

Are Household Water Purification Devices Useful to Improve the Physical Chemical and Microbial Quality of the feed Water? Case Study: Bandar Abbas South of Iran

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Abstract

Part of the Bandar Abbas population in southern Iran, in order to access to better water quality than municipal tap water systems, use household water purification devices. The aim of this study was to determine to what extent these devices are effective in improving the quality and the efficiency are desirable for the production of water quality. This cross-sectional study that was conducted in a six-month period time in 2015 in Bandar Abbas. A total of 30 samples of water from various home water purification apparatuses were sampled and tested for hardness, alkalinity, pH, total dissolved solids (TDS) and electrical conductivity (EC), turbidity and MPN was performed on the samples. Statistical analysis was performed using SPSS version 19 and statistical tests ANOVA and Pearson correlation test. The efficiency of the apparatuses to reduce turbidity, hardness, alkalinity, Na, K and Cl, respectively were 45.9, 39, 22.3, 30.6, 34.9 and 53 percent, and in reduce of TDS and EC respectively were 37.5 and 59 percent. The devices ability to change the pH of water was low and negative; (-5.8 percent). In 26.6% of influent samples, microbial contamination was detected, which in all mentioned cases, the microbial contaminated were showed in effluent samples. In general, the use of these devices was not necessarily lead to improved water quality. After working the 12-month period significantly decreased efficiency. The number of treatment stages did not impact in device efficiency improvement.

Keywords: *Water treatment, Purification devices, Water quality, Chemical quality.*

Introduction

According to the World Health Organization report, more than a billion people worldwide lack access to safe drinking water (1). A number of patients and deaths occur per year as a result of contaminated water. (2-4). Concern about health risk related to water and advertising messages about Household water treatment devices leading to use of these apparatuses in many areas. Household water purification apparatuses (HWPAs) are classified in point of use treatment systems (5- 8); these devices generally include activated carbon filters, membrane filters, and ion exchange, distillation and disinfection UV systems (9, 10).

The past surveys showed that HWPAs can be useful only in the area with polluted water, while many of user's implements HWPAs as a means of fantasy instrument without information about the suitable condition for use (11). The use of HWPAs requires extensive research on effluent water quality from HWPAs. HWPAs should be selected based on the quality of water entering the system, the quality of the output device and the refined mechanism (12).

HWPAs are in a variety of three-step, five-step, six and 11-stage HWPAs on the market. Six treatment stages used in three to six stages HWPAs are provided in the following (13). In eleven stages devices, a ceramic filter and several different stage sand filter have been added to the previous six stages (14).

The first step is the ion exchange resin that reduces water hardness via transformation of dissolved calcium and magnesium ions in water to insoluble forms. These resins are very conducive environment to growth and reproduction of bacteria inside the filter in the shortest time so that the number of bacteria increases significantly (15). Second units are activated carbon filters which have high ability to remove odor and unpleasant taste as well as the efficiently remove residual chlorine from drinking water. The third stage are fabric filters (1 and 5 microns) that made of polypropylene fibers.

The performance of the filters is exactly like a strainer; so that particulate matter, such

as mud, sand, rust particles produced by decaying pipes and piping network and other suspended matters are removed from the water. Step Four are Zeolites; natural resins that have properties of exchange for cations (arsenic, titanium, aluminum, cobalt, chromium, aluminum, lead, zinc and so on) and heavy metals.

Step Five is ceramic filters with pore size of 0.5 microns that act as a barrier for suspended materials and all the parasites and some of bacteria, while water passes (16, 17). Step Six is reverse osmosis and Nano-filtration membranes that are used to separate ions and macromolecules from the water. The importance of the membranes is removal of specific contaminants such as THMs, pesticides, natural organic matter, nutrients and water softening (18- 21). Several studies have been conducted on this topic around the world, including Willis et al in Australia (22), Mintz et al in Atlanta (23), Mwabi et al in Africa (24).

A similar study was done in other parts of the country; In a Fahimnia et al study entitled evaluation of point-of-use drinking water treatment systems performance and problems, the results showed that the device can reduce the TDS of water to 90% and aluminum to 5% and cadmium to 86 percent (25). Bandar Abbas (BA) with 45 square kilometers and 650000 inhabitants, center of Hormozgan province is located in southern Iran. The weather of BA is Hot and humid weather; so this summer in the city was so close to nine months.

