**Assessment of Chemical Quality of Water from Shallow Alluvial Aquifers in and around Badeggi, Central Bida Basin, Nigeria**

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**Abstract**

The chemical composition of water from shallow alluvial aquifers on the River Gbako flood plain, Badeggi, Central Bida Basin, Nigeria has been investigated with the aim of assessing the impact of intensive agricultural activity on the chemical quality of groundwater which is the main source of potable water in the area. A total of 23 water samples made up of eighteen (18) from domestics hand dug wells, two (2) from irrigation boreholes, two (2) river water and one (1) from a spring were collected from the area. The samples were analysed for major cations and anions at the Central Services Laboratory of the National Cereals Research Institute (NCRI) Badeggi, Nigeria using standard water analyses procedures. The results show that cations concentrations in the water of this area are within drinking water limits set by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Nigerian Standard for Drinking Water Quality: NIS 554: 2007 (NSDWQ). The order of abundance of cations in the water is Ca>Na>K>Mg. The concentration of most anions were found to be within acceptable limits, except for phosphate, nitrate and sulphate whose elevated levels in the water may be an indication of the impact of intensive fertilizer application on water chemistry. Two hydrochemical facies, namely, Ca (HCO-3) type and Na (HCO-3) were recognized in the area. Overall, the water of quality in Badeggi and its environs has not been adversely affected by anthropogenic factors. However, continued monitoring is recommended as a means of protecting these flood plain aquifers from potential contamination.

**Keywords**: Bida Basin, water quality, alluvial aquifers, hydrochemistry

**1.1 Introduction**

Groundwater chemically evolves by interacting with aquifer minerals or internal mixing among different groundwater flow paths in the subsurface (Domenico, 1972; Wallick and Toth, 1984). The chemical composition of ground water is regulated by various factors, which include atmospheric inputs, mineral weathering through water-rock interaction, anthropogenic activities and biogeochemical process (Kangjoo*et al.*, 2005). Depending on the geological environment, natural movement, recovery and utilization, the overall quality of groundwater depends largely on the soil zones on which the movement occurs. Mahmut*et al.*(2006) discovered thatsoil, a main component of the terrestrial ecosystem is a habitat for great number of organisms and it is perhaps the most endangered component of our environment open to influences from a variety of different pollutants arising from human activities.

Groundwater contamination occurs as a result of various anthropogenic activities subject to the degree of vulnerability of the aquifer to such activity (Ahmed, 2012). The potential pathway taken by these contaminants are mostly through the environment (Bakari, 2014).Ground water pollution could be from lithogenic or anthropogenic sources such as agricultural practices. Millions of tons of fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides for example, are used annually around the world to boost crop production.A number of the chemicals used are highly toxic and can enter into the groundwater system and pollute the aquifer. Contamination of soils, stream sediment and surface water can result in poor drinking water quality, pollution of aquifer system, high cost for alternative water supplies and potential health problems. The implication of groundwater pollution is of serious concern.

Baddegi community inKatcha Local Government Area (LGA) of Niger State Nigeria is prominent in rice cultivation utilizing rich alluvial soil and stream sediment of Rivers Gbako and Musa. Groundwater serves as a source of water for irrigation agriculture and for domestic usage in the communities in and around the catchment domain of the alluvial plains. Understanding hydrochemical processes in alluvial aquifers of this basin is a baseline for studying the groundwater chemistry of the area.

Intensive agricultural activities are usually practiced in this area. The application of fertilizer, pesticides, insecticides, and manure to boost agricultural production and for research experimentations within the research field may possibly contaminate the soils, sediments and groundwater. NCRI Baddegi and the surrounding communities have had a long history of rice cultivation which involves the use of chemicals to boost the agricultural produce. The aim of this research therefore is to assess the impact of agricultural practices on water (surface and ground) in and around the NCRI, Badeggi.

