



Identification of the distribution pattern of *macroalgae caulerpa racemosa* in Ternate City

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ABSTRACT

Coastal ecosystems in Ternate have high biodiversity, including the macroalgae *Caulerpa racemosa*, which contributes to ecosystem stabilization and mitigation of ocean acidification. However, environmental degradation due to human activities poses a serious threat, so analyzing the distribution and density of macroalgae is important for sustainable ecosystem management. This study aimed to analyze the distribution pattern and density of *C. racemosa* in Kastela and Gamalama waters, Ternate City. Data collection was conducted from May to August 2024 using the line transect method with 1x1 m² quadrants in two research locations. Each site had three 50 m long transect lines with five quadrants per transect. Density was calculated based on the number of individuals per unit area, while distribution patterns were analyzed using the Morisita index (Id). Environmental data such as temperature, salinity and pH were also measured to understand the factors affecting macroalgae distribution. Spatial analysis using GIS software visualized distribution patterns. Results showed that *C. racemosa* had a concentrated distribution pattern (Id > 1) in both study sites, with higher average densities in Kastela waters than Gamalama. Environmental factors, including temperature and substrate type, significantly influenced the distribution of this species. This study provides important data to support ecosystem-based management and sustainable coastal conservation, and fills an information gap on the impacts of ecological pressures on macroalgae in this region.

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Introduction

Coastal ecosystems, especially those containing macroalgae such as *Caulerpa racemosa*, are critical to ecological balance and human livelihoods, especially in biodiverse areas such as Ternate. Macroalgae contribute significantly to habitat provision, sediment stabilization, and nutrient cycling, while also serving as a potential safeguard against ocean acidification (OA) by modifying seawater pH through photosynthesis (Edworthy *et al*, 2023; N. C. James & Whitfield, 2023). The presence of high macroalgal biomass can mitigate the negative effects of OA, which in turn favors marine biodiversity and ecosystem health (Miloslavich *et al*, 2019; Akbar *et al*, 2025a). However, human activities, including coastal land conversion and pollution, pose threats to coastal ecosystems. Research on macroalgal distribution and density to inform sustainable

management practices (Rodrigues-Filho *et al*, 2023). Understanding these dynamics is crucial to preserving the ecological functions and services that coastal lagoons provide, which extend beyond local ecosystems to benefit the needs of the wider community (Rodrigues-Filho *et al*, 2023; Akbar & hasan, 2024).

The distribution patterns and density of *Caulerpa racemosa* in Ternate are poorly documented. This results in significant knowledge gaps that hinder effective coastal ecosystem management. Many studies have shown that macroalgae, including *C. racemosa*, serve as vital indicators of ecological health and can reflect environmental disturbances caused by human activities (Asriani *et al*, 2024; Kalalembang *et al*, 2024). For example, studies in various coastal areas of Indonesia have used methods such as line

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transects and quadrat sampling to assess macroalgal diversity and density, revealing that environmental factors significantly influence their distribution (Basyuni et al, 2024; Turangan et al, 2024; Akbar et al., 2023). A systematic review of seaweed biodiversity in Indonesia identified more than 325 species, emphasizing the need for local studies to understand the distribution of certain species, such as *C. racemosa*, which can inform sustainable conservation policies and improve understanding of anthropogenic impacts on marine ecosystems (Mayakun & Prathep, 2023). Therefore, the research to be conducted in Ternate waters is essential to fill this gap and support effective coastal management strategies.

A systematic review identified at least 325 seaweed species across Indonesia, with environmental factors influencing their distribution and abundance (Mayakun & Prathep, 2023). In Ternate, studies have documented the diversity of red algae (Rhodophyta) and their specific habitat preferences, such as corals and sandy substrates, suggesting a rich coastal ecosystem (Yang et al, 2021). In addition, research on seagrass diversity at Kastela Beach highlighted the presence of six seagrass species, contributing to overall coastal biodiversity (Srimariana et al, 2020). Although research on *C. racemosa* in Ternate is limited compared to areas such as Bali and Java, it provides valuable insights into coastal ecology and biodiversity conservation efforts in Indonesia (Agdialta et al, 2023; Samman & Achmad, 2023).

