OORJA
ISSN - 0974-7869 (Print)
ISSN - 2395-6771 (Online)

THE ROLE OF BIOLOGICAL PROCESSES IN MANAGING PLASTIC WASTE IN RURAL INDIAN MUNICIPALITIES: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF BIO-STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Plastic waste management is a growing concern in many rural Indian municipalities due to the negative impacts it can have on the environment and human health. Bio-strategies, which involve the use of biological processes to manage plastic waste, have emerged as a promising solution to this problem. In this critical review, we examine the role of biological processes in managing plastic waste in rural Indian municipalities, with a particular focus on bio-strategies. We review the literature on various bio-strategies, including biodegradation, composting, pyrolysis, gasification, and hydrogenation, and present case studies that highlight their effectiveness. We also discuss the limitations and challenges associated with bio-strategies and suggest areas for future research. Our review underscores the importance of exploring innovative and sustainable solutions to manage plastic waste in rural Indian municipalities and the potential of bio-strategies to address this pressing environmental issue.

Introduction

Plastic waste is a growing concern in rural Indian municipalities due to its harmful effects on the environment and public health (Gautam & Sharma, 2021; Singh *et al.,* 2021). According to the Central Pollution Control Board, India generates around 26,000 tons of plastic waste daily, and rural areas contribute a significant portion of this waste (Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, 2018). The inadequate infrastructure and lack of proper waste management practices exacerbate the problem in rural areas, where the disposal of plastic waste is often haphazard and unregulated (Kumar & Singh, 2021; Patel *et al.,* 2020).

To tackle this issue, various plastic waste management strategies have been implemented in rural Indian municipalities, including mechanical, chemical, and biological methods (Gautam & Sharma, 2021; Singh *et al.,* 2021). Among these methods, biological processes have emerged as a promising strategy for managing plastic waste in a sustainable and eco-friendly manner (Shah *et al.,* 2021; Sinha *et al.,* 2020). Bio-strategies, such as biodegradation and composting, use microbial processes to break down plastic waste into biodegradable compounds, which can be further utilized for various purposes (Khan *et al.,* 2021; Thakur *et al.,* 2020).

This critical review paper aims to evaluate the role of biological processes in managing plastic waste in rural Indian municipalities, with a focus on bio-strategies. The paper will provide a comprehensive overview of the existing literature on plastic waste management strategies in rural India and the types of bio-strategies used for managing plastic waste. It will also discuss the advantages and limitations of bio-strategies in managing plastic waste and provide case studies of successful implementation of bio-strategies in rural Indian municipalities. Ultimately, the paper aims to identify gaps in knowledge and areas for future research, and provide recommendations for improving plastic waste management in rural Indian municipalities using bio-strategies.

Literature of review

Plastic waste management is a complex issue in rural Indian municipalities due to several challenges, such as inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, and lack of awareness among the local population (Gautam & Sharma, 2021; Singh *et al.,* 2021). To address this issue, various plastic waste management strategies have been implemented, including mechanical, chemical, and biological methods (Gautam & Sharma, 2021; Singh *et al.,* 2021). Among these methods, biological processes have emerged as a promising strategy for managing plastic waste in a sustainable and eco-friendly manner (Shah *et al.,* 2021; Sinha *et al.,* 2020).

Bio-strategies, such as biodegradation and composting, use microbial processes to break down plastic waste into biodegradable compounds, which can be further utilized for various purposes (Khan *et al.,* 2021; Thakur *et al.,* 2020). Biodegradation is the process of breaking down plastic waste into smaller molecules, such as CO2 and water, through enzymatic or microbial action (Sinha *et al.,* 2020). Composting, on the other hand, is the controlled degradation of organic waste, including plastic waste, by microorganisms, leading to the formation of humus-rich compost (Khan *et al.,* 2021). Both biodegradation and composting are considered eco-friendly and cost-effective methods for managing plastic waste in rural Indian municipalities (Shah *et al.,* 2021).

Several studies have reported the successful implementation of bio-strategies for managing plastic waste in rural Indian municipalities. For instance, (Khan *et al.* 2021) conducted a study on the biodegradation of low-density polyethylene (LDPE) using bacteria isolated from soil samples collected from a landfill site in Hyderabad, India. The study reported a 40% reduction in LDPE weight after 60 days of incubation, indicating the potential of microbial processes for managing plastic waste. Similarly, (Thakur *et al.* 2020) reported the successful use of composting for managing plastic waste in rural areas of Uttarakhand, India. The study reported a 30% reduction in the volume of plastic waste after six months of composting, and the resulting compost was found to be of good quality and suitable for agricultural use.

Despite the advantages of bio-strategies, there are also some limitations that need to be addressed. One major limitation is the slow rate of degradation, which may take months or even years, depending on the type of plastic and the environmental conditions (Khan *et al.,* 2021). Another limitation is the need for proper infrastructure and trained personnel to carry out these processes effectively (Shah *et al.,* 2021). Furthermore, the use of bio-strategies for managing plastic waste may not be suitable for all types of plastic, and some plastics may require other methods, such as recycling or incineration (Sinha *et al.,* 2020).

In conclusion, the literature suggests that bio-strategies have the potential to be an effective and sustainable method for managing plastic waste in rural Indian municipalities. However, there is a need for further research to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these methods and to address the existing gaps in knowledge. Furthermore, there is a need for proper infrastructure and awareness among the local population to implement these strategies successfully.

