
Analysis of Microplastic Contamination in Teluk Kombal Estuary: Impact and Sources as the Reference for Further and Mitigation Strategies

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Abstract

Microplastics (MPs) refer to plastic waste particles that measure less than 5 millimeters in size. Their presence is widespread in the environment, particularly in aquatic ecosystems, posing significant risks to coastal organisms and human health. This study aims to assess microplastic contamination in the Kombal bay estuary by conducting identification, abundance analysis, and characterization of microplastics. The method used was to characterize the area, sample extraction, observation and calculation of microplastic abundance, FTIR analysis, water quality testing, and data analysis. Originating from the Teluk Kombal river, this estuary is subjected to various human activities such as fishing, agriculture, and household waste disposal. Sampling was conducted at three representative locations: the estuary, agricultural areas, and residential areas within Teluk Kombal, North Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. Samples were collected and filtered for identification using a microscope Olympus Culture Inverted, 4×100 magnification. The results revealed microplastic abundances ranging from 19.5±14.71 to 25±14.54 particles per liter in water, 9.25±8.54 to 10.75 ±9.53 particles per kilogram in sediment, and 10.25±13.28 to 10.5±10.28 particles per individual in *Padina* sp. across the three locations. Various types of microplastics, including fragments, films, pellets, and fibers, were identified, with dominant colors of yellow, blue, red, black, and green. The presence of microplastics in the Teluk Kombal estuary and river indicates that they have been contaminated with microplastics, which can cause serious problems for organisms inhabiting them. Therefore, further research is needed to investigate the impact of microplastics on organisms and ecosystems in the estuary.

Keywords: Aquatic environment, Kombal Bay Lombok, Microplastics, Pollutant.

1. Introduction

Marine debris encompasses solid materials accumulated from various sources, whether intentionally or inadvertently, persisting in marine ecosystems for extended periods (Mulu *et al.*, 2020). Among the most alarming components of marine debris is plastic, notorious for its slow degradation process spanning hundreds of years. Indonesia, as a maritime nation, ranks second globally in terms of plastic waste inundating its oceans (Ayuningtyas, 2019). According to Suryono (2019), an array of plastic debris types of infiltrate oceans, including Styrofoam,

Polyethylene Terephthalate (PET), High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE), Polyvinyl Chloride (PVC or Vinyl), among others. Plastic debris not only jeopardizes human health through contaminated water sources and marine food products but also despoils marine aesthetics, disrupts ecosystems, and imperils biodiversity (Rahmad et al., 2019; Nugroho et al., 2018). Additionally, microplastics (MPs), formed from the degradation of larger plastic materials into particles smaller than 5 mm, present a significant threat to marine ecosystems (Ayuningtyas, 2019). These minute plastic particles, varying in size, shape, color, composition, and density, can disrupt the marine food chain when accumulated in biotic environments (Nugroho et al., 2018). Due to their diminutive size, MPs are sometimes ingested by marine organisms, posing ecological and physiological risks to biodiversity (Lestari et al., 2021). Kombal Bay, situated in West Pemenang village, North Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara, stands out as a critical marine area susceptible to MPs pollution. This bay, sprawling across coastal regions and opening into the sea, harbors significant human activities like fisheries and agriculture along its shores (Adam et al., 2018, Adam et al., 2022), escalating the potential for waste accumulation (Ondara & Dhiauddin, 2021). As emphasized by Lestari et al. (2021), heightened local activities correlate with increased marine debris potency, thereby compromising water quality, including MPs pollution. The accumulation of MPs in oceanic environments raises concerns regarding its potential to disrupt food chains and habitat stability (Hanif et al., 2021). Given these considerations, it is imperative to assess and analyze the abundance and type of MPs in Kombal Bay as a crucial step towards formulating effective mitigation strategies.

2. Methods

2.1. Sampling Site, Sample Collection, and Research Time

The coordinates of Kombal Bay are 8°24'8.92073 south latitude and 116°5'25.70093"E east longitude. The sampling sites, denoted as Site S1 (Teluk Kombal estuary), Site S2 (Teluk Kombal river proximal to agricultural and fisheries activities), and Site S3 (Teluk Kombal river adjacent to residential and dumping areas), were selected for their representative characteristics.