**1.2 The Study Area**

The area of study is located in the South of Bida,Central Nigeria. It lies within latitude 09˚03ꞌ00"Nand 09˚06ꞌ00"N and longitude 006˚05ꞌ00"Eand 006˚9ꞌ00"E (Figure 1). Geomorphologically, the study area is mainly low lying and slopes towards the banks of river Gbako. River Gbako is the major surface water body in the area. The flood plain of the river is extensive with average uniform elevation across the study area.Topographical map of the area (Figure 1) shows the geomorphology of the area with alluvial plains of river Gbako extending to about three (3) kilometres fromboth sides of the River channel. Average elevationin the area is 75m above sea level from the data obtained with a hand held Geographical Positioning System (GPS) devices.



**Figure 1 Location and Drainage map of the study area.**

The mean annual average temperature of the area ranges between 330C to 340C. Two distinct seasons are prominent in the area,dry and rainy seasons. Between April to October is the rainy season while dry season commences around November and ends around March. The rainy season is characterized by heavy down pours accompanied by ground water infiltration and percolation. Average annual rainfall ranges between 900.6 to 1340.4 mm (NCRI Agro Met, 2014). The vegetation of the area belongs to the savannah type with few trees distributed across the area. Extensive agricultural practices are carried out in the area utilizing the rich alluvial deposits of River Gbako. Cereal crops are usually cultivated and rice is the most prominent. Other land use activities around the area are fishing and grazing.

Two types of aquifers are identifiable in the area; one is semi-confined but locally confined in some places, while the other is unconfined. The first is most widespread and occupies about 80% of the land area, while the second is limited to small portions of the central and northern part of the basin(Shekolo 1990,Olaniyanand Oyeyemi,2008).The unit aquifer (Nupe Sandstone) spreads over a large area within the Middle Niger Basin. At Mokwa area the average thickness is about 28m. The aquifer at the southern part of River Niger spreads as a belt along the basement complex boundary. This belt runs from Jebba in the north-west to Lokoja in the south-east having a maximum width of 30km (Polservice, 1979).

**2.0 Research Methodology**

**2.1 Field Geological Mapping**

Geological mapping of the study area was conducted. It involves the descriptive and structural studies of the rocks in the area using a topographical map on a scale of 1:25,000 as base map. With the aid of the topographical map the study area was easily navigated and accessible. Geographical Positioning System (GPS) *etrex Garmin* and compass-clinometer were used during the field work for proper location of places on the map. Observations and field descriptions of rocks and geological features in the study area were recorded in the field note book. Images of geological features were also captured in the field with a portable digital camera.Detailed stratigraphic studies was not undertaken as the area of study isa flood plain that lacks lithological exposure.

**2.2 Water Sampling and Field Measurements**

A total of 23 water samples made up of eighteen (18) samples from domestics hand dug wells, two (2) samples from irrigation bore holes, two (2) river water samples and one (1) spring water sample were collected across the entire area of study. The samples were filtered and collected in pre-cleaned onelitre plastic bottles. Two samples were collected from eachwell forcation and anion analyses. The samples for cation analysis were immediately acidified with nitric acid (HNO3). The physical parameters measured in the field were temperature (T), pH, Electrical conductivity (EC) and total dissolved solid (TDS) using HANNA pH meter and EC/TDS meter s258236. The samples were immediately transported to the Central Services Laboratory at National Cereal Research Institute (NCRI) Baddegi, Nigeria for chemical analysis.

**2.4 Laboratory Analysis of Water**

The chemical analyses were carried out the Central Services Laboratory, NCRI, Badeggi, Nigeria using standard water analysis techniques (APHA, 1998). The Methods for the different cations and anions analyses are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1 Summary of the analytical methods used in this study**

**S/No. Parameter Method of Analysis**

1 Cl-, HCO-3  Titrimetry

2 PO3-4, NO-3 Colorimetric

3 SO2-4  Turbidometry

4 K+, Na+, Ca2+, Mg2+, Fe Atomic Absorption Spectrometry

**3.1 Results and Discussion**

The concentration of major cations and anions for all samples were obtained from the laboratory analysis. Hydrogeochemical facies of the water was produced using Piper Diagram. Results of the laboratory analysis of the water are presented in Tables 2 and 3.

