

PERFORMANCE AND EMISSION OF SWIRL BURNER WITH DIFFERENT  
SWIRL NUMBERS USING PALM, COCONUT AND JATROPHA OIL  
BIODIESEL

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To my beloved son

*AFFAN FARIS*

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## ABSTRACT

Biodiesel is used as an alternative invaluable fuel in reducing the effect of global warming, greenhouse-gas emissions, and severe climate changes. It is also considered as promising global green energy that can replace fossil fuel, which causes severe pollution to the environment. Biodiesel blend fuel can mitigate pollution towards greener emission in many heavy combustion industries, however, the appropriate axial swirler in burner needs to be identified. The aim of this research is to determine the most suitable percentages of biodiesel fuel blends to be combined with the swirler vane angle in the liquid fuel burner. Therefore, experimental works were conducted in this study by using swirl burner. Three different biodiesel fuel feedstocks of palm, coconut, and jatropha oils were chosen and produced through the transesterification method according to ASTM and EN Standards. The isothermal studies were also conducted via Computational Fluid Dynamics analysis to examine the characteristics of swirl number of axial swirler used in the burner. Experimental results showed that high swirl number yielded the highest center toroidal recirculation zone which could help air and fuel mixing prior to ignition and leads to complete combustion. This test also indicated that, a high swirl number reduces carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and unburned hydrocarbon emissions for diesel and jatropha oil biodiesel (JOB) fuels significantly. The different types of neat biodiesel fuel and their blends; B10, B15, B20, and B25 were tested and compared with diesel fuel performances in terms of lean, stoichiometric, and rich mixtures. The biodiesel fuel blends also exhibited better emissions of nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide and unburned hydrocarbon with high  $S_N$  effect in certain mixtures depending on the types of biodiesel feedstock and blend percentage. In overall, JOB also produced better carbon monoxide emissions in any blend percentages with a maximum reduction of 60% with JOB B25. Meanwhile, COB B25 and COB B10 blends were found able to reduce sulfur dioxide and unburned hydrocarbon emissions by 35% and 33%, respectively, relative to diesel fuel. JOB B25 is the most appropriate biodiesel blend because it is a type of non-edible oil and does not compete with human food consumption. In conclusion, biodiesel fuel blends with high  $S_N$  is a viable alternative for swirl burner applications that effectively reduce greenhouse gases, adverse climate changes and more greener environmental.

## ABSTRAK

Biodiesel digunakan sebagai bahan api alternatif yang sangat berharga bagi mengatasi masalah pemanasan global, kesan rumah hijau dan peningkatan suhu bumi yang mendadak. Ia juga dianggap sebagai sumber tenaga global untuk menggantikan bahan api komersial yang menjadi penyumbang kepada pencemaran yang sangat serius terhadap alam sekitar. Bahan api biodiesel campuran boleh mengurangkan pencemaran ke arah pelepasan lebih hijau di dalam kebanyakan industri pembakaran berat, walaubagaimanapun, pemusar paksi yang sesuai di dalam pembakar perlu dikenalpasti. Matlamat kajian ini adalah untuk menentukan peratusan bahan api biodiesel campuran yang paling sesuai untuk digabungkan dengan sudut pemusar paksi di dalam pembakar bahan api cecair. Tiga bahan api mentah yang berbeza termasuk minyak kelapa sawit, kelapa dan jatropha telah dipilih dan dihasilkan melalui kaedah transesterifikasi mengikut piawaian ASTM dan EN. Kajian isoterma telah dilaksanakan melalui analisis Pengkomputeran Dinamik Bendalir untuk memeriksa ciri-ciri nombor pusing bagi pemusar paksi yang digunakan di dalam pembakar. Keputusan ujikaji menunjukkan bahawa nombor pusing yang tinggi menghasilkan zon berpusar tengah toroidal yang tinggi yang mana boleh membantu percampuran udara dan bahan api sebelum penyalaan serta mendorong ke arah pembakaran lengkap. Ujikaji ini juga menunjukkan bahawa, nombor pusing tinggi dapat mengurangkan pelepasan karbon monoksida, sulfur dioksida dan karbon tidak terbakar bagi minyak diesel dan biodiesel jatropha (JOB). Tiga jenis bahan api biodiesel tulen dan campurannya; B10, B15, B20 dan B25 telah diuji dan dibandingkan dengan prestasi minyak diesel dari segi keadaan kecairan, stoikiometrik dan kepekatan. Bahan api biodiesel campuran juga didapati menunjukkan pelepasan nitrogen oksida, karbon monoksida, sulfur dioksida dan karbon tidak terbakar yang lebih baik dengan kesan  $S_N$  yang tinggi dengan pencampuran tertentu bergantung kepada jenis bahan api biodiesel tertentu dan peratusan campuran. Secara keseluruhannya, JOB juga menghasilkan pelepasan karbon monoksida lebih baik dalam mana-mana peratus campuran dengan pengurangan maksimum sebanyak 60% yang dihasilkan oleh JOB B25. Sementara itu, campuran COB B25 dan COB B10 didapati boleh mengurangkan pelepasan sulfur dioksida dan karbon tidak terbakar dengan kadar pengurangan sebanyak 35% dan 33% masing-masing. JOB B25 merupakan bahan api biodiesel campuran yang paling sesuai kerana ia adalah sumber yang tidak boleh dimakan dan tidak menjejaskan keperluan makanan manusia. Kesimpulannya, minyak biodiesel campuran dengan  $S_N$  yang tinggi adalah alternatif yang berdaya maju untuk aplikasi di dalam pembakar bahan api cecair bagi mengurangkan kesan rumah hijau, perubahan iklim yang mendadak dan persekitaran lebih hijau secara berkesan.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

