



## The Consequences Of Plastic Pollution On Marine Ecosystems.

Jawale Ratnamala S<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1\*</sup>Department of Zoology, Veer Wajekar Arts, Science and Commerce College, Phunde, Uran, Raigad, Navi Mumbai  
400 702, Maharashtra, India

**\*Corresponding Author:-** Jawale Ratnamala S.

\*Department of Zoology, Veer Wajekar Arts, Science and Commerce College, Phunde, Uran, Raigad, Navi Mumbai  
400 702, Maharashtra, India

### Abstract

The proliferation of plastic garbage in marine ecosystems is increasingly having a detrimental impact on the diversity of marine life. The objective of this review article is to provide a succinct overview of the The text discusses many categories of marine debris, the sources of marine debris, the consequences of marine plastics, and the worldwide efforts being made to mitigate plastic pollution in the marine ecosystem. Both macroscopic and microscopic fragments of plastic originate from distinct sources: terrestrial environments such as residential areas and industrial facilities, as well as marine environments including fishing activities. Currently, there is a global apprehension regarding marine plastic due to its impact on significant marine bodies of water. Consequently, this debris can have a significant impact not only on humans, especially those living in coastal areas, but also on wildlife, habitats, and other associated elements. Both macroscopic and microscopic fragments of plastic have a deleterious impact on the marine ecology. A questionnaire was used as the main research instrument to gather responses for this study. To get insight into the sentiments of coastal residents on the issue of marine plastic pollution, primary data was collected through the administration of questionnaires to individuals residing in coastal communities. Attributes of Individuals Who Have Provided a Response A total of 96 individuals partook in the questionnaire procedure, with their responses originating from eight distinct coastal districts.

**Keywords :** Marine Ecosystem, Plastic Pollution

### Introduction

In natural ecosystems, two distinct types of plastic waste can be found: microplastics, which are the smallest particles, and macroplastics, which are the largest pieces. Approximately half of plastic items, such as utensils and plastic bags, are intended to be discarded after use. As a result, the marine ecology is consistently deteriorating due to Plastic waste that comes from several sources, including households, businesses, and others. Plastics discarded, disposed of, and forsaken by people have infiltrated all of the Earth's oceans, causing detrimental effects on marine organisms and the interconnected food chains that sustain them. Moreover, marine debris has adverse effects not only on the financial prosperity of humanity but also on their lifestyle. Consequently, the pollution caused by plastic has evolved into a worldwide issue. Plastics are manufactured utilizing synthetic or semi-synthetic organic polymers, both of which have a high resistance to biodegradation. Consequently, plastics have the ability to persist in the ecosystem for a duration of up to one hundred years. Plastics tend to degrade and break down into tiny fragments when exposed to UV radiation, such as direct sunlight or saline water. There has been a global trend towards a rise in plastic production worldwide. For instance, in the 1950s, the global plastic output amounted to around 1.5 million tonnes per year, whereas in 2013, it exceeded 299 million tonnes annually. Microplastics have recently gained attention, whereas macroplastics have been present in marine ecosystems from the early stages of plastic manufacture. This is because marine organisms have the ability to readily ingest microplastics. Macro polymers act as carriers for the chemical spread of pollutants across the food chain. Marine species are at risk of ingesting or getting trapped in plastic trash, making plastic garbage a major danger to the overall health of the marine ecosystem. This article provides an analysis of many categories of marine trash, including both large and small plastic waste. It also examines the origins of these plastics and their impact on the marine environment. Additionally, it explores global efforts to mitigate plastic pollution in the marine ecosystem. This work will be beneficial for policymakers and ecologists. Plastic pollution is a global environmental problem caused by the widespread presence of plastic waste and its negative impacts on aquatic organisms, biodiversity, and human health in all aquatic ecosystems worldwide. This issue has been extensively studied by researchers such as L and Mataji et al. Plastic products have become increasingly popular worldwide due to their advantageous properties, such as low manufacturing costs, light weight, versatility, and durability that the worldwide output of plastics was approximately 1.5 million tonnes per year in the 1950s. However, by 2007, this figure had surged to nearly 250 million tonnes per year. The annual global production of plastics in 2016 exceeded 322 million tonnes, and it is currently increasing at a rate of 10% per year (Eerkes-Medrano et al., 2015). Additionally, there is a scarcity of social initiatives focused on effectively managing plastic in freshwater and marine environments. Consequently, there is a dearth of information regarding the presence of plastic garbage in river water and sediment worldwide, leading to little expertise on the subject. The

