Optimizing Sampling Strategies for Environmental Analysis: Methodologies, Data Interpretation, and Analytical Outcomes

Dr. N. V. Ravi Shekhar[1]
Post Doctoral Candidate
Lincoln University College, 47301,
Petaling Jaya, Selangor Darul Ehsan
Malaysia
Email ID: pdf.ravishekhar@lincoln.edu.in
Email ID: drnvrs88aec@gmail.com
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6403-4520

Dr. Putrakumar Bhalla[2]
Research Professor,
Catalyst & Catalytic Reaction Engineering Laboratory,
Department of Chemical Engineering and Applied Chemistry,
Lincoln University College, 47301, Malaysia

Abstract

This research evaluates methodologies for monitoring trace elements in food wastewater discharged sites, focusing on the impact of sampling protocols and analytical techniques on data reliability. Water samples were collected from diverse locations and analyzed for arsenic (As), cadmium (Cd), and lead (Pb) using Atomic Absorption spectroscopy. Findings underscore the critical nature of sample preservation and matrix modification for accurate quantification. The study concludes with observations on method sensitivity and environmental relevance, suggesting improvements for future monitoring efforts.

Keywords: Trace elements, Environmental monitoring, Water quality, AAS, Sampling, Analytical methods.

1. Introduction

The presence of trace elements in food vending sites is a significant concern due to their potential toxicity and persistence (Zhang, 2006). Accurate and reliable measurement of these contaminants requires robust sampling strategies and sophisticated analytical techniques. Environmental regulatory bodies frequently mandate the determination of specific trace elements in various environmental matrices. Challenges arise from chemical and spectral interferences during analysis, necessitating careful method development. This investigation addresses the efficacy of current practices in trace element surveillance, specifically considering arsenic, cadmium, and lead in water.

2. Sampling points

Sampling points were strategically selected to represent varying environmental conditions and potential pollution sources across food vending sites. Three distinct locations were chosen: an urban runoff site (S1), a point downstream of an industrial discharge (S2), and a rural agricultural runoff area (S3) (Turner, 2020). Site S1 offered baseline data, S2 provided insights into point-source contamination, and S3 captured diffuse pollution from agricultural activities. This selection aimed for a representative subset to infer broader environmental conditions (Mweshi & Sakyi, 2020).

3. Materials and Methodology

Water samples were collected monthly over a six-month period. At each sampling point, triplicate grab samples were obtained using pre-cleaned high-density polyethylene bottles, which were immediately acidified to pH < 2 with nitric acid for preservation. Samples were stored at

