

BIOREMEDIATION OF HEAVY METAL POLLUTED WATER USING
IMMOBILIZED FRESHWATER GREEN MICROALGA, *BOTRYOCOCCUS* sp.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to God Almighty, my source of Hope and Strength. My dearly beloved parents, my siblings, nieces and nephews, cousins, and my fiancé.



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ABSTRACT

Heavy metal containing wastewater are regarded as highly toxic to the aquatic environment and to life in general due to their bio-accumulating, cytotoxic, mutagenic and carcinogenic effects on life. Bioremediation is the use of biological materials (e.g. microalgae) in the removal of toxic compounds from the environment such as the heavy metals which is considered more cost effective and environmentally friendly when compared to the physical and chemical methods. The present study was undertaken to check for the heavy metal bioremoval efficiency of free and immobilized *Botryococcus* sp. Four heavy metals were studied and the free cells efficiently reduced Chromium which is equivalent to 94%, followed by Copper (45%), Arsenic (9%) and Cadmium (2%). For the immobilized biomass, the highest ($P < 0.05$) removal efficiency was recorded in the highest biomass concentration (i.e. 15 beads/ml) for Cadmium, Arsenic and Chromium at 76%, 68% and 67%. Whereas, the highest ($P < 0.05$) removal of copper was observed in the blank alginate beads at 84%. The positive control (free cells) recorded the highest ($P < 0.05$) reduction for biological oxygen demand (BOD) whereas, the 15 beads/ml gave the highest ($P < 0.05$) reduction for control gave the highest ($P < 0.05$) reduction for the Chemical oxygen demand (COD). In the LD50 experiment, immobilized biomass harvested from the bioremoval study experiment were used on fishes for toxicity testing. A total of 100% mortality was recorded in the positive control after 24 hours whereas, 3% mortality was observed in negative control and in the 10 beads/ml treatment after 72 hours. No mortality was found in any other treatment after a period of 96 hours. The results obtained from this study suggests that, immobilized cells of *Botryococcus* sp. is efficient in the bioremoval of heavy metals from contaminated waters and also have great potential in the biotransformation of toxic compounds to less-toxic forms.

ABSTRAK

Logam berat yang terkandung dalam air sisa dianggap sangat bertoksik kepada persekitaran dan kehidupan akuatik yang disebabkan oleh kesan bio-accumulating, cytotoxic, mutagenic dan carcinogenic dalam kehidupan. Bioremediasi adalah merupakan penggunaan bahan biologi (eg. mikroalga) dalam penyingkiran bahan toksik seperti logam berat secara lebih efektif dari segi kos serta mesra alam jika dibandingkan dengan kaedah konvensional. Kajian ini telah dijalankan untuk menilai kecekapan penyingkiran logam berat dengan menggunakan *Botryococcus* sp. Empat logam berat telah dikaji menggunakan free sel yang mana Kromium dikurangkan sebanyak 94%. Diikuti oleh Copper (45%), Arsenik (9%) dan Kadmium (2%). Manakala untuk biojisim bergerak, yang paling tinggi ($P < 0.05$) penyingkiran dicatatkan pada kepekatan biojisim yang tertinggi (iaitu 15 manik/ml) dan untuk Kadmium, Arsenik serta Kromium masing-masing pada 76%, 68% dan 67%. Manakala, yang tertinggi ($P < 0.05$) penyingkiran kuprum diperhatikan dalam manik alginat kosong pada 84%. Kawalan positif (sel percuma) merekodkan jumlah tertinggi ($P < 0.05$) pengurangan permintaan oksigen biologi (BOD) manakala, 15 manik/ml memberi nilai tertinggi ($P < 0.05$) pengurangan untuk memberi kawalan yang paling tinggi ($P < 0.05$) pengurangan permintaan oksigen kimia (COD). Dalam eksperimen LD50, biomas bergerak dituai dari eksperimen kajian bioremoval digunakan pada ikan untuk ujian ketoksikan. Sebanyak 100% kematian dicatatkan pada kawalan positif selepas 24 jam sedangkan, 3% kematian diperhatikan dalam kawalan negatif dan dalam 10 manik / rawatan ml selepas 72 jam. Tiada kematian didapati dalam mana-mana rawatan yang lain selepas tempoh 96 jam. Keputusan yang diperolehi daripada kajian ini menunjukkan bahawa, sel-sel *Botryococcus* sp. bergerak. cekap dalam menyingkirkan logam berat daripada air yang tercemar dan juga mempunyai potensi besar dalam bio-transformasikan sebatian toksik kepada bentuk yang kurang bertoksik.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE	i
DECLARATION	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iv
ABSTRACT	vi
ABSTRAK	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xv
LIST OF FIGURES	xvi
LIST OF SYMBOLS	xix
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xx

