Engineering Perspectives in Filtration and Separation, Vol. 2, No. 2, June 2024
ISSN:3107-5290

Application of Pressure-Driven Membrane Systems in Sustainable Brewing Practices

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Abstract--- In this paper ultrafiltration and nanofiltration technologies are applied to improve the processes of water reuse, energy efficiency, and waste reduction at a brewery, aimed at redefining sustainable brewing practices by integrating pressure-driven membrane systems. This research was conducted using a model system designed around the specific characteristics of brewery wastewater, and compared the performance to conventional treatment methods. The results showed marked improvements in the sustainability of the operations. These results demonstrate the powerful impact of membrane technology on the environmental performance of the brewed products industry and the need to propel the industry towards eco-friendly production practices.

Keywords--- Brewery Sustainability Practices, Membrane Pressure Systems, Environmental Performance, Waste Management, Sustainble Technologies.

Received: 18 - 03 - 2024; Revised: 15 - 04 - 2024; Accepted: 20 - 05 - 2024; Published: 28 - 06 - 2024

I. Introduction

An increase in awareness and enforcement of policies aimed at environmental protection, combined with heightened public awareness, has led to businesses reevaluating their operations. In particular, the brewing industry has started addressing the need for proactive sustainable solutions. Brewng is known to be one of the most resource demanding processes, on top of it being one of the most popular leisure time activities, with millions of people consuming large quantities of it. This, combined with the large volumes of wastewater produced, creates an ecosystemic challenge, especially when taking into account the huge amounts of energy and water resources consumed throughout the production cycle. This makes it crucial to sustaining the quality and taste of the beverages while significantly reducing eco damages.

Microfiltration (MF), Ultrafiltration (UF), Nanofiltration (NF) and Reverse Osmosis (RO) pressure membrane systems possess significant advantages over traditional methods for treating brewing wastewater. These processes function on the basis of osmosis, with a selective barrier that permits water and minute solutes to traverse through while denying the passage of large particles and contaminants. They have a compact design, are modular, and recover water of such high quality that it can be used further in industrial processes.

Potential uses include not only the treatment of wastewater but also the pre-filtration of water, wort clarification, extraction of yeast, and even yeast recycling. From the aforementioned treatments, sanitation remains one of the most critical processes to bolster a brew plant's sustainability. The adoption of membrane technologies would allow breweries to achieve near-zero liquid discharge, recover useful constituents, and significantly reduce operational costs alongside their environmental impact.

In this study, the research objectives focus on the feasibility of pressure driven membrane systems for sustainable brewing and its performance. This includes studying the application of ultrafiltration and nanofiltration as additional modules to a model brewery, determining the efficiency of contaminant removal and the recovery of reusable water from brewery wastewater. Furthermore, a treatment including membrane systems will be bench marked against other conventional methods to determine the efficiency, cost, and environmental impacts of using membranes.

II. Literature Survey

The 2022-2023 period has certainly not gone by without highlighting the importance of membrane technologies in food and beverage industries. Liu et al., have published a 2023 study that examined the

application of ultrafiltration in the treatment of brewery effluent, reporting greater than 90% removal of total suspened solids and 75% reduction in chemical oxygen demand (COD). The study also pointed out the conserving and prolonging the operational life of membranes through savings on energized cleaning.

Zhang & Ren, (2022) showed the application of NF membranes in a pilot-scale brewery plant with 85% water recovery and substantial reduction of sulfates and phosphates. Their work demonstrated the feasibility of using NF-permeate water for non-critical cleaning, helping to lower freshwater consumption.

Thompson et al., (2023) reviewed membrane-based treatment in breweries and included known benefits such as improvement in effluent quality and potential nutrient recovery. Membrane fouling and high capital investment continue to be the major issues in these developments.

Costa & Mendez, (2022) studied MBR systems, which combine biological treatment with membrane separation, in 2022 and observed significant increase in treatment efficiency. The operational complexity and maintenance burden associated with MBRs still makes it difficult for small breweries to adopt these systems (Chen & Singh, 2024).

The most recent developments have also concentrated on membrane fouling, permeability, and chemical resistance improvement through modification of membrane surfaces by attempting hydrophilic bioinspired coatings and graphene-based composite materials which have proven successful in laboratories and could help extend the life of membranes (Martinez et al., 2024).

In combination, these works demonstrate a more sustainable approach to brewing while highlighting the still-existing technological and operational challenges to be solved for further improvement of pressure-driven membrane systems.

III. Methodology

This study focuses on the design, construction, and assessment of a pressure-driven membrane system designed specifically for a mid-sized brewery with an output of 50,000 hectoliters per year, which is organized into two subsequent stages – ultrafiltration (UF) and nanofiltration (NF). The membrane configuration consists of two main stages - ultrafiltration (UF) and nanofiltration (NF).