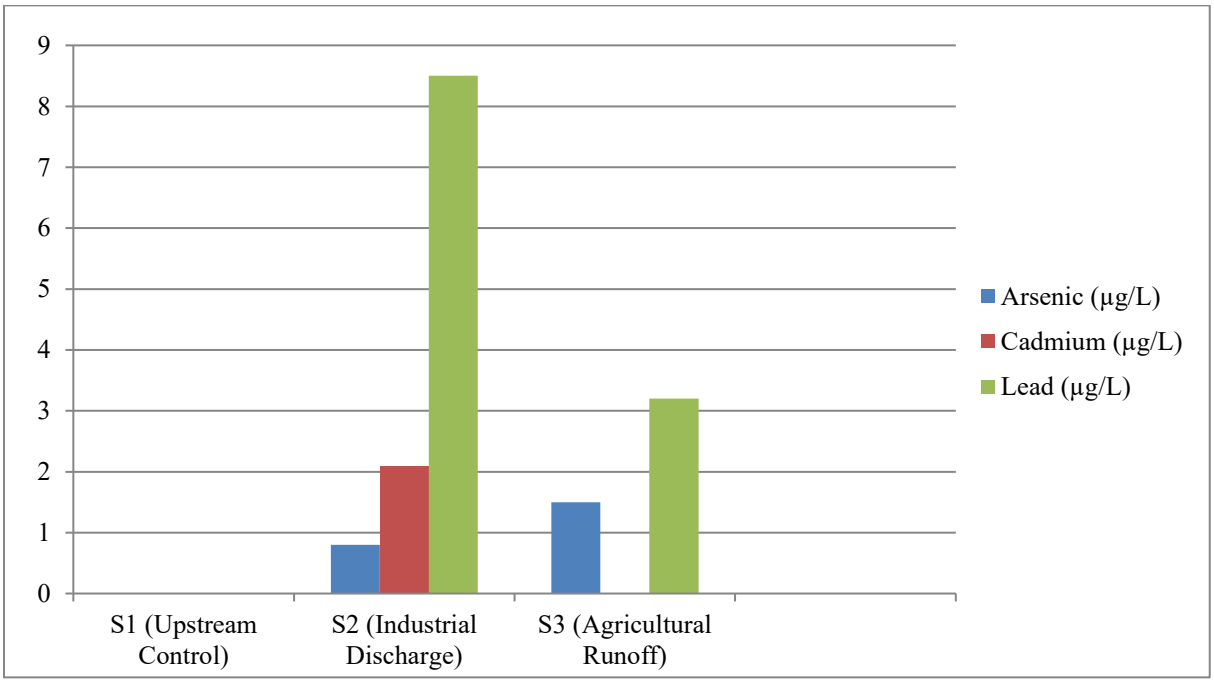
4°C prior to analysis to maintain integrity. All glassware was acid-washed and rinsed with deionized water. Trace element concentrations (As, Cd, Pb) were determined using a PerkinElmer Analyst 800 Atomic Absorption Spectrometer (AAS). Matrix modifiers, including palladium and magnesium nitrate, were employed to minimize interferences. Calibration curves were prepared using certified reference materials. Quality control involved analyzing blanks, duplicates, and spiked samples to ensure accuracy and precision.

4. Results

The analysis yielded varying concentrations of As, Cd, and Pb across the sampling sites. Table 1 presents the mean concentrations for each element at the three locations. At S1, all trace elements were below detection limits. S2 consistently exhibited elevated levels of Pb (mean 8.5 µg/L) and Cd (mean 2.1 µg/L), while As concentrations were marginally above the detection limit (mean 0.8 µg/L). S3 showed moderate levels of As (mean 1.5 µg/L) and Pb (mean 3.2 µg/L), with Cd remaining below detectable limits. These findings, presented quantitatively, reflect the outcomes of the analytical procedures employed (Durner, 2021).

Table 1 Mean concentrations of arsenic, cadmium, and lead at three sampling points.

Sampling Point	Arsenic (µg/L)	Cadmium (µg/L)	Lead (µg/L)
S1 (Upstream Control)	<0.5	<0.1	<0.5
S2 (Industrial Discharge)	0.8	2.1	8.5
S3 (Agricultural Runoff)	1.5	<0.1	3.2



This bar graph visually represents the data from Table 1, allowing for a rapid comparison of element levels across the different sites (In & Lee, 2017).

5. Discussions

The observed trace element profiles underscore the localized impacts of anthropogenic activities. The elevated Pb and Cd concentrations at S2 directly correlate with the industrial discharge, suggesting a need for stricter effluent controls. The presence of As and Pb at S3, although at lower levels, points to potential agricultural inputs, possibly from pesticides or fertilizers. The absence of detectable elements at S1 affirms its utility as a control site. The AAS method demonstrated sufficient sensitivity for environmental water samples, although matrix effects required careful consideration. Methodological rigor, including meticulous sample preservation and the use of matrix modifiers, was crucial for achieving reliable quantification in these complex samples (Hahn Fox & Jennings, 2014).

6. Conclusions

Environmental surveillance of trace elements demands a comprehensive approach encompassing strategic sampling and precise analytical techniques. This investigation confirmed elevated levels of lead, cadmium, and arsenic in specific aquatic environments, directly linked to industrial and agricultural activities. The AAS method, when coupled with appropriate sample preparation and interference mitigation, provided robust data for assessing water quality. Continuous monitoring and targeted remediation strategies are essential to mitigate ecological risks.

Data Availability

The data used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

Author's Contribution

Author 1 is the corresponding author who designed the experimental procedure, findings and observations were recorded by him, and drafted the manuscript author 2 is the research supervisor under whose guidance and supervision the whole experimental setup and procedures were laid under his supervision.

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