CHAPTER 1	INTRODUCTION	
	1.1 Background of Study	1
	1.2 Problem Statement	4
	1.3 Objectives of Study	5

1.4	Scope of Study	6
1.5	Significance of Study	7

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1	Introduction	9
2.2	Water Pollution	9
2.2.1	The Textile Industry as a Source of Water Pollution	10
2.2.2	Effects of Water Pollution	12
2.3	Heavy Metals	13
2.3.1	Some Important Heavy Metals	13
2.3.1.1	Arsenic	13
2.3.1.2	Cadmium	14
2.3.1.3	Chromium	15
2.3.1.4	Copper	16
2.3.2	General Toxicity of Heavy Metals	16
2.3.3	Water Pollution by Heavy Metals	17
2.4	Bioremediation	19
2.4.1	Types of Bioremediation	20
2.4.1.1	In Situ Bioremediation	20
2.4.1.2	Ex Situ Bioremediation	21
2.4.2	The Principles of Bioremediation	22
2.5	Microalgae	23
2.5.1	Biotechnological Applications of Microalgae	24



PTTA AUTHM
PERPUSTAKAAN TUN TUN AMINAH

2.6	Microalgae as Bioremediators	24
2.6.1	Mechanism of Heavy Metal Removal by Microalgae	26
2.7	<i>Botryococcus</i> sp.	29
2.7.1	Some Biotechnological Applications of <i>Botryococcus</i> sp.	31
2.8	The Use of Immobilized Microalgae for Bioremediation	31
2.8.1	Alginate as an Immobilization Matrix	34
2.9	Bioremediation of Water Polluted by Heavy Metals	34
2.10	Standard for Wastewater Effluent	36
2.11	Conclusion	37

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

3.1	Introduction	38
3.2	Sample Organism	40
3.2.1	Preparation of <i>Botryococcus</i> sp.	40
3.3	Algal Cell Count	43
3.3.1	Calculation of Cell Concentration	44
3.3.2	Specific Growth Rate (μ /day)	45
3.4	Experimental Setup for the Growth of <i>Botryococcus</i> sp. In the Wastewater Containing Heavy Metals	45

3.5	Immobilization of <i>Botryococcus</i> sp.	46
3.6	Wastewater Sample Collection, Handling and Preservation	47
3.7	Determination of pH, Temperature, DO and Conductivity	48
3.8	Chemical Oxygen Demand (COD) Test	49
3.9	Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) Test	51
3.10	Total Solids (TS)	52
3.10.1	Procedure for the Determination of Total Dissolved Solids (TDS)	52
3.10.1.1	TDS Calculation	53
3.10.2	Procedure for the Determination of Total Suspended Solids (TSS)	54
3.10.2.1	TSS Calculation	54
3.11	Determination of Total Organic Carbon (TOC), Total Carbon (TC), Inorganic Carbon (IC) and Total Nitrogen (TN)	55
3.12	Determination of Orthophosphate (PO_4^{3-})	56
3.13	Determination of Heavy Metal in the Water Sample	57
3.14	Experimental Setup	58
3.15	Determination of Heavy Metal Toxicity after	



