

TREATMENT OF LANDFILL LEACHATE USING MODIFIED ANAEROBIC  
BAFFLED REACTOR

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TREATMENT OF LANDFILL LEACHATE USING MODIFIED ANAEROBIC  
BAFFLED REACTOR

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## **DEDICATION**

Dedicated to my respected and honorable father (late) Prof. Dr Qamar-e-Hasan and my beloved mother whose blessings helped me at every step.

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## ABSTRACT

Landfill leachate is highly concentrated organic wastewater with complex composition. It is a major source of pollution potentially threatening the quality of groundwater, surface water and life forms. Leachate needs to undergo a series of treatment prior to discharge into soil, ground water and surface water bodies. Current biological treatment of landfill leachate using aerobic ponds has some drawbacks such as low removal of organic matter and heavy metals. As a result, further treatment of the effluent from the aerobic ponds is required. Hence, chemical and physical treatments are provided which in turn increase the cost of treatment. In this study, raw leachate was subjected to an anaerobic treatment using a modified anaerobic baffled reactor (MABR). In phase I of the study, the design, development and start-up of the MABR system were accomplished. The synthetic feed which was used in the start-up of the reactor was meat extract. When the chemical oxygen demand (COD) removal efficiency reached up to 99%, leachate was gradually introduced until 100% COD. In phase II of the study, a full treatment of the landfill leachate was carried out by maintaining the hydraulic retention time (HRT) and gradually increasing the organic loading rate (OLR). In phase III of the study, the effect of variation of OLR on the treatment performance of the MABR was investigated by reducing the HRT. Results showed that the COD, As, Cr, Fe and color removal values during the treatment of landfill leachate at an OLR of 1.4 kgCOD/m<sup>3</sup>/d were 79.3%, 87.5%, 88.8%, 87.8% and 78.2%, respectively. In decreasing the HRT (4, 3, 2 and 1 days) and subsequently increasing the OLR (1.4, 1.86, 2.8 and 5.6 kgCOD/m<sup>3</sup>/d), the efficiency of the MABR showed reduction in the treatment performance. At an OLR of 5.6 kgCOD/m<sup>3</sup>/d and HRT of 1 day, the COD, As, Cr, Fe and color removal values were found to be 71%, 8.3%, 59.3%, 63.5% and 37.1%, respectively. In addition, the stable population of bacteria has tolerated the heavy metals when the OLR was gradually increased from 1.4 - 5.6 kgCOD/m<sup>3</sup>/d. The efficient removal of the heavy metals provides evidence that heavy metals can be degraded in anaerobic environments using the MABR. In sum, the MABR may be an efficient solution for the treatment of leachate at the site of a sanitary landfill.

