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## **Assessment of untreated wastewater used for crop irrigation in Khassa stream- Kirkuk/Iraq**

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### **Introduction**

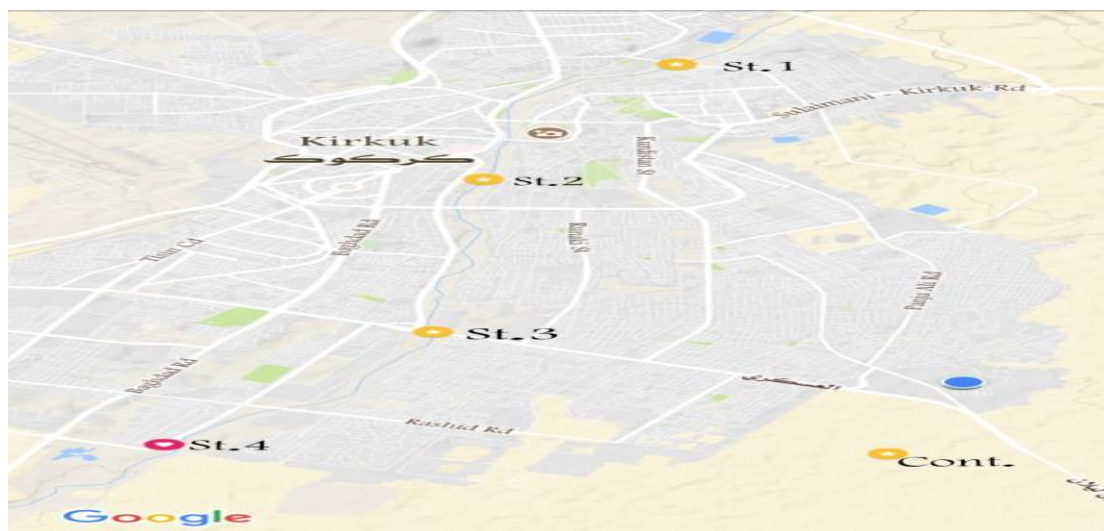
The environmental pollution is a widespread problem facing major cities in developing countries over the past decades [1], the main forms of water pollution are wastewater from various human, agricultural, industrial and household activities [2]. The wastewater produced by different human activities varies, so it is difficult to establish fixed rates for their components [3]. It is composed of a dilute mixture of several types of contaminants, and the components depend on the sources they supply. Organic, inorganic and other substances in soluble, suspended, and colloidal state are the main components [4]. Pathogens associated with toxic waste and chemicals from these waters pose health risks for farmers, their families and communities living near wastewater, as well as consumers of crops irrigated with this polluted water [5]. In the case of use of this water to irrigate crops, it should be ensured that they are free of high concentrations of harmful pollutants that affect the plant and soil directly or indirectly [6]. In many regions, fresh water is not available for irrigation, therefore, reuse of treated or untreated wastewater is an alternative source of agriculture, however, standards are needed to ensure the safe use of wastewater and to avoid biological hazards to the population [7]. It has been suggested that the use of sewage in irrigation as

one of the possible ways out of the looming water crisis [8]. The use of sewage water for irrigation has additional agricultural benefits. It contains a high nutritional rate that can improve plant growth, reduce fertilizer use, increase poor soil productivity and fertility, increase soil organic matter, increase nutrient concentrations needed by plants such as nitrogen, phosphorus, iron, manganese, potassium, calcium, magnesium and others [9]. The need for this water for irrigation depends on the availability of dissolved salts, and the increased concentration of these salts and other components, they affect soil quality and make them less suitable for agriculture [11]. Irrigation of these water effects on the soil at two different levels: the first change the physical and chemical properties and content of microorganisms of the soil, the second poses risks to human health and the environment, so sustainable wastewater reuse in agriculture can lead to both types of impacts, requiring a comprehensive and integrated risk assessment [12, 13]. In this study, the physical and chemical parameters of untreated wastewater were measured in the Khassa stream of Kirkuk City, which is used to irrigate crops located on the sides of the stream. The Khassa stream is one of the three main branches flowing into the Great River, the stream consists of rainwater, flood, and springs that originate from the mountains surrounding Sulaymaniyah city, this water accumulates in Kirkuk city and increases in winter seasons due to increased rainfall and floods. At present, the stream has become a passage for sewage only and running water suitable in the rainy season. The special tributary was chosen for its importance and it is the only stream that passes through Kirkuk city.

