Potential of Low Cost Sensor Usage for Waste Water IOT System

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Abstract. Mining industry is one of the industries that require huge amount of water. 1 tonne of coal requires 800-3000 gallons of water to produce. Due to the massive volume of water requirements, coal mining company must carry out water conservation. Moreover, the waste water from a coal mining process contains pollutants from mining activities that are dangerous for the environment. Therefore, the waste water must be treated to annihilate any harmful pollution before the water can be flowed back to the water resources. Stringent government regulation requires companies to report waste water quality regularly. The task to collect waste water quality data is laborious as a company needs operators to measure and checks the parameters periodically. Therefore, an on-line system to measure and collect the information is in dearth. However, expensive industrial sensors pose difficulties for small-scale coal mining.

The paper presents the potential of low cost sensor for waste water online monitoring in coal mine. The experiment uses sediment from the waste water pond of a coal mining site. Two sensors are used to measure pH and total suspended solid (TSS). While pH level can be directly read from the sensor, TSS reading uses estimation from turbidity sensor. Log linear regression is used to plot the relation between turbidity and TSS. The R value shows that the low cost turbidity sensor is able to estimate TSS.

1. Introduction

Water is the most important element on earth to support any living creatures on earth. Therefore, any contamination to natural water resources could lead to catastrophe [1]. Consequently, industrial waste must be prevented from polluting water resources. Usually, waste water from coal mining is settled in a pond and treated to balance the PH and reduce TSS (Total suspended solid) before being returned to water bodies. Wastewater treatment in coal mining industry is highly regulated by the government, due to the high usage of water and hazardous pollution. The Indonesian government through Minister of Environment and Forestry Regulation number P.93/MENLHK/SETJEN/KUM.1/8/2018 requires all coal mining companies to monitor water quality parameters namely pH, TSS, and water debit.
Therefore, continuous pH and TSS measurement is required to ensure that the quality of water meets government regulations.

Industrial grade meters are costly, e.g. the price for a TSS portable meter is between USD 2,000 to 4,000. Therefore, a small-scale coal mining company would find the price too expensive. In addition, companies also feel that the monitoring task is too laborious. Not only the equipment is costly, to frequently measure and input the data manually is also time demanding. In addition to the meter investment cost, the company still has to assign a staff to manually measure the wastewater quality and enter the data to the system. Therefore, low cost solution to monitor water quality is a necessity to solve the problem.

Shahana and Shivakumar compiled various technologies and platform for smart water management system (SMWS) and designed a framework for SMWS using raspberry pi [2]. Raspberry pi is a low cost CPU system with Wi-Fi capability. Therefore, the raspberry pi can function as a central controller for sensors. In this research, an IOT system based on raspberry pi was designed and developed for wastewater measurement equipment. The system has 3 sensors to measure temperature, pH, and turbidity each. pH and turbidity are used for wastewater quality monitoring. Figure 1 shows the system of waste water monitoring.

Nowadays, low cost sensors utilization for monitoring is increasingly popular because of their cheap price and availability in the market. The sensors can be easily purchased through online stores. Recently, the accuracy and reliability of low cost sensors are adequate for industrial purposes. Schmidt (2018) designed a low-cost monitoring buoy system for near-shore aquaculture and it performed satisfactorily [3]. While pH measurement can be directly obtained from pH sensor, TSS value cannot be directly obtained from the sensor. Therefore another sensor with a similar principle is used to estimate the value. Holliday et.al (2003) concluded that turbidity is able to estimate TSS [4]. Further, Daphne et al (2011) found that turbidity is the most economical solution to estimate suspended solid in the river [5]. Turbidity is a parameter to measure water clarity, therefore it is suitable as an estimator for TSS as both metrics are used to measure water clarity.

![Wastewater monitoring system](Figure 1. Waste water monitoring system)

2. Material and Methods
The experiment utilized wastewater from a coal mining wastewater pond. However, the location of the pond cannot be disclosed due to confidentiality. The experiment steps are as follows:
1. The wastewater was mixed with pure water to create seven 500-ml wastewater samples to form gradually increasing TSS content.
2. The samples were then analyzed in an industrial laboratory to obtain pH and TSS values. A pH meter was used to measure the pH of the samples, while gravimetric analysis was used to measure TSS.

3. The voltage of turbidity and pH sensors from each solution samples were measured and plotted in the graph on X axis and the corresponding TSS values were also plotted in Y axis.

4. A model was to created to estimate TSS and pH value.

2.1. Gravimetric
Gravimetric is a method to measure TSS by weighing residue from a solution after filtering the solution using a 2-µm filter and drying the residue in the oven at 103-105°C for one hour. Gravimetric is the standard procedure to measure TS.

2.2. Log linear regression
The log-linear model is a mathematical equation which is a function of logarithmic variables combination making it possible to create a linear regression. The equation is shown below

\[ y = a \log x + c \]  (1)

Where:
- \( y \) is dependent variable
- \( x \) is independent variable
- \( a \) is constant
- \( c \) is constant

3. Results and Discussion
Among seven samples, three samples were omitted, one sample was omitted because the TSS values were similar to another sample, while two other samples were omitted due to sensor limitation. Therefore, only 4 samples are presented in Figure 2. Log-linear equation was applied to model the relationship between TSS values and turbidity voltages.

![Figure 2](image)

**Figure 2.** Turbidity sensor voltage vs TSS Graph using laboratory data
(a) Log-linear graph (b) Linear graph

During implementation at mining site, the equipment needed to be calibrated as the sediments in the pond were different from samples. Because of limited installation time, TSS measurement through gravimetric method could not be performed. Therefore, Hach® TSS and pH meter were used to
measure the values. Waste water samples were taken from a pond where the equipment was installed to ensure that the sediment did not affect the value of the TSS. The sample was then mixed with pure water to produce variation of TSS value. Moreover, following a discussion with the company’s EHS staffs, the wastewater TSS value was rarely over 1000. Therefore the TSS values during implementation were below 1000. The results are shown in figure 2a illustrating turbidity vs TSS log linear graph and Figure 2b depicting the linear regression graph.

![Figure 2a: Log-linear graph](image1)

![Figure 2b: Linear graph](image2)

**Figure 3.** Graph of Turbidity sensor voltage vs TSS during implementation  
(a) Log-linear graph (b) Linear graph

| Table 1. R² Results |
|---------------------|
|                   Log linear R² | Linear regression R² |
| Laboratory data    | 0.993                     | 0.7747                  |
| Implementation data| 0.9941                    | 0.9883                  |

Table 1 shows that the log linear model has a coefficient of determination $R^2 = 0.993$ and 0.9941 for laboratory and implementation data respectively. Likewise, the linear regression model has a coefficient $R^2 = 0.7747$ and 0.9883 for laboratory and implementation data. The log-linear model fit the data satisfactorily for values more than 1000 compared to linear regression. For TSS values below 1000, the log linear and linear regression presented similar results, therefore both methods can be applied to model TSS value.

4. Conclusion

Log-linear equations were applied to model the relationship between turbidity sensor voltages and TSS values. Experiment results utilizing laboratory and implementation dataset confirmed that log-linear model fit the dataset satisfactorily. Therefore, turbidity sensor can be applied to estimate TSS values, particularly for TSS values that are more than 1000. However, the results are limited to coal mining wastewater. Future research should apply a varied wastewater dataset and utilization of spectrum sensor that would allow utilization of advanced modelling techniques such as neural networks, support vector models (SVM), particle swarm, etc.
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