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Abstract: With the increase in transportation demand and facilities in this era and the significant improvement in people's living standards, the annual production and sales of vehicles are steadily increasing. With this, the issues of car wash wastewater treatment and water pollution are becoming more and more serious. Car wash wastewater mainly comprises fine sand, slick oil, suspended solids (SS), and surfactants, and can be quantified as chemical oxygen demand (COD) on a normative basis. This study examines the use of cyclo-flow filtration with high filtrate flux to treat car wash wastewater to solve issue of limited space in metropolitan areas and increase the willingness of the industry to invest in car wash equipment to recover water resources. The average removal rates of SS and COD are about 81% and 43%, respectively. Compared with current technology, the price of recycled water can compensate for operating costs, requiring minimal operating space owing to the single-unit cyclo-flow filtration system.

Keywords: carwash; SS; COD; wastewater; cyclo-filtration



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1. Introduction

Erratic droughts and floods caused by extreme climates lead to a shortage of water resources, creating the need to consider various possible water recovery technologies. Metropolitan areas are usually tight and crowded. Vehicles can be roughly divided into large transportation vehicles and small vehicles; the former run long distances. These vehicles are contaminated with more coal tar or fuel oil, and the carried items also pollute the vehicle body. This kind of wastewater pollutant is complicated and requires a degreasing processing unit. Small vehicles are contaminated with more dust and sand, and relatively few oils [1]. In Taiwan, due to the small, crowded metropolitan area, a greater number of small cars are cleaned by the car wash industry; this type of pollutant wastewater is relatively simple, containing mainly mud and sand, a small amount of oil, and detergents used when cleaning cars. The corresponding water quality parameters are suspended solids (SS, mg/L), chemical oxygen demand (COD, mg O_2/L), oil and grease (O&G, mg/L), and anionic surfactants (AS, mg/L).

The quantity of water required for washing each car is approximately 130–350 L and 151–227 L of water, respectively [2,3]. A reasonable amount of water for washing a car is 100–200 L. Germany and Austria have stipulated regulations mandating the recycling of 80% of car wash wastewater. Alternatively, the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries require operators to use 60–70 L of reclaimed water in each car wash [4].

According to an estimation, car sales alone reached 1 billion from 2011–2021 [5], excluding old cars over 10 years. If each car is washed twice a month and each wash consumes 100 L of water, the amount of water used for car washing would be 2.4 billion tons/year, which is a huge amount of water. Shahid et al. reviewed current advances in treatment technologies for the removal of emerging contaminants from water [6].

Barambu et al. report the separation of oil from water by membrane-based technology [7]. Some studies have conducted literature reviews on the treatment and reclamation of car wash wastewater [8–10].

There are several techniques to treat car wash wastewater, such as single unit like electrocoagulation (EC) [11], flocculation flotation (FF) [12], filtration (F) [13], coagulation-flocculation (CF) [14], biological treatment (Bio) [15], adsorption (AD) [16], and electro-oxidation (EO) [17]. A combination of multiple techniques like EC followed by nanofiltration (NF) have better treatment efficiency [18–20].

The popular technique for car wash wastewater is EC. The energy consumption rates of EC were estimated to be 0.14 and 1.5 kWh/m³, respectively [20,21]. It equates to about 5.5 New Taiwan Dollars (NTD) per cubic meter. Zaneti et al. [2] reported that the electricity consumption costs for car wash wastewater treatment were US $0.42/m^3$, which amounts to about NTD $1.2/m^3$. For adoption by the Taiwan car wash industry, where small enterprises account for more than 90% of the set-ups, low cost is a very important factor. Therefore, this study adopted the cyclo-flow filtration technology.

Filtration technology has always been one of the common methods of solid–liquid separation [22–24] and has been widely used in various fields in recent years; for example, paper and pulp industry [25], metal removal [26], and landfill leachate [27].

Table 1 lists the reports on car wash wastewater treatment related to the use of filtration [13,19,28–48]. When using combined filtration technology, for example, ultrafiltration (UF) + nanofiltration (NF) [13,28,29], ultrafiltration + reverse osmosis (RO) [30], microfiltration (MF) +UF [31], sedimentation (SED) + Filtration (F) [32], the removal rates of turbidity and COD is usually greater than 95%. However, the costs of UF, NF, and RO are much higher. Meanwhile, the filtrate flux of UF and NF are only approximately 50 and 10 L per square meter per hour (LMH, L/m² h), respectively. To provide wastewater treatment for the medium-scale car, the wash factory should produce 1 cubic meter per day (CMD, m³/day), and a UF plant with a size of approximately 100 m² would be required.

