

CULTIVATION OF *NANNOCHLOROPSIS* SP. FOR BIODIESEL
PRODUCTION VIA MICROWAVE IRRADIATION DIRECT
TRANSESTERIFICATION USING IONIC LIQUID

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*To my beloved late father and mother,
Mr Wahidin Majid & Mrs Rohani Harun,
My lovely hubby,
Mohd Ridzuan Mohd Noor,
My cute Prince,
Muhammad Daryus Zaffran,*

with my eternal love and thank you for being the best thing that ever happened to me

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ABSTRACT

Nannochloropsis sp. has been recognized as a potential source of biomass feedstock for biodiesel due to their abilities to grow rapidly, high oil and lipid content. However major challenges faced are the expensive downstream processes such as dewatering and drying; utilisation of large volumes of solvent; and tedious extraction processes. The novelty of this study is the production of biodiesel from wet microalgae biomass via microwave irradiation direct transesterification (DT) process with ionic liquid as co-solvent system. *Nannochloropsis* sp. was cultivated aseptically for 9 days at different light intensities (50, 100 and 200 $\mu\text{mol m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$) and photoperiod cycles (24:0, 18:06 and 12:12 h light:dark) in a 5 L photobioreactor at 23 °C using F/2 and Walne's medium for maximum growth and lipid content. Microwave irradiation was used in the extraction of lipids from microalgae and also the transesterification and the results were compared with that obtained via conventional waterbath heating. The effect of microwave irradiation on microalgae cell morphology was then identified. The effects of parameters such as different types of solvent and microwave irradiation time on biodiesel yield were also investigated. A DT process was performed taking into account the important factors such as reaction temperature, reaction time, ratio of methanol to algae and ratio of ionic liquid to methanol. Results revealed that the maximum growth and lipid content were obtained under 100 $\mu\text{mol m}^{-2} \text{s}^{-1}$ light intensity and photo period cycles (18:06 h) after 7 days cultivation using Walne's medium; achieving maximum cell concentration of $12.5 \times 10^7 \text{ cell.ml}^{-1}$, which corresponded to the growth rate of 0.453 d^{-1} and lipid content of 38.31 %. Microwave accelerates the disruption of microalgae cell walls resulting in rapid release of oil. The use of IL2 as co-solvents was found to be most effective in disrupting microalgae cell. It was seen that the cell disruption achieved a maximum of 99.73 % after 15 min of DT process. The mixture of methanol-IL2 extracted the lipid from microalgal biomass, concurrently transesterified the extracted lipids to produce biodiesel under microwave irradiation. The maximum (36.79 %) biodiesel yield was obtained in 15 min when IL2 was used as co-solvent. The biodiesel production via DT under microwave irradiation was optimized using Central Composite Design (CCD). The main effects considered were reaction time (5 – 25 min); wet algae to methanol ratio (1:4 – 1:12) and methanol:IL2 ratio (1:0.5 - 1:1); and the response variables measured was biodiesel yield. Statistical analysis revealed optimum biodiesel yield (40.9 %) was achieved at 15 min of reaction time, algae:methanol ratio of 1:4 and methanol:IL2 ratio of 1:0.5 (v/v). The major composition of fatty acid methyl esters (FAMES) were oleic acid (C16:0), palmitoleic acid (C16:1), stearic acid (C18:1n9c) and linoleic acid (C18:2n6c). In conclusion DT process using combination of methanol-IL2 coupled with microwave irradiation is a very attractive novel method to produce maximum biodiesel yield.