% v/v	- Percentage of volume to volume
% w/w	- Percentage of weight to weight
Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>	- Aluminium oxide
ASTM	- American Society for Testing and Materials
AV	- Acid value
AV <sub>f</sub>	- Final acid value
AV <sub>i</sub>	- Initial acid value
B	- Blend
BTU	- British thermal unit
CAD	- Computer aided design
CaO	- Calcium oxide
CFD	- Computer fluid dynamics
CFPP	- Cold filter plugging point
CO	- Carbon monoxide
CO <sub>2</sub>	- Carbon dioxide
COB	- Coconut oil biodiesel
CP	- Cloud point
CRZ	- Corner recirculation zone
CTRZ	- Center toroidal recirculation zone
D	- Diameter
D <sub>c</sub>	- Diameter of combustor
EN	- European Standard
ERZ	- External recirculation zone
EU	- European Union
FAME	- Fatty acid methyl ester
FFA	- Free fatty acid
GC	- Gas composition

$G_x$	- Axial flux of the axial momentum
$G_\theta$	- Axial flux of the tangential momentum
$H_2O$	- Water
$H_2SO_4$	- Sulfuric acid
HC	- Hydrocarbon
HCl	- Hydrochloric acid
IRZ	- Internal recirculation zone
JOB	- Jatropha oil biodiesel
JOME	- Jatropha oil methyl ester
K	- Kelvin
$KNO_3$	- Potassium nitrate
KOH	- Potassium hydroxide
$L_c$	- Length of combustor
LES	- Large eddy simulation
MJ/kg	- Mega joules per kilograms
MOME	- Moringa oil methyl ester
MPOB	- Malaysian Palm oil Board
$M_w$	- Molecule weight
N	- Normality
$N_2O$	- Nitrous oxide
$N_2O_5$	- Dinitrogen pentoxide
NaOH	- Sodium hydroxide
NO	- Nitric oxide
$NO_3$	- Nitrate
$NO_x$	- Nitrogen oxide
$O_2$	- Oxygen
ORZ	- Outer recirculation zone
PM	- Particulate matter
POB	- Palm oil biodiesel
POME	- Palm oil methyl ester
PP	- Pour point
ppm	- Part per millions
R	- Outer radius of annular
RANS	- Reynolds Average-Navier Stokes

RBD	- Refined blend diesel
RNG	- Renormalized Group
RSM	- Reynolds stress model
$r_i$	- Inner radius
$r_0$	- Outer radius
$S_N$	- Swirl number
SO <sub>2</sub>	- Sulfur dioxide
SST	- Shear transport
$U_0$	- Input velocity
UHC	- Unburned hydrocarbon
USDA	- United State Department of Agriculture
V	- Volume
W	- Weight
x	- Length
$\eta$	- Efficiency
$\rho$	- Density
$\nu$	- Viscosity
$\phi$	- Equivalence ratio
$\theta$	- Swirl angle

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Research Background**

Globally, alternative fuels are considered a form of sustainable energy towards the green technology by which internal combustion engine or gas turbine combustion operated. These engines are widely used in many industries including transportation, heavy industries and the electrical power plant industry because of its many advantages such as higher efficiency and lower fuel consumption. All types of engine are using diesel fuel as a main medium to operate it. Diesel fuel has been used and produced high gaseous pollutions into environment. Due to high volumes consuming with diesel fuel in many applications, the depletion of viable fossil fuel is fast increasing. Thus, biodiesel fuel production is being studied more and more as a solution to these issues, in reference to respective country policies.