purpose of this review chapter is to present the existing information on plastic pollution in the aquatic ecosystem, with the goal of enhancing the reader's comprehension of both the problem of plastic pollution and its potential ramifications. The following studies have been referenced: The current understanding of target-oriented management of plastic particles, their quantity, distribution, and rarity is inadequate, and further research is needed to improve the quality of knowledge in this area. To summarize, this study examines significant challenges and proposed recommendations for future research on plastic. It strongly advocates for the implementation of a widespread campaign aimed at reducing plastic pollution in society. The Earth's surface is predominantly covered by oceans and seas, which account for about 70 percent of its total area, giving it a distinct blue appearance. Marine ecosystems globally sustain a significant population of marine organisms and humans, while also performing a wide array of ecological services. This encompasses the provision of sustenance for billions of individuals, the sequestration of carbon, the filtration of waste, and the cultural benefits, such as opportunities for pleasure and enrichment of spirituality [1]. Additionally, they form the foundation for a substantial chunk of the worldwide economy, offering assistance to many sectors such as global shipping, tourism, and fisheries. [2-5]

Any disruption to the continuous provision of these ecosystem services has the capacity to harm the welfare of the wildlife, plants, and humans residing around the globe, leading to the decline of biodiversity, food security, livelihoods, income, and health. [6-8]

### **Distribution of Plastic Waste in the Marine Ecosystem**

The marine ecosystem contains a significant amount of plastic trash, including food wrappers, cigarette filters, fishing line, rope and gear, baby diapers and nappies, six-pack rings, beverage bottles, disposal syringes, and resin pellets. Within the waters of the continental shelf spanning from Virginia to Rhode Island, The plastic concentration reached a maximum of 14 cubic meters and formed into sheets and pellets. However, researchers found that the surface of the Sargasso Sea, which extends over a distance of 1300 km, had an average concentration of microplastics of approximately 3500 pieces per kilometer. Cosmetic items in Europe contribute approximately 0.1 to 4.1% of marine microplastics, amounting to an annual plastic waste of 2461 to 8627 tonnes. However, microplastics generated by the wearing out of tires make up approximately 5 to 10 percent of the total amount of plastic found in the world's oceans. [9-11]

### **Micro debris**

refers to tiny fragments or particles that are typically less than a few millimeters in size. Concentrations of microplastics vary depending on water depth, with higher concentrations seen at greater depths compared to shallower depths. Dynamic zone. Recent studies have found that microplastics offer a substantially greater danger to the marine ecology compared to macroplastics. Microplastics are employed in the composition of cosmetic products, including makeup, sunscreen, nail paint, hair dye, eye shadow, and shower gels. Additionally, they are utilized in the creation of personal care items such as toothpastes, facial cleansers, and air blasters. Microplastics are minuscule to the point of being imperceptible to the unaided eye, and they are prone to infiltrating drainage systems via public toilet drains. [12-18]

### **Macro debris**

refers to large pieces of waste or rubbish that are visible to the naked eye. Rubbish dumping results in the introduction of significant debris (exceeding 5 millimeters in size) into the marine ecology. The concentrations of macro debris vary based on your location. The United States, the Falkland Islands, and Oman have lesser quantities of macro debris than Oman, with a rate of roughly 29.7 kg per kilometer, compared to the United Kingdom's rate of approximately 45 kg per kilometer. However, the beaches of Indonesia and Belgium have significantly larger amounts of macro debris. Specifically, Indonesia has roughly 1000 kg per kilometer while Belgium has approximately 64290 kg per kilometer. Due to their long-lasting nature, plastics have a substantial influence on marine ecosystems. [19-22]

### **Origin of Plastic Debris Discovered**

in the Marine Ecosystem River systems are the main contributors of plastic litter in the marine ecosystem through the release of waste water and runoff water. Next, we consider the close vicinity of waste water treatment plant outfalls and the The process of breaking down discarded plastic products from both household and industrial garbage into smaller fragments. Nevertheless, the fragmentation and degradation of the waste into diverse and small collections make it challenging to precisely identify the specific origins of marine plastics. This poses a difficulty in determining their beginnings. Furthermore, studies have been conducted on the microplastics that are present in the uppermost layer of the ocean, beyond the reach of satellites due to their submerged position. Consequently, there is a lack of concrete data addressing the worldwide introduction of plastic into the ocean. [23]

