



**UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA**

***DISTRIBUTION AND DIVERSITY OF PHYTOPLANKTON IN A TROPICAL  
MAN-MADE LAKE, PUTRAJAYA, MALAYSIA***

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**IB 2016 28**



**DISTRIBUTION AND DIVERSITY OF PHYTOPLANKTON IN A TROPICAL  
MAN-MADE LAKE, PUTRAJAYA, MALAYSIA**

By

**ASMA' BINTI JAMAL**

**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies,  
Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Science**

**May 2015**

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Life pleasures

*Umar Mukhtar*

*Wafa' Amani*

Life companion

*Mohd Qayyim Hafidzi*



Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science

## DISTRIBUTION AND DIVERSITY OF PHYTOPLANKTON IN A TROPICAL MAN-MADE LAKE, PUTRAJAYA, MALAYSIA

By

ASMA' BINTI JAMAL

May 2015

**Chairperson : Professor Fatimah Md Yusoff, PhD**  
**Faculty : Institute of Bioscience**

A study on phytoplankton community in a tropical man-made lake, Putrajaya Lake was carried out from October 2009 to September 2010. The study was conducted to examine the phytoplankton composition, distribution and diversity in different zones of the lake, and in different seasons. Monthly phytoplankton samples were collected at three selected stations representing three different lake zones, namely Station 1 (littoral zone), Station 2 (sub-littoral zone) and Station 3 (limnetic zone). Phytoplankton samples from each station were preserved, identified and enumerated. Physico-chemical parameters such as water temperature, pH, conductivity and dissolved oxygen were measured *in situ*. Meteorological data were obtained from the Putrajaya Corporation Database Centre.

Differences in the composition and diversity of the community across zones spatially and vertically were analysed by using multivariate test procedures. A total of 148 species from 77 genera were recorded for the Putrajaya Lake during the study period. The seven identified groups were Chlorophyta (59% of the total abundance), Pyrrophyta (15%), Cyanobacteria (11%), Bacillariophyceae (9%), Chrysophyceae (3%), Cryptophyta (2%) and Euglenophyta (1%). The highest total mean density of phytoplankton was recorded in the limnetic zone ( $433.94 \pm 18.29$  cells  $\text{ml}^{-1}$ ), followed by sub-littoral ( $292.94 \pm 18.61$  cells  $\text{ml}^{-1}$ ) and littoral zone ( $199.58 \pm 13.56$  cells  $\text{ml}^{-1}$ ). Average similarity within zones in descending order was limnetic zone (58.5%), sub-littoral zone (53.7%) and littoral zone (52.1%). According to zones, *Peridinium* had the highest density in littoral and sub-littoral zones although the dinoflagellates were not the dominant phytoplankton group, whereas *Staurastrum* dominated the limnetic zone. There was a significant difference in the Shannon-Wiener diversity index for phytoplankton diversity and abundance in all three zones ( $p < 0.05$ ). Limnetic zone demonstrated the highest species diversity ( $H' = 3.48 \pm 0.021$ ) compared to other zones.

In terms of depth distribution, the highest phytoplankton density was found at 1.5 m depth ( $366.03 \pm 33.37$  cells  $\text{ml}^{-1}$ ) combining all stations. However, the highest species

diversity was observed at 2.0 m depth ( $3.54 \pm 0.04$ ). Nonetheless, densities and species diversity values at different depths were not significantly different ( $p > 0.5$ ).

Two distinct groups consisted of limnetic and littoral-sub-littoral zones at 83% were obtained from the dendrogram. SIMPER average dissimilarity was highest between littoral and limnetic zone (50.8%) with *Staurastrum* as the most discriminating genus (6.7%). Sub-littoral species dominated both littoral and limnetic phytoplankton communities suggesting that sub-littoral zone acts as an interphase for phytoplankton adaptation and migration between the two different zones.

Phytoplankton community in Putrajaya Lake did not show distinct seasonal pattern. Rainfall had low influence on the phytoplankton community structure ( $r = 0.168$ ) and the ANOSIM R value ( $R = 0.21$ ) indicated strong overlapping of phytoplankton communities found during the wet and dry seasons. Average dissimilarity between the two seasons was 49.8% whilst average similarity within each wet and dry seasons were 55.0% and 58.5%, respectively. Shannon-Wiener diversity index during the wet season was higher than the dry season, but not significantly different ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Physical parameters such as water transparency, temperature, pH, dissolved oxygen, and conductivity were found to be important factors characterizing each zone and influencing the phytoplankton composition ( $p < 0.01$ ). The genus *Staurastrum* and *Peridinium* which were found dominant in the present study may indicate the water trophic as oligotrophic. Nevertheless the rise and sink of chrysophytes at a certain period of time may suggest the interchanging trophic water between oligotrophic to mesotrophic. The findings suggest that spatial and temporal distribution and diversity of the phytoplankton community can be affected significantly by local lake zonation characterized by environmental variations.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Sarjana Sains