**Table 2 Physical parameters in water of Badeggi area, central Bida Basin**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code** | **pH** | **EC (µS/cm)** | **TDS (mg/L)** | **T (o C)** |
| BDW2 | 5.73 | 200.00 | 128.00 | 31.01 |
| BDW3 | 6.05 | 90.00 | 57.00 | 30.50 |
| BDW4 | 5.34 | 57.00 | 36.00 | 30.00 |
| BDW5 | 5.23 | 64.00 | 40.00 | 30.50 |
| BDW6 | 5.56 | 59.00 | 37.00 | 28.00 |
| BDW7 | 5.38 | 70.00 | 44.00 | 30.50 |
| BDW8 | 5.37 | 90.00 | 57.60 | 30.00 |
| BDW9 | 5.39 | 230.00 | 147.00 | 33.00 |
| BDW10 | 5.64 | 150.00 | 96.00 | 33.00 |
| BDW11 | 5.31 | 150.00 | 96.00 | 30.00 |
| BDW13 | 5.53 | 170.00 | 108.00 | 27.00 |
| BDW14 | 5.37 | 160.00 | 102.00 | 28.00 |
| BDW15 | 5.02 | 140.00 | 89.00 | 28.00 |
| BDW16 | 5.39 | 160.00 | 102.00 | 31.00 |
| BDW19 | 5.86 | 120.00 | 76.00 | 28.00 |
| BDW20 | 5.84 | 70.00 | 44.80 | 30.00 |
| BDW21 | 5.58 | 83.00 | 53.11 | 28.00 |
| R.Gbako | 5.42 | 100.00 | 64.00 | 28.00 |
| R.Mussa | 5.79 | 280.00 | 179.00 | 31.00 |
| Spring | 5.74 | 300.00 | 192.00 | 28.00 |

**Table 3 Concentration of anions and cations in water from Badeggi area, central Bida Basin (mg/l)**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Code** | **K+** | **Na+** | **Ca2+** | **Mg2+** |  **Fe** | **Cl-** | **SO42-** | **NO-3** | **PO3-4** | **HCO-3** |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|  BDW2 | 12.80 | 23.00 | 22.30 | 1.16 | 5.53 | 22.70 | 12.34 | ND | 295.93 | 200.00 |  |
| BDW3 | 5.00 | 10.00 | 7.30 | 1.16 | 5.53 | 39.77 | 9.49 | 2.28 | 21.70 | 40.00 |  |
| BDW4 | 37.10 | 43.20 | 42.30 | 1.16 | 5.87 | 69.52 | 24.19 | ND | 16.27 | 50.00 |  |
| BDW5 | 47.20 | 50.40 | 38.20 | 1.38 | 5.53 | 83.81 | 28.74 | ND | 67.80 | 70.00 |  |
| BDW6 | 45.90 | 52.50 | 34.61 | 1.38 | 5.22 | 25.05 | 8.45 | ND | 21.70 | 100.00 |  |
| BDW7 | 5.10 | 7.80 | 45.72 | 1.38 | 5.53 | 25.05 | 8.45 | 0.17 | 32.54 | 110.00 |  |
| BDW8 | 7.00 | 18.80 | 41.91 | 1.38 | 5.53 | 38.77 | 15.34 | 8.56 | 81.36 | 40.00 |  |
| BDW9 | 6.90 | 13.40 | 40.34 | 1.62 | 5.53 | 26.42 | 11.18 | 10.2 | 51.53 | 50.00 |  |
| BDW10 | 5.00 | 6.50 | 39.23 | 1.38 | 5.22 | 11.84 | 12.09 | 10.83 | 455.62 | 120.00 |  |
| BDW11 | 4.20 | 13.20 | 36.42 | 1.62 | 5.23 | 17.30 | 25.36 | 12.3 | 299.05 | 190.00 |  |
| BDW13 | 3.00 | 26.40 | 33.74 | 1.62 | 5.22 | 37.35 | 25.36 | ND | 168.14 | 120.00 |  |
| BDW14 | 3.20 | 30.50 | 31.22 | 1.38 | 5.22 | 10.93 | 9.49 | 11.12 | ND | 200.00 |  |
| BDW15 | 5.10 | 19.90 | 31.11 | 1.63 | 5.23 | 19.13 | 13.26 | ND | 21.70 | 100.00 |  |
| BDW16 | 37.70 | 35.50 | 12.14 | 1.62 | 4.87 | 20.24 | 146.55 | 12.52 | 273.12 | 180.00 |  |
| BDW19 | 37.70 | 35.50 | 12.15 | 1.82 | 5.23 | 55.22 | 26.66 | ND | 56.95 | 120.00 |  |
| BDW20 | 17.20 | 23.00 | 27.02 | 1.63 | 5.23 | 36.44 | 17.04 | 6.53 | 157.30 | 160.00 |  |
| BDW21 | 4.00 | 20.70 | 26.80 | 1.82 | 4.87 | 4.56 | 4.42 | 9.23 | 32.54 | 120.00 |  |
| R.Gbako | 7.40 | 14.60 | 23.94 | 1.82 | 4.87 | 19.13 | 11.70 | 6.24 | 363.41 | 130.00 |  |
| R.Mussa | 4.20 | 13.10 | 23.13 | 1.60 | 4.87 | 20.04 | 1.22 | 8.30 | 62.30 | 60.00 |  |
| Spring | 20.40 | 46.80 | 16.02 | 1.82 | 5.23 | 72.88 | 1.81 | 1.690 | 100.50 | 150.00 |  |