The water demand of BA is about 150,000 cubic meters per day which much of the drinking water of Bandar Abbas (95%) will be supplied from the Esteghlal Dam reservoir. Bandar drinking water meet all of water primary standards; However, due to the no desirable taste and odor (mostly in summer and autumn) water quality is not accepted by users, so it leads to dissatisfaction of the city's water quality (26), which is why a large percentage of the people of this city use household water treatment devices to access suitable water quality.

The aim of this study was to evaluate the efficiency of the household water treatment apparatus in production a suitable water quality.

Materials and Methods

In this descriptive-analytic study which was conducted in 2016 in the city of Bandar Abbas, according to the diversity of the number of HWPAs, random cluster method was used for sampling. Any type of HWPAs considered as a cluster, and they were randomly sampled. To calculate the sample size the average of total hardness produced water was assumed in range of 81 to 105 mg/L as CaCO_3 ; considering the standard deviation of 60, by using the Eq 1, the sample size was determined as 30 samples.

Hardness testing using titration methods (Merck materials, expire date to end of 2017) and in accordance with standard procedure reference number C 2340 of standard

methods were performed. Alkalinity by titration methods, using materials manufactured by Merck and Scharlau companies (date expires until the end of 2017) and in accordance with standard procedure reference number B 2320 of standard method was tested (27).

To measuring TDS and EC, TDS meter of Aqua lytic (model of CD24, Italy) with accuracy of 0.01 units and to turbidity measurement by a Hach 2100N Laboratory Turbid meter (Hatch Ltd., USA) were used. pH was measured using Elmetron pH meter (model of CP-501) and to evaluate the microbial quality of water, the most probable number (MPN) technique was used based on standard methods procedure.

Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS software version of 19 for windows and the tests of ANOVA and Pierson correlation were used and p-value < 0.05 was purposed as significant level.

Table 1: Average measured values of influent and effluent of water taken from water purification systems under the study

Parameter	Unit	Influent	Effluent
Turbidity	NTU	0.61±0.29	0.33±0.12
Hardness	mg/L as CaCO_3	269.30±135.13	124.27±72.70
TDS	mg/L	958.90±103.78	469.44±141.07
NA	mg/L	12.74±1.98	7.04±2.05
K	mg/L	8.81±1.93	4.73±1.71
CL	mg/L	164.42±20.91	57.43±23.65
ALK	mg/L as CaCO_3	204.11±21.98	128.60±22.63
EC	$\mu\text{S/cm}$	1292.51±86.27	409.53±205.76
PH	-	7.27 ±0.39	7.69±0.26

$$Eq(1) \rightarrow n = \frac{Z_{\alpha/2}^2 \times \sigma^2}{d^2}$$

Results and Discussion

The done tests on 30 samples taken from different apparatus were classified in four clusters as (eleven, six, five and three unit stages) then analyzed.

Results of measured qualitative parameters in influent and effluent of devices as mean values are presented in Table 1.

The purpose of this table showing the overall

status of influent and effluent of water quality related to studied HWPAs.

Figure 1 is presented to show effect of in-line duration of HWPAs on efficiency in reducing the measured parameters for the studied HWPAs.