**TABURAN DAN KEPELBAGAIAN FITOPLANKTON DI TASIK TROPIKAL  
BUATAN MANUSIA, PUTRAJAYA, MALAYSIA**

Oleh

**ASMA' BINTI JAMAL**

**Mei 2015**

**Pengerusi : Professor Fatimah Md. Yusoff, PhD**  
**Fakulti : Institut Biosains**

Satu kajian mengenai komuniti fitoplankton di sebuah tasik tropikal buatan manusia, Tasik Putrajaya, Malaysia telah dijalankan sejak Oktober 2009 sehingga September 2010. Kajian tersebut dilaksanakan untuk mengkaji komposisi, distribusi dan variasi fitoplankton mengikut faktor perbezaan zon tasik dan perbezaan musim. Sampel bulanan fitoplankton telah diambil di tiga stesen terpilih yang mewakili tiga zon berbeza sesebuah tasik, iaitu Stesen 1 (zon litoral), Stesen 2 (zon sub-litoral) dan Stesen 3 (zon limnetik). Sampel fitoplankton dari setiap stesen telah diawet, dikenalpasti dan dikira. Parameter fisiko-kimia seperti suhu air, pH, konduktiviti dan oksigen terlarut telah diukur secara *in situ*. Data meteorologi turut didapati dari pangkalan data Perbadanan Putrajaya.

Perbezaan dari segi komposisi dan kepelbagaian komuniti fitoplankton merentas zon mengikut ruang dan secara menegak telah dianalisa menggunakan prosedur ujian multivariat. Sejumlah 148 spesies daripada 77 genera telah direkod. Tujuh kumpulan yang telah dikenal pasti adalah Chlorophyta (59% daripada jumlah keseluruhan fitoplankton), Pyrrhophyta (15%), Cyanobacteria (11%), Bacillariophyceae (9%), Chrysophyceae (3%), Cryptophyta (2%) dan Euglenophyta (1%). Purata kepadatan fitoplankton yang tertinggi telah direkod di zon limnetik ( $433.94 \pm 18.29$  sel  $\text{ml}^{-1}$ ), diikuti oleh zon sublitoral ( $292.94 \pm 18.61$  sel  $\text{ml}^{-1}$ ) dan zon litoral ( $199.58 \pm 13.56$  sel  $\text{ml}^{-1}$ ). Purata persamaan dalam lingkungan zon secara menurun adalah zon limnetik (58.5%), zon sublitoral (53.7%) dan zon litoral (52.1%). Mengikut zon, *Peridinium* mencatat limpahan tertinggi di zon litoral dan zon sublitoral meskipun dinoflagella bukan merupakan kumpulan dominan, sementara *Staurastrum* mendominasi zon limnetik. Terdapat perbezaan signifikan pada indeks kepelbagaian Shannon-Wiener untuk kepelbagaian dan limpahan fitoplankton di ketiga-tiga zon ( $p < 0.05$ ). Zon limnetik menunjukkan indeks kepelbagaian tertinggi ( $H' = 3.48 \pm 0.021$ ) berbanding zon lain.

Dari aspek distribusi menegak, limpahan fitoplankton tertinggi merentas zon adalah di kedalaman 1.5 meter ( $366.03 \pm 33.37$  sel  $\text{ml}^{-1}$ ). Walau bagaimanapun, kepelbagaian

indeks menegak yang tertinggi diperhatikan di kedalaman 2.0 m ( $3.54 \pm 0.04$ ). Sekalipun begitu, limpahan dan kepelbagaian indeks fitoplankton merentas faktor kedalaman didapati tidak signifikan ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Dua kumpulan yang terdiri daripada kumpulan zon limnetik dan zon litoral-sublitoral di peratusan 83% telah diperolehi daripada dendrogram. Purata ketidaksamaan SIMPER didapati tertinggi di antara zon litoral dengan zon limnetik (50.8) dengan *Staurastrum* sebagai genus utama yang membezakan (6.7%). Spesies zon sublitoral yang diperhatikan mendominasi kedua-dua zon litoral dan limnetik menggambarkan zon sublitoral berperanan sebagai zon interfasa untuk fitoplankton mengadaptasi dan bermigrasi antara dua zon yang berbeza.

