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A Systematic Analysis of the Role of Garment Washing in Promoting Eutrophication

Indrani Dhar*

Department of Textile Engineering, Port City International University, Chittagong, Bangladesh

***Corresponding Authors:** **Indrani Dhar,** *Department of Textile Engineering, Port City International University, Chittagong, Bangladesh*

Abstract: *Garment washing and dyeing contribute significantly to global pollution from the textile sector. This comprehensive research examines how garment washing affects eutrophication, a major environmental issue caused by excessive nutrient discharge into aquatic environments. Eutrophication causes algal blooms, oxygen depletion, and aquatic life damage. The review describes clothing washing steps, highlighting detergents, chemicals, and water use. These processes pollute wastewater with nutrients like phosphorus and nitrogen. These nutrients cause eutrophication in rivers, lakes, and seas. The study shows that synthetic textiles, microplastics, and colors exacerbate this issue.The analysis suggests sustainable washing, eco-friendly detergents, and water treatment technology improvements to address the issue. It also explores textile sector environmental regulations and certifications.*

Keywords: *Garment washing, eutrophication, textile industry, environmental impact, mitigation, sustainable practices.*

1. Introduction

The textile industry is one of the largest and most globalized industries, producing a vast range of clothing and textiles to meet consumer demands. Garments washing, a crucial step in textile manufacturing, plays a pivotal role in achieving the desired quality, texture, color, and softness of fabrics. However, the chemical processes and excessive water usage involved in this procedure can contribute to eutrophication, an environmental issue of increasing concern.Consumers in the current world place a premium not only on the practicality of their apparel but also on its impact on the economy and the environment. As a result, there has been increased interest in terms of using environmentally friendly, non-toxic, and biodegradable wet methods such as super white wash[1].Denim washing method that combines mechanical scrubbing with chemical treatments has recently attracted a lot of attention because of its eco-friendliness, non-toxicity, and excellent biodegradability[2].When nitrogen and phosphorus, both naturally occurring and introduced, are found in aquatic environments, this is known as eutrophication. Because of an overabundance of plant nutrients, the water quality in various water sources, such as ponds, lakes, rivers, etc., is decreasing. Over-fertilization of aquatic systems is a major global danger to aquatic ecosystem health[3].The promotion of trade beyond geographical boundaries for the benefit of both parties is a major success of this strategy. The availability of raw materials and a low-paid labor force have led numerous reputable global studies to predict that Southeast Asia would soon become a major center for the textile and clothing industries[4].

2. Garments Washing Techniques

This section provides an overview of the various techniques used in garment washing, including stone washing, enzyme washing, bleaching, and dyeing. Each technique has its own environmental implications, with the release of chemicals and effluents potentially contributing to eutrophication.Denim is simply a twill cloth with the warp yarn-dyed (with sulphur or vat) and the weft yarn left untreated and white. Size compounds are applied to warp yarn during fabric weaving, making the thread stronger and more able to withstand the mechanical abrasion that occurs during the weaving process.Therefore, it is crucial to lessen the rigidity of clothing to guarantee user-friendly experiences. Garment-washing technologists have developed a number of efficient dry and wet processes throughout the years to achieve this goal[2].Stone washing, enzyme washing, and acid

washing turn raw clothes into fashionable, distressed, or vintage-inspired pieces. Enzyme washing softens fabric and removes color, while stone washing creates a worn effect with abrasive stones. Fade or bleach effects are achieved by acid washing. Sandblasting, ozone washing, and tie-dye enable artistic customization. Garment washing improves comfort and fit, making it essential to fashion design and production.

3. Chemicals and Detergents

The chemicals and detergents used in garment washing, such as surfactants, bleaching agents, and colorants, can leach into wastewater, contaminating aquatic ecosystems. This section discusses the composition of these chemicals and their potential to act as nutrients that fuel eutrophication.Garment washing relies on various chemicals and detergents to achieve desired results. Here are some key substances used in the process:

Enzymes: Enzymes like amylase, cellulase, and protease are commonly used to break down starch, cellulose, and protein-based stains, facilitating softening and distressing of fabrics.

Alkalis: Sodium hydroxide (caustic soda) and potassium hydroxide are employed to adjust pH levels and aid in the removal of impurities and unwanted color.

Surfactants: Detergents containing surfactants help in the removal of dirt, oils, and stains by lowering surface tension.

Bleaching agents: Hydrogen peroxide and sodium hypochlorite are used for bleaching to achieve faded or whitened effects.

Acid and alkaline agents: These chemicals play a role in controlling pH levels during various washing processes like acid washing and neutralization.

Optical brighteners: Optical brightening agents are used to enhance the whiteness of fabrics.

Antifoaming agents: These prevent excessive foaming during washing.

4. Water Consumption

The textile industry is notorious for its high-water consumption, with garments washing being one of the most water-intensive processes. Excessive water usage can lead to the discharge of nutrient-rich wastewater, further exacerbating eutrophication concerns. This section discusses the importance of water conservation and sustainable water management practices in the textile industry.After the dry process is complete, the raw garments undergo a series of wet processes like enzyme wash, super white wash, acid wash, and stone wash to rid them of any remaining impurities (size materials, dirt, dust) that could impede the success of the succeeding textile processing steps. In contrast to an unwashed sample, the washed version seems softer, smoother, and more worn[2].

5. Impact on Eutrophication

Eutrophication is characterized by the excessive growth of algae and aquatic plants, which depletes oxygen levels and disrupts aquatic ecosystems. The release of nutrients from garments washing can contribute to the onset and acceleration of eutrophication. We delve into case studies and research findings that demonstrate the links between textile industry activities and eutrophication events.Water use in households and farms has been reduced as a result of the circulations. Discharges from industries involved in cattle farming, agriculture, fertilizer manufacture, textile manufacturing, and apparel production are major contributors of these plant nutrients to aquatic habitats[3].

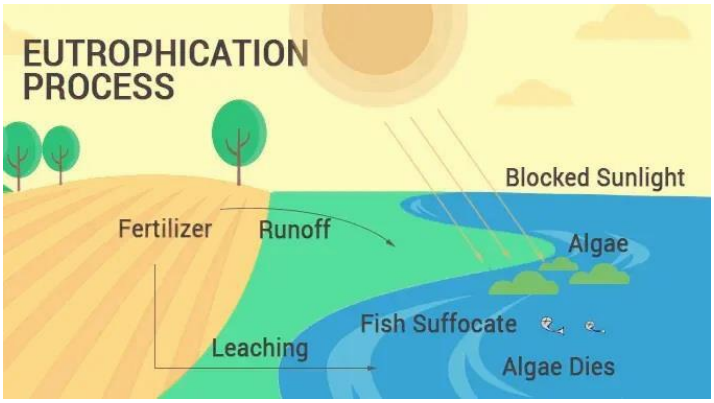

Figure: Eutrophication in the ecosystem[3].

6. Mitigation Strategies

This section outlines various strategies and technologies that can be employed to reduce the environmental impact of garment washing. Sustainable practices, such as eco-friendly detergents, closed-loop water recycling systems, and advanced treatment of effluents, are discussed as effective ways to mitigate eutrophication.When phosphorus is taken from the water ecosystem, it causes an explosion of algae and other aquatic plants. Additionally, it may lead to low levels of dissolved oxygen[3].

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, garment washing, while integral to the textile industry, can have a detrimental impact on aquatic ecosystems through eutrophication. The industry must adopt sustainable practices and technologies to minimize this impact and protect our water resources. By understanding the environmental consequences of garment washing and implementing responsible measures, the textile industry can contribute to a more sustainable and eco-conscious future.

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