## Material and Methods

### Physical and chemical tests of water

Samples of the area of study is located in the Kirkuk city, which is about 240 km away from Baghdad, and it is one of the most important and vital cities in Iraq. The increase in population density and the spread of random houses, and the lack of fresh water bodies in Kirkuk are used for irrigation purposes, some farmers resort to irrigating their crops with untreated wastewater directly. The samples were collected monthly at the period from September 2017 to May 2018, Four sites were chosen were farmers using wastewater to irrigate their farms as illustrated in Fig. 1, in addition to these four sites a fifth site were selected as a control site:



*Fig. 1: Map of the study sites*

- The first site: It is located in the Karama area near the Azadi Bridge, where the rainwater is discharged, in addition to the absence of treatment plants.
- The second site: located in the Al-Mussallah area and away from the first site (3600) meters, was selected to provide sewage from markets, restaurants and hotels.
- The third site located in the Al-Askry district and away from the second site (5500) meters.
- The fourth site is located in Al-Sayeda area, and there is a lot of buffalo breeding in this area.
- The fifth site (control site) located in the area of Benga Ali, and away from the Khassa stream (5000) meters, the farmers in this area used well water for irrigation their farms, this site was chosen because of its distance from the Khassa stream.

Each of [TDS, COD (Open Reflux Method), phosphates (Ascorbic Acid method), sulphates (Turbidimetric method), nitrates (Ultraviolet Spectrophotometric Screening method), chlorides (Argentometric method), sodium (Flame Atomic Emission method), magnesium and calcium (EDTA Titrimetric method)] were measured according to [14]. The turbidity was measured by (TR 210 IR) device, and the EC and TDS of the water samples were measured using a multi meter (HANNA Hi 99300) device, pH used (pH Meter 720), the (Senso Direct 150) device is used to measure the dissolved oxygen, and the (OxiTop) device for BOD measurement, potassium was measured using a (HANNA) kit.

### **Statistical analysis**

Statistical analysis has been conducted by using the Special Program for Statistical System (SPSS), Duncan test to compare averages, and Person Correlations.

### **Results and Discussion**

#### **Physico-chemical characteristics of wastewater under study**

Figures (2,3,4) and tables 1 and 2 summarized the results of the study and statistical analysis and comparison with Iraqi and international standards. Figure 2 shows the levels of turbidity, EC, Total dissolved solids (TDS), Total suspended solids (TSS), pH and Dissolved oxygen (DO). The turbidity of the raw sewage was varied according to the various human activities and rainfall, the highest rate of turbidity was (196 NTU) at the second site during spring, while the lowest rate (15.9 NTU) was recorded at control site of autumn. The increase in turbidity rates during the rainy seasons was due to the increase in the water level due to the precipitation with which a quantity of the river was washed [14], the decrease of rates due to the water of the control site is relatively stagnant.

