



A Study of Sewage Treatment Plant

Aditya Tandan¹, Rahul Gain², Ram Kumar Sah³, DineshYadav⁴, Dr. Swati Agrawal⁵

^{1,2,3,4} Kalinga University, New Raipur

⁵Assistant Professor, Kalinga University, New Raipur

Abstract

Sewage treatment plants are vital infrastructures that safeguard public health and protect the environment by treating and purifying wastewater. The design of these plants plays a crucial role in ensuring efficient and effective treatment processes. This research paper focuses on the design principles and considerations for sewage treatment plants and explores various methods for improving existing facilities. By implementing innovative design strategies and adopting optimization techniques, wastewater treatment plants can enhance their performance, increase treatment capacity, and achieve higher levels of environmental sustainability.

Keywords: Sewage treatment plant, wastewater, design principles, optimization, environmental sustainability.

1. Introduction

Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) are critical infrastructures for protecting public health and ecosystems by treating wastewater laden with physical, chemical, and biological contaminants. Utilizing multi-stage processes—screening, sedimentation, biological treatment, and tertiary polishing—STPs ensure effluent compliance with environmental standards, enabling safe discharge or reuse. Rapid urbanization and stringent regulations demand optimized, scalable designs, particularly for institutions like universities with variable wastewater profiles.

Historically, wastewater management evolved from ancient cesspits to modern automated systems. The Industrial Revolution's pollution surge spurred 19th-century sewage networks, while 20th-century advances introduced biological treatments like activated sludge. Modern STPs now integrate smart technologies, membrane bioreactors (MBRs), and nutrient recovery, aligning with climate resilience and resource efficiency goals.

STPs offer multifaceted benefits: eradicating pathogens, mitigating eutrophication via nutrient removal, enabling resource recovery (biogas, reclaimed water), and ensuring regulatory compliance. However, challenges include capacity overload, aging infrastructure, high energy consumption (~2–3% global electricity), and costly sludge management. Techno-economic barriers, such as capital intensity and land requirements, further hinder rural accessibility. Untreated sewage threatens aquatic ecosystems and public health, but STPs reduce biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) by 85–95% while grappling with their own carbon footprints.

Future advancements emphasize smart technologies (IoT, AI), energy-neutral processes, advanced treatments (e.g., nanotechnology), decentralized systems, and circular economy integration for resource recovery. This thesis investigates STP design, operational challenges, and modernization strategies, focusing on educational institutions. By addressing technical, economic, and environmental dimensions, it aims to optimize wastewater management in alignment with evolving sustainability and regulatory demands.

2. Literature Review

The evolution of Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) highlights advancements in treatment technologies, process optimization, and sustainable practices. Advanced systems like Membrane Bioreactors (MBRs) combine biological treatment with ultrafiltration, ensuring high effluent quality in compact designs, ideal for space-constrained campuses. Constructed wetlands and Advanced Oxidation Processes (AOPs) address decentralized needs and emerging contaminants, such as pharmaceuticals, while tertiary treatments like UV disinfection enhance compliance.

Operational efficiency is achieved through IoT-enabled sensors and model-based controls, reducing energy use by 15–20%. Sequencing Batch Reactors (SBRs) offer flexibility in handling variable loads, critical for institutions with fluctuating wastewater profiles. Sludge management innovations, including anaerobic digestion and thermal hydrolysis, recover biogas and align with circular economy goals, though pathogen risks in agricultural reuse remain a concern.

Decentralized systems, such as compact SBRs and membrane units, provide scalable, cost-effective solutions for rural and institutional settings, achieving 85% BOD removal. Biological Nutrient Removal (BNR) systems and algal ponds enable efficient nitrogen reduction and effluent reuse, supporting campus sustainability. However, challenges persist: aging infrastructure, high energy demands (~2–3% global electricity), and emerging contaminants strain conventional systems.

Future directions emphasize integrating smart technologies (AI, IoT), renewables, and decentralized models to enhance resilience. Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs) underscore the need to balance energy use, emissions, and social acceptance. For educational institutions, hybrid solutions and retrofittable designs are pivotal to address technical, economic, and regulatory constraints while advancing resource recovery. This synthesis underscores the imperative to harmonize innovation with scalability, ensuring STPs meet evolving environmental and institutional demands.

3. Methodology

This study outlines a systematic methodology for designing and optimizing sewage treatment plants (STPs) in educational institutions, integrating technical, environmental, and sustainability principles.