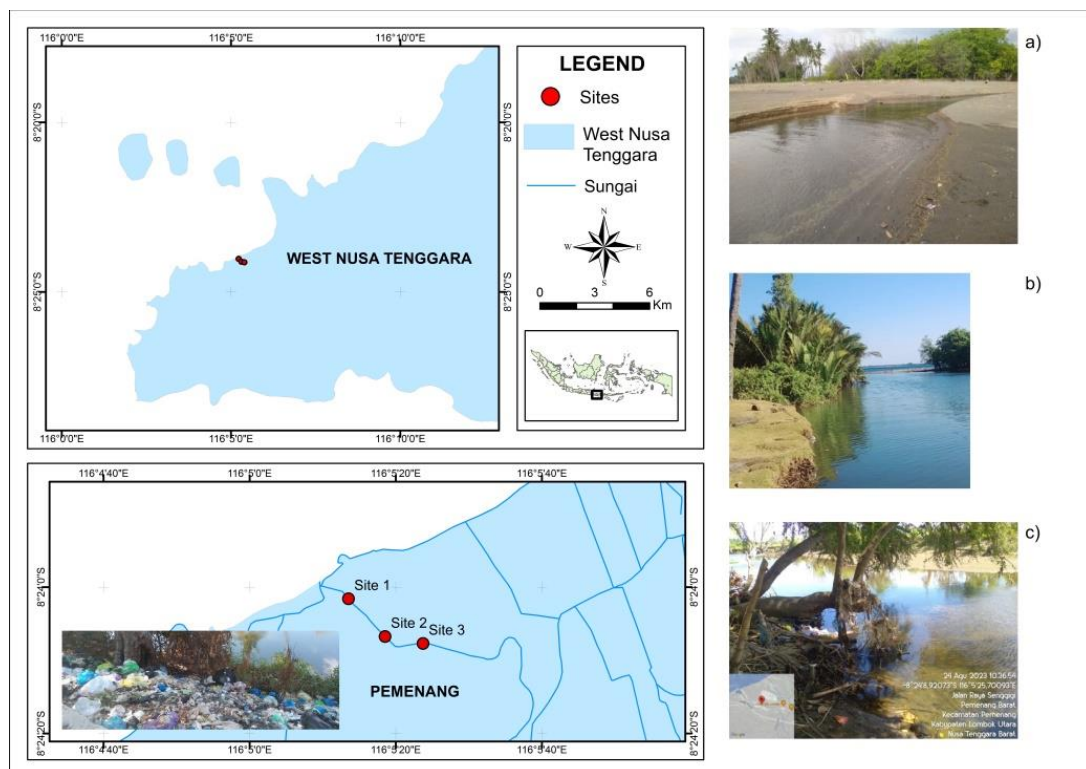


Figure 1. Sampling site of MPs surveillance, a) estuary, b) river that close to agricultural area, c) river that close to residences

Water, sediment, and algae (*Padina* sp) samples were collected in triplicate from each site. Water samples were collected in sample bottles and filtered through a 0.3 nm plankton net. Sediment samples, weighing approximately 300 g, were collected from the river and estuary surfaces using sample bottles, while *Padina* sp was preserved in plastic clips. All samples were stored in cool boxes during transportation to the laboratory.

2.2. Sample Extraction and Microplastic Quantification

Extraction organic compounds from sediment and *Padina* sp samples, the following procedure was followed: The samples were dried in an oven at 70°C for 3 days in a beaker glass. Once dried, the samples were treated with 10 mL of Fe(II) and 10 mL of 30% H₂O₂. For *Padina* sp samples only, 10 mL of NaOH 30% was added. The mixtures were homogenized and allowed to stand for 5 minutes. Subsequently, the samples were heated on a hot plate at 75°C for 15 minutes or until the first bubble burst. After cooling for 5 minutes, they were heated again for 30 minutes. Then, 6 grams of NaCl/20 mL sample was added to the mixtures and heated until dissolved. The mixtures were left to cool for 24 hours and then filtered using a 0.3 nm plankton net equipped with Whatman paper. The filtrates, along with water samples, were observed under a microscope (Olympus Culture Inverted, 4×100 magnification) to identify MPs based on their form, abundance, and color.

2.3. FT-IR Analysis

Following microscopic observation, MPs debris were analyzed using FTIR BRUKER Alpha II version 8.2 to identify the type of plastics based on their functional groups and polymers (Pungut et al., 2021).

2.4. Water Quality Analysis

Chemical and physical properties of water were tested, including ammonia, phosphate, nitrate, nitrite, and Dissolved Oxygen (DO) analysis was performed using the Salifert Freshwater Test Kit and total dissolved solids (TDS) analysis was conducted using a TDS Meter.