ABSTRAK

Nannochloropsis sp. telah diiktiraf sebagai sumber bahan mentah biojisim untuk menghasilkan biodiesel kerana kadar pertumbuhannya yang cepat, kandungan minyak dan lipid yang tinggi. Cabaran utama yang dihadapi adalah kos pemprosesan hiliran yang mahal seperti penyahairan dan pengeringan, penggunaan pelarut yang banyak. Novelty kajian ini adalah penghasilan biodiesel daripada biojisim mikroalga basah melalui penyinaran gelombang mikro dan proses transesterifikasi langsung (DT) dengan menggunakan cecair berion sebagai sistem sepelarat. *Nannochloropsis* sp. dikultur secara aseptik selama 9 hari pada keamatan cahaya berbeza (50, 100 dan 200 $\mu\text{molm}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$) dan kitaran fotokala (24:0, 18:06 dan 12:12 j cahaya:gelap) di dalam 5 L photobioreaktor pada suhu 23 °C menggunakan medium F/2 dan Walne untuk pertumbuhan dan kandungan lipid yang maksima. Sinaran gelombang mikro digunakan dalam pengekstrakan lipid dari mikroalga dan juga transesterifikasi dan data dibandingkan dengan pemanasan waterbath konvensional. Kesan parameter seperti jenis pelarut dan masa tindak balas daripada pendedahan kepada sinaran gelombang mikro kepada penghasilan biodiesel dikenalpasti. Proses DT dibuat dengan mengambil kira faktor yang penting seperti suhu dan masa tindakbalas, nisbah alga/methanol dan nisbah methanol/IL2. Keputusan menunjukkan pertumbuhan dan kandungan lipid yang maksimum diperolehi pada keamatan cahaya 100 $\mu\text{molm}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$ dan foto kitaran 18:06 j selepas 7 hari pengkulturan di dalam media Walne; mencapai sel maksimum $12.5 \times 10^7 \text{ sel.ml}^{-1}$ dengan kadar pertumbuhan 0.453 d^{-1} dan kandungan lipid 38.31%. Gelombang mikro mempercepatkan lagi pemecahan dinding sel mikroalga dan menyebabkan minyak lebih cepat dikeluarkan. Penggunaan IL2 sebagai sistem sepelarat merupakan paling berkesan untuk memecahkan sel. Ianya dilihat dengan pemecahan sel yang maksimum sebanyak 99.73% dicapai selepas 15 min proses DT. Campuran metanol-IL2 menyarin lipid daripada biojisim mikroalga dan secara serentak lipid ditransesterifikasikan untuk menghasilkan biodiesel di bawah sinaran gelombang mikro. Penghasilan biodiesel yang maksimum telah dicapai pada 15 min apabila IL2 telah digunakan sebagai sepelarat (36.79 %). Penghasilan biodiesel menggunakan biojisim basah dalam proses DT telah dioptimumkan dengan menggunakan perisian *Central Composite Design (CCD)*. Faktor-faktor utama yang diambil kira adalah masa tindak balas (5-25 min), nisbah alga/metanol (1:4-1:12) dan nisbah methanol/IL₂ (1:0.5-1:1), dan pembolehubah maklumbalas yang dikaji ialah penghasilan biodiesel. Analisis statistik menunjukkan penghasilan biodiesel yang maksimum (40.9%) telah dicapai pada 15 min masa tindakbalas, nisbah alga:metanol 1:4 dan metanol:IL₂ nisbah 1:0.5. Komposisi utama asid lemak metil ester (FAMES) adalah asid oleik (C16:0), asid palmitoleic (C16:1), asid stearik (C18:1n9c) dan asid linoleik (C18:2n6c). Kesimpulannya proses DT menggunakan kombinasi methanol:IL₂ dibantu dengan sinaran gelombang mikro adalah satu kaedah baru yang amat menarik untuk menghasilkan biodiesel yang maksimum.

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LIST OF SYMBOLS

β_o	-	Constant coefficient
2_k	-	Factorial (or fractional factorial)
$2k$	-	Axial or star runs
gL^{-1}	-	Concentration (gram per liter)
H_2SO_4	-	Sulphuric acid
HCl	-	Hydrochloric acid
mg	-	Mass, milligram
$^{\circ}\text{C}$	-	Temperature (Degree Celsius)
g	-	Mass, gram
v/v %	-	Volume per volume percentage
ϵ'	-	Dielectric constant
ρ	-	Density
α	-	Axial point
ϵ''	-	Dielectric loss
$\mu\text{molm}^{-2}\text{s}^{-1}$	-	Light intensity, micromole per meter square per second
μ	-	Specific growth rate
$\tan \delta$	-	Loss tangen
R^2	-	Linear regression constant
%	-	Percentage
Kv	-	Kilo volt
O_2	-	Oxygen
s	-	Time, second
KOH	-	Potassium hydroxide
sp.	-	Subspecies