The lack of literature on coastal ecosystem dynamics in Ternate, particularly on the distribution

pattern of *Caulerpa racemosa*, led to this study. Studies show that environmental factors such as temperature, salinity, and substrate type significantly affect the distribution and abundance of *Caulerpa* species in various Indonesian coastal waters (Ulaş et al, 2011). For example, nutrient levels, particularly nitrate and ammonia, have been shown to correlate with *Caulerpa* growth, suggesting that similar investigations in Ternate may explain local dynamics (Pulukadan et al, 2013; Akbar et al., 2025b). In addition, the impacts of coastal reclamation on physical and ecological parameters in Ternate have been documented, suggesting potential habitat alterations that could affect macroalgal distribution (Rashedy et al, 2022). Therefore, a comprehensive study is essential to fill existing knowledge gaps and improve the coastal ecology database for the region (Buana et al, 2024; Darmawan et al, 2022; Rashedy et al, 2022).

This study aims to analyze the distribution pattern and density of *Caulerpa racemosa* in Ternate coastal area. This study is expected to produce scientific data that can support ecosystem based management and sustainable conservation in Ternate waters, as well as answer the existing information gap regarding the impact of ecological pressures on the distribution pattern of *C. racemosa*.

Materials and methods

Location and time of research

This research was conducted from May to August 2024. The research site was located in the coastal waters of Kastela and Gamalama, Ternate City.