**3.1.1 Physico-Chemical Characteristics**

The pH values of water samples varied from 5.0 to 6.0 with an average value of 5.6 indicative of acidic water. The pH values of the water samples fall below the World Health Organization (WHO) 2004 limits for drinkable water of 6.5 to 9.5 and6.5 to 8.5 specified by Nigerian Standard for Drinking Water Quality: NIS 554: 2007 (NSDWQ). The source of acid in the water could be contributions from dissolved carbon dioxide and organic acids (fluvic and humic acids) which are derived from decay and subsequent leaching of plants materials (Langmuir, 1997). Confirmation of this statement can be made from the fact that the area of study is an intensive agricultural area and decay of plants materials over time could have contributed to the acidity of the water in the area. The impact of low water pH is corrosion of water carrying metal pipes which could lead to release of toxic metals such as zinc, lead, cadmium, iron and mercury.

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**Table 4 Summary Statistic of the Parameters Analysed in the Water of Baddeggi in mg/l**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **K+** | **Na+** | **Ca2+** | **Mg2+** |  **Fe** | **Cl-** | **SO42-** | **NO3-** | **PO43-** | **HCO3-** |
| Number of samples | 23 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 23 | 15 | 22 | 23 |
| Minimum | 2.71 | 6.51 | 7.31 | 1.15 | 4.53 | 4.56 | 1.22 | 0.17 | 16.27 | 30 |
| Maximum | 47.21 | 52.51 | 45.71 | 1.82 | 5.86 | 83.81 | 146.55 | 12.52 | 455.62 | 200 |
| Range | 44.51 | 46.1 | 38.41 | 0.66 | 1.33 | 79.25 | 145.33 | 12.35 | 439.35 | 170 |
| Mean | 14.27 | 23.27 | 28.94 | 1.52 | 5.24 | 31.65 | 19.68 | 8.12 | 136.72 | 110 |
| Standard deviation | 15.26 | 14.36 | 10.44 | 0.21 | 0.34 | 20.86 | 28.69 | 3.96 | 130.12 | 52.48 |

Total dissolved solid (TDS) ranges from 36 to 129 with average of 89.88 mg/l (NSDWQ Limit; 500 mg/l). The electrical conductivity (EC) values in the water samples average 141 mS/cm. Both parameters (EC) and (TDS) are within the 2004 (WHO and NSDWQ) limits of drinkable waters. The low values of TDS and EC could be indicative of low mineralization or the continuous recharge of the ground water aquifer with rainfall which causes dilution.Sometimes low (EC) and (TDS) can also suggest that input of salts from anthropogenic sources of pollution is minimal as was observed in the analytical results of the water samples. Figure 4.4 shows the relationships among the physical parameters of the water of the alluvial aquifers of River Gbako around Baddegi.