In order to improve pollution and emissions reduction, the quality of the combustion performance must be taken into consideration [1]. This can be done using a variety of methods such as improving the air intake system, using appropriate fuels, etc. New technologies involving biodiesel fuel are now being discovered, either in the gas turbine or diesel engine industries, in order to achieve better performance and to reduce pollutant emissions towards a greener environmental. Rudolp Diesel introduced the first diesel engine to use peanut oil, which is considered to be biodiesel fuel [2]. Biodiesel is one of the versatile renewable energies that has significant advantages such as being biodegradable,

sustainable, and requiring low cost energy resources. It is also environmentally clean and non-toxic [3-5]. Throughout the years, research and development on biodiesel fuels from many resources have been continuously conducted to obtain optimum yield and advancement in biodiesel production.

Biodiesel is used as an alternative fuel that can be blended with diesel fuel or used directly inside the engine. Biodiesel is a general term covering a number of ester-based oxygenated fuel produced from fatty acid triglycerides contained in either plant oils or animal fats or plant oil waste (i.e. used cooking oil). There are two types of plant oil feedstocks: edible and non-edible. One of the reason plant oil is more attractive than petroleum is because it contains no or less sulfur [6, 7]. Plant oils produced from different plants give different levels and mixes of fatty acid content. The fatty acids of oils are divided into two types either saturated or unsaturated.

Many types of biodiesel from various feedstocks have been researched and applied in different kinds of applications. Biodiesel feedstocks can be produced from edible oils such as soybean, sunflower, palm, coconut, corn, canola, olive, rapeseed, etc. [8-11]. However, non-edible oils are more often used for conversion into biodiesel fuels because their production does not reduce the available plant oils for human use and food consumption [12, 13] These include oils from jatropha, karanja, polanga, mahua, castor, and rubber plants. Non-edible oils are more practical for producing biodiesel fuel because this type of oil does not compete with human food consumption and is considered waste. In this study, various feedstocks, from edible or non-edible oils, i.e including palm, coconut, and jatropha oils were selected for the production of biodiesel fuel. Then, a comparative study of the combustion performance of all biodiesel fuels was conducted with diesel fuel as the benchmark.

Biodiesel can be produced via various methods such as transesterification, dilution, pyrolysis, and micro-emulsion [14]. Transesterification is the most popular method because it is considered the most economical and easiest method. In addition, this method produces good quality and yield of biodiesel [15]. In the transesterification method, which involves alcohol reaction with oil, the presence of

a catalyst is needed. The transesterification process is considered as a straightforward reaction requiring a molar ratio of alcohol reagent and catalyst reaction [16]. In one study, crude jatropha oil with high free fatty acid (FFA) was treated with an acid catalyst, sulphuric acid ( $H_2SO_4$ ), in the initial stage of the pre-treatment esterification process resulting in a FFA of 14% that was subsequently reduced to less than 1%. Then, the transesterification process with methanol and potassium hydroxide (KOH) was continued for 24 mins of reaction time to produce a biodiesel yield of 99% [17]. Catalysts can be categorized as homogeneous or heterogeneous catalysts. Homogeneous catalysts include acid, basic (alkaline), and enzyme catalysts. However, basic catalysts such as sodium hydroxide (NaOH) or KOH are the most commonly used in the transesterification process. In one research, transesterification using a homogeneous catalyst, NaOH, significantly accelerated the reaction of rapeseed oil biodiesel conversion compared to all four different heterogeneous catalysts [18]. Shahbazi *et al.* [19] found that the yield of transesterification reaction with KOH as a catalyst was higher than the one carried out using NaOH. Calcium oxide (CaO) is one of the heterogeneous catalysts that can be recycled and reused. The CaO catalyst obtained in the transesterification method exhibited high yields of biodiesel production of over 90% [20]. Ito *et al.* [21] found that waste cooking oil (WCO) showed an improvement of  $-5^\circ C$  in the pseudo-cold filter plugging point when produced by pyrolysis compared to being produced via the transesterification method.