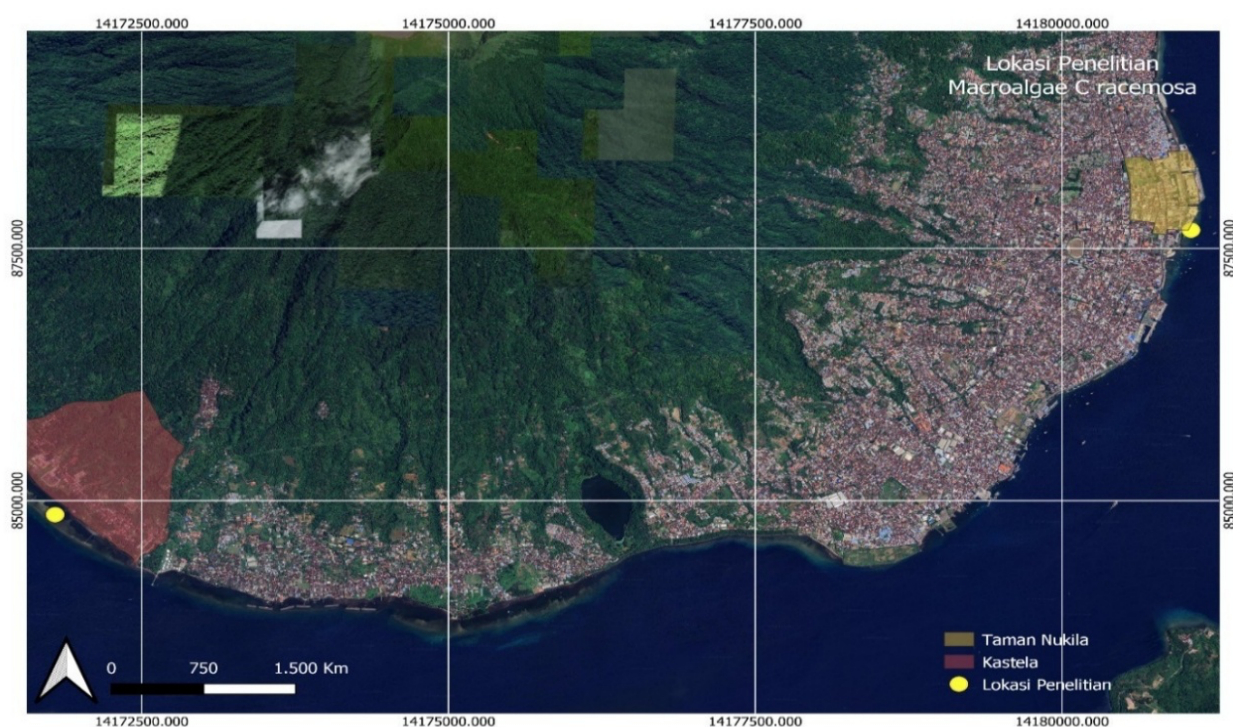


Figure 1: research location

Materials and Methods

Table 1. The tools and materials used in this study

No	Name	Using
1	Hariba Water Inspection	Water quality meter
2	Pipe 1m x 1m	Quadrant
3	Underwater camera	Documentation
4	GPS	coordinate point of research
5	Sterofoam	Storing macroalgae samples
6	Plastic samples	Storing macroalgae samples
7	Stationery	Recording the results of research in the field
8	Label paper	Sample labels

Data collection and analysis method

The methods used in this study include field surveys and spatial data analysis. Field surveys were conducted in several strategic locations in the waters of Ternate City, the location is in the coastal waters of Kastela and Gamalama Ternate City which are known to have high biodiversity.

Sampling methods using line transects and quadrant techniques (English et al, 1997). Sampling was conducted at 2 research sites where the transect placement was divided into 3 transect lines of 50 m long which were placed perpendicular (vertical) to the shoreline with 5 quadrants (size 1x1 m²), the distance between quadrants in one transect line was 10 m and the distance between transects was 50 m. Each quadrant was determined and counted the number of individuals. Each quadrant was determined and counted in number of individuals. The use of transects and quadrants can provide accurate information about the distribution of species in a particular habitat. The data obtained were then analyzed using GIS (Geographic Information System) software to visualize the distribution pattern (Buana et al, 2024).

Density of *C. racemosa* macroalgae species

Density is the total number of individuals in a measured unit. Macroalgae density was calculated using (J. Brower & Zar, 1977).

$$Di = ni/A$$

Where:

*I*_n = Number of macroalgae (*thallus*) individuals up to – i per unit area

ni = Number of macroalgae (*thallus*) individuals up to –i in the quadrant transect
A = Quadrant transect area

Distribution pattern

The distribution pattern of macroalgae was calculated based on the distribution pattern equation of Morisita (Id) according to (J. E. Brower et al, 1990).

$$Id = n \frac{\sum x^2 - N}{N(n-1)}$$

Information:

Id = Morisita dispersion index;

n = Number of sampling plots;

N = Total number of individuals in the plot;

x²= Number of individuals in each plot

The distribution pattern criteria (Id) are random distribution pattern Id=1.0, distribution pattern Id<1.0, clustering distribution pattern Id>1.0. To understand the distribution pattern of *C racemosa* in Ternate City. Descriptive statistical analysis was used to describe the distribution characteristics, while spatial analysis helped in identifying areas of high concentration. In addition, environmental data such as temperature, salinity, and depth were also analyzed to understand the factors affecting *C. racemosa* distribution.

Water quality

Water quality is crucial for the sustainability of marine ecosystems, affecting the health and diversity of aquatic life, including fish and plankton. Key parameters such as temperature, salinity, pH, and dissolved oxygen are essential for assessing the physico- chemical conditions of the marine environment, directly affecting the physiological and biochemical activities of marine organisms (Lapa et al, 2024). Monitoring these parameters is critical to understanding the impacts of human activities, such as pollution from municipal sewage, which can cause significant ecological disruption (Lapa et al, 2024; Zaragoza-Esquerdo et al, 2024).

Result

Density of the macroalga *C racemosa*

Macroalgal species density is an important parameter in marine ecology, it reflects the number of individuals of a species per unit area. Low densities usually indicate that the habitat is considered less favorable for the growth of a particular macroalgae species.