μm	-	Distance, micrometer
mw	-	Microwave
CO_2	-	Carbon dioxide
min	-	Time, minute
m	-	Distance, meter
m^3	-	Volume, cubic meter
h	-	Time, hour
>	-	More than
mm	-	Distance, millimeter
wt%	-	Weight percentage
CH_3COCl	-	Acetyl chloride
cm	-	Distance, centimeter
M	-	Concentration, Molar
L	-	Volume, Liter
nm	-	Distance, nanometer
MHz	-	Megahertz
W/m^2	-	Power, Watt per meter square
% C_t	-	Cell disruption percentage
N_1	-	Cell number concentration at t_1
N_2	-	Cell number concentration at t_2
k	-	Division rate
W	-	Watt
f	-	Frequency
N_t	-	Average number intact cells at certain time
D	-	Distribution coefficient
P	-	Power dissipation density
E_i	-	Electric field strength
C_p	-	Specific heat
E	-	Total energy
HCO_3	-	Bicarbonate
w/ w_{DW}	-	Weight per dry weight
AlCl_3	-	Aluminum chloride
BMIM-Cl	-	1-butyl-3-methyl imidazolium chloride
$[\text{PF}_6]^-$	-	Hexafluorophosphate

[BF ₄]-	-	Tetrafluoroborate,
[CF ₃ SO ₃]-,	-	Trifluoromethane sulfonate or triflate
[(CF ₃ SO ₂) ₂ N]-	-	Bis-(trifluoromethanesulfonyl) amide
[NTf ₂]-	-	Bistriflamide
[N(SO ₂ CF ₃) ₂] ⁻	-	<i>N</i> -Phenyl-bis(trifluoromethanesulfonimide)
[(CF ₃ SO ₂) ₃]-	-	Tris {(trifluoromethyl) sulfonyl} methanide
[Ms ₂ N]-	-	Bis (methanesulfonyl) amide
[R ₁ R ₂ IM] +	-	Alkylimidazolium
[RPy] +	-	Alkylpyridinium
[NR ₄] +	-	Tetraalkylammonium
[PR ₄] +	-	Tetraalkylphosphonium
NaOH	-	Sodium hydroxide
SrO	-	Strontium oxide
ml	-	Volume, milliliter
vvm	-	Gas volume flow per unit of liquid volume per minute, volume per volume per minute
μL	-	Volume, microliter
mgml ⁻¹	-	Milligram per milliliter
g	-	Mass, gram
HF	-	Hydrogen fluoride
FeCl ₃ .6H ₂ O	-	Iron (III) Chloride hexahydrate
MnCl ₂ .4H ₂ O	-	Manganous chloride
H ₃ BO ₃	-	Boric acid
Na ₂ EDTA	-	Disodium salt dehydrate
NaH ₂ PO ₄ .2H ₂ O	-	Sodium di-hydrogen orthophosphate
NaNO ₃	-	Sodium nitrate
ZnCl ₂	-	Zinc chloride
CoCl ₂ .6H ₂ O	-	Cobalt (II) chloride hexahydrate
NaMoO ₄ .2H ₂ O	-	Sodium molybdate dihydrate
(NH ₄) ₆ Mo ₇ O ₂₄ .4H ₂ O	-	Ammonium molybdate tetrahydrate
CuSO ₄ .5H ₂ O	-	Copper (II) sulfate pentahydrate
NaCl	-	Sodium chloride,
C14:0	-	Myristic acid methyl ester
C16:0	-	Palmitic acid methyl ester

C16:1	-	Palmitoleic acid methyl ester
C17:0	-	Heptadecanoic Acid
C18:0	-	Stearic acid methyl ester
C18:1, <i>cis</i> -9	-	Oleic acid methyl ester
C18:1, <i>trans</i> -9	-	Elaidic acid methyl ester
C18:2, <i>cis</i> -9,12	-	Linoleic acid methyl ester
C18:2, <i>trans</i> -9,12	-	Linolelaidic acid methyl ester
C18:3, <i>cis</i> -9,12,15	-	Linolenic scid methyl ester
C20:0	-	Arachidic acid methyl ester
C22:0	-	Behenic acid methyl ester
ZnSO ₄ 7H ₂ O	-	Zinc Sulfate Heptahydrate

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ANOVA	-	Analysis of variance
CCD	-	Central composite design
FESEM	-	Field emission scanning electron microscope
FCD	-	Face centered design
RSM	-	Response surface methodology
PFD	-	Photon flux density
GHGs	-	Greenhouse gas emissions
GF/C	-	Glass microfiber design
DT	-	Direct transesterification
FFA	-	Free fatty acid
SCM	-	Supercritical methanol
PE	-	Polyethylene
PVC	-	Polyvinyl chloride
TAG	-	Triglyceride
FID	-	Flame ionization detector
SEM	-	Scanning electron microscopy
ID	-	Internal diameter
ATP	-	Adenine tri-phosphate
NADPH	-	Nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate
L:D	-	Light:dark cycles
NR	-	Nile red
PTFE	-	Polytetrafluoroethylene
IL	-	Ionic liquid
TSIL	-	Task specific ionic liquid
SFE	-	Supercritical fluid extraction
FAMEs	-	Fatty acid methyl esters
mw	-	Microwave
PFA	-	Perfluoroalkoxy alkane