### **Sources of debris originating from land**

Land-based sources are the primary drivers of plastic particle pollution in marine ecosystems, responsible for a staggering 80% of the total. Land-based plastics can be located in several locations. including thoroughfares, recreational spaces, parking facilities, and additional locations. Subsequently, the precipitation, melting snow, and gusts of wind collectively lead to the release of the substance into the nearby water bodies. Furthermore, the sources

encompass illicit disposal of residential and industrial waste by the general public, public littering, insubstantial covers on dumpsters and dump trucks, manufacturing facilities, processors and transporters, sewage systems that are overwhelmed, individuals at the beach, fishermen, solid waste disposal at beaches, landfills, and water transportation. These waste management practices all contribute to the irresponsible release of trash, leading to the presence of marine debris. Furthermore, the packaging and wrapping of diverse products, such as food items, beverage containers, and other materials, had a substantial role in polluting marine habitats. [1-12]

### **Sources of trash originating from the ocean**

Ocean-based sources, responsible for 20% of plastic particles, are found in places where commercial fishing is the primary human activity. These sources are the sole contributors of plastic waste in the marine ecosystem. The garbage found in the water is primarily a result of human activities, particularly from individuals who are at sea. Most of the waste found in marine habitats is caused by human activities and desires. These waste items are being discarded into the sea from several types of vessels, including commercial fishing vessels, military vessels, merchant vessels, and research vessels. Additionally, recreational boats, cruise ships, offshore oil rigs, and supply vessels associated with these platforms also contribute to this pollution. Furthermore, the inadvertent destruction of ships or the failure of their systems can also lead to the generation of debris. Once again, the main factors contributing to the debris can be attributed to ineffective waste management practices and improper disposal of trash from the ships.

### **The consequences of marine plastic waste**

Currently, there is a global apprehension about marine plastic due to its impact on significant marine bodies of water. Consequently, this debris can have a significant impact not only on humans (especially those living near the coast), but also on wildlife, habitats, and other interconnected aspects. Both large and small fragments of plastic have a deleterious impact on the marine ecology. Animals, including birds, mammals, insects, and turtles, can become entangled in macroplastics, such as fishing gear and nets. Microplastic has a harmful effect on fish due to its white or opaque color, which often leads surface-feeding fish to mistake it for plankton. Microplastic exerts a detrimental impact on fish. Consequently, aquatic organisms that consume plastics are exposing themselves to peril. Furthermore, these microplastics possess the capacity to penetrate the human food chain via the ingestion of fish and shellfish, posing a threat to human well-being. The presence of macroplastics can modify the availability of refugia, hence impacting the biodiversity of the ocean. Furthermore, large plastic materials create a rigid surface that prevents the colonization of organisms, thereby inhibiting the establishment of biological communities. Similarly, the deep water is not a typical habitat for marine life.

### **Marine waterbody**

The presence of personal and medical waste, such as condoms and tampon applicators, in rivers due to inadequate sewage treatment systems poses a substantial threat to water quality. or discharge of untreated sewage. Consequently, this debris has the potential to affect the water in every part of the ocean. The ready availability of these plastic goods strongly suggests the presence of bacterial contamination, perhaps including *E. coli* and other harmful bacteria and viruses. When toxins and pathogens come into contact with water, it can result in the transmission of infectious hepatitis, diarrhoea, bacillary dysentery, skin rashes, typhoid, and cholera.

#### **Aquatic organisms**

Plastic pollution negatively impacts marine life throughout all levels of the food chain, ranging from plankton to whales. Both macro and micro plastic fragments, regardless of their size, possess the capacity to cause harm to certain species.

Through either entanglement or ingestion. The consumption of broken pieces of large and small plastic by 170 marine animals, both vertebrates and invertebrates, is also a concern. Entanglement is primarily caused by large plastic trash, whereas ingestion is mainly caused by smaller plastic bits. Plastic, including microplastic, enters all marine food chains, being consumed by invertebrates, fish, turtles, and even mammals. Recent studies have indicated that zooplankton ingest plastics present in their surroundings. Microplastics, upon ingestion, can traverse trophic levels and pose a threat to crustaceans and other organisms that consume them.