2.5. Data Analysis

Data were tabulated using Microsoft Excel 2013, and statistical analysis was performed using IBM SPSS 25. ANOVA was utilized to analyze differences in sampling sites and MPs forms with a 95% confidence level. The difference in abundance was assessed using T-Test Variance.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Result

3.1.1. The Abundance of Microplastics

Table 1 displays the abundance of MPs at the three sampling areas in Kombal Bay, representing the initial step of this study.

Table 1. The Abundance of the Microplastics

Type of Sample	The abundance of MPs at three sampling spots		
	Estuary	River	River nearby residence area
Water (particle/L)			
Mean±SD	19.5 ±14.71	25±14.54	21.5±14.62
Sediment (particle/kg dw)			
Mean±SD	10.75±9.53	9.25±8.53	9.75±6.31
<i>Padina</i> sp (particle/individual)			
Mean±SD	15.25±9.53	10.25±13.3	10.5±10.27

Table 1 illustrates the average abundance of microplastics (MPs) in water samples collected from the estuary point, revealing the lowest concentration compared to the other two sampling sites, at 19.5 ± 14.71 particles/L. Conversely, sediment samples obtained from the estuary point exhibit the highest average MPs abundance, measuring 10.75 ± 9.53 particles/kg dw. Notably, the abundance of MPs in *Padina* sp. specimens collected from the estuary surpasses that of the other two sampling areas, reaching 15.25 ± 9.53 particles/individual. This disparity suggests a potential accumulation of plastic debris at the estuary, likely attributable to its position at the terminus of the river (Riandi et al., 2018). Following the determination of MPs abundance, their forms were identified, as depicted in Figure 2.