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**Figure 2 Plots of Physical Parameters in theWater of the Alluvial Aquifers of River Gbako**. A= TDS against Sum of Ion. B=pH against TDS. C= Ec against TDS. D= TDS against Elevation.

Average temperature value of the water samples is 29.6oC with minimum and maximum temperature values of 27oC and 33oC respectively. Characteristic temperature values of the water is uniformly distributed with slight variations observed in some water wells, high water temperatures was observed in most of the water wells within Baddegi township. The natural background temperature of waters in the tropics is usually between 22 to 29oC (Stumn and Morgani, 1981). High temperature conditions for waters could encourage the growth of micro-organisms which can alter the odour, taste and colour of the water (Bakari, 2014). Water in the study area did not however show any questionable odour, taste or colour.

**3.1.2 Cations in the Water**

The major cations in the water sample shows sodium (Na) and Calcium (Ca) as the dominant in the water samples. The mean concentration of (Na) in the water sample is 23.3mg/l with minimum of 6.50mg/l and maximum of 52.50mg/l. Calcium (Ca) has mean concentration of 28.94mg/l with minimum and maximum concentration of 7.30mg/l and 45.70mg/l respectively.Potassium (K) minimum and maximum concentration is 2.70mg/l and 47.20mg/l respectively with mean concentration of 14.3mg/l. Magnesium (Mg) concentration averages 1.5mg/l with minimum values of 1.16mg/l and maximum valueof 1.8mg/l.

The order of abundance of cations in the water is thus Ca>Na>K>Mg. The cations are distributed in the groundwater without any particular pattern, however, a decrease in concentrations of some elements towards the channels of River Gbako and River Mussa signifying active mixing of groundwater system with the Rivers Mussa and Gbako. This is confirmed by the characteristic chemistry of rivers water and that of the wells sited in the flood plains of River Gbako.

Weathering of silicate materials mayalso have contributed to the concentration of cations in the waters of the study area. The silicates are the chief constituents of clays and soils. Thus the cations concentration in the water were derived through this process as groundwater chemically evolves by interacting with aquifer minerals or internal mixing among different groundwater flow paths in the subsurface (Domenico, 1972; Wallick and Toth, 1984).

The analysed cations are however, within the 2004 WHO limits for drinking water quality of Ca = 200 mg/l, K= 200mg/l, Mg =150 mg/l and Na = 200 mg/l respectively. The Cations (Ca, K, Na, Mg) are essential component of the water and important for human health and metabolism and should be available in normal drinking water. High concentration of these elements outside the permissible limits in groundwater can have adverse health impact on man.

**3.1.3 Anions in the Water**

The anions analysed in the water samples are HCO3, Cl, NO3, PO4, SO4, preference was given to this analysed anions because their high concentration in groundwater could signifies anthropogenic activities.

Nitrate (NO3) concentration in the water samples are within the NSDWQ limits for drinkable water of 50mg/l and WHO of 45mg/l. The sources of nitrate in the area of study can be linked to the application of fertilizer to agricultural soils in the area of study.Nolan *et al.*(2002) estimate that nitrate concentration in the range of 13 to 18 mg/l are considered to indicate anthropogenic input.Wells BDW10, BDW11, BDW14, Rivers Mussa andGbako have been observed to have concentration of NO3 close to Nolan’s standard indicative of anthropogenic input. River Mussa was observed to have high concentration of nitrate than River Gbako the reason been that River Mussa is close to the intensive agricultural area than River Gbako. More of the fertilizer is washed closedinto River Mussa than River Gbako. Elevated concentration (>50 mg/l) of nitrate in water are an indication that the waters are at risk of pollution (Atabey, 2005). The levels of nitrate in water are of particular importance for use in drinking. Studies have shownthat high nitrate in water can lead to blue baby syndrome or infantile methemoglobinaemia (WHO, 1984; price, 1996), urinary tract diseases (Wasik*et al.*,2001). Adelana*et al.*(2003) have suggested that chronic exposure to high levels of nitrate in drinking water may have adverse effects on the cardiovascular system.