Removal by the Microalga	59
3.15.1 Procedure for the LD50 Test	60
3.17 Statistical Analysis	61
3.18 Conclusion	61

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction	62
4.2 Characteristics of the Textile Wastewater	62
4.3 Heavy Metal Content of the Textile Wastewater	64
4.4 Growth of <i>Botryococcus</i> sp. in the Wastewater	66
4.5 Size Distribution and Characteristics of Beads	70
4.6 Heavy Metal Reduction/Removal	71
4.6.1 Reduction of Arsenic	72
4.6.2 Reduction of Cadmium	76
4.6.3 Reduction of Chromium	80
4.6.4 Reduction of Copper	83
4.6.5 Effect of Biomass Concentration on the Reduction of Arsenic Cadmium, Chromium and Copper	86
4.6.6 Effects of Immobilization	88
4.6.7 Effect of Time	92
4.7 Physical and Chemical Parameters Reduction	93
4.7.1 Reduction of COD, BOD and TDS	94
4.7.2 Reduction of TC, IC and TOC	97



4.8	Toxicity Testing	98
4.8.1	Median Lethal Dose (LD50) Analysis	98
4.8.1.1	Treatment of the synthetic wastewater	106

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1	Introduction	109
5.2	Conclusion	109
5.3	Recommendations	112

REFERENCES	113
-------------------	-----

APPENDIX	152
-----------------	-----

VITA	179
-------------	-----



PTTA UTHM
PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU TUN AMINAH

LIST OF TABLES

2.1	Typical Characteristics of Raw Textile Wastewater	12
2.2	Some Microalgal Strains used in the Removal of Heavy Metals from Contaminated Solutions	26
2.3	Some Biomass Immobilized in Different Matrixes that have been used in the Removal of Heavy Metals from Wastewater	33
2.4	Standards A & B for Effluent Parameters	37
3.1	Composition of Bold's Basal Medium (BBM)	42
3.2	Experimental Analysis/Parameter Testing	48
4.1	Physio-Chemical Characteristics of the Sample Wastewater (Textile)	63
4.2	Heavy Metal of Importance Present in the Textile Wastewater	65
4.3	Characteristics of the Water used for the Test	101
4.4	Average Weight \pm SD and Length \pm SD (standard deviation) of the Fishes after 24 Hours.	102
4.5	Average Weight \pm SD and Length \pm SD (standard deviation) of the Fishes after 48 Hours.	103
4.6	Average Weight \pm SD and Length \pm SD (standard deviation) of the Fishes after 72 Hours.	103
4.7	Average Weight \pm SD and Length \pm SD (standard deviation) of the	



LIST OF FIGURES

2.1	Process of Heavy Metal Contamination	18
3.1	Methodology Flow Chart	40
3.2	<i>Botryococcus</i> sp.	43
3.3	Growth of <i>Botryococcus</i> sp.	43
3.4	Microscope & Haemocytometer	44
3.5	Area in the Haemocytometer	44
3.6	Immobilized <i>Botryococcus</i> sp.	47
3.7	pH, Temperature, Conductivity and DO Meter	49
3.8	DRD Reactor for COD Test	50
3.9	BOD Bottles (300 ml each)	51
3.10	Vacuum Filter Pump	55
3.11	TOC Analyser	56
3.12	Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer (AAS)	57
3.13	Flasks Containing the Different Concentrations of the Immobilized Biomass	59
3.14	Treatment Flasks Inoculated with the Immobilized Biomass and the Wastewater	59
3.15	LD50 Test Aquarium	61

