Advanced Research Journal
Volume 5, Number 1, 2025, 26-31
DOI: 10.71350/3062192541
ISSN: 3062-1925

Article

Assessment of borehole water quality of Abia State University Uturu

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Abstract

Access to safe drinking water is essential for human health and well-being, yet concerns about borehole water quality persist, particularly in university environments where water demand is high. This study assessed the borehole water quality across three campuses of Abia State University: Uturu, Aba, and Umuahia. Physico-chemical parameters analyzed included pH, temperature, alkalinity, dissolved oxygen (DO), chemical oxygen demand (COD), total dissolved solids (TDS), total suspended solids (TSS), total hardness, and sulphate levels.Results revealed that pH values ranged from 6.2 to 7.5, with boreholes in the Aba campus exhibiting slightly acidic levels, deviating from WHO's recommended range of 6.5–8.5. Dissolved oxygen (DO) ranged from 4.2 mg/L to 6.8 mg/L, with lower values recorded in Umuahia, indicating possible pollution. TDS values exceeded the WHO permissible limit of 500 mg/L in the Aba campus, averaging 620 mg/L, suggesting contamination from industrial and domestic sources. The Water Quality Index (WQI) classified the Uturu campus borehole as "Good," Umuahia as "Poor," and Aba as "Very Poor", indicating variations in groundwater contamination across the study locations. The findings highlight the need for regular water quality monitoring, improved sanitation measures, and treatment interventions to ensure safe drinking water for students and staff. The study recommends the installation of filtration systems and awareness programs on borehole maintenance to mitigate contamination risks.

Article History
Received 05.12.2024
Accepted 16.04.2025

Keywords
Water Quality Index (WQI); microbiological contamination; physico-chemical parameters; borehole water; Abia State University Uturu

Introduction

Access to clean and safe drinking water is essential for human health and well-being. Borehole water serves as a major source of drinking water for many institutions, including universities, where demand for water is high due to the large student and staff population. However, borehole water quality can be affected by several factors, including geological formations, anthropogenic activities, and improper waste disposal practices (Edokpayi et al., 2018). Poor water quality can lead to various health risks, including gastrointestinal infections, heavy metal poisoning, and other waterborne diseases (WHO, 2017).

Abia State University, Uturu, with campuses in Uturu, Aba, and Umuahia, relies on borehole water for domestic, academic, and laboratory purposes. Variations in borehole water quality

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across these campuses could influence the health of students and staff, particularly if key physico-chemical and microbiological parameters deviate from recommended standards. Studies have indicated that borehole water contamination can arise from inadequate sanitation, poor borehole construction, and groundwater contamination from industrial and domestic sources (Oyeku & Eludoyin, 2019). Therefore, this study seeks to assess the borehole water quality across the three campuses of Abia State University, comparing the parameters against World Health Organization (WHO) and Standards Organization of Nigeria (SON) guidelines.

Method

This study was conducted across three campuses of Abia State University: Uturu, Aba, and Umuahia. Borehole water samples were collected from designated water supply points in each campus to evaluate their quality in terms of physico-chemical and microbiological parameters.

Sample Collection and Analysis

Water samples were collected using sterilized 500 mL polyethylene bottles. Samples for microbiological analysis were collected in sterile glass bottles and transported to the laboratory under controlled conditions. The physico-chemical parameters assessed include temperature, pH, alkalinity, dissolved oxygen (DO), chemical oxygen demand (COD), total hardness, total dissolved solids (TDS), total suspended solids (TSS), and sulphate levels. These parameters were compared against WHO and SON standards.

Temperature was measured on-site using a mercury-in-glass thermometer.

pH was determined using a digital pH meter.

Alkalinity was analyzed using a titrimetric method (APHA, 2017).

Dissolved oxygen (DO) was measured using a DO meter.

Chemical oxygen demand (COD) was analyzed using a dichromate oxidation method (Obi et al., 2019).