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

The concerns for greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs), an accelerated decrease in fossil fuels, steeply increase in crude oil prices and energy insecurity has attracted worldwide interest in sustainable and renewable energy sources (Cui *et al.*, 2014; Owen *et al.*, 2010; Soh and Zimmerman, 2011; Kaur *et al.*, 2012; Li *et al.*, 2011). In order to meet petro-diesel replacement, renewable energy sources should not only be environmentally beneficial but it should be producible, economical and costs competitive to give a meaningful impact on sustainable energy demands (Parmar *et al.*, 2011; Budarin *et al.*, 2012). Biodiesel fuel is one type of alternative renewable fuel, which is highly biodegradable, has minimal toxicity or non-toxic and environmentally friendly. Recently, biodiesel has been considered as one of the best sustainable sources of petroleum-based fuels (Man and Keat, 2012; Chisti, 2008).

Biodiesel is a fuel derived from the transesterification process which comprised of methyl-esters of fatty acids from animal fats and vegetable (crops) oils. Current production of biodiesel fuel includes oil of crops (palm oil, soybean, corn oil, rapeseed oil, coconut oil and sunflower oil), animal lards (fats) and used cooking oil. Unfortunately biodiesel produced from these feedstocks are not able to replace fossil fuels because they are regarded as competitors to food supply. The findings in biotechnology have proven that microalgae, yeast and fungi are potential raw materials for biodiesel production due to high amounts of lipid composition (Amaro *et al.*, 2011).

Microalgae is regarded as an interesting sustainable feedstock for biodiesel manufacturing and has the potential to completely displace petrol-diesel fuels because of their rapid growth potential (microalgae biomass was higher 5-30 times of oil crops) and has high lipid content (Chisti, 2008). Chen *et al.* (2009) stated that microalgae can be grown without encroaching on arable land or cultivated in brackish water. Zhang *et al.* (2003) found that microalgae oil is mostly accumulated as triglycerides and can be transformed to biodiesel. Microalgae such as green algae have been found to contain proportionally high level of lipids. Different kinds of microalgae have different capability in producing lipids yields for lipid productivity, depending on types of microalgae species. Among the locally marine microalgae, *Nannochloropsis* sp. displayed the best potential biodiesel production because they have both high biomass productivity and high lipid content (Thi *et al.*, 2011; Rodolfi *et al.*, 2009; Chiu *et al.*, 2009; Gouveia and Oliveira, 2009).

However, algal biodiesel production still faces hurdles due to the high cost associated with microalgae mass production, harvesting, dewatering and preparation for conventional lipid extraction and transesterification into biodiesel. Harvesting technology of microalgae biomass requires a universal separation application such as universal centrifuge and flocculant agents to recover microalgae mass. The major challenge for commercialized biodiesel production from microalgae is the high cost of recovering the oil from the microalgae prior to converting it into biodiesel. Numerous methods for extraction of lipids from microalgae have been applied such as solvent extraction (liquid-liquid extraction), supercritical fluid extraction (SFE) (Mouahid *et al.*, 2013; Liao *et al.*, 2010), ultrasonic extraction and mechanical pressing. Such extraction methods require longer extraction time, large volumes of solvent except using SFE and are energy-cost intensive (Patil *et al.*, 2011; Kanithar, 2010; Um and kim, 2009; Boldor *et al.*, 2010).

Lardon *et al.*, (2009) analyzed the lipid extraction process and reported that 90% of energy consumed for biodiesel conversion from microalgae biomass are used for the lipid extraction. Thus, any improvement in microalgal oil productivity will give a major impact on lowering the costs of the extraction process. Some of microalgae species can accumulate significant quantities of triglycerides (20-50% of

total dry weight). Conversion of algal triglycerides to biodiesel production required the conventional extraction, where microalgal oil has been mixed with organic solvents such as chloroform, methanol and n-hexane). Xu *et al.* (2006) and Cheng *et al.* (2009) explain that the organic solvents in lipid extraction can be removed via distillation unit and triglycerides are then synthesized with alcohol (e.g. methanol) using either acid-catalyzed or base-catalyzed for biodiesel production.