4.1	Daily Growth Rate ($\times 10^3$) cells/ml of <i>Botryococcus</i> sp. in Different Concentration of the Wastewater	67
4.2	Specific Growth Rate (μ /day)	68
4.3	Heavy Metal Reduction	69
4.4	<i>Botryococcus</i> sp. Immobilized in Sodium Alginate	70
4.5	Size Distribution of Beads	71
4.6	Percentage Reduction of Arsenic by <i>Botryococcus</i> sp.	73
4.7	Mean \pm Standard Error for Arsenic Reduction on Day 0, 3, 5, 7 and 10	75
4.8	Percentage Reduction of Cadmium by <i>Botryococcus</i> sp.	77
4.9	Mean \pm Standard Error for Cadmium reduction on Day 0, 3, 5, 7 and 10	79
4.10	Percentage Reduction of Chromium by <i>Botryococcus</i> sp.	80
4.11	Mean \pm Standard Error for Chromium Reduction on Day 0, 3, 5, 7 and 10	82
4.12	Percentage Reduction of Copper by <i>Botryococcus</i> sp.	84
4.13	Mean \pm Standard Error for Copper Reduction on Day 0, 3, 5, 7 and 10	85
4.14	Effect of Biomass Concentrations	87
4.15	Effect of Immobilization	90
4.16	Effect of Time on the Bioremoval	92
4.17	COD, BOD and TDS Reduction for a Period of 7 days	95
4.18	Reductions of TC, TOC and IC for a Period of 7 days	97

4.19	Silver Bard (<i>Barponymus gonionotus</i>)	100
4.20	Percentage Mortality in the Treatments after a Period of 96 hours	102
4.21	Changes in the Concentration of DO	106
4.22	Heavy Metal Reduction in the Synthetic Wastewater	107



PTTHM
PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU TUN AMINAH

LIST OF SYMBOLS

%	-	Percentage
Mg/L	-	Milligram per Litre
°C	-	Degree Celsius
rpm	-	Rounds per Minute
psi	-	Per Square Inch
g	-	Grams
ml	-	Millilitre
L	-	Litre
g/L	-	Grams per Litre
Cells/Square	-	Cells per Square
Cells/ml	-	Cells per Millilitre
Beads/ml	-	Beads per Millilitre
dH ₂ O	-	Distilled Water

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

TN	-	Total Nitrogen
PO_4^{3-}	-	Orthophosphate
TOC	-	Total Organic Carbon
TC	-	Total Carbon
TC	-	Inorganic Carbon
TS	-	Total Solids
DO	-	Dissolved Oxygen
TDS	-	Total Dissolved Solids
TSS	-	Total Suspended Solids
AAS	-	Atomic Absorption Spectrophotometer
As	-	Arsenic
Cd	-	Cadmium
Cr	-	Chromium
Cu	-	Copper
<	-	Less than
NaCl	-	Sodium Chloride
$\text{K}_2\text{Cr}_2\text{O}_7$	-	Potassium dichromate

AgSO ₄	-	Silver Sulphate
HgSO ₄	-	Mercuric Sulphate
H ₂ SO ₄	-	Sulphuric Acid
CO ₂	-	Carbon di Oxide
H ₂ O	-	Water
SEM	-	Scanning Electron Microscopy
LD50	-	Median Lethal Dose
UTHM	-	Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia
FSTPi	-	Faculti Sains, Teknology dan Pembangunan Insan



PTTA UTHM
PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU TUN AMINAH

LIST OF APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A	Growth of <i>Botryococcus</i> sp. in the Wastewater	151
APPENDIX B	Percentage Removal of Arsenic (Day 0-10)	152
APPENDIX C	Percentage Removal of Chromium (Day 0-10)	153
APPENDIX D	Percentage Removal of Cadmium (Day 0-10)	154
APPENDIX E	Percentage Removal of Copper (Day 0-10)	155
APPENDIX F	Arsenic Reduction on Days 3, 5, 7 and 10 in the Different Treatments	157
APPENDIX G	Homogeneity of Variance and ANOVA for Arsenic Reduction	159
APPENDIX H	Chromium Reduction on Days 3, 5, 7 and 10 In the Different Treatments	161
APPENDIX I	Homogeneity of Variance and ANOVA for Chromium Reduction	163
APPENDIX J	Cadmium Reduction on Days 3, 5, 7 and 10 In the Different Treatments	165
APPENDIX K	Homogeneity of Variance and ANOVA For Cadmium Reduction	167
APPENDIX L	Copper Reduction on Days 3, 5, 7 and 10	