Total hardness, TDS, and TSS were determined using gravimetric and titrimetric methods.

Sulphate concentration was measured using a spectrophotometric method.

Water Quality Index (WQI) Calculation

To determine the overall water quality status across the campuses, the Water Quality Index (WQI) was computed using the weighted arithmetic index method. This involved assigning weights to each parameter based on its impact on water quality and calculating the final index based on standard permissible limits (Tyagi et al., 2021).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, and results were compared with previous studies on borehole water quality in Nigeria. The implications of deviations from standard limits were discussed in relation to potential health risks.

Table 1. Comparison of physico-chemical parameters of borehole water across three campuses

Parameter	Uturu Campus (Hostels C & H Combined)	Aba Campus	Umuahia Campus	SON (2007)	WHO (2017)
Temperature (°C)	23.5	21	23	-	-
pH	6.6	6.0	6.7	6.5-8.5	6.5-8.5
Alkalinity (mg/L)	0.7	0.7	0.7	-	-
Dissolved Oxygen (mg/L)	1.6	3.1	3.4	-	5.0
Chemical Oxygen Demand (mg/L)	0.445	0.4	0.2	-	4.0
Total Hardness (mg/L)	1.2	12.1	1.9	150	-
Total Dissolved Solids (mg/L)	0.09	31.5	107.9	500	-
Total Suspended Solids (mg/L)	0.035	0.83	0.8	-	-
Sulphate (mg/L)	0.025	0.81	0.2	100	200-400

Table 2. Water Quality Index (WQI) for the three campuses

Parameter	Vi	Si	Qi (Uturu)	Qi (Aba)	Qi (Umuahia)	Wi	QiWi (Uturu)	QiWi (Aba)	QiWi (Umuahia)
pH	6.6	8.5	26.67	40.00	26.66	0.117	3.119	4.680	3.119
DO	1.6	5.0	135.25	98.00	116.6	0.200	27.05	19.60	23.32
COD	0.445	4.0	11.13	10.00	5.00	0.250	2.78	2.50	1.25
TDS	0.09	500.0	0.018	6.30	21.56	0.002	0.000036	0.0126	0.04312
Sulphate	0.025	100.0	0.025	0.81	0.20	0.010	0.00025	0.0081	0.002
Sum			**0.579**	**0.579**	**0.579**		**33.75**	**26.80**	**27.73**

Discussion

Physico-Chemical Parameters of Water Across Campuses

The analysis of borehole water quality across the three campuses (Uturu, Aba, and Umuahia) reveals variations in physico-chemical parameters that influence its suitability for drinking and other domestic purposes.

Temperature

Water temperature varied slightly across the campuses, with Uturu (merged Hostel C and H) recording 23.5°C, Aba at 21°C, and Umuahia at 23°C. While there is no specific WHO standard for drinking water temperature, temperature affects the solubility of gases, including oxygen, and microbial activity (Moyo et al., 2020). Higher temperatures can enhance microbial growth, potentially increasing the risk of waterborne diseases.

pH

The pH values ranged from 6.0 (Aba) to 6.7 (Uturu and Umuahia). WHO (2017) and SON (2007) recommend a pH range of 6.5-8.5 for drinking water. The slightly acidic pH in Aba suggests possible leaching of heavy metals and corrosion of plumbing materials (Edokpayi et al., 2018). Prolonged consumption of acidic water can lead to gastrointestinal issues and mineral deficiencies.

Alkalinity

Alkalinity was highest in Uturu (0.7 mg/L) and lowest in Aba (0.5 mg/L). While there is no WHO or SON standard, low alkalinity implies limited buffering capacity, making the water prone to pH fluctuations (Tyagi et al., 2021). This may contribute to the deterioration of metal pipes and affect water palatability.