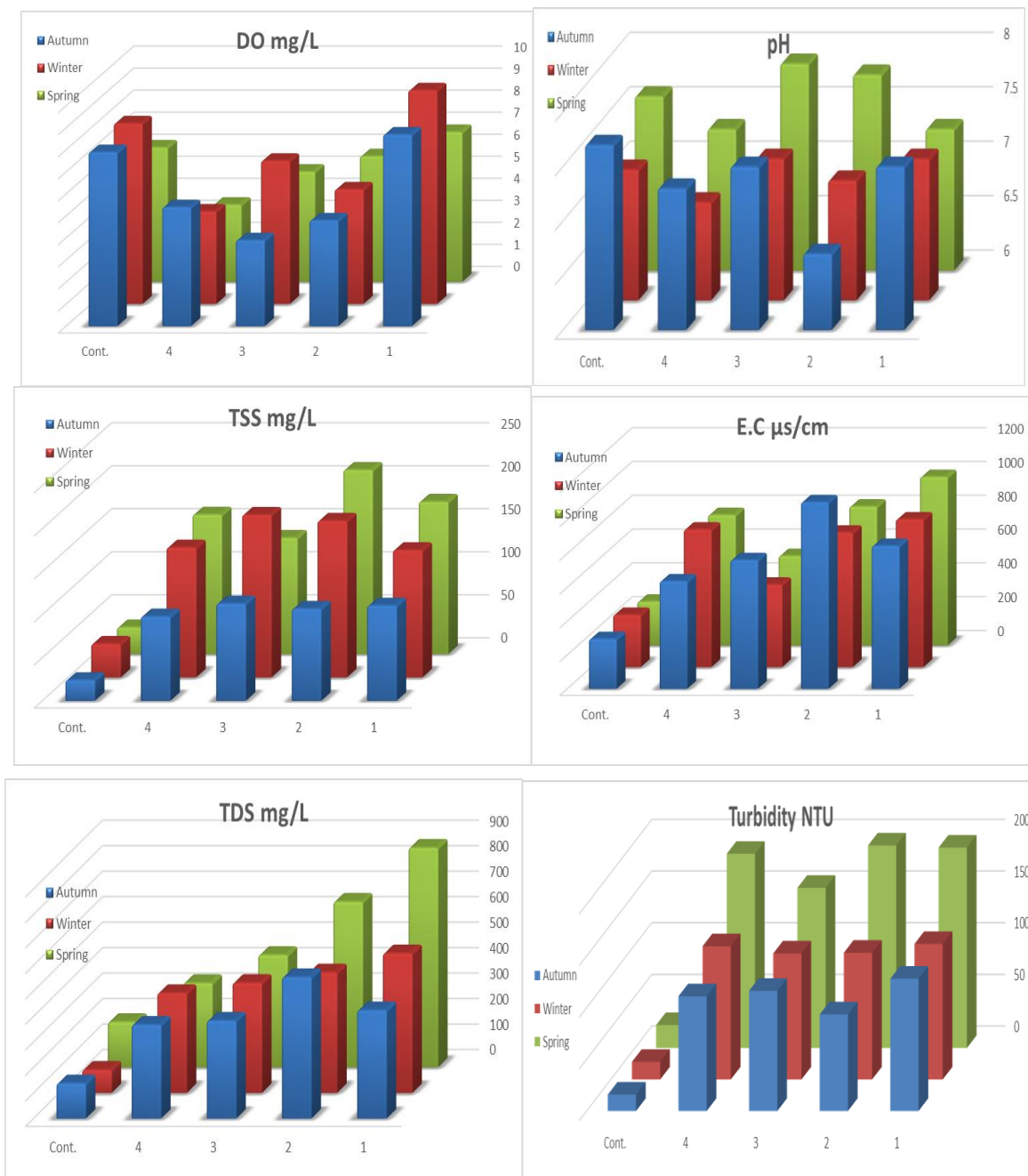


Fig. 2: Values of (Turbidity, E.C, TDS, TSS) at the studied sites.

Table 1. Statistical analysis of Physico- chemical characteristics of wastewater samples under study

Seasons Tests	Autumn	Winter	Spring
Turb.(NTU)	c92.94	b104.4	a151.04
E.C( $\mu\text{s}/\text{cm}$ )	a729	c657.2	b676.8
TDS(mg/L)	c374	b387.2	a492.4
TSS(mg/L)	c90.53	b141.8	a143.8
pH	b7.34	c7.16	a7.58
DO(mg/L)	b6.14	a6.76	c5.42
COD(mg/L)	a362	c285.4	b314.2
BOD(mg/L)	a157.2	c136.8	b141.6
PO <sub>4</sub> (mg/L)	b3.48	a5.34	c2.49
SO <sub>4</sub> (mg/L)	b225.53	a234.04	c182.93
NO <sub>3</sub> (mg/L)	a17.8	b17.58	c12.16
Cl(mg/L)	b42.58	c36.96	a43.17
K(mg/L)	b6.5	a6.9	c6.07
Na(mg/L)	b26.47	a28.11	b25.86
Ca(mg/L)	b50.4	a52.9	a53.1
Mg(mg/L)	a36.9	c18.1	b29.6

Electrical conductivity (EC) is the ability of a medium, such as water, to carry an electric current, the presence of soluble solids such as calcium, chloride and magnesium in water samples increase water electrical conductivity [15]. The rates of EC were ranged between (1105 $\mu\text{s}/\text{cm}$ ) at the second site of the autumn and (260 $\mu\text{s}/\text{cm}$ ) at the control site of spring. The rise in the rates of EC is due to the nature of liquid precipitates discharged into the stream [16].