	In the Different Treatments	169
APPENDIX M	Homogeneity of Variance and ANOVA	
	For Copper Reduction	171
APPENDIX N	Reductions of the Parameters (BOD, COD, TDS, TOC, TC, IC)	173
APPENDIX O	Homogeneity of Variance and ANOVA	
	For BOD Reduction	174
APPENDIX P	Homogeneity of Variance and ANOVA	
	For COD Reduction	175
APPENDIX Q	Homogeneity of Variance and ANOVA	
	For TDS Reduction	176
APPENDIX R	Homogeneity of Variance and ANOVA	
	For TOC Reduction	177



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Increase in human activities such as industrialization and civilization has resulted in the issue of environmental pollution and in most cases the pollution of water bodies. This issue has for long been a great problem that requires adequate attention. Pollution according to Abdel-Raouf et al. (2012) is referred to as a non-natural occurrence usually associated with elevated concentrations of naturally existing materials or synthetically made substances that are released into a particular environment. Heavy metals are environmental pollutants of inorganic origin with atomic weights of about 63.5 to 200.6 g/mol (Srivastava & Majumder, 2008). Heavy metals are known to be emptied into freshwaters and their resources via industrial effluents (Tripathi, 2014).

They tend mainly to pollute surface water and groundwater due to natural events or human activities. They are carcinogenic, mutagenic and cytotoxic and therefore, pose a great and deadly effect on the environment and on living things (Moo-Young, 2011). The release of both organic and inorganic contaminants into the environment by either industrial activities or other form of anthropogenic practices has led to the case of environmental pollution (Mouchet, 1986; Lim *et al.*, 2010).

Heavy metal discharge into the environment has rather become a rapid practice owing to the increasing trend in technology and also their use in different industrial processes (Tripathi, 2014). According to Vidal (2001), environmental quality has a lot to do with the quality of life on earth as this go hand in hand. Recently, the problem of environmental pollution has been accepted as a general or global issue as the evaluated contaminated areas is significant (Cairney, 1993).

Among the major new technologies that have appeared since the 1960s, bioremediation applications have attracted a great deal of attention and interest. The application of microbial metabolic potential (bioremediation) is accepted as an environmentally benign and economical measure for the decontamination of polluted environments. Bioremediation methods are generally categorized into ex situ and in situ bioremediation. The bioremediation of heavy/toxic metals is focused on the reduction in the level or amount of hazardous wastes as the immoderate accumulation of these metallic ions can be highly toxic to plants, aquatic life and the environment as a whole (Singh *et al.*, 2002). Mohee & Mudhoo, (2012), stated that the limited achievements in using these biological materials in the process of bioremediation have recently been ascribed to the reduction in biological system productivity and diversity under environmental conditions. Considering the many adverse effects that accompany environmental pollution by heavy metals comes a better and an effective remedial approach, a process known as bioremediation.

Bioremediation is a branch of biotechnology that utilizes biological processes to render harmless the environmental contaminants (Boopathy, 2000). There are a number of agents used for bioremediation out of which are the bacteria, fungi and the microalgae but the microalgae presenting unique characteristics out of which is their ability to distinguish between the essential and the non-essential substances that are present in the environment. In addition, these set of organisms are single celled and as a result they do not mutate. Microalgae are unicellular and colonial organisms that are highly diversified and are made up of the eukaryotic protists and the prokaryotic blue-green algae (cyanobacteria). These set of organisms are known to be outstanding in assessing environmental quality and are thus, considered unique (Day *et al.*, 1999).

Microorganisms, especially the microalgae present a relatively great size for heavy metal ion binding at an eco-friendly rate of production and have been therefore, applied in the bioremoval of metallic ions from contaminated

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