Komuniti fitoplankton di Tasik Putrajaya tidak menunjukkan corak perbezaan ketara antara dua musim. Air hujan memberikan pengaruh yang rendah keatas struktur komuniti fitoplankton ( $r = 0.168$ ) dan bacaan nilai R ANOSIM ( $R = 0.21$ ) mengindikasikan pertindihan yang ketara antara komuniti fitoplankton yang dijumpai semasa musim hujan dan musim kering. Purata ketidaksamaan antara dua musim adalah 49.8% sementara purata persamaan dalam lingkungan setiap musim adalah masing-masing 55.0% dan 58.5% bagi musim hujan dan musim kering. Indeks kepelbagaian Shannon-Wiener semasa musim hujan lebih tinggi dari indeks kepelbagaian semasa musim kering tetapi tidak berbeza secara signifikan ( $p > 0.05$ ).

Parameter fizikal seperti transpirasi air, suhu, pH, oksigen terlarut dan konduktiviti didapati adalah faktor-faktor penting dalam mencirikan setiap zon dan mempengaruhi komposisi fitoplankton ( $p < 0.01$ ). Genus *Staurastrum* dan *Peridinium* yang didapati dominan dalam kajian ini berkemungkinan mengindikasikan trofik air sebagai oligotrofik. Walau bagaimanapun, peningkatan dan penurunan krisofita pada waktu tertentu mencadangkan perubahan trofik antara oligotrofik kepada mesotrofik. Kajian ini mencadangkan bahawa distribusi dan kepelbagaian komuniti fitoplankton merentas ruang dan masa boleh dipengaruhi secara signifikan oleh penzonan sesebuah tasik yang dicirikan oleh variasi persekitaran.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my utmost appreciation and indebtedness to my advisory committee chairperson, Professor Dr. Fatimah Md. Yusoff who provided me with every academic need; valuable guide, helpful suggestions, constructive comments and motivation, untiring support and encouragement. Sincere thankfulness also goes to the members of my advisory committee, Prof Dato' Dr Shariff Mohamed and Dr Sanjoy Banerjee for providing critical reviews, comments and suggestions needed.

Special thanks go to Mr. Perumal, En. Azmi, Suhayati, Siti Zubaidah and Dora for their assistance and guide during the early days of my MSc programme. To Hafizah Osman, Siti Balqis, Nicholas, thank you for the friendship, time spared and companionship during my field sampling days. Not to forget, to Adibah, and Kamarul Bahri for helping out the extended works I needed to complete although I know all of you have your own heavy workloads needed to attend to. My gratefulness also extends to the newly found friends and acquaintances of Laboratory of Marine Biotechnology (MARSLAB) for the intellectual discussions, joyful moments and being inspiring exemplars; Norasamullah, Nurul Farahin, Nurul Huda, Hanis, Wan, Izni, Sasi, Fareha, Sook kun, Soochirn, Elsie, Dr. Helena, Dr. Nagao, Dr. Aminurrahman and Dr. Srikanth. Being part of the MARSLAB community and able to share the knowledge attained in aspects of science nor life itself, in happiness and tears, will become a pleasant memory in life. My recognition also goes to the staffs in the microscopy unit of Institute Bioscience (IBS) for their contribution in the pursuit of completing this thesis.

**Above all, gratitude to the Almighty, for His mercy, will and power, I am here.**

I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 18 May 2015 to conduct the final examination of Asma' binti Jamal on her thesis entitled "Distribution and Diversity of Phytoplankton in a Tropical Man-Made Lake, Putrajaya, Malaysia" in accordance with the Universities and University Colleges Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Science.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Science. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follow:

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b>	i
<b>ABSTRAK</b>	iii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	v
<b>APPROVAL</b>	vi
<b>DECLARATION</b>	viii
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b>	xii
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b>	xiii
<b>LIST OF PLATES</b>	xv
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</b>	xvii
<b>CHAPTER</b>	
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of the study	1
1.2 Problem statement	2
1.3 Objectives of the study	3
<b>2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1 Phytoplankton	4
2.1.1 General characteristics	4
2.1.2 Phytoplankton classification and composition	4
2.1.3 Phytoplankton diversity	5
2.1.4 Seasonality and succession of phytoplankton	6
2.2 Environmental factors and phytoplankton distribution	7
2.2.1 Vertical distribution	7
2.2.2 Horizontal distribution	8
2.2.3 Temporal variations	8
2.3 Phytoplankton as environmental indicators	9
2.4 Tropical man-made lake	9
2.5 Eutrophication and anthropogenic sources	10
2.6 Freshwater phytoplankton studies in Malaysia	11
<b>3 GENERAL METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>13</b>
3.1 Study site description	13
3.2 Sampling	13
3.3 Field sample collections	14
3.4 Preparation of preservative	14
3.5 Sample processing	14
3.6 Identification and enumeration	16
3.7 Data analysis	16
3.8 Micrographs	17

