm 1.64$  mg/l (for *B. tetrazona*) to  $108.92 \pm 3.20$  mg/l (for *P. scalare*) which was strongly supported by the assumption of Ghosh *et al.* (2003). Ammonia-nitrogen and chlorine level were found to be ranged from  $0.0010 \pm 0.0006$  mg/l (for *H. plecostomus*) to  $0.0133 \pm 0.002$  mg/l (for *P. scalare*) and  $0.0045 \pm 0.001$  mg/l (for *B. tetrazona*) to  $0.012 \pm 0.0014$  mg/l (for *C. auratus* and *X. helleri*) respectively. Mitranescu *et al.* (2010) found ammonia-nitrogen and optimal chlorine level ranges from 0.011 to 0.5 mg/l and 0.003 to 0.2 mg/l in studying water quality in three experimental aquaria tanks which was much closer to the value of the present study. It was found that water quality parameters remained well for experimented fish species in all of the experimental treatments but comparatively better in treatment  $T_2$  than the treatment  $T_1$ .

**Table 2:** Recorded different parameters of water quality

Fishes	Temperature (°C)	DO (mg/l)	Free $CO_2$ (mg/l)	pH	Total alkalinity (mg/l)	$NH_3-N_2$ (mg/l)	Cl (mg/l)
<i>Carassius auratus</i>	$T_1$ 28.66	4.34	11.61	7.21	96.21	0.0054	0.012
	$T_2$ 28.54	4.63	11.17	7.22	97.23	0.0034	0.01
<i>Epalzeorhynchus frenatus</i>	$T_1$ 26.81	4.23	9.58	7.23	97.06	0.0037	0.01
	$T_2$ 26.79	4.67	9.25	7.23	97.95	0.002	0.008
<i>Barbuste trazona</i>	$T_1$ 25.66	3.8	10.38	7.25	76.66	0.0023	0.006
	$T_2$ 25.66	3.98	10.11	7.25	76.93	0.0015	0.0045
<i>Danio rerio</i>	$T_1$ 26.33	4.16	9.43	7.13	79.53	0.0023	0.0045
	$T_2$ 26.33	4.32	9.26	7.13	79.84	0.0014	0.005
<i>Acantopsis choirorhynchos</i>	$T_1$ 26.21	4.31	9.74	7.2	85.84	0.0028	0.008
	$T_2$ 26.17	4.57	9.49	7.2	86.97	0.0013	0.006
<i>Pterophyllum scalare</i>	$T_1$ 28.5	4.2	11.75	7.46	105.46	0.0133	0.008
	$T_2$ 28.43	4.65	11.03	7.47	108.92	0.0085	0.006
<i>Trichogaster trichopterus</i>	$T_1$ 27.18	4.11	9.8	7.46	91.01	0.0056	0.01
	$T_2$ 27.17	4.73	9.21	7.46	92.08	0.0031	0.008
<i>Poecilia reticulata</i>	$T_1$ 26.45	4.38	9.59	7.13	92.55	0.0028	0.011
	$T_2$ 26.39	4.58	9.24	7.13	93.6	0.0015	0.01
<i>Poecilia sphenops</i>	$T_1$ 26.64	4.3	9.57	7.14	94.59	0.0045	0.011
	$T_2$ 26.56	4.7	9.21	7.14	94.95	0.0025	0.009
<i>Xiphophorus helleri</i>	$T_1$ 26.94	4.23	9.73	7.13	83.66	0.0052	0.012
	$T_2$ 26.88	4.43	9.54	7.13	83.99	0.003	0.01
<i>Pangasius hypophthalmus</i>	$T_1$ 27.06	4.17	9.76	7.38	92.28	0.005	0.01
	$T_2$ 27.05	4.65	9.27	7.38	93.2	0.0027	0.008
<i>Hypostomus plecostomus</i>	$T_1$ 26.67	4.12	10.12	7.17	75.33	0.0017	0.011
	$T_2$ 26.67	4.23	9.93	7.17	75.55	0.001	0.009
<i>Synodontis decorus</i>	$T_1$ 26.2	4.07	9.79	7.21	84.63	0.0032	0.01
	$T_2$ 26.18	4.23	9.61	7.21	85.08	0.0016	0.008
<i>Gymnocorymbus ternetzi</i>	$T_1$ 26.05	3.85	9.83	7.25	77.92	0.0035	0.007
	$T_2$ 26.03	4.2	9.43	7.25	79.25	0.0023	0.006