## ABSTRAK

Larut lesapan di tapak pelupusan merupakan air kumbahan organik yang sangat tertumpu dengan komposisi kompleks. Ia merupakan sumber utama pencemaran yang berpotensi mengancam kualiti air bawah tanah, air permukaan dan bentuk kehidupan. Larut lesapan perlu menjalani rawatan yang rapi sebelum ianya dibuang ke alam sekitar, air bawah tanah dan permukaan air. Rawatan biologi semasa pelupusan menggunakan kolam aerobik mempunyai beberapa kelemahan seperti penyingkiran bahan organik dan logam berat yang rendah. Oleh yang demikian, rawatan lanjut mengenai efluen dari kolam aerobik diperlukan. Oleh itu, rawatan kimia dan fizikal disediakan yang seterusnya meningkatkan kos rawatan. Dalam kajian ini, larut resapan telah dirawat secara anaerobik menggunakan reaktor anaerobik yang diubah suai (MABR). Dalam Fasa I kajian ini, reka bentuk, pembangunan dan permulaan sistem MABR telah dicapai. Air sisa sintetik yang digunakan dalam permulaan reaktor adalah ekstrak daging. Apabila kecekapan penyingkiran COD mencapai 98%, larut lesapan secara beransur-ansur diperkenalkan sehingga 100% COD. Dalam Fasa II kajian ini, rawatan penuh larut lesapan telah dijalankan dengan mengekalkan masa pengekalan hidrolis (HRT) dan secara berperingkat meningkatkan kadar pemuatan organik (OLR). Dalam Fasa III pula, kesan OLR terhadap prestasi rawatan MABR dikaji dengan mengurangkan HRT. Keputusan menunjukkan bahawa COD, As, Cr, Fe dan nilai penyingkiran warna semasa rawatan larut lesapan pada OLR sebanyak 1.4 kgCOD/m<sup>3</sup>/d adalah 79.3%, 87.5%, 88.8%, 87.8% dan 78.2%. Dalam mengurangkan HRT (4, 3, 2 dan 1 hari) dan seterusnya meningkatkan OLR (1.4, 1.86, 2.8 dan 5.6 kgCOD/m<sup>3</sup>/d), kecekapan MABR menunjukkan pengurangan prestasi rawatan. Pada OLR 5.6 kgCOD/m<sup>3</sup>/d dan HRT 1 hari, COD, As, Cr, Fe dan nilai penyingkiran warna didapati 71%, 8.3%, 59.3%, 63.5% dan 37.1%. Pada OLR 5.6 kgCOD/m<sup>3</sup>/d dan HRT 1 hari, COD, As, Cr, Fe dan nilai penyingkiran warna didapati 71%, 8.3%, 59.3%, 63.5% dan 37.1%. Di samping itu, populasi bakteria yang stabil telah menerima toleransi logam berat apabila OLR secara beransur-ansur meningkat dari 1.4 - 5.6 kgCOD/m<sup>3</sup>/d. Penyingkiran logam berat membuktikan bahawa logam berat boleh diurai dalam persekitaran anaerobik menggunakan MABR. Dalam jumlah itu, MABR boleh menjadi penyelesaian yang efektif untuk rawatan larut resapan di tapak tapak pelupusan sanita.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADMI	-	American Dye Manufacturers Institute
AOP	-	Advanced Oxidation Processes
APHA	-	American Public Health Association
atm	-	Atmospheric Pressure
Ba	-	Barium
BOD	-	Biochemical Oxygen Demand
FA	-	Formaldehyde
FAO	-	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FTIR	-	Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrometer
GAC	-	Granular Activated Carbon
GHG	-	Green House Gases
HPLC	-	High Performance Liquid Chromatography
HRT	-	Hydraulic Retention Time
MBBR	-	Moving Bed Bioreactor
MABR	-	Modified Anaerobic Baffled Reactor
MF	-	Microfiltration
MLSS	-	Mixed Liquor Suspended Solids
MLVSS	-	Mixed Liquor Volatile Suspended Solids
MSW	-	Municipal Solid Waste
NF	-	Nanofiltration
OC	-	Organic Carbon
OLR	-	Organic Loading Rate
PAC	-	Powdered Activated Carbon
RF	-	Response Factor
RO	-	Reverse Osmosis
SBR	-	Sequencing Batch Reactor
SS	-	Suspended Solids

SWCORP	-	Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Management Corporation
T-N	-	Total Nitrogen
TOC	-	Total Organic Carbon
TSS	-	Total Suspended Solids
TVA	-	Total Volatile Acid
UASB	-	Up-flow Anaerobic Sludge Blanket
UF	-	Ultrafiltration
UTM	-	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
VFA	-	Volatile Fatty Acid
VA	-	Volatile Acid
VSS	-	Volatile Suspended Solids



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Research Background

Various driving factors influence the waste management system in a country. It is vital to identify the related obstacles to achieve sustainable practice. Waste management has become an issue in developing countries, particularly in the Asian region. The increase in population has resulted in a huge amount of waste being generated and the greater the population density the more important is the waste management system (Botetzagias *et al.*, 2015). Initially, waste management systems were implemented solely to remove food and breeding media for flies and rats. However, with the development of modern civilization, simply removing waste became an insufficient solution. Therefore, various strategies have been introduced to improve the concepts of waste management (Agamuthu *et al.*, 2009a). Waste reduction, reutilization and recycling are widely practised to achieve sustainable waste management (Agamuthu *et al.*, 2008; Agamuthu *et al.*, 2009a; Damgaard, 2009). Sustainable landfilling is a necessary part of an efficient integrated waste management system. Sanitary landfilling is one of the most common methods for disposing of Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) (Nghiem *et al.*, 2016). Modern sanitary landfills are designed, constructed, and maintained to minimize the adverse environmental impacts from the waste disposal over both the short and long terms. After landfilling, solid waste undergoes physico-chemical and biological changes. Consequently, the degradation of the organic fraction of the wastes in combination with percolating rainwater leads to the production of “leachate”. Leachates may contain enormous quantities of organic contaminants, ammonia, suspended solids, heavy metals, and inorganic salts, phenols and phosphorus (Rahim *et al.*, 2010; Yoshida *et al.*, 2002).