1. Wastewater Characterization: Physical (solids, temperature), chemical (pH, nutrients), and biological (BOD, COD) analyses guide treatment selection.
2. Site Design: Prioritize proximity, flat topography, and modular layouts for scalability, minimizing environmental and community impacts.
3. Treatment Units:
 - Primary: Screening (0.3–0.6 m/s velocity), grit removal (0.3 m/s), and sedimentation (2–3 hours) target 50–70% solids reduction.
 - Secondary: Activated sludge (F/M ratio: 0.2–0.4) or SBRs handle variable organic loads.
 - Tertiary: Filtration (sand/UV), disinfection, and nutrient removal (BNR, alum) ensure effluent compliance (BOD <10 mg/L).

4. Optimization: Enhance energy efficiency via variable frequency drives (VFDs), biogas recovery (60–70% methane), and solar integration. Sludge management employs anaerobic digestion (30–40% volume reduction) and composting. IoT sensors enable real-time monitoring of DO, pH, and flow.

5. Environmental Assessment: Validate effluent standards, safe sludge reuse (pathogen-free), and carbon footprint reduction. Stakeholder engagement addresses odor/noise concerns.

This framework balances technical rigor with sustainability, emphasizing modularity, resource recovery, and smart technologies. A 0.3 MLD case study will validate its adaptability for institutional use.

4. Results and Discussion

The 0.3 MLD sewage treatment plant (STP) design achieved basic regulatory compliance, with effluent BOD reduced to 25 mg/L. Key units included screening (1.28 m × 0.008 m; 0.8 m/s velocity), grit chambers (12 m length; 0.228 m/s velocity), and an aeration tank (75.6 m³; 86.77% BOD removal). However, the secondary clarifier's shallow depth (0.055 m) risked sludge resuspension, and the aeration tank's narrow width (0.38 m) posed oxygen distribution challenges. Primary sedimentation achieved 50–60% solids removal, but nutrient removal mechanisms were absent, risking eutrophication. Energy intensity (60% operational costs from aeration/pumping) and unaddressed sludge management highlighted inefficiencies. Comparatively, the design lagged behind innovations like membrane bioreactors (MBRs) or sequencing batch reactors (SBRs), which enhance nutrient removal (95% nitrogen reduction) and reduce footprints. Decentralized systems (e.g., constructed wetlands) and IoT-enabled monitoring, as advocated in literature, were not integrated, limiting sustainability.

Proposed retrofits include modular expansion for scalability, high-efficiency turbo aerators (20–30% energy savings), anaerobic digestion (40–50% sludge reduction with biogas recovery), and tertiary treatments (UV, reverse osmosis) for reuse. Odor control via biofilters and solar integration align with circular economy principles. However, the design's economic viability and lifecycle impacts require further analysis.

Limitations include hydraulic constraints in shallow clarifiers and the absence of cost-benefit assessments for advanced technologies. Future work should pilot-test hybrid systems (e.g., SBRs with solar sensors) and evaluate scalability for institutional settings. By addressing these gaps, the STP can transition from basic compliance to a resource-efficient, climate-resilient infrastructure.

5. Conclusion

Sewage treatment plants (STPs) are vital for public health and environmental protection, requiring meticulous design and adaptive strategies to address evolving challenges. This thesis demonstrates that tailored 0.3 MLD designs for educational institutions, incorporating optimized hydraulic parameters, multi-stage treatment, and modular scalability, can achieve regulatory compliance (e.g., 86.77% BOD reduction) while balancing efficiency and sustainability. Key challenges—aging infrastructure, energy intensity, nutrient mismanagement, and sludge disposal—demand solutions like renewable energy integration, biological nutrient removal (BNR), anaerobic digestion, and IoT-enabled monitoring.

The study underscores retrofitting existing systems with corrosion-resistant materials, decentralized models, and smart technologies to enhance resilience. Modular designs and green infrastructure (e.g., constructed wetlands) reduce footprints and operational costs, aligning with circular economy goals. However, economic viability and lifecycle assessments require further exploration to justify advanced upgrades.

Ultimately, the research provides a framework harmonizing technical rigor, environmental stewardship, and cost-effectiveness. Continuous innovation—prioritizing energy neutrality, resource recovery, and community engagement—is critical to meet urbanization and regulatory pressures. By adopting adaptive management and climate-resilient practices, STPs can evolve into sustainable, future-proof systems, ensuring long-term water security and ecological balance.

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