<b>4</b>	<b>PHYTOPLANKTON COMMUNITY DISTRIBUTION AND DIVERSITY IN DIFFERENT ZONES OF PUTRAJAYA LAKE</b>	<b>18</b>
4.1	Introduction	18
4.2	Materials and Methods	19
4.2.1	Study area	19
4.2.2	Sampling and sample collections	19
4.2.3	Statistical analysis	19
4.2.4	Micrographs	19
4.3	Results	20
4.3.1	Spatio-temporal variations	20
4.3.2	Spatial composition	25
4.3.3	Spatio-temporal diversity	26
4.3.4	Vertical variations	32
4.3.5	Vertical diversity	34
4.3.6	Relationship among zones	34
4.3.7	Dominant genera	36
4.4	Discussion	44
4.5	Conclusion	46
<b>5</b>	<b>BIODIVERSITY AND SEASONAL VARIATION OF PHYTOPLANKTON COMMUNITY IN PUTRAJAYA LAKE</b>	<b>48</b>
5.1	Introduction	48
5.2	Materials and Methods	49
5.2.1	Sampling	49
5.2.2	Meteorological data	49
5.2.3	Environmental parameters	49
5.2.4	Statistical analysis	49
5.3	Results	50
5.3.1	Phytoplankton community	50
5.3.2	Seasonal variations	50
5.3.3	Seasonal diversity	57
5.3.4	Environmental variations	57
5.3.5	Phytoplankton in relation to rainfall and environmental factors	68
5.3.6	Indicator species	70
5.4	Discussion	73
5.5	Conclusion	78
<b>6</b>	<b>SUMMARY, GENERAL CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH</b>	<b>79</b>
6.1	Summary and general conclusion	79
6.2	Recommendations for future research	80
	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>82</b>
	<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>97</b>
	<b>BIODATA OF STUDENT</b>	<b>115</b>
	<b>LIST OF PUBLICATIONS</b>	<b>116</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
3.1	The coordinates and depths of different stations established in different zones.	14
4.1	Number of phytoplankton genera and species observed according to phylum in each zone from October 2009 to September 2010.	21
4.2	Mean densities (cells ml <sup>-1</sup> ± SE) and percentages of phytoplankton species in different groups at different zones of Putrajaya Lake during September 2009 to October 2010. Number of samples (n) of each zone is given in parentheses.	27
5.1	Mean densities (cells ml <sup>-1</sup> ± SE) and percentages (%) of dominant phytoplankton genera in different zones of Putrajaya Lake during September 2009 to October 2010.	51
5.2	Mean total density (cells ml <sup>-1</sup> ) of three sampling zones in selected months during wet and dry seasons.	55
5.3	Results of one-way ANOSIM (R values and significance level) and SIMPER analysis on the phytoplankton abundance during wet and dry seasons.	55
5.4	Average similarity and contributing genera (%) during wet and dry seasons using SIMPER analysis. Sim/SD is the ratio of the average contribution (sim) divided by the standard deviation (SD) of those contributions across all pairs of samples making up the average.	56
5.5	Mean values ± SE and range of environmental variables of Putrajaya Lake at different stations. Values in rows having different superscripts are significantly different at p < 0.05. Number of samples (n) of each zone is given in parentheses.	57
5.6	Overall correlation matrices (Pearson correlation) of rainfall and different environmental variables in Putrajaya Lake. Values with asterisks indicate significant relationship at p < 0.01.	68
5.7	Results of one-way ANOSIM (R values and significance levels) and SIMPER analysis on the phytoplankton abundance between different stations. Values with asterisk indicate significant difference at p < 0.001.	69
5.8	Average similarity and discriminating genus in each station using SIMPER analysis.	69
5.9	Results of one-way ANOSIM (R values and significance levels) and SIMPER analysis on the phytoplankton abundance between different depths (m).	70
5.10	Average similarity (%) and discriminating genus in every depth using SIMPER analysis.	71