Table 1. Removal rate of various water qualities by Filtration.

Country	Area	Ref.	Technique	SS (mg/L)	Turbidity (NTU)	COD (mg/L)	O&G (mg/L)	AS (mg/L)
Belgium	Leuven	[13]	UF + NF	-	-	60–95%	-	88–95%
Malaysia	Johor, Skudai	[28]	UF + NF	-	-	55–92%	-	-
Turkey	Istanbul	[29]	UF + NF	-	-	Negligible-97%	-	-
Australia	Melbourne	[30]	UF + RO	100%	99.9%	96%	-	-
Brazil	Belo Horizonte	[31]	MF + UF	-	96.2–99.3%	81-85%	-	-
Pakistan	Peshawar	[32]	SED + F	80%	99%	-	49.2%	-
Japan	Tokyo	[40]	F + UF	-	75%	50–90%	-	-
Sweden	-	[34]	UF	-	-	60%	-	-
Indonesia	Semarang	[36]	UF	-	100%	91%	83%	-
India	Trichy	[33]	UF	-	82%	47–60%	-	-
India	Aligarh	[35]	SF	89.2%	-	83.5%	-	-
Turkey	Istanbul	[19]	EC + NF	99%	-	88%	90%	91%
Pakistan	Hyderabad, Sindh	[47]	DAF + F	-	97%	-	99%	-
China	Shanghai	[38]	C + UF	-	85%	80%	-	-
China	Shenyang	[37]	C + UF	-	94%	-	>40%	-
China	Shanghai	[41]	C + M	-	70%	-	-	-

Country	Area	Ref.	Technique	SS (mg/L)	Turbidity (NTU)	COD (mg/L)	O&G (mg/L)	AS (mg/L)
India	Bangalore	[39]	CF + F	-	-	80–90%	92–93%	-
Egypt	Elminia	[19]	CF + SF + O + SF	-	100%	88%	-	-
Vietnam	Hanoi	[44]	MBR + F	-	-	90%	88%	-
Brazil	Sao Paulo	[45]	RBC + F	-	72–97%	56–94%	-	-
Taiwan	Hsinchu	[44]	Bio + M	95.7%	-	70.2%	-	-
Australia	Geelong	[42]	C + MBR	99.8%	99.6%	-	-	-
Australia	Melbourne	[46]	enhanced MBR (eMBR)	-	99.9%	99.8%	5.9–6.7 LMH	-

Table 1. Cont.

Note: coagulation (C), dissolved air flotation (DAF), membrane filtration (M), membrane bio-reactor (MBR), oxidation (O), rotating biological contactor (RBC).

Lin and Wu published a new filtration operation, cyclo-flow filtration, which can achieve 10% more filtrate using the same filter [49]. The characteristic of cyclo-flow filtration is that when the fluid enters the filter barrel, it enters in a tangential direction, so the rotation causes centrifugal force. This centrifugal force can carry the particles away from the filter of the central axis of the filter barrel. Therefore, under the same filter material and the same driving force, cyclo-flow filtration has about a 10% higher filtration rate.

This article focuses more on small vehicles, like saloon cars, sport utility vehicles, or pick-ups. Therefore, a single unit technology of high-filtrate cyclo-flow filtration is provided as one of the options for treating car wash wastewater. This work used cyclo-flow filtration technology with minimal equipment space to treat car wash wastewater to meet emission standards and solve space constraints.

2. Materials and Methods

The car wash wastewater was taken from CAR HOUSE, located in New Taipei City, Taiwan, near Ming-Chi University. Fourteen samples were taken during 15 November 2020–31 July 2021, including on sites testing on 10 June 2021.

The filter element used in this research is polypropylene, with an average pore size of 1 μ m. It was made by heating and dissolving polypropylene plastic materials and then entangling by polypropylene microfibers, commonly referred to as the "melt-blown" molding method. The schematic diagram and photo of the cyclo-flow filtration system used are shown in Figure 1. The diameter and height of the filtration chamber are 14.3 and 26 cm, respectively. The diameter of the inlet pipe is 2 cm.