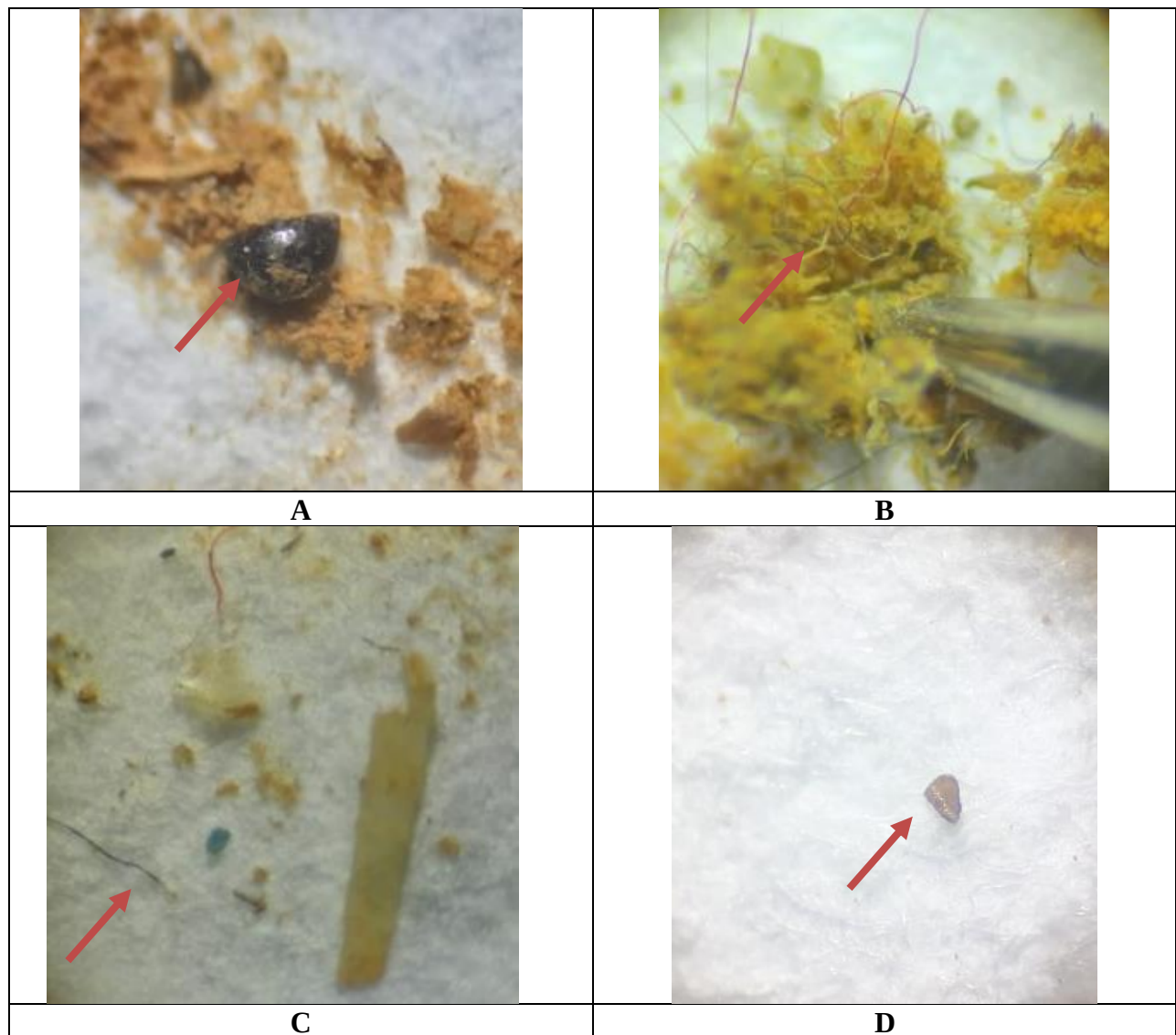


Figure 2. Form of Microplastics (a) Fragments, (b) Film, (c) Fibers, (d) Pellets

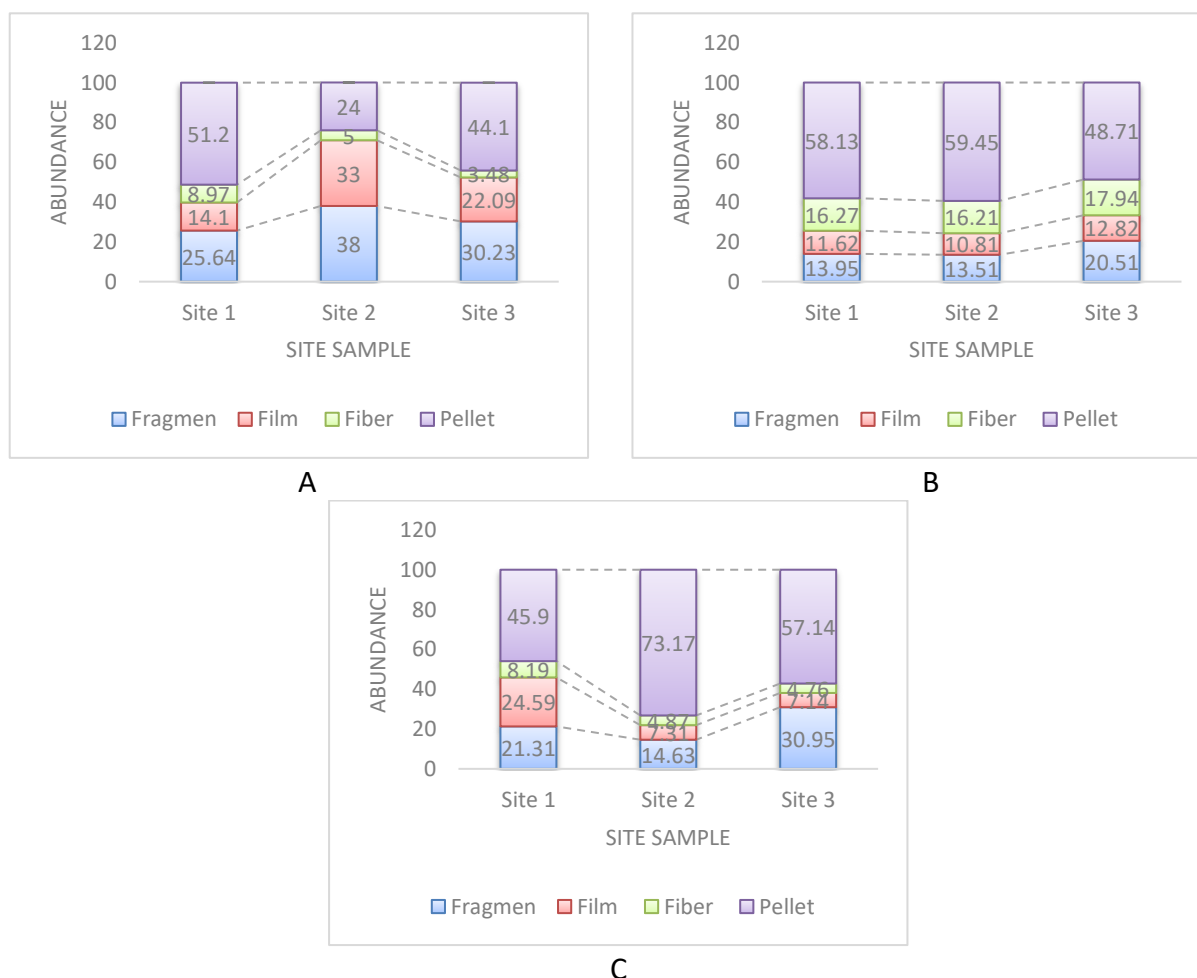


Figure 3. The Percentage (%) of MPs Abundance were Collected from (a) Water, (b) Sediment, (c) and *Padina* sp

Using a microscope inverter, we identified four forms of microplastics (MPs) present in water, sediment, and *Padina* sp. samples: fragments, film, fibers, and pellets. Fibers are categorized as solid-like threads with colors such as black, yellow, red, white, and blue, potentially originating from clothing residues or fishing gear (Sawalman et al., 2021), as illustrated in Figure 4. Film-form MPs appear transparent, often yellow or brown, possibly stemming from domestic utensils (Labibah & Triajie, 2020). Conversely, fragment MPs are opaque, typically in black, yellow, green, or blue hues, originating from plastic containers, bags, or toys; Ridlo et al. (2020) note that these fragments are usually thick. Pellet-shaped MPs are circular, black, and may derive from materials like Styrofoam (Sandra & Radityaningrum, 2021). The distribution of these plastic forms across the sampling areas is presented in Figure 3.