The complexity of these characteristics makes the leachate more difficult to manage (Zainol *et al.*, 2012; Renou *et al.*, 2008). If not treated and carefully disposed of, leachate may enter the surrounding soil, groundwater, or surface water (Razarinah *et al.*, 2015; Kumari *et al.*, 2016). Regulations concerning leachate discharge into receiving waters are becoming more and more stringent (Renou *et al.*, 2008; Peyravi *et al.*, 2016), therefore, landfill leachate must be collected and treated.

In Malaysia, the population has increased at a rate of about 2.4% per annum since 1994 (Aja and Al-Kayiem, 2014). This has resulted in a tremendous amount of solid wastes being generated. The daily generation of waste in Peninsular Malaysia has escalated from 13,000 tonnes in 1996 to 19,100 tonnes in 2006 and it is expected to increase approximately 1,000 tons per year (Tiew *et al.*, 2015; Agamuthu *et al.*, 2009a). The urban population in Malaysia increased from 8.1 million in 1960 to more than 32 million in 2017 (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2017). This phenomenon has resulted in an increase in waste generation in urban areas. It was estimated that the total MSW generated in 2016 was 38,200 tons per day, 82.5% of which is disposed of in landfills (Agamuthu and Fauziah, 2010). The per capita solid waste generation is estimated to be about 1.12/cap/day (Solid Waste Corporation, 2016). Non-operating landfill sites are 130, operating non-sanitary landfill sites are 157 with operating sanitary landfill sites of 13 (JPSPN, 2015a).

Rain is the major environmental agent that contributes to the generation of landfill leachate (Agamuthu and Fauziah, 2010). Malaysia annually receives 990 billion m<sup>3</sup> of rainwater (Malaysian Meteorological Department, 2015). Of this staggering amount, more than 35,490 m<sup>3</sup> could possibly turn into leachate annually (Salleh and Hamid, 2013). According to Agamuthu *et al.* (2010), Malaysian MSW landfill produced 150-200 L/tonne of leachate or approximately  $2.1 \times 10^7$  L/day. The treatment of leachate prior to discharge is a legal requirement to avoid contamination of water resources to prevent both acute and chronic toxicity (Aziz *et al.*, 2011; Ngo *et al.*, 2008). To reduce the negative impact of discharged leachate on the environment, several techniques of treatment have been used.

The technologies which were developed for the treatment of landfill leachate could be classified as physical, chemical, and biological (Mojiri *et al.*, 2014; Bashir *et al.*, 2013; Renou *et al.*, 2008). In general, biological treatment processes are effective for young (<5 years) produced leachate. However, it is ineffective for leachate from older landfills (>10 years old).

Physical–chemical methods which are not favoured for young leachate treatment are advised for older leachate treatment (Mojiri *et al.*, 2014; Bashir *et al.*, 2013). Normally, the techniques are applied as an integrated system because it is not easy to achieve the satisfying treatment efficiency by using only one technology. To set up an acceptable treatment process for removal of contaminants from leachates, various physico-chemical and biological techniques combinations could be applied. The implementation of the most suitable technique for the treatment of leachate is directly governed by the characteristics of the leachate. Leachates from different landfills vary considerably in their chemical compositions (Bashir *et al.*, 2015; Renou *et al.*, 2008). The current major leachate treatment method in Malaysia is by aerobic treatment combined with chemical and physical treatment. The aerobic treatment mechanism mainly consists of microorganisms degrading the pollutants in the leachate using aeration. However, this method is still insufficient to remove some toxic pollutants in the leachate. Accordingly, chemical and physical treatments such as coagulation and activated carbon, sand filter and membrane filters are used for complete removal of pollutants.

The anaerobic treatment is a biological process of decomposition of organic matter which does not only remove most pollutants, but also generates valuable by-product, namely biogas, in the form of methane (Lim and Kim, 2014). Anaerobic treatment of wastewater gained wide attention among researchers and sanitary engineers, mainly due to its economical merits over the conventional aerobic methods. The major advantages of anaerobic treatment are: (1) no aeration required, (2) very low excess sludge production, (3) biogas production with high energy content, (4) low nutrients requirement, and (5) application of high organic loading (Aqaneghad *et al.*, 2017).