The difference between cyclo-flow filtration and traditional filtration is that when cyclo-flow filtration enters the filter cartridge, it enters in a tangential direction so that the fluid will rotate to generate centrifugal force. This causes two effects. One is that the fluid sweeps over the surface of the filter element, which is the same as the cross-flow filtration. The second effect is that the rotating centrifugal force takes the particles away from the surface of the filter element, reducing the probability of particles contacting the filter element, slowing down fouling, and increasing the filtration rate [48].

Figure 2 is a schematic diagram of the cyclo-flow filtration system. Wastewater in the storage tank is pumped to the filtration cartridge. The inlet and recycle parts of the cartridge are designed with tangential direction so that the liquid and the solid are subjected to the centrifugal force field. Part of the liquid sample passes through the filter material to obtain the filtrate *f*. The particles are blocked by the filter material to achieve the filtering effect. The rest of the liquid sample is returned from the recycle end *r* into storage tank A. The samples were measured from point *f* to obtain SS, COD, O&G, and AS).





Figure 1. Schematic diagram of the cyclo-flow filtration.



Figure 2. The schematic diagram of cyclo-flow filtration system.

Car wash wastewater generally contains SS that originates from the dirt on vehicles, the oil on vehicle exteriors, the O&G generated from car wax, and the AS caused by detergent use. There are 14 samples taken during 15 November 2020–31 July 2021. The median values of SS concentration, turbidity, COD, O&G, and AS values in the collected data were 120 mg/L, 148 mg/L, 8 mg/L, and 14 mg/L, respectively. The measuring methods of SS, COD, O&G and AS are according to Taiwan EPA standards NIEA W210.58A, W517.53B, W507.51C, and W525.52A, respectively. These are the standard methods of the United States Environmental Protection Agency or the American Public Health Association (SS: 2540D, COD:5220D, O&G: 1664, AS: 5540C). All chemicals were of analytical grade and purchased from Sigma-Aldrich, Riedel-deHean and J. T. Baker. External standards were used to check the accuracy of COD, O&G, and AS measurements. All experiments were conducted in triplicate. The particle size distribution in wastewater was analyzed using a laser diffraction particle size analyzer (Coulter LS230). The filtrate flux of each run was calculated using the accumulated volume of water at the filtrate sampling point (*f* point in Figure 2) over the respective time interval.

3. Results

3.1. Removal Rates

The particle size distribution of the car wash wastewater is shown in Figure 3. The average particle size is 16.77 μ m. Therefore, the filter with 1 μ m average pore size is enough to block most particles.



Figure 3. Particle size distribution of car wash wastewater.

In general, the above-mentioned technologies use two treatment units in series; it basically has a certain effect on car wash wastewater treatment, just like the technology of biological treatment combined with filtration. However, coagulation/flocculation and biological treatment will inevitably produce sludge. To achieve the water discharge standard at a low cost, this study only used the filtration method to treat car wash wastewater. Table 2 presents the SS, COD, O&G, and AS values of raw and filtrate samples. Red numbers in Table 2 indicate non-compliance with COD regulations. With the average removal rates as shown in Figure 4, the worst SS, COD, O&G, and AS water quality treated by this method were 263, 172, 29, and 18 mg/L, respectively. Over these ranges, the treatment was not efficient.

Table	2. Remov <i>a</i>	l rate of	various	water q	ualities	by fil	tration
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Sampling Date	Sampling Point	SS (mg/L)	Removal Rate	COD (mg O ₂ /L)	Removal Rate	O&G (mg/L)	Removal Rate	AS (mg/L)	Removal Rate
2020/11/19	0	84		151	• • • • •	-		-	- <u>-</u>
	f	18	79%	121	20%	-		-	
2020/11/27	0	183		281		-		-	
	f	42	- 77%	132	53%	-		-	
2020/12/23	0	-	-	60	2004	ND		8.4	- 80%
	f	-		43	28%	ND		1.7	
2021/01/07	0	66		126	2004	ND		17	- 24%
	f	13	80%	90	29%	ND		13	
2021/01/28	0	127	51 0/	237	250/	10.2	050/	23.8	- 66%
	f	37	71%	150	37%	ND	- >95% -	8.2	