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
3.1	Geographical location of the study area and sampling stations in Putrajaya Lake, Peninsular Malaysia.	15
4.1	Total number of species and genus observed in different zones of Putrajaya Lake.	20
4.2	Changes of phytoplankton species numbers observed in different zones of Putrajaya Lake from October 2009 until September 2010.	21
4.3	Mean total densities (cells ml <sup>-1</sup> ± SE) of phytoplankton community in different zones of Putrajaya Lake. Mean values with different superscripts indicate significant difference at p < 0.05.	24
4.4	Changes of monthly mean total density (cells ml <sup>-1</sup> ± SE) of phytoplankton community in different zones of Putrajaya Lake from October 2009 until September 2010. Vertical bars indicate ± standard error of the means.	24
4.5	Dendrogram of phytoplankton mean total density (cells ml <sup>-1</sup> ) according to zones in Putrajaya Lake.	25
4.6	Percentages of phytoplankton groups in Putrajaya Lake.	25
4.7	Percentages (%) of phytoplankton density according to different groups in different zones of Putrajaya Lake.	26
4.8	Shannon-Wiener diversity index (H') and species evenness (J') in the (a) littoral zone, (b) sub-littoral zone and (c) limnetic zone of Putrajaya Lake.	30
4.9	Shannon-Wiener diversity index (H') and species evenness (J') of different zones in Putrajaya Lake.	31
4.10	Dendrogram of phytoplankton diversity according to zones in Putrajaya Lake.	31
4.11	Mean density (cells ml <sup>-1</sup> ± SE) of phytoplankton community in different depth of Putrajaya Lake.	32
4.12	Vertical distribution of mean total phytoplankton density (cells ml <sup>-1</sup> ) and the percentage of different groups of phytoplankton in the (a) littoral zone, (b) sub-littoral zone and (c) limnetic zone of Putrajaya Lake.	33
4.13	Vertical diversity indices (Shannon-Wiener diversity (H') and evenness (J') according to depth in Putrajaya Lake.	34
4.14	Vertical diversity indices (Shannon-Wiener diversity (H') and evenness (J') according to depth in (a) littoral zone, (b) sub-littoral zone and (c) limnetic zone of Putrajaya Lake.	35
4.15	Dendrogram of phytoplankton mean total density (cells ml <sup>-1</sup> ) according to zones in Putrajaya Lake.	36
5.1	Mean total densities (cells ml <sup>-1</sup> ) and the relative percentages of phytoplankton densities according to different groups in different zones of Putrajaya Lake.	53
5.2	Monthly mean precipitation for Putrajaya Lake during October 2009 until September 2010.	54

5.3	Monthly mean precipitation (mm) and spatio-temporal variations of phytoplankton mean total density (cells ml <sup>-1</sup> ) during October 2009 to September 2010.	54
5.4	Shannon-Wiener diversity index (H') and evenness (J') in (a) littoral zone, (b) sub-littoral zone and (c) limnetic zone of Putrajaya Lake during months of maximum and minimum rainfall.	58
5.5	Shannon-Wiener diversity index (H') and evenness (J') in different rainfall intensities.	59
5.6	Multi-dimensional scaling (MDS) plots of phytoplankton abundance during wet and dry seasons in Putrajaya Lake. Stress indicates the quality of measurement. Low stress suggests good measurement. Maximum = months of heavy rain; Minimum = months of low rain.	59
5.7a	Temporal variations of (a) temperature and (b) pH of three zones in Putrajaya Lake.	61
5.7b	Temporal variations of (c) conductivity, (d) transparency and (e) dissolved oxygen of three zones in Putrajaya Lake.	62
5.8	Depth-time diagram of water temperature (°C) during sampling period (October 2009 to September 2010) at (a) littoral, (b) sub-littoral and (c) limnetic zones of Putrajaya Lake.	63
5.9	Depth-time diagram of pH during sampling period (October 2009 to September 2010) at (a) littoral, (b) sub-littoral and (c) limnetic zones of Putrajaya Lake.	64
5.10	Depth-time diagram of conductivity (µS cm <sup>-1</sup> ) during sampling period (October 2009 to September 2010) at (a) littoral, (b) sub-littoral and (c) limnetic zones of Putrajaya Lake.	65
5.11	Depth-time diagram of transparency (m) during sampling period (October 2009 to September 2010) at (a) littoral, (b) sub-littoral and (c) limnetic zones of Putrajaya Lake.	66
5.12	Depth-time diagram of dissolved oxygen (mg L <sup>-1</sup> ) during sampling period (October 2009 to September 2010) at (a) littoral, (b) sub-littoral and (c) limnetic zones of Putrajaya Lake.	67