## CONCLUSION

Knowledge on different behavioural phase of ornamental fish species in aquaria is an essential pre-requisite for better husbandry and management practice. The study

again proved that aeration system can make more or less better environment for fish than that of the without aeration one. The research findings will be helpful in gathering basic knowledge on different behavioural phases through which aquarists can maintain primitive behavioural phase all the time of the kept fish species in their aquaria. Further research work is needed in the aforesaid theme massively.

## REFERENCES

- Atchison GJ, Henry MG and Sandheinrich MB (1987) Effects of metals on fish behaviour: a review. *Environmental Biology of Fishes* 18(1):11-25.
- Baensch HA and Riehl R (1997) *Baensch Aquaria Atlas*, Vol. 1.(6th ed.), 652 pp.
- Ghosh A, Mahapatra BK and Datta NC (2003) Ornamental Fish Farming- Successful Small Scale Aqua Business in India. *Aquaculture Asia* 8(3): 14-16.
- Jacome I, Aluja M, Liedo P and Nestel D (1995) The influence of adult diet and age on lipid reserves in the tropical fruit fly, *Anastrepha serpentina* (Diptera): Tephritidae. *Journal of Insect Physiology*, 41:1079-1086.
- Johnson E, Johnson JL and Bjornsson B (1998) Growth hormone increases aggressive behaviour in juvenile rainbow trout. *Hormones and Behavior* 33(1): 9-15.
- Kramer DL (1987) Dissolved oxygen and fish behavior, *Environmental Biology of Fishes*. Junk Publishers, Dordrecht 18(2): 81-92.
- Mitrancescu E, Furnaris F, Tudor L, Simion V and Gonciarov M (2010) Correlation between water physical chemical parameters and survival rate of *Pterophillum scalare* aquaria fish. *Lucrari Stiintifice - Universitatea de Stiinte Agricole a Banatului Timisoara, Medicina Veterinara* 43(2): 170-175.
- Namrata S, Sanjay N and Pallavi C (2011) Effect of Starvation on the Biochemical Composition of Freshwater Fish *Channa punctatus*. *Recent Research in Science and Technology* 3(9): 17-19.
- Olufeagha SO, Ladu B, Ayanda JO and Ashonibare BI (2007) Investment feasibility in gold fish (*Carassus auratus*). National Institute for Freshwater Fisheries Research NIFFR, New Bussa, Niger State. pp. 159-166.
- Petrauskiene L (2002) Changes in aggressive behaviour of rainbow trout after starvation and exposure to heavy metal mixture, *Ekologija (Vilnius)*. Nr. 1. pp. 14-21.
- Torres JB, Evangelista WS, Barras R, Guedes RNC (2002) Dispersal of *Podius nigrispinus* (Het., Pentatomidae) nymphs preying on tomato leaf miner: effect of predator release time, density and satiation level. *Journal of Applied Entomology* 126(6): 326-332. DOI: 10.1046/j.1439-0418.2002.00653.x
- Vadas RL, Burrows MT and Hughes RN (1994) Foraging strategies of dogwhelks, *Nucella lapillus* (L): interacting effects of age, diet and chemical cues to threat of predation. *Oecologia* 100(4): 439-450.
- William M and Lewis JR (1970) Morphological adaptations of cyprinodontoids for inhabiting oxygen deficient waters. *Copeia* 2: 319-326.
- Wojdak JM (2009) Foraging and refuge use by a pond snail: Effects of physiological state, predators, and resources. *Acta Oecologica* 35(5): 746-751. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.actao.2009.08.001>