Sampling Date	Sampling Point	SS (mg/L)	Removal Rate	COD (mg O ₂ /L)	Removal Rate	O&G (mg/L)	Removal Rate	AS (mg/L)	Removal Rate
2021/03/05	0	141	2 00/	36	17%	3.6	- 78%	18.5	- 15%
	f	43	70%	30		0.8		15.8	
2021 /02 /05	0	72	0.40/	142	470/	4.8	- >90%	13.5	
2021/03/05	f	4	94%	75	47%	ND		9.0	- 33%
2021 /01 /25	0	244	00%	68	29%	36.8	- 15%	1.2	- 58%
2021/01/27	f	24	90%	48		31.2		0.5	
0001 /01 /10	0	66	500/	56	120/	ND		1.3	- 62%
2021/01/18	f	18	73%	32	43%	ND		0.5	
	0	120	(00)	144	83%	ND		0.7	- 43%
2021/02/02	f	38	68%	24		ND		0.4	
0001 /00 /10	0	38	92%	189	22%	14	- 43%	57.2	- 15%
2021/02/19	f	3		147		8		48.4	
0001 /01 /10	0	632	050/	688	020/	2.2	- >77%	0.54	- 17%
2021/01/18	f	32	95%	55	92%	ND		0.09	
2021/04/27	0	526		169	440/	-		58	- 83%
	f	28	95%	95	44%	-		10	
0001 /07 /10	0	87	(00)	365	F (0)	-		-	
2021/06/10	f	27	69%	159	56%	-	·	-	

Table 2. Cont.

o: denotes raw carwash wastewater, *f*: denotes carwash wastewater filtrate.



Figure 4. Average removal rates of the filtrate qualities.

In this study, only the microfiltration (MF) technique was used. A few reports are available on the use of MF to treat car wash wastewater. Compared with the UF treatment [33,34,36], the SS removal rate in this study reached averaged 81%. This is comparable with 82% [33] and 100% [36] turbidity removal rates. The COD removal rate was 43%, a bit lower than 60% [33,34]. Thus, filtration technology cannot effectively remove dissolved COD.

3.2. Filtrate Flux

When using only a single unit filtration, like UF [33,34] or sand filtration (SF) [35], the removal rates of turbidity/SS and COD are merely 80% and 60%. Although one report [36] claimed that their removal rates of turbidity and COD were 100% and 91%, the filtrate flux was only 2.7 LMH under 1 bar transmembrane pressure.

EC+ NF [19] gives excellent (>90%) results in all four water (SS, COD, AS, O&G) quality indicators. The data slightly fluctuated using coagulation/flocculation combination with filtration technology [19,37–41]. The coagulation–filtration process exhibited turbidity and COD removal rates of approximately 90% and 60%, respectively. When coupled with filtration technology, the biological treatment process achieved turbidity and COD removal rates of approximately 95%, respectively [42,43].

Figure 5 presents a filtrate flux comparison between the research (cyclo-flow filtration) and the traditional filtration (MF). Cyclo-flow filtration was about 10% higher on average and reached the level of 15,000 LMH. When compared with UF or NF, which is only 50 LMH, the amount of filtrate obtained from cyclo-flow filtration was a hundred times higher.



Figure 5. Filtrate flux comparison between cyclo-flow filtration and the traditional filtration.

It is also twice as high as the 5328 LMH obtained in [35], which used a filter with fine + coarse sand + stone chips > 10 mm size. Therefore, a large amount of filtrate is the biggest advantage of this technology.

3.3. Evaluation of the Operation Cost

The filter element used in this study was evaluated to be unsatisfactory after 10 h of operation. The amount of filtered water was about 7500 L, equivalent to NTD 37.5 in Taiwan. The cost of each filter was NTD 33.3. The electricity bill was NTD 50. Besides, the price value of the obtained water was not enough to pay for the filter material and electricity. However, the recovery of one-time consumption such as car wash wastewater, is inevitable. If the electricity fee is not considered (because the electricity required for cyclo-flow filtration is the same as that of traditional filtration), the recycled water price can compensate for operating costs.

This study used cyclo-flow filtration to treat car wash wastewater. The average removal rates of SS and COD were about 81% and 43%, respectively. When using the same filter, cyclo-flow filtration had 10% more filtrate than traditional filtration technology. Hence, cyclo-flow filtration can achieve higher filtrate flux without losing recycled water quality.

4. Conclusions

In order to make sustainable use of water resources, waste water from car washing should be properly treated and reused. The combination of two techniques in series has high treatment efficiency. For adoption in the Taiwan car wash industry, where small enterprises account for more than 90% of the set-ups, low cost is a very important factor. This study used cyclo-flow micro-filtration technology because it is simple to operate and occupied minimal space. In addition, the price of recycled water is comparable to the cost of filter media. It is especially important in the event of a drought that has the potential to stop water supply and cause car wash businesses to be shut down.

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