System Design: The process starts from the collection of the brewery wastewater streams like the wort boiling, fermentation tank cleaning and packaging line wash downs. Wastewater is subjected to preliminary screening where large solids are removed. Suspended solids, yeast and colloidal matter are also removed using an Ultrafiltration module containing hollow fiber membrane with 100,000 Da molecular weight cut off. UF permeate is sent to NF module.

The removal of divalent and trivalent ions, leftover sugars, and micropollutants happens in the NF system via spiral-wound membranes with molecular weight cutoff of 300 Da. The NF concentrate is either sent for anaerobic digestion to produce biogas or is treated as waste in a manner that abides by environmental laws.

Operational Boundaries

- UF: Operating at a flow rate of 2 m3/h and pressure of 1.5-2.0 bar

- NF: Operating with a flow rate of 1.5 m3/h and 4-6 bar pressure

- Cleaning-in-place (CIP) cycles: biweekly for UF, weekly for NF

Data Collection: system sustainability and efficacy is calculated through gauging key performance indicators (KPIs) such as COD, BOD, TSS, turbidity, and conductivity alongside water recovery rate, energy usage, and membrane fouling.

IV. Discussion And Results

During the evaluation period of three months, the performance evaluation was conducted. During the ultrafiltration stage, there was a 95% removal of total suspended solids alongside 70% COD removal, while in the nanofiltration stage there was an additional 20% COD reduction and decrease in 90% of conductivity in Table 1.

Table 1: Performance Comparison of Membrane System vs Conventional Treatment

Parameter	Conventional Treatment	UF + NF Membrane System
COD Removal	65%	90%
TSS Removal	75%	95%
Water Recovery	60%	85%
Energy Use (kWh/m3)	1.8	1.2
Maintenance Frequency	Weekly	Biweekly

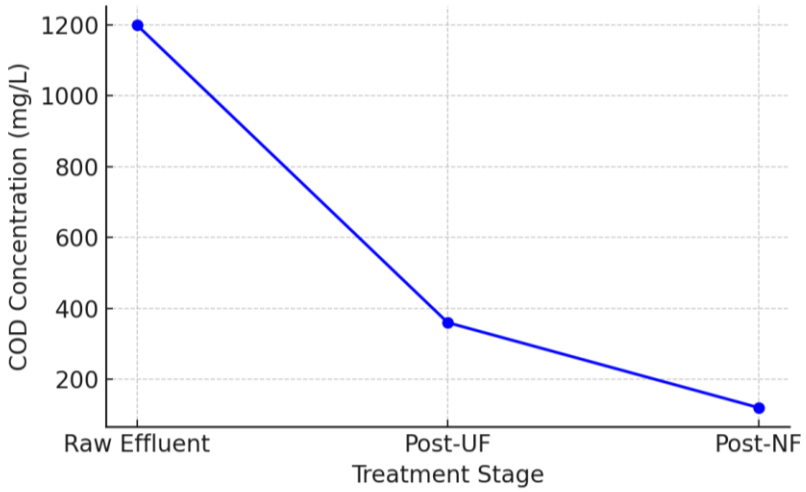


Figure 1: COD Reduction Across Treatment Stages

[Graph Placeholder: Line graph showing COD concentration (mg/L) across raw effluent, post-UF, and post-NF stages]

In Figure 1, the treatment improvements and resource recovery using pressure-driven membrane systems is optimally achieved, as the results illustrate. Further reinforcing their economic viability is the additional reduction in energy expenditure and maintenance required in comparison with traditional methods. Besides, the modular design of these systems enables seamless scalability and incorporation into the existing frameworks of breweries.

Although reclamation methodologies and the cost associated with membrane replacements still pose challenges, these issues are less impactful when advanced membrane materials are utilized under the optimized operational protocols developed to best combat membrane fouling.

Enhanced water reclamation, in conjunction with the likely potential nutrient recovery from concentrated waste streams, arguably shifts the brewing industry closer towards a circular economy model.

V. Conclusion

Out of all conclusions that can be drawn from this study, the most salient is the encouragement of using pressure-driven membranes in a sustainable brewing system. With the incorporation of ultrafiltration and nanofiltration, the energy, wastewater byproducts, and resources reclaimed becomes greatly mitigated alongside the net environmental damage, thus increasing overall ecological sustainability. Membrane deployment within different brew-plant environments, alongside the development of membranes resistant to the buildup of contaminants, should be the centerpiece of focus for future studies to strengthen these systems.

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