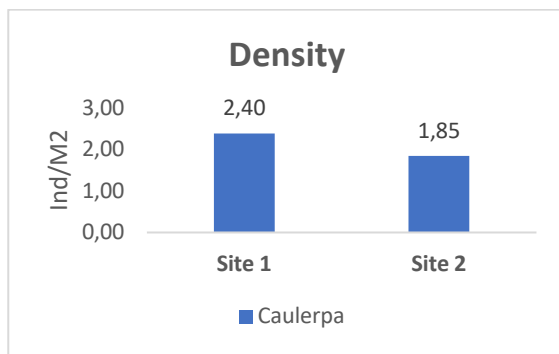


Figure 2. Density of *C. racemosa*.

Distribution patterns

Macroalgae distribution patterns can provide important information about the health and balance of coastal ecosystems. Through a better understanding of macroalgae distribution patterns, it is possible to further identify areas vulnerable to damage and develop effective management strategies to conserve biodiversity and preserve coastal ecosystems. Distribution patterns are caused by aquatic ecological factors that can control the presence of macroalgae and the biological characteristics of macroalgae. The distribution pattern of *C. racemosa* at the study site is presented in Figure 3.

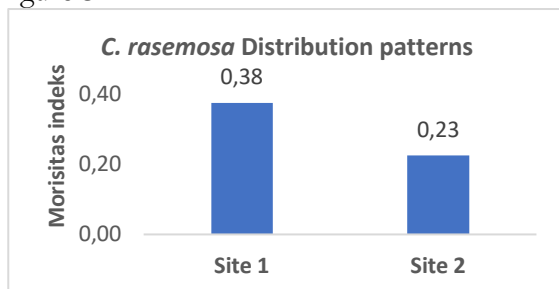


Figure 3. Distribution pattern of *C. racemosa* in Ternate City waters

Water quality of *C. racemosa*

Water quality is key to supporting sustainable fisheries management and efficient aquaculture production. Water quality data are also used to detect and mitigate the impacts of pollution in marine waters. Pollution-related studies, such as the introduction of hazardous chemicals, heavy metals or microplastics, require continuous water quality measurements to take appropriate precautions. These data not only help identify pollution sources, but also provide guidance for policymakers to establish effective regulations to maintain the health of marine ecosystems. Therefore, the integration of water quality data in marine research plays an important role in optimizing conservation efforts and mitigating environmental impacts. The results of

water quality measurements at the study sites are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Water quality measurement results of *C. racemosa*.

No	Criterion	Location	
		Site 1	Site 2
1	Salinity (ppm)	30	23,69
2	Ph	8,22	8,31
3	DO (mg/L)	6,03	5,21
4	Temperature (°C)	31	29
5	Brightness (m)	1,5	1,5

Discussion

Macroalgae *caulerpa racemosa* density

Caulerpa racemosa (*C. racemosa*) density is an important indicator of coastal ecosystem conditions and reflects habitat suitability. The density of *C. racemosa* at Station 1 of 2.40 individuals/m² indicates optimal conditions for proliferation. While the lower density of 1.85 individuals/m² at Station 2 indicates that limiting factors such as depth and light availability significantly affect macroalgal distribution (Cebrian & Ballesteros, 2009; Sun et al, 2016) and substrate also determines macroalgal abundance, with spatial and temporal variations influenced by seasonal changes and anthropogenic impacts (Cebrian & Ballesteros, 2009).