## LIST OF PLATES

Plate		Page
4.1	(A) Distorted plates of the <i>Peridinium</i> sp. b; (B) Clear view of the orange-red eyespot and yellow-brown chloroplasts of <i>Peridinium</i> sp. c; (C) Ovoid shape of <i>Peridinium</i> sp. a from central view; (D) Circular shape of <i>Peridinium</i> sp. d from apical view; (E) Visible cingulum of <i>Peridinium</i> sp. d.	37
4.2	<i>Staurastrum quadrinotatum</i> . Cells two-radiate, deeply constricted. (A) Lateral view; (B) Apical view.	38
4.3	<i>Staurastrum gracile</i> in different angles. Cells three-radiate, moderately constricted with an open U-shaped sinus, semi-cells broadly basin shape, apex slightly convex, angles produced into moderately long, hollow processes, tapering and slightly convergent processes terminating in four short spines, granules encircle body above isthmus. (A) Apical view; (B) Lateral view; (C) Three processes at each semi-cells ornamented by denticules; (D) Processes with four truncate ends.	38
4.4	<i>Staurastrum tetracerum</i> . Cells two-radiate, deeply constricted, sinus open V-shaped, semi-cells margins continue smoothly to angles produced into slender divergent processes with denticulate margins and tipped with four minute spines, apex distinctly concave with small granule in the middle. (A) Live sample; (B) Preserved sample.	39
4.5	<i>Staurastrum</i> sp. a. (A) Angle showing three processes at each semicell with three truncate ends; (B) Lateral view showing two processes at each semicell end.	40
4.6	<i>Staurastrum pelagicum</i> . Cells three-radiate deeply constricted with an open sinus, upper margin of semi-cells convex while lower part slightly convex, hollow processes tipped with two divergent spines. (A) Live sample; (B) Preserved sample.	40
4.7	<i>Staurastrum pseudopelagicum</i> . Cells three-radiate, deeply constricted with a short open sinus, semi-cells convex at lower margin and slightly vonvex at upper margin, angles smoothly extend into fairly slender, hollow processes with two divergent spines. (A) Lateral view showing clear view of all three processes; (B) Lateral view with clear view of the chloroplast; (C) Apical view.	41
4.8	Preserved <i>Staurastrum arachne</i> in different resolutions. Cells five-radiate, decorated with concentric series of granules and terminating in three short spines. (A) All 10 processes radiating from each semi-cell ends; (B) Apical view showing five processes on a semi-cell ends.	42
4.9	<i>Staurastrum</i> sp. b in different resolutions. (A) Clear view showing all 16 processes; (B) Apical view showing eight processes radiating from a single isthmus of each semicell terminating in three short spines.	42
4.10	Preserved <i>Staurastrum</i> sp. c in different resolutions. (A) Clear view showing all 15 processes; (B) Apical view showing five processes on a semi-cell with processes ending in 3 short spines.	43
4.11	<i>Staurodesmus</i> sp. a. (A) Lateral view; (B) Apical view; (C) <i>Staurodesmus</i> sp. b under live-cell microscope.	43

A1	Bacillariophyceae. <i>Cyclotella</i> sp. (A) under SEM; (B) under light microscope; (C) view at a slanted angle; (D) girdle view.	99
A2	Bacillariophyceae. (A) <i>Stauroneis</i> sp.; (B) <i>Nitzschia</i> sp.	99
A3	Bacillariophyceae. (A) <i>Rhizosolenia</i> sp.; (B) <i>Synnedra cunningtoni</i> ; (C) <i>Cymbella</i> sp.	100
A4	Bacillariophyceae. <i>Melosira granulata</i> (A) under live-cell microscope; (B) live sample under light microscope; (C) preserved sample under inverted microscope.	101
A5	Chlorophyta. (A) Preserved <i>Ankistrodesmus spiralis</i> under light microscope; (B) Live sample of <i>A. spiralis</i> ; (C) <i>A. fulcatus</i> ; (D) <i>Ankistrodesmus</i> sp.	102
A6	Chlorophyta. (A) <i>Cosmarium</i> sp. a under light microscope; (B) <i>Cosmarium contractum</i> under light microscope; Live sample (C) and preserved sample (D) of <i>Cosmarium</i> sp. b under light microscope.	103
A7	Chlorophyta. (A) <i>Pediastrum simplex</i> under live-cell microscope; live sample (B) and preserved sample (C) of <i>P. simplex</i> under light microscope; different variety of preserved sample <i>P. duplex</i> (D) and (E) under light microscope; (F) live sample of <i>P. duplex</i> under light microscope.	104
A8	Chlorophyta. (A) <i>Scenedesmus ellepticus</i> under light microscope, (B) <i>S. obtusus</i> ; (C) Preserved sample of <i>Scenedesmus maximus</i> under light microscope; (D) <i>Scenedesmus</i> sp.a.	105
A9	Chlorophyta. (A) <i>Crucigenia rectangularis</i> under light microscope; (B) <i>Crucigenia quadrata</i> under light microscope; (C) <i>Closterium acutum</i> ; (D) <i>Coelastrum sphaericum</i> ; (E) <i>Actinotaenium</i> sp.; (F) <i>Chlamydomonas</i> sp.	106
A10	Chlorophyta. (A) Colony of <i>Botryococcus braunii</i> ; (B) <i>B. braunii</i> cells embedded within the periphery of a strong mucilage; (C) Lateral view of <i>Ankyra</i> sp.; (D) Basal view of <i>Ankyra</i> sp. indicating the forked or bifid extension; (E) <i>Kirchneriella obesa</i> under SEM; (F) <i>K. lunaris</i> under light microscope.	107
A11	Chlorophyta. (A) <i>Arthrodesmus</i> sp.; (B) <i>Asterococcus</i> sp.; (C) <i>Nephrocytium</i> sp; (D) <i>Selenastrum</i> sp.; (E) <i>Chlorobion braunii</i> ; (F) <i>Spaerotaenia erythrocephala</i> .	108
A12	Chlorophyta. (A) <i>Tetraedron caudatum</i> ; (B) <i>Dictyosphaerium pulchellum</i> ; (C) <i>Golenkinia radiata</i> ; (D) <i>Chlorella</i> sp.; (E) <i>Gloeocystis gigas</i> ; (F) <i>Gloeocystis vesiculosa</i> .	109
A13	(A) <i>Oocystis borgei</i> (Chlorophyta); Cyanobacteria. (B) <i>Microcystis</i> sp. a; (C) <i>Chroococcus giganteus</i> ; (D) <i>Chroococcus turgidus</i> ; (E) Colony of <i>Microcystis aeruginosa</i> in general view; (F) Close view of <i>M. aeruginosa</i> cells densely embedded in colourless mucilage.	110
A14	Cyanobacteria. (A) <i>Oscillatoria</i> sp. b; (B) <i>Oscillatoria</i> sp. a.	111
A15	Chrysophyceae. (A) <i>Dinobryon divergens</i> ; (B) live sample of <i>D. sertularia</i> ; (C) Preserved sample of <i>D. sertularia</i> .	112
A16	Pyrrhophyta. (A) Live sample of <i>Ceratium hirundinella</i> ; (B) preserved sample of <i>C. hirundinella</i> .	112
A17	Chrysophyceae. (A) <i>Mallomonas</i> sp. a; (B) <i>Mallomonas</i> sp. b; (C) <i>Mallomonas</i> sp. c.	113
A18	Euglenophyta. (A) <i>Phacus</i> sp. under live-cell microscope; (B) <i>Euglena grasilis</i> under light microscope; Live cell (C) and preserved cell (D) of <i>Phacus longicauda</i> ; (E) <i>Trachelomonas</i> sp. a.	114