The technological challenge to improve the anaerobic reactors lies in providing the best growing environment for acidogenic bacteria and methanogens and enhancing the bacterial activity taking place. In addition, the contact between the microorganisms and their substrate is critical to efficient anaerobic reactor operation. Among the high rate anaerobic reactors, the anaerobic baffled reactor (ABR) is a promising treatment technology for many wastewaters.

ABR is described as a series of up-flow anaerobic sludge blanket (UASB) reactor in which the wastewater is forced to flow under and over of a series of the vertical baffles as it passes from the inlet to the outlet (Aqaneghad *et al.*, 2017). The compartmentalization of the reactor prevents horizontal movement of the biomass and thus a high amount of active biomass retains in each compartment. This feature provides the excellent contact between the contaminants and the microorganisms, longer biomass retention times and better resilience to organic and hydraulic shock loadings (Chelliapan *et al.*, 2006). Moreover, it is simple to design, construct and operate (Barber and Stuckey, 1999). Its design ensures contact of biomass with substrates without the need to use any mechanical mixing. This is done by the narrow down-flow and the wide up flow inside each compartment of the ABR. Some of the bacteria also move horizontally down the reactor at a relatively slow rate, giving rise to cell retention time of 100 days at HRT of 20h (Grobicki and Stuckey, 1991). Therefore, the wastewater can come into intimate contact with a large amount of active biomass as it passes through the ABR with short HRTs (6-20h), while the effluent remains relatively free of biological solids.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

The current system of leachate treatment consists of various unit processes which require larger area, energy and cost. In addition, the current aerobic treatment is not able to treat entirely the pollutants which require further treatment of the leachate (Del Moro *et al.*, 2016). There are situations whereby only 50% COD removal was observed in some aerobic treatments of leachate in Malaysia (Worldwide Landfills Sdn Bhd, 2017).

This leads to a larger consumption of chemicals and activated carbon in the treatment system. Though the ABR has several advantages, disadvantages of conventional ABR include the requirement of building a shallow reactor to maintain acceptable liquid and gas up-flow velocities which can lead to bacterial washout and delay the start-up of the reactor (Barber and Stuckey, 1999).

In addition, potential problems can arise during start-up because of plug-flow characteristics, the accumulation of volatile fatty acid (VFA) and low pH, exposing sensitive bacteria in the front compartments to toxic levels of inorganic and organic compounds in the high strength feeding wastewater. To overcome these difficulties, some approaches such as low organic loading rate (OLR), feed dilution, periodic feeding and effluent recycling have been recommended (Barber and Stuckey, 1999; Skiadas and Lyberatos, 1998). However, they may not be the best solution to the prompt start-up of ABR because the compartmentalised structure of ABR brings with another problem such as nutrient limits in the final compartment and elimination of phase separation (Chelliapan *et al.*, 2006). Furthermore, it has also some drawbacks such as high quantity of solids washout, inactive and stagnant sludge at the bottom and poor performance for some recalcitrant wastewater. As a result, a novel modified anaerobic baffled reactor (MABR) is proposed in this study. The MABR consists of compartments supported by slanted baffles for better removal efficiency. To date, there is no reported study on the treatment of landfill leachate containing heavy metals using ABR.

There are very limited studies which explored the removal of heavy metals from landfill leachate using anaerobic reactors (Hashemi *et al.*, 2016; Duncan *et al.*, 2004). Most of the previous studies on the treatment of landfill leachate using anaerobic reactor concentrated on the removal of COD, ammoniacal nitrogen and color, but neglected the heavy metal degradation in the process. To date, there is no reported study on the use of ABR for the treatment of landfill leachate focussing on heavy metals.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

Based on the research problem, research questions are summarized, which are as follows:

- a) What is the performance of MABR during start-up using meat extract?
- b) What is the treatment performance of MABR in treating the landfill leachate containing heavy metals?
- c) Does the MABR is to be operated at different OLR and HRT?

### **1.4 Research Objectives**

The aim of this research is to treat the landfill leachate by using modified anaerobic baffled reactor (MABR). The specific objectives of this research are:

1. To design, develop and to investigate the start-up of a modified anaerobic baffled reactor (MABR) system using meat extract.
2. To investigate the treatment of landfill leachate containing heavy metals (As, Cr and Fe) using MABR system.
3. To analyze the effect of variation of HRT and OLR in the treatment performance of landfill leachate using MABR system.