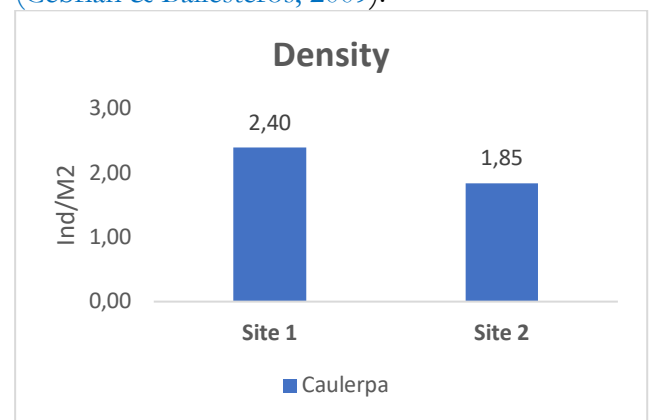


Figure 4: Density *C. racemosa*

The water temperature of 31°C at Station 1 favored optimal metabolism and photosynthesis of tropical macroalgae, which is thought to be the cause of the density of *C. racemosa*, while the temperature of 29°C at Station 2 is thought to be a limiting factor for these processes. Optimal temperatures range from 28-30°C, with significant increases reducing growth and photosynthetic efficiency (Aditya et al, 2023; Wu et al, 2023). Acclimatization to thermal fluctuations may affect species tolerance to environmental warming (Huang et al, 2023). Salinity also affects *C. racemosa* growth, with optimality in the 30-35 ppt range achieved at Station 1. Lower salinity (23.69 ppt) at Station 2 may interfere with

osmoregulation, reducing growth potential (Phelps, 2016; Sácz et al, 2023; Z. Wang et al, 2024).

The response of *C. racemosa* to stable salinity is similar to patterns in other halophyte species (Z. Wang et al, 2024), emphasizing the role of salinity in the sustainability of coastal ecosystems. Dissolved oxygen (DO) concentration is also influential, where a (DO) of 6.03 mg/L at Station 1 supports photosynthesis, while (DO) 5.21 mg/L at Station 2 can trigger physiological stress. The combination of temperature, salinity, and (DO) factors, as well as the alkaline pH, clarifies the variation in *C. racemosa* density. A thorough understanding of these dynamics is important for the sustainable management and conservation of marine ecosystems (Angell et al, 2015; Karsten, 2012; J.-J. Wang et al, 2024).

Distribution pattern of *caulerpa racemosa*

The spatial distribution of *Caulerpa racemosa* provides important insights into the ecological stability and environmental conditions of coastal waters. The uniform distribution pattern observed at the two stations, with indices of 0.38 and 0.23 respectively, reflects relatively homogeneous environmental conditions. However, the lower index at Station 2 indicates a more restricted distribution, likely caused by environmental stress (Liu et al, 2022). This phenomenon highlights the significant influence of environmental variables on coastal habitats (Liu et al, 2022).

In addition, the distribution of *C. racemosa* was influenced by depth and habitat type, with higher densities found on rocky substrates compared to

seagrass beds. This suggests the urgency of monitoring invasive species such as *C. racemosa*, which have the potential to threaten native biodiversity and alter benthic communities (James et al, 2022).

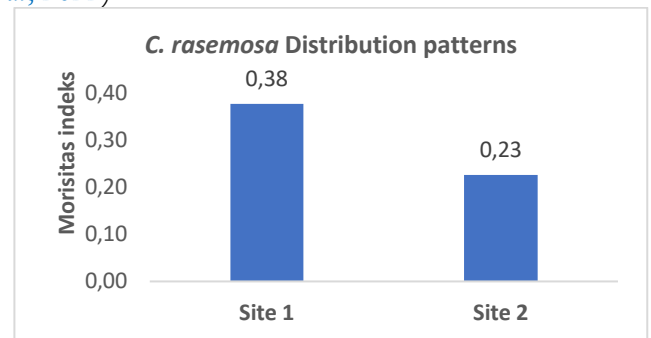


Figure 5. distribution pattern *C. racemosa*

Environmental parameters such as temperature, salinity, pH, and dissolved oxygen (DO) are instrumental in determining the spatial distribution of *C. racemosa* (James et al, 2022). High temperatures at Station 1 (31°C) increase metabolism and reproduction, thereby expanding the distribution of the species, while lower temperatures at Station 2 (29°C) can inhibit physiological activities, potentially reducing species density (Ali et al, 2022). The lower salinity at Station 2 (23.69 ppt) also provides a challenge, as salinity variations can disrupt osmoregulation and metabolic functions of macroalgae (Cebrian & Ballesteros, 2009; Sun et al, 2016). The interaction of these environmental factors shapes habitat preferences and species distribution patterns in diverse ecological contexts (Storz, 2024).