Total dissolved solids (TDS) concentrations depend on water sources, and water passing through soluble mineral soils has higher levels of TDS [17]. The highest rate of TDS was (862mg/L) at the first site of spring season, and the lowest rate was (91mg/L) at the control site of autumn season. According to [18] high levels of TDS in wastewater discharge has a negative impact on aquatic life and reduces crop yields if used in irrigation [19]. Noted that low concentrations of soluble salts might be attributed to specific rock formations of water.

Total suspended solids (TSS) are substances in water that do not pass through a filter paper of 0.45 microns [20]. TSS highest rate was (214mg/L) at the second site of spring season and the lowest rate was (24mg/L) at the control site of autumn season. Increases rate in spring season is result from precipitation and rising water levels that washed away the soil [21]. The low rates are due to the relatively stagnant water at control site. pH is a chemical concept used to determine the amount of hydrogen ion concentration in water [22]. The highest rate was (7.9) at the third site of spring season while the lowest rate was (6.7) at the second site of autumn season. All rates were converged during the months of the study and tend to light basal, low pH rates may be due to sulfate salts, nitrates and chlorides with acidic effect. The higher rates are due to the increased discharge of domestic sewage water loaded with basal detergents [23, 24].

Dissolved oxygen (DO) is necessary for all living organisms and for many chemical processes occurring within water, and water content of oxygen is an important factor [13]. The highest rate of DO was (9.7mg/L) at the first site of winter season while the lowest rate was (3.5mg/L) at the fourth site of spring season. The higher DO rates which may be due to photosynthesis process of algae and their release to oxygen as a by-product [25], while the fourth site recorded the lowest rate of the DO due to the large number of organic matter produced from buffalo breeding at this site.

**Table 2.** Iraqi and international standards of irrigation water.

Figure 3 shows the results reorded for Chemical oxygen demand (COD), Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD), phosphorus, Sulphate (SO<sub>4</sub>) , Nitrates (NO<sub>3</sub>) and Chloride (Cl). Chemical oxygen demand (COD) is an indirect measure of

Tests	Iraqi Determinants of Water for Irrigation1998	WHO 2004	Canadian standard(2003)	USEPA(2002)	Current Study mini-max
Turbidity(NTU)	25	0- 50	-	-	15.9-194
EC(μs/cm)	-	135 0	1600	1600	260-1150
TDS(mg/L )	1000	500-1500	450	1000	91-862
TSS(mg/L )	40	100 0	-	-	24-214
pH	6.5-8.5	6.5-8.5	6.5-8.5	6.5- 8.5	6.7-7.9
DO(mg/L)	<5	<5	4-6.5	-	3.5-9.71
COD(mg/ L)	<40	-	-	-	0-712
BOD(mg/ L)	<10	<3	-	-	0-267
PO <sub>4</sub> (mg/L)	25	0.4	-	0.5	0.14-9.57
SO <sub>4</sub> (mg/L)	200	150-250	400	500	109-349
NO <sub>3</sub> (mg/L )	25 –50	0 – 45	10	45	6.26-32.26
K(mg/L)	100	12	-	-	5.2-9.1
Na(mg/L)	250	200	200	200	14.32-42.58
Ca(mg/L)	25-50	75	25	50	30.4-87.11
Mg(mg/L)	80	50-125	50	125	13.19-67.98