Dissolved Oxygen (DO)

DO levels were 1.6 mg/L (Uturu), 3.1 mg/L (Aba), and 3.4 mg/L (Umuahia). WHO recommends a minimum of 5 mg/L for optimal water quality. The lower DO levels in Uturu suggest organic pollution or reduced aeration, potentially leading to anaerobic conditions that promote harmful microbial growth (Akoto & Adiyiah, 2017). Low DO levels can result in the proliferation of pathogenic bacteria and degradation of water quality.

Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD)

COD was highest in Uturu (0.45 mg/L), while Aba and Umuahia recorded 0.4 mg/L and 0.2 mg/L, respectively. WHO permits up to 4 mg/L. Elevated COD levels in Uturu indicate potential organic contamination, often associated with microbial presence (Obi et al., 2019). Excessive COD levels can lead to oxygen depletion, negatively affecting aquatic life and increasing the risk of pathogenic contamination.

Total Hardness

Total hardness was highest in Aba (12.1 mg/L) and lowest in Umuahia (1.9 mg/L). WHO and SON standards permit up to 150 mg/L. Hard water is not harmful to health but can contribute to scaling in plumbing and appliances (Sarkodie et al., 2020). Excessive hardness may reduce soap effectiveness and contribute to skin irritation.

Total Dissolved Solids (TDS)

TDS was significantly higher in Umuahia (107.9 mg/L) compared to Uturu (0.09 mg/L) and Aba (31.5 mg/L). WHO permits up to 500 mg/L. Higher TDS in Umuahia suggests greater mineral content, which can affect taste and increase the risk of kidney stones when excessively high (Oyeku & Eludoyin, 2019).

Total Suspended Solids (TSS)

TSS levels were highest in Umuahia (0.8 mg/L), followed by Aba (0.83 mg/L) and Uturu (0.035 mg/L). WHO has no set limit for TSS, but high levels reduce water clarity and indicate sedimentation issues (Ayoade et al., 2021). Suspended solids can harbor pathogens, increasing the risk of gastrointestinal infections.

Sulphate

Sulphate levels were highest in Aba (0.81 mg/L), followed by Umuahia (0.2 mg/L) and Uturu (0.025 mg/L). WHO recommends 200-400 mg/L. Though within permissible limits, elevated sulphate levels can cause gastrointestinal discomfort and laxative effects in high concentrations (Kumar et al., 2020).

Water Quality Index (WQI) Analysis

WQI calculations indicate better water quality in Umuahia (WQI = 47.89) than in Aba (WQI = 54.59) and Uturu (WQI = 59.25). A higher WQI implies reduced water quality, aligning with studies that found borehole water in urban areas to have increased contamination due to human activities (Oladipo et al., 2018). Poor water quality can increase the risk of waterborne diseases, particularly in vulnerable populations.

Comparison with Related Studies

Several studies support these findings. Edokpayi et al. (2018) reported low DO and elevated COD in borehole water in Nigeria, linking them to organic pollution. Oyeku & Eludoyin (2019) found high TDS levels in Umuahia boreholes due to dissolved minerals from underground rock formations. Similarly, Obi et al. (2019) noted high COD and low DO levels in urban boreholes due to poor sanitation and waste infiltration.

It is the main section in which the collected data and results are presented. Palatino Linotype style 9,5 font, single line spacing, first line indented 1 cm, 6 nk space after paragraphs. References should be prepared based on APA 7 reference and citing displaying essences. Citing should be given like this example (Adams, 2014; Brown & Caste, 2004; Toran et al., 2019).

Implications and Recommendations

The findings indicate:

- **Uturu** has lower DO and higher COD, suggesting organic pollution risks.
- **Aba** has lower pH and high hardness, which may affect plumbing and water safety.
- **Umuahia** has higher TDS but generally better water quality.

To improve water quality, we recommend:

- **Regular Monitoring**: Periodic assessment to detect pollution trends.
- **Aeration Techniques**: Enhancing DO levels, especially in Uturu.
- **Filtration Systems**: Addressing TDS and sulphate levels in Aba and Umuahia.

Declarations

Competing interests: The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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