Works by Demirbas (2009) have shown that supercritical transesterification is one of the alternative processes for produce biodiesel from microalgae lipid conversion. This process facilitated without the catalyst but required high reaction temperature ($>240^{\circ}\text{C}$) and pressure ($> 8 \text{ MPa}$). Supercritical fluid extraction (SFE) has gained interest because it significantly lowers the requirement for organic solvents and thus takes into consideration the concerns for waste disposal after reaction. Ehimen *et al.*, (2010) reported that SFE demonstrated the shortest reaction time (120-240 sec) to complete the reaction from lipid to biodiesel. SFE method required a simple purification step and also produce higher biodiesel yields compared to solvents extraction and soxhlet extraction processes. However, this method has several disadvantages due to the adverse process economics as well as safety concerns related to the reaction condition. Furthermore, sample size and water content conditions were affecting the SFE process and must be improved to achieve efficient extractions. Thus, the new extraction technologies which are efficient and cost effective on large scales must be explored and developed for microalgae systems.

Microwave technology has allowed the development of rapid, safe and cost-effective method for extracting lipids and does not require that samples be devoid of water. Performance of microwave lipid extraction was qualitatively (all lipid classes) and quantitatively comparable with that of the conventional Folch's method for various biological samples. There have limited articles in literature that mentioned the acceleration of lipid extraction from microalgae by microwave irradiation. The application of radio frequency microwave energy offers a fast and easy route to this valuable biofuel with the advantages of enhancing the reaction rate (2 min instead of 2 hr process reaction) and improving the separation techniques

(Shakinaz, 2010). The advantages of using microwave energy as a non-contact heat source for the extraction of analytes from plant materials include: more effective heating, faster energy transfer, reduced thermal gradients, selective heating, reduced equipment size, faster respond to process heating control, faster start-up, increased production and elimination of process steps (Matthieu, 2008).

Direct transesterification (DT) method can displace the conventional biodiesel production process which is reducing the fuel conversion processing units and costs associated. Unlike the conventional method where oil is first extracted, followed by the transesterification process of FAMEs. In this method, the oil is simultaneously extracted and transesterified into methyl ester in-situ in one single process. Hence, separate extraction and oil refining steps can be eliminated since extraction is simultaneously carried out by reactant itself (Ehimen *et al.*, 2010).

The single step transesterification (direct transesterification) method was performed on dried microalgae powder by normal heating at 90°C for 40 minutes and reacted with alcohol and acid catalyzed (Johnson and Wen, 2009). Koberg *et al.*, (2011) and Patil *et al.*, (2012) performed direct transesterification on the dried samples using microwave radiation extraction and sonication extraction for biodiesel production. This biodiesel production scheme could therefore aid in the simplification of the fuel conversion process, potentially reducing the overall process cost, hence lowering the final fuel product costs as well. However, the health security and regulatory problems associated with the use of organic solvents should be addressed (Tsigie, *et al.*, 2012). In addition, efficient solvent recovery processes are needed to commercialize these processes.

Environmental friendly concept has placed a renewed emphasis on careful solvent selection and search for less harmful alternatives. In the past, the emphasis in industrial chemistry was placed on product yield and quality. Increasingly, solvent use during manufacture is viewed in terms of avoiding the costs associated with disposal, legal liabilities and regulatory constraints. Over the years, our society has become more aware of the environmental problems. This awareness has led to interest in cleaner and greener technologies which reduce or even eliminate the use

of hazardous and toxic materials. As one of the most promising green technologies is application of green solvents and considered a category which includes supercritical CO₂ and microwave assisted techniques, aqueous biphasic systems and ionic liquids. Ionic liquids (ILs) have been described as “green” alternatives to organic solvents and have many unique physiochemical properties and are becoming more attractive substitutes. ILs are non-volatile, thermal stable solvents and non flammable (Jonathan *et al.*, 2001). Normally the traditional organic solvents are volatile and are used in large amounts for complete reaction.

To the best of our knowledge, there have been no reports on the combined use of ionic liquid as green solvent in microwave system for biodiesel production technique in order to further reduce biodiesel production costs while increasing of biodiesel yields. Thus, in this study the wet biomass microalgae of *Nannochloropsis* sp. are converted to biodiesel using direct transesterification by microwave technique and ionic liquid as green solvent. Microwave accelerates the disruption of microalgae cells and as a result the oil are released rapidly from cell wall. Ionic liquid as a green solvent or catalyst can be filtered and reused as a solvent or catalyst.