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

$\mu\text{m}$	Micrometer
$\mu\text{S}$	Micro-semen
2-D	Two dimensional
ANOSIM	Analysis of similarity
ANOVA	Analysis of variance
cm	Centimeter
g	Gram
$H'$	Shannon-Wiener diversity index
ha	Hectare
hrs	Hours
I	Iodine
$J'$	Pielou's species evenness index
KI	Potassium iodide
km	Kilometer
L	Litre
m	Meter
$\text{m s}^{-1}$	Meter persecond
ml	Milli-litre
mm	Millimeter
n	Number of samples
NAHRIM	National Hydraulic Research Institute of Malaysia
NMDS	Non-metric multidimensional scaling
$^{\circ}\text{C}$	Degrees celsius
PRIMER	Plymouth routines in multivariate ecological research
Sim	Similarity
SD	Starndard deviation
SEM	Scanning electron microscope
SPSS	Statistical package for the social sciences



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Phytoplankton constitutes the basic component in the aquatic ecosystem (Ghosh et al., 2012). They are photosynthetic free floating microorganisms that are mostly found in various types of water bodies. The contribution of phytoplankton as a minute creature to the humankind is undeniable. They stand in the baseline of the aquatic food chain as the primary producer, thus offering significant information on the aquatic ecosystem condition (McCormick and Cairns, 1994). Phytoplankton occupies the water which covers 70% of the biosphere, thus it is also regarded as a significant contributor to oxygen production, fixing 40% of earth's carbon (Post et al., 1990). Recent technology adopted the ecological benefit of phytoplankton by installing an algae farm on a highway overpass to absorb car emissions while augmented by sunlight, a form of air pollutant filter (Lexie, 2014).

The combinations of physical, chemical and biological factors largely influence the distribution of phytoplankton community and its composition. Their variation and distribution within the water column depends on the availability of nutrients, temperature, light intensity, salinity, pH and other limnological attributes (George and Heaney, 1978). Variance in these attributes along space and time results in phytoplankton heterogeneity vertically and horizontally as well as established periodicity (Klausmeier and Litchman, 2001). Lake hydrographic and its geographical location also have an impact to the distribution of phytoplankton (Lewis, 1987; Shiel and Williams, 1990; Vyverman, 1996). Previous studies which showed responsive behaviour demonstrated by the phytoplankton community enable the phytoplankton to be important biological tool in monitoring the ecological health of water bodies.

#### 1.1 Background of the study

Lake represents a very small fraction (0.009%) of the total water content of the biosphere compared to oceans (97%) (Băgăcean and Viorel, 2014). Freshwater from many aspects are of vital importance to human and their livelihood, a fact that had led to surveying and monitoring programmes for environmental protection and sustainability. In many cases, the analysis of phytoplankton community structure is related to the practical problems of a lake and had been used as an indicator in water quality analysis and eutrophic assessments. The adoption of phytoplankton as an environmental indicator had started since the mid-19th century (Dokulil et al., 2003). Phytoplankton respond rapidly and predictably to a wide range of pollutants, thus providing potentially useful early warning signals of deteriorating conditions and the possible causes (McCormick and Cairns, 1994; Stevenson et al., 2003).