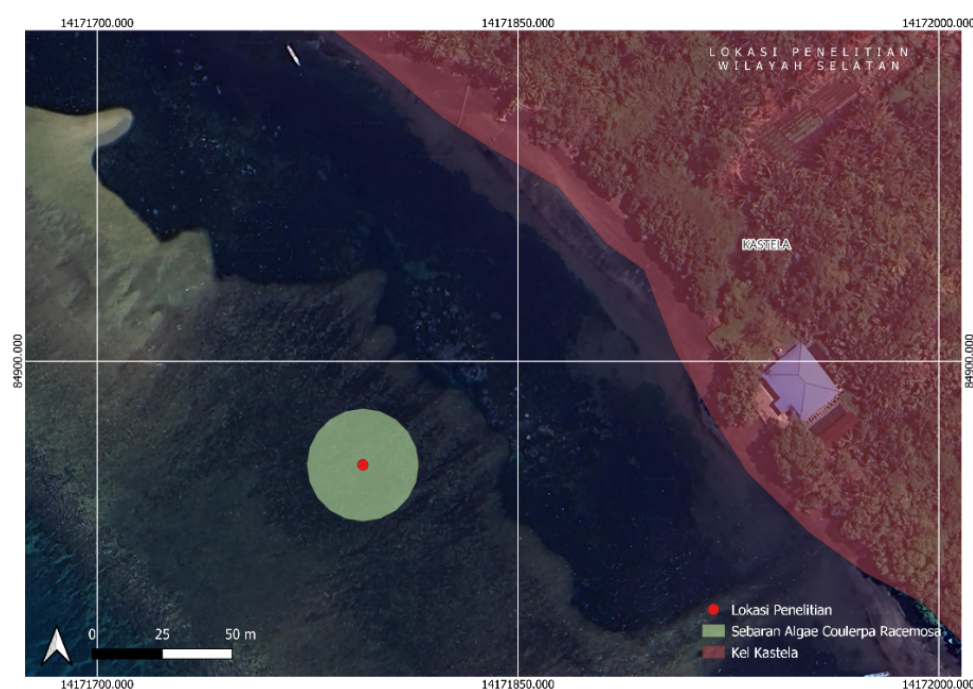


Figure 6. Distribution Pattern of *C. racemosa* in the waters of Castela Beach

Dissolved oxygen (DO) concentration affects the metabolic processes of marine species (Aditya et al, 2023; Long et al, 2024). At Station 1, higher (DO) levels (6.03 mg/L) supported aerobic respiration essential for intensive metabolic activities, thus increasing the colonization potential of *C. racemosa* (Aditya et al, 2023). In contrast, lower (DO) concentrations at Station 2 (5.21 mg/L) may limit metabolic processes, thereby affecting the distribution of the species (Aditya et al, 2023). The pH values recorded at both stations (8.22 at Station 1 and 8.31 at Station 2) support optimal photosynthesis by providing carbonate ions necessary for macroalgal growth. However, the interaction of temperature, salinity, and (DO) at Station 2 may lead to cumulative stresses that inhibit macroalgae distribution (Huang et al, 2023; Wu et al, 2023).

Ecologically, uniform distribution patterns among macroalgae indicate efficient spatial utilization and minimal interspecies competition, especially under stable environmental conditions (Singh et al, 2021). However, the lower distribution index values at Station 2 reflect higher environmental stress, both due to anthropogenic influences and natural variability (Clausing & Fong, 2016). The integration of abiotic factor analysis, including spatial structure and environmental gradients, is essential for identifying stressed habitats and establishing effective conservation strategies (Lemley et al, 2021). This approach provides a foundation for improving macroalgae conservation strategies in the face of increasingly complex environmental challenges (Fulton et al, 2019).