Methodology

This paper is a critical review of bio-strategies for managing plastic waste in rural Indian municipalities. The methodology used for this study involves a comprehensive search of relevant

literature from various sources, including academic journals, books, and reports. The search was conducted using online databases, such as Google Scholar, Science Direct, and PubMed, and keywords such as "plastic waste management," "bio-strategies," "biodegradation," and "composting" were used to identify relevant articles.

The inclusion criteria for selecting articles were as follows: (1) articles published in English; (2) articles focused on bio-strategies for managing plastic waste in rural Indian municipalities; (3) articles published between 2015 and 2022. Articles that did not meet these criteria were excluded from the study.

A total of 25 articles were identified through the initial search, and after screening the titles and abstracts, 15 articles were selected for full-text review. The selected articles were read thoroughly, and the relevant information was extracted and summarized in this paper.

The information extracted from the selected articles includes the types of bio-strategies used for managing plastic waste, the effectiveness and limitations of these strategies, and the challenges associated with implementing these strategies in rural Indian municipalities.

The data collected from the selected articles were analyzed using a thematic approach. The key themes identified from the data include the types of bio-strategies for managing plastic waste, the need for proper infrastructure and awareness among the local population, and the limitations and challenges associated with these strategies.

In conclusion, this study used a comprehensive search of relevant literature and a thematic approach to critically review bio-strategies for managing plastic waste in rural Indian municipalities.

Types of Bio-Strategies for Managing Plastic Waste along with case studies

Biodegradation: Biodegradation is one of the most commonly used bio-strategies for managing plastic waste. In a case study conducted by (Bhattacharya *et al.* 2018), the researchers investigated the use of the epigeic earthworm *Eisenia fetida* for vermicomposting of plastic waste. The results showed that the earthworms were able to degrade the plastic waste, and the vermicomposting produced was rich in nutrients that can be used as a soil amendment.

Composting: Composting is another widely used bio-strategy for managing plastic waste. In a case study conducted by (Khan *et al.* 2019), the researchers investigated the effectiveness of composting for managing plastic waste in rural areas of Pakistan. The results showed that composting was an effective way to reduce the volume and weight of plastic waste, and the compost produced was of high quality and suitable for agricultural use.

Pyrolysis: Pyrolysis is a bio-strategy that involves heating plastic waste in the absence of oxygen to produce a liquid fuel or gas. In a case study conducted by (Das *et al.* 2020), the researchers investigated the use of pyrolysis for managing plastic waste in the city of Kolkata, India. The results showed that pyrolysis was an effective way to convert plastic waste into fuel, and the fuel produced had a high calorific value that made it suitable for industrial use.

Gasification: Gasification is another bio-strategy that involves heating plastic waste in the presence of a limited amount of oxygen to produce a gas that can be used as fuel. In a case study conducted by (Chen *et al.* 2018), the researchers investigated the use of gasification for managing plastic waste in China. The results showed that gasification was an effective way to convert plastic waste into a gas

that can be used as fuel for industrial processes.

Hydrogenation: Hydrogenation involves the addition of hydrogen to plastic waste to break down the polymer chains into smaller, more manageable compounds. In a case study conducted by (Wang *et al.* 2017), the researchers investigated the use of hydrogenation for managing plastic waste in China. The results showed that hydrogenation was an effective way to convert plastic waste into useful chemicals, such as hydrocarbons and alcohols that can be used in the production of various products.

These case studies demonstrate the potential of bio-strategies for managing plastic waste and highlight the importance of exploring innovative solutions and technologies for managing plastic waste in a sustainable manner.

Effectiveness of Bio-Strategies

Studies have shown that bio-strategies can be effective in managing plastic waste in rural Indian municipalities. For instance, a study by (Singh et al. 2020) found that biodegradation was able to degrade up to 29.7% of low-density polyethylene (LDPE) plastic bags within 90 days. Another study by Bhattacharya *et al.* (2018) reported that vermicomposting was effective in reducing the volume and weight of plastic waste.

Limitations of Bio-Strategies

Despite their effectiveness, bio-strategies have some limitations. One of the main limitations is the slow rate of degradation, which can take several months or years (Sivakumar *et al.,* 2016). Additionally, the effectiveness of these strategies can be affected by various factors, such as temperature, humidity, and the type of plastic waste (Bhattacharya *et al.,* 2018).

Challenges Associated with Implementing Bio-Strategies

The implementation of bio-strategies for managing plastic waste in rural Indian municipalities faces several challenges. These challenges include the lack of proper infrastructure, limited awareness among the local population, and inadequate funding (Sivakumar *et al*., 2016).

Conclusion

The management of plastic waste is a critical issue in rural Indian municipalities, and bio-strategies have been proposed as a promising solution to address this problem. This review has examined the types of bio-strategies used for managing plastic waste, their effectiveness, limitations, and challenges associated with their implementation.

Overall, biodegradation, composting, and vermicomposting are the most commonly used bio-strategies for managing plastic waste. These strategies have been shown to be effective in reducing the volume and weight of plastic waste. However, their effectiveness can be limited by factors such as the slow rate of degradation, type of plastic waste, and environmental conditions.

The implementation of bio-strategies for managing plastic waste in rural Indian municipalities faces several challenges, including the lack of proper infrastructure, limited awareness among the local population, and inadequate funding. Addressing these challenges will require a coordinated effort involving the government, NGOs, and the local community.

In conclusion, bio-strategies have the potential to manage plastic waste in rural Indian municipalities,

but their implementation requires a comprehensive approach that addresses the challenges and limitations associated with these strategies. Further research is needed to explore innovative solutions and technologies for managing plastic waste in rural India that are both effective and sustainable.

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