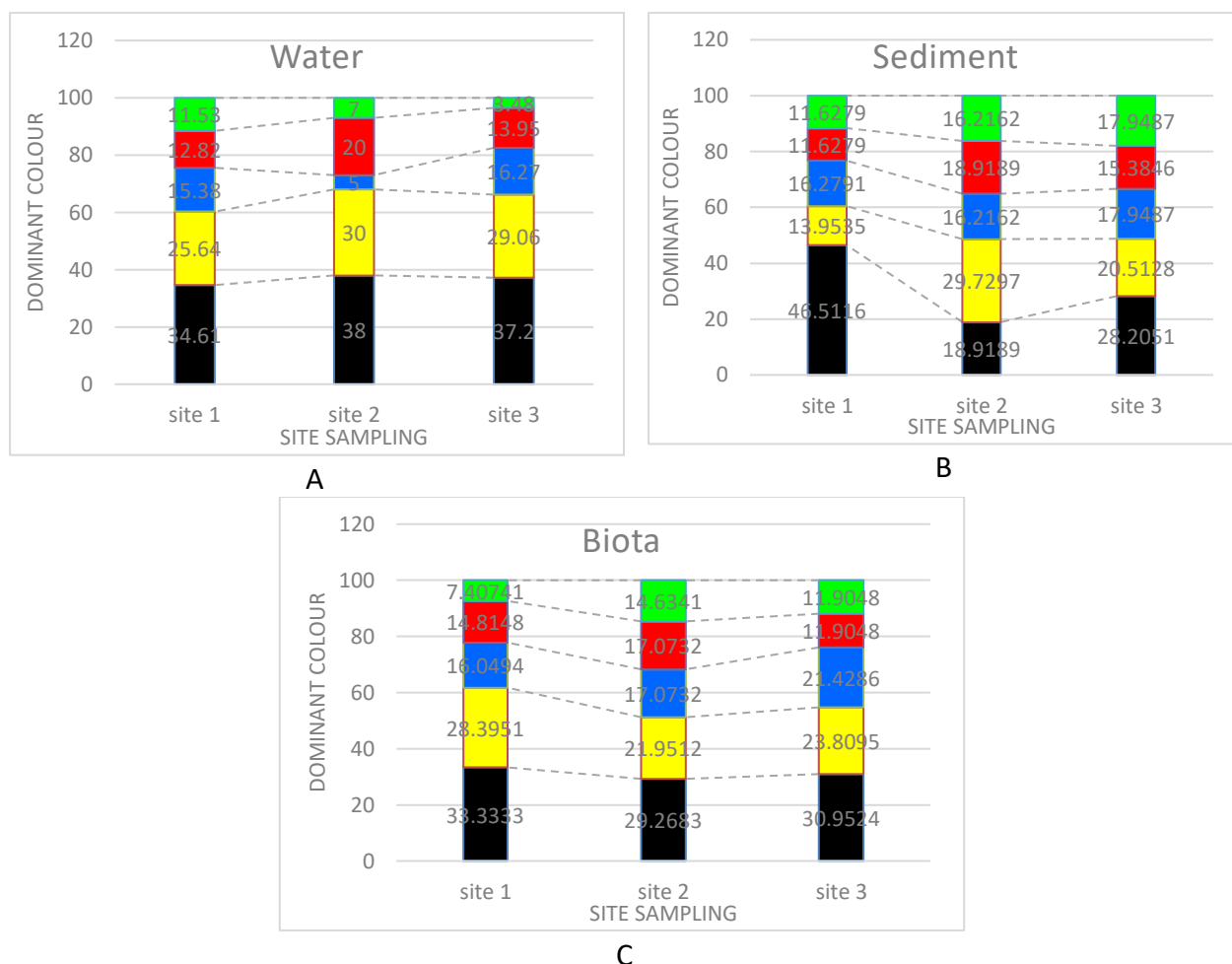


Figure 4. The Dominant Colors of MPs Abundance were Collected from (a) Water, (b) Sediment, (c) and *Padina* sp

The average concentration of microplastics in surface water (Figure 3) is highest in S1 and S3 in the form of pellets and S2 in the form of fragments. The average number of microplastic concentrations in the sediment is highest in S1, S2, and S3 in the form of pellets, and the average number of microplastic concentrations in *Padina* sp is highest in S1, S2, and S3 in the form of pellets.

3.1.2. Identification of Microplastic Monomers Using Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) Spectroscopy

The abundance of microplastics was further analyzed to identify their monomers using FTIR, as detailed in Table 2. From the water samples collected at the estuary, the wave numbers of monomers indicated the presence of polystyrene (PS) at 3315.75 cm^{-1} , identified by hydroxyl (N-H), carbonyl (C-O), nitril (C-N), and alkane (C-H) groups. Additionally, a spectrum at 2165.03 cm^{-1} specific for carbonyl (C=O) and (C-O) groups was detected, indicative of Low-Density Polyethylene (LDPE) (Sugandi et al., 2021). In sediment samples, three spectra were observed: one at 3340.19 cm^{-1} , specific for amine (N-H), carbonyl (C=O), and alkane (C-H) groups, suggesting polystyrene; another at 2165.03 cm^{-1} , indicating LDPE with specific C=O and C-O groups; and finally, a spectrum at 2234.69 cm^{-1} , predicting polyethylene when the C=N group appeared (Sugandi et al., 2021). Detailed spectra are provided in Figure 5.

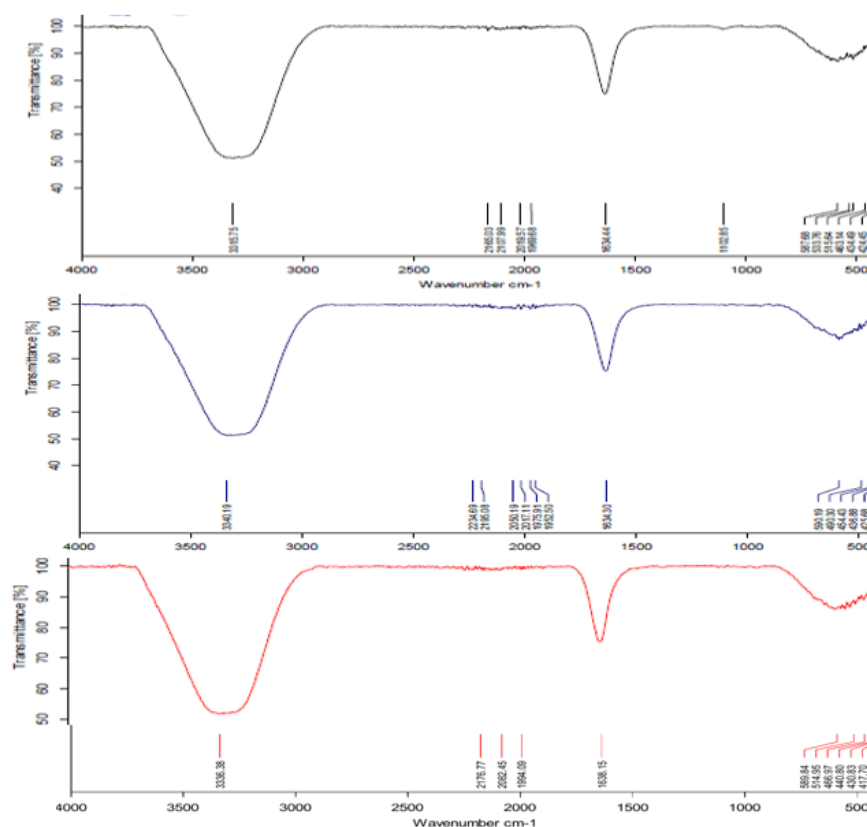


Figure 5. The FTIR Results of Water (black), Sediment (blue), and Biota at the Estuary (red) Samples.