the amount of contaminants that cannot be oxidized biologically in a water sample, the high COD rates indicate a high amount of contaminants [8]. Both organic and inorganic pollutants are subject to this oxidation, and the organic pollutants are more important [13]. COD were recorded highest rate (712mg/L) at the fourth site of autumn season, while no rate was recorded at the control site of spring season [26]. Noted that the COD rates are affected by the presence of organic matter, dissolved solids and due to industrial and household waste and agricultural activities. The BOD is defined as the amount of oxygen needed by microorganisms to analyze unstable organic matter found in water and turns it into a more stable state under aerobic conditions [13]. The highest rate was (267mg/L) at the fourth site of autumn season while no value was recorded at the control site in spring. The BOD's high values may be due to the flow of organic matter and organic fertilizers used for agricultural land adjacent to the stream [27]. The low concentration of the BOD at the control site are due to the filtration processes that get the water to the groundwater at the control site, the soil layers are either isolated or far from the outside, so they are fairly clean [28].

The main sources of phosphorus are local wastewater, detergents, agricultural effluents with fertilizers and industrial wastewater, the higher concentrations of phosphorus indicate pollution [26]. The highest rate of phosphate was (9.57mg/L) at the third site of winter season, while the lowest rate was (0.14mg/L) at the control site of spring season. The decrease in phosphate rates in the control site is due to the arrival of small quantities of contaminants containing wastewater or phosphorus-containing agricultural wastes, the increase in phosphate levels is due to the high concentration in the wastewater resulting from the use of detergents from powders and cleaning fluids, human consumption has increased its concentrations in wastewater and varies according to the intensity and quantity of these uses [29].

Sulphate ( $\text{SO}_4$ ) ions are present in different concentrations ranging from a few milligrams to thousands of milligrams per liter depending on the geological nature of the water sources [13]. The highest rate of sulphate was (349mg/L) at the fourth site of winter season, while the lowest rate was (109.24mg/L) at the control site of spring season. The increase in sulfur levels in winter is due to the discharge of wastewater and water from agricultural lands [29, 30]. Shows that sulfur rates are increasing in areas where household wastewater is liquidities due to anaerobic degradation of compounds. Nitrates ( $\text{NO}_3$ ) are the most abundant form of nitrogen compounds normally found in natural waters, important nitrate sources are chemical fertilizers, degraded plant and animal materials, and wastewater disposal [31].  $\text{NO}_3$  recorded the highest rate (32.29mg/L) at the third site of autumn season, while the lowest rate was (6.26mg/L) at the control site of spring season. The high concentration of nitrate is due to the discharge of water from fertilizer-rich agricultural lands and animal residues, the proximity of farmland provided by river water species to chemical and animal fertilizers has increased nitrate concentrations [32]. Low rates may be due to increases in photosynthesis rates by phytoplankton as well as increased nitrate reduction [33].



**Table 3.**Statistical analysis for physio-chemical characteristic used for irrigation at studied sites.

	site.1	site.2	site.3	site4	cont.
<b>Turbidity(NTU)</b>	a151.07	c137.4	d131.1	b142.67	e18.4
<b>EC(µs/cm)</b>	b906.33	a908.33	d593.67	c741.67	e288.33
<b>TDS(mg/L)</b>	a611.67	b559.33	c419	d363.67	e135
<b>TSS(mg/L)</b>	b145.22	a167.67	b145.67	c137	d31.33
<b>pH</b>	bc7.37	cd7.2	a7.67	d7.27	ab7.5
<b>DO(mg/L)</b>	a8.4	c5.23	c5.13	d4.37	b7.4
<b>COD(mg/L)</b>	d254	c349.7	b385	a596.3	e17.67
<b>BOD(mg/L)</b>	d127.67	c168.67	b186.67	a242.3	e0.67
<b>PO<sub>4</sub>(mg/L)</b>	b5.47	d2.67	a6.67	c3.81	e0.26
<b>SO<sub>4</sub>(mg/L)</b>	c212.87	d160.87	b251.67	a299.7	e145.87
<b>NO<sub>3</sub>(mg/L)</b>	c14.94	d14.39	b20.64	a21.04	e8.23
<b>Cl(mg/L)</b>	d34.31	b50.19	c49.02	a57.63	e13.37
<b>K(mg/L)</b>	ab6.67	a6.65	ab6.38	a6.81	b6.27
<b>Na(mg/L)</b>	b31.89	c25.39	a37.5	d22.69	e16.7
<b>Ca(mg/L)</b>	a76.98	c47.2	e35.19	b63.1	d38.3
<b>Mg(mg/L)</b>	a44.57	c25.5	e19.29	b28.4	d23.2