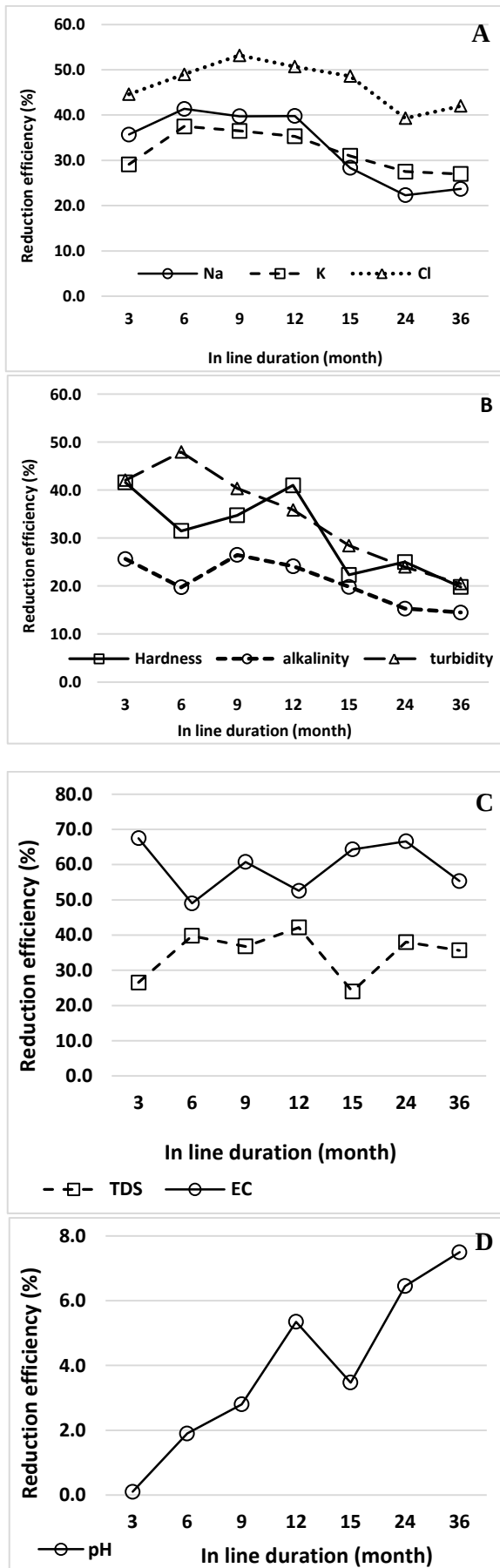


Figure 1: The relationship between in-line duration of household water purification devices to efficiency in reducing Na, Cl and K (A), hardness and alkalinity (B), EC and TDS(C) and pH (D)

In order to illustration the effect of unit number in HWPAs on efficiency of them in reducing the measured parameter, fig 2 is presented.

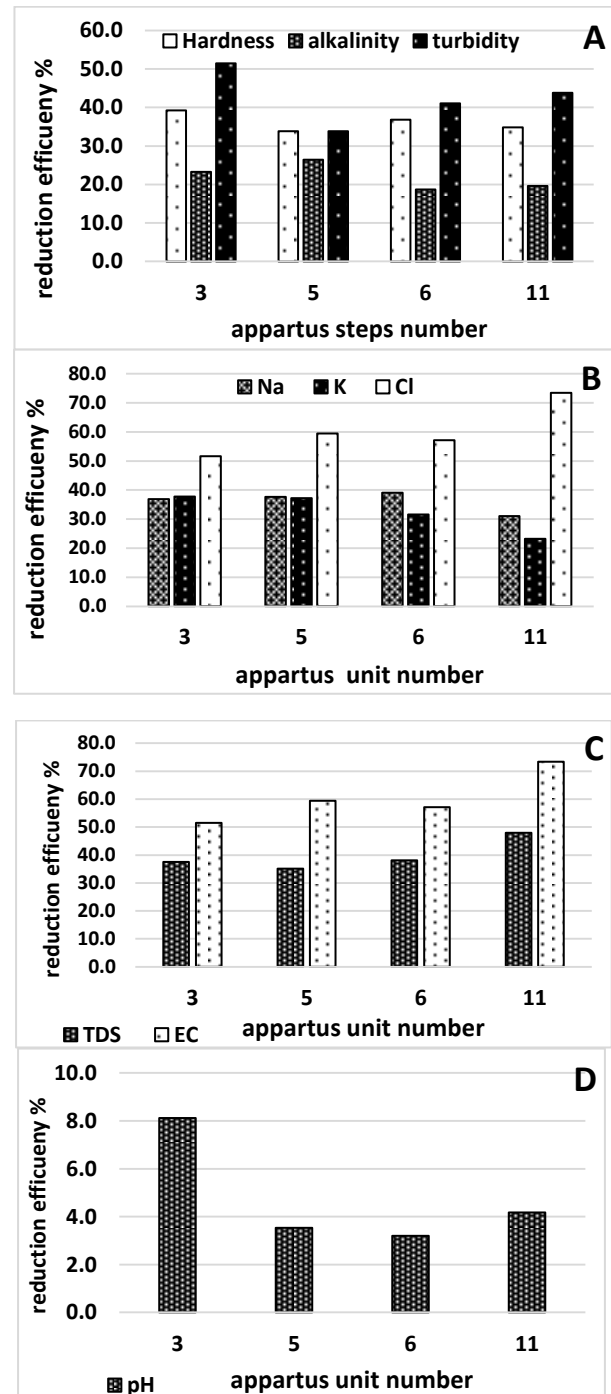


Figure 2: The relationship between number of treatment units of HWPAs to efficiency in reducing Na, Cl and K (A), hardness and alkalinity (B), EC and TDS(C) and pH (D)

Turbidity of input and output of all devices was in the standard range; less than NTU1. Among studied HWPAs, the type of 3 stages apparatus had the maximum efficiency in the removal of turbidity.