### **Aquatic avian species**

Throughout the globe, deceased marine avian species have been discovered ensnared in derelict fishing nets. A gill net measuring 1500 meters in length ensnared approximately 99 seabirds. When maritime avian species encounter By leaving behind fishing nets, individuals expose themselves to the risk of drowning. Marine birds are at a higher risk to their health due to the ingestion of plastic debris. Consuming plastic can potentially lead to an obstruction or injury to the internal organs. According to the United States Marine Mammal Commission, approximately 111 species of marine birds are impacted by the ingestion of marine debris. A total of 15 out of the 37 marine bird species in Alaska were discovered to have plastic debris present in their stomachs. Tourism refers to the activity of traveling to different places for leisure, recreation, or business purposes. Beachgoers and water sports enthusiasts, including tourists, swimmers, divers, and snorkelers, might be endangered by broken glass, medical waste, fishing line, and discarded needles. They are occasionally at danger of getting entangled by the debris that is either submerged or floating above them. The tourism sectors consistently yield substantial economic advantages for the local population and government situated in

close proximity to coastal habitats. Nevertheless, the presence of waste diminishes the appeal of the seaside area and heightens the potential hazards encountered by tourists during their stay. The presence of marine plastic particles discourages people from engaging in activities such as fishing, boating, swimming, diving, and visiting coastal areas.

### **The process by which plastics find their way into the ocean**

Multiple studies have found that 80% of plastics come from land sources. The improper handling and disposal of sewage and plastic garbage, as well as the dumping of waste along coastlines and the pollution caused by litter transported by streams Landfill plastics are introduced into the ocean due to various sources, including human activities, such as improper waste disposal, as well as natural processes, such as wind and rivers. Unintentional spills that happen during the process of handling or many other procedures are an additional source. The remaining twenty percent comprises waste generated by ships and boats due to recreational activities, the release of marine debris during nautical activities, fishing activities, and aquaculture. However, it is mostly commercial fishing that is responsible for most of the damage. This includes discarded fishing gear, as well as monofilament lines and nylon nets. The buoyancy of marine plastics facilitates their long-distance transportation by prevailing winds, ocean currents, and tides. Consequently, plastic waste can accumulate on coastlines, including remote islands, as well as in both the surface and deep waters of the open sea. River networks and wastewater treatment plants serve as conduits for the transportation of plastics from their production sites to the marine ecosystem. Furthermore, really intense natural calamities, such as hurricanes and floods, might increase the probability of land debris being carried away into the ocean. Ocean currents converge, causing plastic items to accumulate gradually at the center of large ocean vortices, resulting in the formation of extensive and persistent floating debris fields throughout the seas. These areas are usually known as "garbage patches."

### **Data collection**

A questionnaire was used as the main research instrument to collect responses for this study. To gain insight into the sentiments of coastal residents regarding the issue of marine plastic pollution, The collection of primary data involved the administration of questionnaires to residents of coastal towns. The questionnaire was the most suitable tool to utilize because it provided concise facts without any controversial dispute. The research necessitated the use of standardized data, and the questionnaire facilitated respondents' quick and effortless understanding of the inquiries, so enhancing the efficiency of the data collection procedure. At the onset of the trial, the participants were given explicit instructions for completing the questionnaire. The instructions contained a purpose statement and a research description. Furthermore, a confidentiality agreement was given to each participant to guarantee the anonymity of their views. If any of the respondents had any inquiries or want clarification on any of the questions, they were able to get assistance from the researcher who was conducting the survey.

### **Results and Discussion**

**Attributes of Individuals Who Have Provided a Response** The questionnaire process involved a total of 96 participants, who provided their replies from eight distinct coastal districts. All 96 respondents of the study were Indian citizens. To obtain an accurate understanding of the characteristics of the sample population, data was collected regarding the demographics of the population that was used as the sample. Van Rensburg et al. emphasize the significance of comprehending the characteristics and demographics of the research study's sample population. This understanding is crucial as it can influence participants' willingness to respond and, more importantly, affect their responses to the chosen questions.

### **Substitutes for Plastics**

A significant proportion of respondents (32% and 30% respectively) expressed a preference for paper and cloth as alternative alternatives to plastics. Possessing their own distinct Despite having both advantages and disadvantages, this alternative is considered to be a sustainable and ecologically sound choice. Paper bags undergo natural decomposition over time and can be easily recycled or composted after they are no longer needed. Nevertheless, to produce them on a large scale, a substantial quantity of water, fuel, and forests must be depleted. Cotton, a widely used material for manufacturing fabric bags, necessitates a substantial quantity of insecticides and uses a considerable amount of water. Plastics, despite their image, have the lowest carbon footprint, particularly when it comes to the production of a single unit. However, it should be noted that this is only the initial stage. Equally significant is the way we utilize and discard bags.

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