Lakes which are categorized as tropical are far less numerous than temperate lakes, which might cause the study of tropical inland waters being predominated and influenced by the understanding of inland waters from higher latitude (Lewis, 1996).

Thus tropical limnology would not be of extraordinary importance if tropical aquatic environments could be understood readily from the principles applied to temperate systems (Lewis, 1987). Many assumptions, findings and conclusions had been made on tropical system; some might contradict one another (Melack, 1979; Ashton, 1985; Lewis, 1987; 1996; Stomp et al., 2011). It can be said that the phytoplankton communities in the lower latitude lakes are no more complex than the higher latitudes, in contrast with the terrestrial communities which have established a good understanding of diversity pattern. The corresponding fluctuations of phytoplankton in their abundance and dynamics are governed by localized climatic events consisting of physical, chemical and biotic factors.

Putrajaya Lake is a tropical man-made lake created in the year 2007 located in the heart of the Federal Government Administrative Centre of Malaysia. It covers a surface area of 7.5 km<sup>2</sup> (NAHRIM, 2005) with a maximum depth of 14 m and an average annual rainfall of 2839 mm. The lake system was created from the flooding of Sungai Chuau and Sungai Bisa valleys, integrated with yet the biggest constructed wetlands in the tropics, occupying more than 600 ha of the landform in Putrajaya (Hijjas et al., 2001). It becomes the most significant visual and landscape feature of the administrative city and supports many water activities. Thus Putrajaya Lake is under constant monitoring by the Perbadanan of Putrajaya to maintain the lake ecosystem and its water quality.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

The ecology of tropical phytoplankton started to gain attention since 1928 (Thienemann, 1954) but published works and understandings in the principles are still scarce and fragmented despite of the accumulating literatures (Lewis, 1987). Compared to the comprehensively compiled works of the temperate and high latitudes such as *The Freshwater of Algal Flora of the British Isles* (John et al., 2002), *Freshwater Algae of North America* (Wehr, 2002), the PEG-model proposed by Sommer (1986) and the ongoing online algaeBase web founded by Michael Guiry since year 1996, the knowledge on phytoplankton in tropical waters is still diffuse and fragmentary. Despite the increasing literatures and good documentation on tropical inland waters (Lewis, 1978a; 1978b; 1978c; Furtado and Mori, 1982; Kalff and Watson, 1986; Ndebele-Murisa et al., 2010), there is most likely that understanding of the researchers on the water dynamics is more or less influenced by the literatures of the higher latitudes (Lewis, 1987) although it is least likely evitable.

In addition, not many tropical freshwater studies were done solely to understand the tropical ecology of phytoplankton especially in man-made lakes. Most studies that had been done on the phytoplankton of Putrajaya Lake utilize the phytoplankton community in monitoring and modelling programmes (Malek et al., 2009; Malek et al., 2012; Sorayya et al., 2012). By far there is no published study in Putrajaya Lake that focuses on the biodiversity of the phytoplankton community itself, which is very important for ecosystem studies.

The diversity of phytoplankton has never been an explicit discovery. A review on the algal biodiversity by Norton et al. (1996) states that no one knows how many algae actually are there. The community comprises a large number of species and displays minimum characteristics to differentiate (Norton et al., 1996; Andersen, 1992; Uusitalo et al., 2013). Even with the help of the light microscope and electron microscope, expert help is still needed whilst molecular test is of expensive cost besides time consuming (Andersen, 1992). Furthermore, being responsively sensitive to changing environmental parameters makes the phytoplankton individuals spatial and temporally available. Thus, having a list of species which is completely available in a certain water body is hardly possible to be attained at a certain point of time. Nevertheless, to document an inventory of algal flora such as the checklist of algae in Singapore (Pham et al., 2011) in Putrajaya Lake would be a contribution to the algological study in Malaysia.

### **1.3 Objectives of the study**

This study was undertaken with the following objectives;

1. To determine the distribution and biodiversity of phytoplankton in different zonations of Putrajaya Lake.
2. To evaluate the seasonal effects on phytoplankton abundance and biodiversity.
3. To determine the relationship between phytoplankton biodiversity and physical factors.



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## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

- Jamal, A., Yusoff, F. M., Sharif, M. and Banerjee, S. 2014. Littoral and Limnetic Phytoplankton Distribution and Biodiversity in a Tropical Man-made Lake, Malaysia. *Advanced Studies in Biology*. 6:149-168.
- Jamal, A., Yusoff, F. M. and Srikanth, R. M. 2015. Growth rate assessment of high lipid producing microalga *Botryococcus braunii* in different culture media. *Iranian Journal of Fisheries Sciences*. 14.2: 436-445.





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