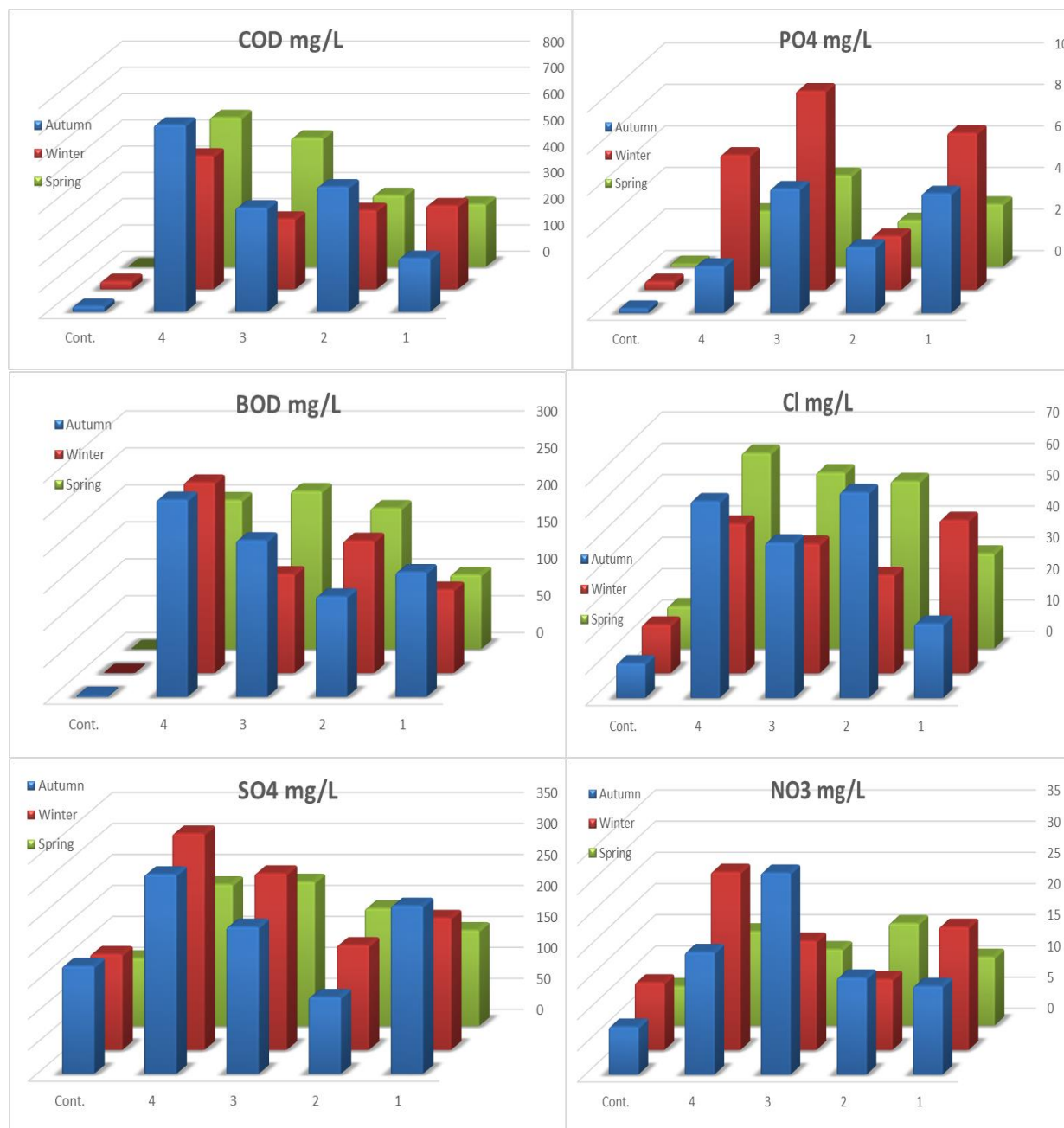


Fig. 3: Values of (COD, BOD, SO<sub>4</sub>, NO<sub>3</sub>, PO<sub>4</sub>, Cl,) in the studied sites.