The most performance for turbidity reduction was observed after 6 months in-line duration and after that the efficiency showed a continued downward trend. The TDS in output water of all devices was less than standard. TDS is less than desirable in a number of devices by reducing TDS of water decreases the quality of water.

Eleven-stage apparatus showed the most efficiency to reduce TDS. In all devices slight decrease occurred in the alkalinity (less than 25%). A large number of households in different cities of Iran, use of HWPAs. Most users of HWPAs, unaware of its true performance and what they know about the quality of the device is on the basis of advertising information. Some of these devices, not meet the standard water quality; so they produce the water same as public water quality and even in some cases lower than that. Some of the devices also reduce many of the minerals which are needed for human body. According to research conducted in areas where water hardness is high, cardiovascular patients is low (28).

Optimal water hardness range is from 75 to 150 mg/L as CaCO_3 which called semi-hard water. However, in some devices there has been a sharp decrease in water hardness output that can be inappropriate. All the apparatuses, similar efficiency in the reduction of hardness so significant differences between them were not approved by ANOVA analysis ($p=0.081$). According to the results, in 26.6% of influent samples, microbial contamination was detected, which in all mentioned cases, the microbial contaminated were showed in effluent samples.

It means that the household water purification devices in each case have failed to reduce the contamination. Hence, these devices had not suitable efficiency in reducing microbial. Pierson correlation analysis was done to determining the correlation between in-line duration and reduction efficiency for different parameters which showed; there is a significant negative correlation between in-line duration and parameters of alkalinity, turbidity, K and Na and the related coefficients were as ($r=-$

0.427, $p=0.006$), ($r=-0.606$, $p=0.003$), ($r=-0.353$, $p=0.009$) and ($r=-0.289$, $p=0.007$) respectively. It means that by increasing the in-line duration, the efficiency of apparatuses showed a significant reduction.

There was not a significant correlation between the in-line duration and the devices efficiency in reduction of Cl, TDS, EC and pH; the related coefficient respectively were as ($r=-0.002$, $p=0.083$), ($r=-0.052$, $p=0.061$), ($r=-0.004$, $p=0.092$) and ($r=-0.011$, $p=0.071$); which means the index of in-line duration is not played a uniform and significant role on apparatuses performance to reduction the last mentioned parameters.

The same statistical analysis was done for determining the relationship between the number of apparatus units and their efficiency on studied parameter reduction from influent to effluent; This analysis were not approved correlations for turbidity index ($r=0.003$, $p=0.091$). Pearson correlation test did not show the correlation between hardness and alkalinity reduction efficiency with the steps number of the devices; correlation coefficient respectively were as ($r=0.007$, $p=0.068$) and ($r=0.003$, $p=0.091$). In the case of electrical conductivity and total dissolved salts, there were little correlation coefficients; ($r=0.038$, $p=0.042$) and ($r=0.022$, $p=0.038$) respectively. This condition implies that the number of units in different household devices has not significant impact in improving water quality.

Given the importance of microbial water quality, it is essential to the accurate maintenance of water treatment systems, so these devices have to install in clean places and in places like the nearby sewage systems, sinks and the like are not installed.

Conclusion

Much of the Claimed material about the performance of HWPAs are the advertising material, so in numerous cases the HWPAs have not been completely desirable performance; especially in the case of microbial contamination, the HWPAs have very low efficiency and even in some cases have increased microbial contamination of water. In the operation of HWPAs, should be applied carefully; so after a 12-month period

of performance, the apparatuses efficiency significantly reduced and the process further over time, faster. Therefore, it is advisable to do after the end of this period of operation; device service should be done. The number of treatment steps in commercial devices available on the market had not a significant role in improving the efficiency of such devices.

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