The chloride concentration in the water of the study area is within the WHO and NSDWQ limits of 250mg/l. The minimum and maximum concentrations of chloride are4.5mg/l and 83.8mg/l respectively. The sources of the chloride in the water could be contribution from atmospheric inputs from rainfall recharge or even to a large extent from agricultural activities within the area of study. The moderate concentrations of chloride in the water suggest moderate inputs of anthropogenic contribution to ground water chemistry of the area.Water with chloride in excess of drinking water standards can be used for irrigation and some types of livestock can drink water that has chloride concentration as high as 4000mg/l (Bakari, 2014).

Sulphate (SO2-4) concentration in water of the area of study is within the 2011 WHO limits of drinking water.Minimum concentration of SO2-4 in the water is 1.2mg/l while the maximum concentration is 146.6mg/l. Only BDW16 shows SO2-4 level above NSDWQ limits of 100mg/l. However, SO2-4 occurs naturally in geologic materials (rocks, soil). In sedimentary basins highestabundance of SO2-4 is in gypsum andanhydrites. The main anthropogenic source of SO2-4 in the study area is input from agrochemicals applied in farming rice. Also low level of SO2-4 concentration could beas a result of removal by bacteria (Freeze and Cherry, 1979).

All the water samples have shown elevated concentration of phosphate (PO3-4) beyond the Federal Ministry of Environment Effluent (FMEE) limits of 5mg/l. The minimum and maximum phosphate concentration is 16.3 and 455.6mg/l respectively. Of particularinterest is in the spring water, River Gbako, River Mussa, wells BDW2, BDW10, BDW11, BDW13, BDW16, andBDW20 which exhibited high phosphate concentration. Intensive application of fertilizers in the study area is adding phosphate to the soil which gradually leaches to the underlying alluvial aquifers from which groundwater resource is exploited. Domagalski and Johnson (2012) observed that long term over application of manure and chemical fertilizers can contribute to phosphorus movement into the groundwater system. Bicarbonate (HCO-3) concentration in the area has a minimum and maximum concentration value of 30 and 200mg/l respectively. Bicarbonate in the water could have originated fromwater dissolving CO2 from the atmosphere and soil.

**3.1.4 Hydrochemical Facies**

Results of major ion chemistry of the water samples were plotted on a Piper diagram. The concentration of 8 major ions (Na+ ,K+, Mg2+, Ca2+, Clˉ, CO32-, HCOˉ3 and SO42-) are represented on a trilinear diagrams by grouping the (K+ with Na+) and the (CO32- with HCOˉ3), thus reducing the number of parameters for plotting to 6. On the piper diagram, the relative percentages of the cations and anions are plotted in the lower triangles, and the resulting two points are extended into the central field to represent the total ion concentration. The degree of mixing between waters can alsobe shownon the piper diagram. Two water types were recognized in the area of study. They are Ca (HCO3) type and Na (HCO3) type (Figure 3).



**Figure 3TheHydrochemicalFaciesof theWater of the Alluvial Aquifers of River Gbako.**

**4.1 Conclusion**

Laboratory analysis of the water and sediments in the study area shows various chemical compositions. Generally, the water from the alluvial aquifers of Gbako River around Baddeggi is acidic with pH values ranging between 5.0 and 6.0. All the cations analysed in the water were found to be within the permissible limits of WHO and NSDWQ, while their source in the water is probably mainly from natural geological process of rock weathering. Fe concentration is however high in the area with values ranging from 4.87 to 5.87 mg/l which is far above the 0.3 mg/l of permissible limits of WHO and NSDWQ. Iron is not of health concern at levels causing acceptability problems in drinking-water, but may affect acceptability of drinking water.

Anions analysed in the water are within the WHO and NSDWQ permissible limits with the exceptions of phosphate,nitrateandsulphate which were above the desirable limits, thus indicating anthropogenic contribution from agricultural practices in the area. The risks associated with consumption of water contaminated with these contaminants are urinary track diseases, blue baby syndrome or infant methermoglobinaemia. Groundwater quality monitoring and evaluation should be carried out often in the study area to monitor the trend of contaminant mobility in the area.

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