Chloride (Cl) ion is available in most of the water at different concentrations, sedimentary rocks are an important source of this ion in water as well as industrial, domestic, and domestic waste water to the watercourse [34] this is confirmed by [35]. Highest and the lowest rate of chloride was (65.7- 11.1mg/L) at the second site and control site respectively. Low chloride rates at the control site may indicate that the soil surrounding the site is low in chloride, and that the depth of the water at control site and its distance from rainwater and surface water have led to a lack of concentration Chloride in this site.

We observe in Figure4 the results of Potassium ion (K), Sodium ion (Na), Calcium (Ca) and Magnesium (Mg). Potassium ion (K) is found in a few concentrations in natural water because the rocks contain resistance to weathering, but its salts are widely found on industrial scale and agricultural fertilizers [35]. The natural concentration of potassium in

irrigation water is between (0-2mg / L) [36]. The current study recorded the highest rate of potassium (9.1mg/L) at the third site of winter season, while the lowest rate was (5.2mg/L) at the control site of winter season. The decrease in potassium rates may be attributed to the paucity of agricultural activities, as well as the lack of decaying plant residues that add potassium ions to the water [37]. The higher rates are due to the introduction of untreated water as well as to the potassium-containing agricultural water discharge [38]. Sodium ion (Na) is a positive ions in the earth's crust and usually united with many ions as a stable salts [39], and it is one of the most common metals in the Earth's crust [40]. Na recorded the highest rate (42.58mg/L) at the third site of autumn season, while the lowest rate was (14.32mg/L) at the control site of autumn season. Variable rates of Na in the wastewater may be due to the different amounts of pollutants added to the river from household waste and the agricultural effects of surrounding lands [41], as well as sewage loaded with sodium ions [25]. The reduction of sodium concentrations in some areas of the study is due to the removal of this element by adsorption of the living organisms. Calcium (Ca) is an essential element for plant growth [42]. Its presence in irrigation water is essential for the natural growth of the plant and also improves soil permeability and minimizes the harmful effect of sodium [43]. The highest rate of calcium was (87.11mg/L) at the first site of the spring season while the lowest rate in the third site for the fall season (30.41mg/L),