Table 2. Analysis of Functional Group Based on FTIR Result, Samples (Water, Sediment and *Padina* sp.) were Collected from the Estuary.

Sampling site	Wavelength (cm ⁻¹)	Functional group	Polymer
Surface water	3315.75	N-H	PS (polystyrene)
	2107.99 - 2165.03	C≡C	LDPE (Low Density Polyethylene)
	1634.44 - 2019.57	C-O	LDPE (Low Density Polyethylene)
	1102.85	C-N	PS (polystyrene)
	407.33 - 587.68	C-H	PS (polystyrene)
Sediment	3340.19	N-H	PS (polystyrene)
	2234.69	C≡N	PE (polyethylene)
	2195.08 - 2017.11	C≡C	LDPE (Low Density Polyethylene)
	1975.91 - 1952.50	C-O	LDPE (Low Density Polyethylene)
	1634.30	C=O	PS (polystyrene)
<i>Padina</i> sp	590.19 - 414.45	C-H	PS (polystyrene)
	3328.62	N-H	PS (polystyrene)
	2237.39	C≡N	PE (polyethylene)
	2198.33 - 2122.81	C≡C	LDPE (Low Density Polyethylene)
	1986.90 - 1634.27	C=C	LDPE (Low Density Polyethylene)
	594.23 - 407.35	C-H	PS (polystyrene)

Figure 5 presents the monomers of microplastics (MPs) identified from the peaks observed in the Fourier Transform Infrared (FTIR) results of samples collected from *Padina* sp. Polyethylene (PE) was detected at 2237.39 cm^{-1} wavelength, indicating a covalent bond, $\text{C}\equiv\text{N}$. Additionally, polystyrene was identified at 3328.62 cm^{-1} wavelength, specific to the amine group, N-H . Another peak observed at 2198.33 cm^{-1} suggests the presence of a carbonyl group, $\text{C}=\text{O}$, and $\text{C}=\text{C}$, indicative of Low-Density Polyethylene (LDPE). These findings are consistent with local plastic usage patterns. [Huo et al. \(2023\)](#) suggests that fragments of MPs, such as those identified in this study, are commonly derived from polyethylene polymers found in plastic bags, while pellets may originate from microbeads used in the cosmetic industry ([Sugandi et al., 2021](#)).

3.1.3. The Water Quality of Kombal bay

Table 3. Comparison of Teluk Kombal River Water Quality Based on Chemical and Physical Parameters with River Water Quality Standards Based on Government Regulations No. 82, 2001

Parameters	River water quality standards	Sampling point		
		S1	S2	S3
TDS (ppm)	500	259	274	337
DO (mg/L)	3.00	6.00	5.00	4.00
Ammonia(mg/L)	<0.5	0.25	0.25	<0.15
Nitrate(mg/L)	1	0	0	0
Nitrite(mg/L)	1	0	0	0
Phosphate(mg/L)	0.5	0.1	0.25	0.25

notes:

S1: Estuary

S2: the river close to agricultural area

S3: the river close to residences

Table 3 provides an overview of the water quality in Teluk Kombal river across three sampling areas. Nitrate and nitrite were not detected at any of the sampling sites. Ammonia was observed at concentrations of 0.25 mg/L at both S1 and S2, while at S3, it was less than 0.5 mg/L. Dissolved oxygen concentrations ranged from 4 to 6 mg/L.

This shows that the water quality can be said to be good because the ammonia level at the three sampling points is still low, the phosphate level is also low, and the DO level is high. In general, the water quality of a surface water source can be seen or observed from its dissolved oxygen (DO) content, this can be a reference that the water quality is said to be good. This is also confirmed in several articles which state that the greater the DO content value, the better the water quality ([Asrori, 2021](#)).