Some studies of biodiesel fuel combustion show that emission products can be reduced and potentially contribute towards environmental improvement. Furthermore, blended biodiesel with petroleum oils have different physical properties such as higher viscosity and cetane number, and lower heating values compared to conventional fossil fuels, which translates to a high potential in emissions reduction. These different fuel properties can be influenced by fuel and air mixing and also combustion characteristics, especially when the biodiesel is applied either in gas turbines or diesel engines. Besides being renewable, these blended fuels have also been proven to reduce emissions involving carbon monoxide (CO), unburned hydrocarbons (UHCs), oxides of sulphur ( $SO_x$ ), and particulate matter (PM); the net reduction in carbon dioxide ( $CO_2$ ) accompanied by

an increase in nitrogen oxide ( $\text{NO}_x$ ) was observed in the use of biofuels in automotive and aviation applications [22, 23]. Gan and Ng [24] found that the combustion of palm biodiesel B10 and B20 fuel blends produced higher  $\text{NO}_x$  and lower CO emissions compared to the diesel No. 2 combustion in a non-pressurised burner. However, the combustion of biodiesel and diesel in a large-scale laboratory furnace showed that the biodiesel produced slightly similar amounts of CO emission but lower  $\text{NO}_x$  emissions. Both emission gaseous were reduced and increased due to the increase in excess air level up, respectively.

Currently, the biodiesel combustion studies are widely investigated in the internal combustion engine and gas turbine engine. The emissions from biodiesel combustion are well predicted in different speed of engine, load and effect on brake fuel consumption in case of internal combustion engine [references]. Meanwhile, gas turbine engine or furnace application is evaluated on the blend percentage of biodiesel in diesel fuel to reduce the emissions formation during combustion [references]. In furnace or burner application, there has lacking on the swirling flow via biodiesel blends combustion that will effect on their emission performances. As mentioned in many studies, the swirler is one of the technologies used in a combustion chamber or burner in order to enhance flame stability and to produce recirculation flow in the combustion process [25].

Most researches reported the relationship between the swirling flow and the combustion process conducted with gaseous fuels such as methane, propane, etc. [26]. The effect of swirling flow has commonly been identified to improve flow reversal, enhance flame stability, achieve better and fast mixing of fuel and oxidizer, and promote vortex breakdown [27, 28]. Hashemi *et al.* [29] studied diffusion flames using hydrogen and hydrogen-hydrocarbon fuels. The study used a numerical realizable  $k-\varepsilon$  model and experimental methods, showing that increasing air turbulence intensity resulted in a decrease in NO concentration in the flame zone and at the combustor outlet. Nowadays, the combustion performance and emission using diesel and biodiesel fuels in diesel engines have been widely explored [30-34]. However, the application of biodiesel and their blends in burners has not been widely studied. Many experimental studies on the combustion behavior of liquid fuels such as diesel or Jet A-1 in a tubular combustor have been reported for



predicting the distribution temperature and various species concentration of emissions in the combustor [35, 36]. In this study, the effect of using various biodiesels from different feedstock and blend percentages on the gaseous emission level was evaluated and their combustion performances defined by high swirling flow in a liquid fuel burner. The combustion performance was evaluated from the emission formation of  $\text{NO}_x$ , CO,  $\text{CO}_2$ ,  $\text{SO}_2$ , and UHC.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Currently, the biodiesel combustion performances are widely investigated in the internal combustion engine. The emissions from biodiesel combustion are well predicted in different speed of engine, load and effect on brake fuel consumption [9, 34, 37-41]. There are also studies on different types of feedstock of biodiesel on the internal combustion engines [9, 34, 42-44]. However, the studies on biodiesel combustion using burner are rarely investigated. There are few cases on biodiesel fuel have been studied in burner application such as cottonseed oil biodiesel combustion in Riello burner [45], effect on emissions of palm oil biodiesel in non-pressurized combustion chamber [3], NO emissions from six different biodiesels fuel on burner [46] and combustion of palm oil biodiesel via high temperature air (673K) in gas turbine engine [11]. In reacting flows, the interaction between the physical and chemical reaction is highly significant in causing a vortex breakdown that induces flow recirculation [47]. The characteristics of combustion of biodiesel and its blend inside a swirl-stabilized burner have not been properly understood yet. There is no comparison study on the palm oil biodiesel with other biodiesel types and their blend that burned in a liquid swirl burner.