Figure 7. Distribution pattern of *C. racemosa* in Gamalama coastal waters

Water quality and its effect on *caulerpa racemosa*

Water quality parameters, such as salinity, temperature, dissolved oxygen (DO), and pH, play a key role in determining the ecological conditions and distribution of macroalgae, including *Caulerpa racemosa*. These parameters directly affect the physiological processes of algae, with optimal pH

(6.81-8.33) and sufficient (DO) concentrations required to support healthy algal growth (Buana et al, 2024; Phelps, 2016; Sáez et al, 2023). Salinity and temperature also influence osmoregulation, metabolism, and distribution patterns of macroalgae, as reflected in the significant relationships between water quality and ecological indicators (Ferrer-Ledo et al, 2023; Pang et al, 2023; Z. Wang et al, 2024).

Temperature significantly affects the metabolism and photosynthesis of *C. racemosa*. At high temperatures (31°C), physiological activity increases, which favors algal distribution and density. However, lower temperatures (29°C) can limit metabolic efficiency, thereby reducing growth (Kumari et al, 2015; Nunes & Camargo, 2020). Temperatures outside the optimal range (28-30°C) can cause thermal stress, decrease photosynthesis, and inhibit metabolic performance (Angell et al, 2015; Karsten, 2012). For example, *Picochlorum* sp. showed decreased photosynthetic efficiency at high temperatures, despite its increased phagotrophic activity, reflecting a complex adaptive response to temperature change (Karsten, 2012).

Table 3. Results of water quality measurements of *C. racemosa*.

No	Criterion	Location	
		Site 1	Site 2
1	Salinity (ppm)	30	23,69
2	Ph	8,22	8,31
3	DO (mg/L)	6,03	5,21
4	Temperature (°C)	31	29
5	Brightness (m)	1,5	1,5

Salinity affects the osmoregulatory capacity and metabolism of algae. *C. racemosa* shows optimal growth at 30 ppt salinity, while physiological stress occurs at 23.69 ppt, due to impaired ion balance and decreased nutrient uptake (Liu et al, 2022; J.-J. Wang et al, 2024). In *Ulva ohnoi*, higher salinity is associated with increased levels of amino acids, which are important for osmoregulatory adaptations (Liquarobby et al, 2021). These metabolic adaptations, such as the synthesis of salinity-responsive osmolytes and proteins, support the ability of algae to survive in extreme salinity conditions (James et al, 2022; Yadollahi et al, 2023).

DO is essential for aerobic respiration and supports a healthy aquatic ecosystem. Higher (DO) at Station 1 (6.03 mg/L) promoted *C. racemosa* growth compared to Station 2 (5.21 mg/L), which may indicate hypoxic conditions, limiting algal growth and increasing the risk of eutrophication (Becherucci et al, 2021; Houngnandan et al, 2019). (DO) anomalies highlight the importance of sustainable management to prevent ecosystem degradation (Katsanevakis et al, 2010).

Moderate pH conditions (8.22 at Station 1 and 8.31 at Station 2) favor photosynthesis, increase carbonate ion availability, and promote algal growth (Bernardeau-Esteller et al, 2011). Alkaline environments also favor lipid accumulation, as demonstrated in microalgae with increased pH

promoting photosystem efficiency and mitigating coastal acidification (Chandler, 1942).

Uniform water clarity (1.5 meters) facilitated algal photosynthesis. However, variations in temperature, salinity and (DO) determine the distribution pattern of *C. racemosa*. Research shows the adaptive ability of *C. racemosa* to variations in light intensity, which enhances its success in diverse ecosystems (Muhaemin et al, 2022; Najamuddin et al, 2023). Thus, studies on the interaction of water clarity with other environmental parameters are essential to understand the distribution dynamics of macroalgae (Buana et al, 2024; Chauhan et al, 2022).