In this study the effect and feasibility of using an ionic liquid-microwave extraction system for one stage direct transesterification of biodiesel production are evaluated since this technology has the potential to be introduced for industrial scale applications due to its high heating rates, scalability, lesser solvent requirements, continuous nature and environmentally friendly process.

1.2 Problem Statement

Amaro *et al.* (2011) reported that wet feedstock can be directly applied for microalgal oil production and should be an effective extraction technology. Since microalgae are cultivated in aqueous environments, removal of water towards a paste consistency-typically 10-30% (w/w_{DW}), is cost intensive because of the high latent heat of vaporization of water. Thus, one step transesterification can avoid some of

the energy intensive drying and lipid extraction process and can make the overall process more efficient.

The biodiesel production have been successfully produced using various extraction methods from microalgal oil (Koberg *et al.*, 2011; Ranjan *et al.*, 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2010). Most of the biodiesel production method involved a two-step processing. The first step involves extraction of lipid using different kinds of extraction method such as solvent extraction (mixture of chloroform-methanol), soxhlet extraction (with n-hexane as solvent), supercritical fluid extraction or supercritical CO₂ extraction, ultrasound-assisted extraction and limited study using a microwave radiation technique. The microalgal oil was then converted to biodiesel through transesterification method with base-catalyzed or acid-catalyzed (Ross *et al.*, 2010).

Since the conventional method (extraction-transesterification) is not costs competitive, a direct transesterification technique is another alternative for biodiesel production. A direct transesterification method involves only a single step process, where the microalgae biomass is extracted and converted to fatty acid methyl esters (FAMES) or biodiesel. In this process, microalgae biomass would be mixed with large quantities of organic solvent and used either acid-catalyzed or base-catalyzed. The continued use of large quantities of organic solvents as liquid media and prolong reaction time of simultaneous extraction-transesterification for unsure complete reaction and recovery are the factors that hindered the use of the direct transesterification method.

In order to eliminate the use of toxic organic solvents (e.g. chloroform, n-hexane or benzene) and hazardous catalysts, ionic liquid is used to replace the solvents in the direct transesterification procedure with microwave heating. Thus, in this study a novel simultaneous extraction transesterification technique in explored using a combination of ionic liquids and microwave heating.

1.3 Objectives and Scope

The objective of this research is to produce biodiesel from wet biomass of *Nannochloropsis* sp. as a feedstock through the microwave simultaneous extraction-transesterification or direct transesterification (DT) using ionic liquid as a green solvent. In order to achieve this objective *Nannochloropsis* sp. is cultivated in a photobioreactor and the DT method is then compared with several conventional solvents. Among others the objectives are as follows:

1. To investigate the effect of different light intensities and different photoperiod regimes (exposure to light:dark cycles) on the growth of *Nannochloropsis* sp. and total lipid content.
2. To study the potential of producing biodiesel from wet microalgae biomass using different biodiesel preparation techniques (conventional water bath and microwave irradiation)
3. To investigate parameters such as different types of solvent and reaction time to microwave irradiation
4. To identify the microwave effect on microalgae cell and the percentage of disrupted cell.
5. To optimize direct transesterification process using design of experiment (DOE) where the one step direct transesterification process is performed taking into account all the important parameters such as reaction temperature and time, ratio of algae to methanol volume and ratio of ionic liquid to methanol volume.

1.4 Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is basically divided into six chapters. The research background in biodiesel production using microalgae is discussed in Chapter 1. This chapter also highlights the problem statement, research objectives and scope of the study. A comprehensive literature review were performed prior to any experimental work.

Literature review providing the state of art background to the research is provided in detail in Chapter 2. The topic highlights on microalgae, extraction process, microwave heating, biodiesel conversion, ionic liquid and the experimental design process for optimization of biodiesel production. Chapter 3 elaborates the materials and methods used in the present study which includes cultivation of microalgae, lipid extraction, transesterification process and direct transesterification. Chapter 4 discusses the data analysis and results interpretation in cultivation of *Nannochloropsis* sp. cell concentration and specific growth rate. The total lipid content, morphology of cell wall, cell disruption, biodiesel yield, fatty acid methyl esters (FAMES) composition and dielectric properties are studied in detail in Chapter 5. The effects of various simultaneous reaction process parameters on biodiesel yield are also discussed in this chapter. Finally, Chapter 6 reveals the conclusion of the present study and suggests the recommendations for improvement in future studies.

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