3.2. Discussion

At site 1, downstream of Kombal bay, microplastic contaminants were detected, with the highest levels observed at this site (as shown in Table 1). This finding is likely attributed to the common use of fish nets in this area and the accumulation of microplastics transported downstream by the river. In addition, river water flowing into the estuary is thought to also influence MPs contamination which then settles in the estuary or even enters the sea. Microscopic analysis revealed four forms of microplastics: fragments, fibers, films, and pellets, which are often the result of the degradation of macroplastics into smaller particles ([Hanif et al., 2021](#)).

Pellet-form microplastics were predominantly found at sites 1 and 2, potentially influenced by runoff flowing towards the estuary. This is in accordance with research conducted by ([Shafani et al., 2022](#)) which states that the pellet form is the most common form of MPs found in the

estuarine waters of the East Flood Canal, so that the total density is higher than other forms of MPs. The high density of pellet shape MPs in the estuarine waters of the East Flood Canal can be caused by run off towards the mouth of the East Flood Canal. The pellet shape is influenced by community activities that dispose of household waste in the form of used laundry water (Azizah et al., 2020). Makrима et al. (2022) suggest that these pellets may originate from exfoliated particles from body scrubs or soaps, as well as domestic waste. Fragment-form microplastics were more prevalent at site 3, likely influenced by tourism activities and domestic waste. The most commonly found plastic waste includes beverage bottles made of polyethylene (PE) or polypropylene (PP) (Sugandi et al., 2021).

The abundance of fiber-form microplastics is attributed to the high intensity of fish net usage (Helfira et al., 2022). Film-form microplastics, identified as PE and PP, likely originate from plastic bags commonly used by local residents and are relatively easier to degrade compared to other plastic packaging (Susanti et al., 2019). Films and fragments were the most abundant microplastics found at the sampling sites.

The predominant colors of the microplastics were black, yellow, blue, red, and green, reflecting the diversity of plastic sources. Fragment microplastics are often white and blue (Kapo et al., 2020), while film microplastics are mostly white, with red and blue hues possibly resulting from physical degradation, such as exposure to sunlight (Ningrum et al., 2022). The presence of black microplastics may indicate the abundance of organic particles (Hiwari et al., 2019).

3.2.1. FTIR Analysis

FTIR analysis revealed the presence of specific functional groups characteristic of various polymers. Polystyrene (PS) was identified by peaks representing N-H, C-O, C-N, and C-H bonds (Trivantira et al., 2023). LDPE was identified by peaks indicating C=C and C-O bonds (Gumulya et al., 2020), while PE was characterized by the presence of C≡N functional groups.

This assumption is almost the same as the research of Sugandi et al., (2021) that polystyrene (PS) type plastics are characterized by the presence of C-H phenyl, CH aliphatic, CH₂ aromatic and phenyl functional groups identified in IR with the presence of absorption at 3348 cm⁻¹, 2917 cm⁻¹ and 1397 cm⁻¹.

3.2.2. Water Quality Analysis

Ammonium levels in Teluk Kombal river ranged from <0.15 to 0.25 mg/L, within class 1 standards set by Indonesia President Regulation No. 82, 2001. Phosphate concentrations ranged from 0.1 mg/L to 0.25 mg/L, also within acceptable limits (Government Regulations No. 82, 2001). Nitrate and nitrite were undetected, indicating good water quality (Hamuna et al., 2018). Dissolved oxygen levels ranged from 4 to 6 mg/L, indicative of satisfactory water quality (Daroini & Arisandi, 2020). Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) fell within the classification range specified by Government Regulations No. 82, 2001.

4. Conclusion

Microplastics, primarily in pellet form, contaminate the estuary of Teluk Kombal river. Other forms include fragments, films, and fibers. Polymers identified include PS, LDPE, and PE. The presence of microplastics in the estuary of Kombal Bay is due to the input of waste from densely populated land or human activities in the estuary area such as fishing or household activities. These findings underscore the urgent need for disaster mitigation strategies to prevent further pollution in Teluk Kombal river.

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7. Author Contributions

Conceptualization, M. A. A. and N.I. ; methodology, M.A.A, M.A. and N.I. ; software, M.A, T.M., H.M. and H.S.T.; validation, N.I, M.A.A., N.K.C. and M.A.; formal analysis, N.I.; investigation, M.A.A., T.M. and H.M.; resources, M.A.A.; data curation, M.A.A and M.A.; writing—original draft preparation, M.A.A, N.I. and M.A; writing—review and editing, M.A.A, N.I. and M.A.; visualization, H.S.T, M.A., T.M and H.M.; supervision, M.A.A.; project administration, M.A.A. ; funding acquisition, M.A.A.

8. Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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