Synthesis and implications

The integration of environmental parameters with biological observations revealed that *C. racemosa* thrived optimally at Station 1 in Ternate waters, characterized by favorable conditions such as higher temperature, salinity, and dissolved oxygen (DO) levels, which correlated with increased species density. In contrast, Station 2 presented environmental constraints, especially lower salinity and (DO), which adversely affected the ecological performance of *C. racemosa*, leading to reduced density and distribution. This pattern is in line with findings on the influence of oceanographic parameters on marine life, where variations in temperature and salinity significantly impact species distribution and health, as evidenced in studies of coral bleaching and macroalgal diversity in coastal ecosystems (Holman et al, 2013; Singh et al, 2021; Smyth & Elliott, 2016).

The study found that measurable management interventions are needed to reduce environmental stress at Station 2, particularly through monitoring salinity fluctuations and improving water circulation. Salinity is a key factor influencing the distribution and health of aquatic ecosystems, as it affects the physiological tolerance of various species, with euryhaline organisms benefiting from lower salinity while stenohaline species face stress (Clausing & Fong, 2016). Effective management strategies, such as spatially targeted water level adjustments, can significantly reduce salinity impacts in coastal aquifers, improving ecological balance (Fulton et al, 2019). In addition, maintaining homogeneous environmental conditions is essential to support macroalgal growth, which is critical for ecosystem resilience (Fulton et al, 2019; Lemley et al, 2021). Implementing catchment-scale interventions, such as restoring hydrodynamic variability, can also improve biodiversity and ecosystem health in affected areas (Ji & Gao, 2021).

Findings regarding the ecological dynamics of macroalgae, particularly *C. racemosa*, demonstrate the significant influence of abiotic factors such as nutrient availability, temperature, and ocean acidification on their growth and community structure in tropical marine ecosystems. Research shows that nutrient limitation can shift rapidly between nitrogen and phosphorus depending on environmental conditions, highlighting the complexity of nutrient dynamics in these ecosystems (Lapa et al, 2024; Tetali et al, 2024; Zaragoza-Esquerdo et al, 2024). In addition, climate change factors, including ocean warming and UV radiation, may promote growth in some macroalgal species while adversely affecting others, especially calcifying species that are sensitive to acidification (Phelps, 2016). These insights are critical for developing evidence-based conservation strategies aimed at conserving biodiversity and sustaining ecosystem services, as they emphasize the need for habitat connectivity and adaptive management in response to ongoing environmental changes (Ji et al, 2016). Future research should focus on long-term monitoring of environmental parameters and their interactions with macroalgal physiology, incorporating advanced methodologies such as remote sensing and molecular analysis. Such an approach could improve our understanding of macroalgal ecology and inform adaptive management practices in response to changing environmental conditions.

Conclusion

The density and distribution pattern of *C. racemosa* were significantly influenced by environmental parameters such as temperature, salinity, dissolved oxygen (DO), and pH. Station 1 with a temperature of 31°C, salinity of 30 ppt, (DO) 6.03 mg/L, and pH 8.22 showed optimal conditions for *C. racemosa* proliferation, with a density of 2.40 individuals/m² and a uniform distribution reflecting a favorable habitat. In contrast, Station 2 with a temperature of 29°C, lower salinity of 23.69 ppt, (DO) 5.21 mg/L, and pH 8.31 experienced higher environmental stress, resulting in a lower density of 1.85 individuals/m² and a more restricted distribution.

Water quality parameters have a significant role in determining the physiological and ecological adaptations of these macroalgae. Optimal temperature (28-30°C) supports metabolism and photosynthesis, while stable salinity allows efficient osmoregulation. Lower (DO) variation at Station 2 may trigger physiological stress, limiting macroalgal growth and distribution. Uniform distribution

patterns indicate efficient habitat utilization under stable environmental conditions. Whereas lower distribution index values reflect environmental stress due to anthropogenic and natural factors.

This study emphasizes the importance of integrating abiotic factor analysis in the sustainable management of coastal ecosystems, while providing critical insights for developing conservation strategies in the face of complex environmental change.

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