### **1.5 Research Scope**

Following is the scope of this study:

- a) The raw leachate was taken from Jeram Sanitary Landfill, Selangor. The site is operated by Worldwide Landfills Sdn. Bhd. Landfill leachate is of intermediate nature.
- b) The MABR is a laboratory scale plexiglass reactor having 28 L capacity containing four uniform compartments (7 L capacities) and each having a slanted baffle (45°), heater and sludge and gas sampling ports.
- c) The treatment performance of the MABR was evaluated, based on COD removal, color removal, pH and VA profile, and biogas production.



- d) The heavy metals focused in this study were Arsenic, Chromium and Iron due to their high concentration at the landfill site.

## **1.6 Significance of Study**

Anaerobic digesters for wastewater treatment are gaining popularity in Malaysia. It has been used in other sectors in Malaysia such as palm oil industries, sewage treatment plants and other industries, except for landfill leachate treatment. Moreover, to date, there is no reported study on the MABR system treating landfill leachate. Hence, the treatment of landfill leachate using MABR will hopefully lead to the efficient treatment solution of landfill leachate compared to available technologies. Moreover, it will be an accomplishment in the area of anaerobic wastewater technology which will hopefully improvise the limitations of conventional ABR.

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## APPENDIX A

### Operational problems and subsequent precautions

In this study, there have several operational problems that occurred throughout the experimental phase. The problems that should be kept in mind and the precautionary measures that should be taken to avoid any unavoidable problems are discussed in this section.


1. Calibrate the pump for different values of HRT before starting the experiment as it is not possible to calibrate during the experiment.
2. At the junction of lid and reactor, examine the leakage carefully on daily basis to avoid any leakage and subsequent infiltration of oxygen.
3. Use the timer for the operation of heater to maintain the temperature in the mesophilic range if the heating is continuous than there are chances of overflow because of overheating.
4. Intermittently check the inflow and outflow pipes because sometimes the clogging of pipes takes place due to thickened wastewater or sludge which may hinder the flow leading to overflow of the reactor.
5. The pH should be monitored on a continuous basis and if the pH of the feed is dropping from the value of 7 then we can add NaOH to stabilize the pH.
6. Empty the effluent tank according to HRT otherwise it can cause spillage in the lab.
7. Make sure that there is enough feed every time because if it finishes in the absence air can go inside the reactor causing problems as it is an anaerobic reactor.



8. Intermittently check the water in the bubble counter and note down the bubbles produced every day.
9. Make sure to use centrifuge in the preparation of samples for COD.
10. From gas collection ports there should be a single pipe connected to Tedlar bag as the connectors in between can cause losses.
11. The stock solution for the synthetic wastewater (meat extract) must be shaken properly before being used as the thick content settles at the bottom.
12. After filling the reactor with the sludge the reactor should be purged with nitrogen gas to eliminate the oxygen present in the reactor.
13. GC or FTIR should be used in the measurement of gas because gas analyzers are not efficient and accurate for experiments.
14. The collected leachate sample should be avoided to be kept under direct sunlight as the material of the container together with the heat may change the characteristics of the leachate.

## APPENDIX B

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### A REVIEW OF MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE (MSW) LANDFILL MANAGEMENT AND TREATMENT OF LEACHATE

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#### ABSTRACT

*Solid Waste Management (SWM) has become an issue of concern ever since humans began to build communities within a concentrated area. The greater the population density the more important is a proper waste management system. The main objective of the disposal system was to take care of the sanitation and health of the community. However, with the development of modern civilization, simply removing waste became an insufficient solution because waste disposal dumps became major sources of regional environmental contamination due to emissions of leachate and gas into groundwater and surface water; dumps were soon recognized as unsuitable and unsustainable disposal practices. Therefore, various strategies have been introduced to improve the concepts of waste management and sustainable landfilling is a necessary part of an efficient integrated waste management system. The degradation of the organic fraction of the wastes in combination with percolating rainwater leads to the production of a dark coloured, highly polluted liquid called "leachate". If not treated and carefully disposed the movement of leachate into the surrounding soil, ground water, or surface water, may lead to severe pollution. This paper highlights the landfill management, landfill leachate generation and its characterization, and treatment methods available for landfill leachate.*

**Keywords:** Municipal Solid Waste, Landfill Leachate, Treatment of Leachate, Management of Leachate

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## APPENDIX C