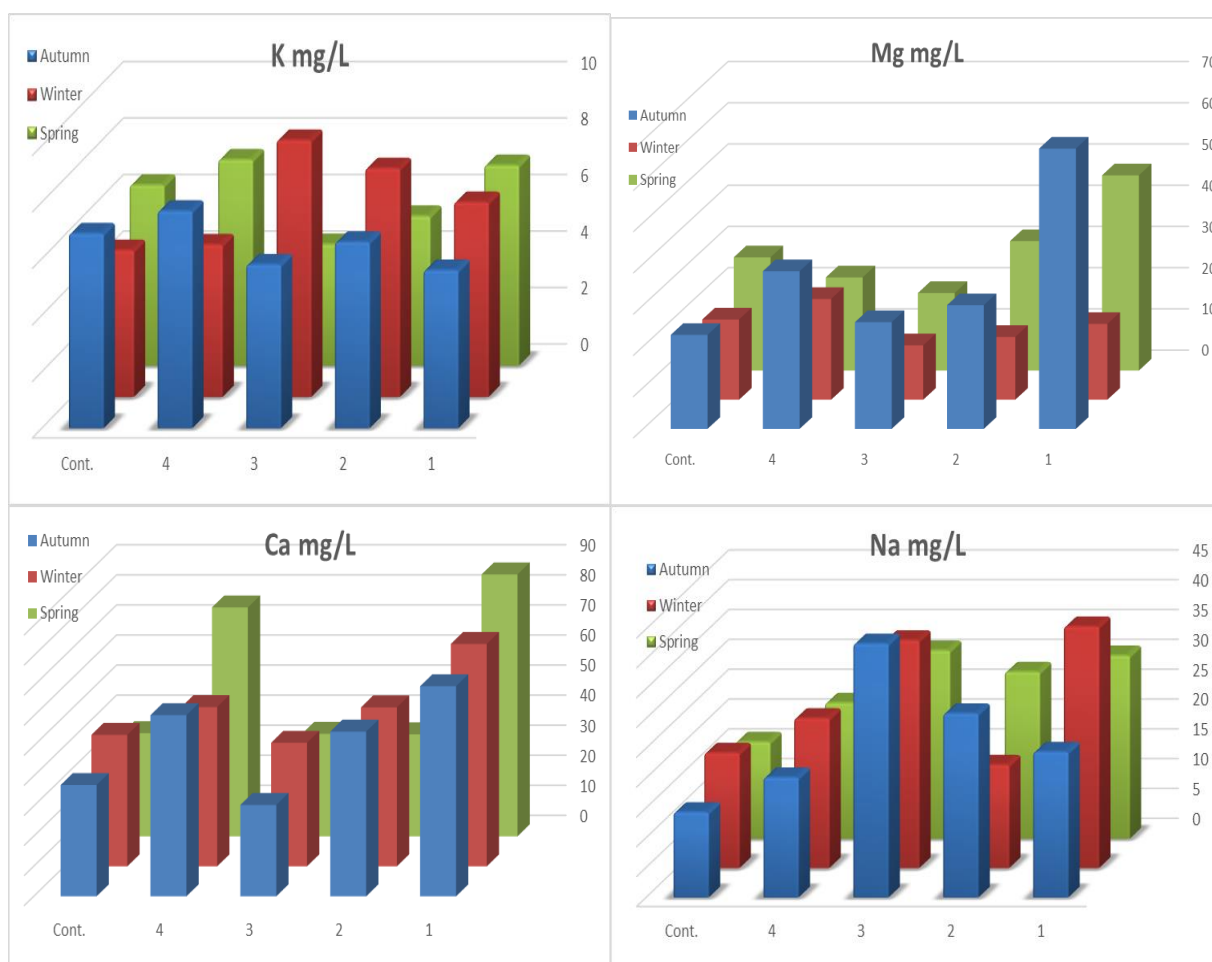


Fig. 4: Values of (K, Na, Ca, Mg) in the studied sites.

The rise in calcium values due to the precipitation of these ions from adjacent areas, as reported by [44], as well as the rise of calcium concentrations in domestic wastewater and detergents and plant residues [41], the reason for the decline in the rate of calcium in some months is due to the need of some water organisms to use this element in their life activities to build some of its members or deposition to form compounds that are not soluble in water [45].

Magnesium (Mg) is a widespread element found in nature and appears primarily with calcium in geological formations as well as in dissolved water, magnesium in water can be a natural source, but it also refers to human contamination with sewage or agricultural fertilizers [36]. Magnesium is less soluble than calcium because it can be deposited in large amounts [46]. The highest Mg rate was recorded was (67.98 mg/L) during the autumn season at the first site and the lowest was (13.19mg/L) at the third site of the winter season. Low of Magnesium concentration may be due to immediate causes or precipitation. The salinity of the water increases when the presence of magnesium ions in greater quantities. The variation in the rates of magnesium may be due to the geological nature of the study area [41 and 47]. There were significant differences regarding seasons of the study for all physical and chemical tests, and significant differences were found among studied sites except for pH and DO, while no significant differences was resulted for potassium at contaminated sites. The results of (EC, TDS, TSS, pH, PO<sub>4</sub>, NO<sub>3</sub>, K, Na, and Mg) were within the permissible limits for irrigation except for (Turbidity, DO, COD, BOD, SO<sub>4</sub>, and Ca) which exceeded permissible limits.

## Conclusions

Local agriculture is one of the most important wastewater consumers, and the search for alternative irrigation sources is necessary to ensure the safety of crops. The use of wastewater as an alternative source of irrigation is a mechanism that works because of the scarcity of water sources for irrigation in some countries. However, there are risks associated with this use that should be evaluated. These risks range from altering the physical and chemical properties of soil to human health.

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