One of the technologies that can be used in a combustion chamber or burner is by attaching a swirler inside the chamber to support the air-flow stability towards producing the recirculation zone. The swirler is also commonly used to increase the flame stability and hence to produce lower emissions formation. It is important to note that the effects of the swirler attached inside the burner during combustion of biodiesel and its fuel blends have not been widely investigated as yet. In order to

obtain better emissions from biodiesel combustion, flame stability and good recirculation flow are needed, which calls for the swirler attachment. As a consequence, the suitable swirler vane angles by swirl number,  $S_N$  need to be carried out. Thus, the viable swirler suit to diesel and biodiesel fuels combustion in swirl burner can be determined. Therefore, the four different swirlers were then simulated via Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) as to their suitability for attachment with the burner to produce lower and better emissions to the environment.

The influence of important parameters during combustion such as exhaust temperature at the end of the system and the value of emission products with different axial swirler angles has been widely studied. However, there has been a lack of research on the influence of vane angles on liquid fuel, especially on various neat biodiesel and also biodiesel blends fuel combustion on swirl burner. This study focuses on liquid fuel combustion with an attached axial swirler to evaluate three different feedstocks of biodiesel, namely from jatropha, palm, and coconut oils and their blends against diesel fuel. Diesel fuel is used as a benchmark and compared with the biodiesel fuel blends in this study. From this study, the potential use of different feedstocks of biodiesel fuel and their blends using a liquid fuel burner with an axial swirler can be determined and assessed to study the reduction of emissions formation.

### 1.3 Research Objectives

The main goal of this research study is to determine the most suitable biodiesel fuel blends percentages in order to suit the suitable swirler attach to the liquid fuel burner. In order to achieve the main goal, the following objectives have been identified:

1. To determine the suitable swirl number,  $S_N$ , inside the liquid fuel burner via isothermal studies in numerical analysis and experimental studies of combustion for both plant oil biodiesel fuel blend and diesel fuel combustion.
2. To define the suitable percentages of acid catalyst of sulfuric acid on esterification process of jatropha oil biodiesel production via established transesterification method according to ASTM and EN standards.
3. To evaluate palm, coconut and jatropha oils neat biodiesel and their blends and to compare their performances to that of diesel fuel via their gaseous emissions using a swirl burner.

### 1.4 Scopes of study

This study focuses on the emission formation, which is taken as the combustion performance of a liquid fuel burner, to determine suitable swirler vane angles represent as swirl number for each biodiesel fuel used. The present work also carried out a numerical simulation for isothermal swirling flows inside the liquid fuel burner. Initially, the velocity profiles in central recirculation zones during the isothermal condition have been widely studied using numerical methods, namely ANSYS Fluent, which is a CFD package software. These properties were evaluated in order to define the mixing flow in recirculation zone. Four different axial swirler vane angles in the liquid fuel burner used are limited from 30° to 60° were evaluated and represented as four different swirl numbers,  $S_N$  of 0.436, 0.630, 0.895 and 1.300.

Biodiesel or methyl esters of various feedstocks including palm, coconut and jatropha oils were tested and characterized to confirm that the biodiesel fuels produced in the laboratory are according to ASTM or EN standards. These three types of feedstock were selected in the study based on the availability of palm oil in Malaysia as the second largest producer in the world and coconut oil also as the main cooking oil in Indonesia due to the largest in Asia as importer. Both oils are considered as food products that produced by plant oil and need to be produced continuously to the consumers. However, when the biodiesel fuel suppliers considered to consume both types of oil, the demands of oils are increasing drastically. Thus, many researches start to observe other alternative to replace the edible oil with non-edible oil such as jatropha, polanga, karanja, rubber oils and etc. In order to support this study, both edible and non-edible oils including palm, coconut and jatropha oils need to be considered to evaluate their combustion performance such as emissions characteristic in the swirl burner. All the biodiesel fuels are being produced in the laboratory due to unavailability in the market.

Initially, the methyl esters were tested in regard to the acid value of each feedstock, so as to identify the most suitable method to be used. Once the acid value is known and recorded, the esterification process step is defined for optimum yield production. In this study, two different pre-treatment steps were used involving acid-catalysed and alkaline-catalysed processes using methanol with presence of  $H_2SO_4$  and KOH.

Other parameters of biodiesel combustion that affect the reduction of emission products such as  $NO_x$ , CO,  $CO_2$ ,  $SO_2$ , and UHC were identified using different biodiesel fuel feedstocks in a liquid fuel burner with attached the suitable swirler. In this study, the diesel fuel is used as a baseline and the biodiesel fuel blends are compared in terms of gaseous emissions via experimental works. There are included the neat biodiesel combustion and the effect of  $S_N$  on biodiesel combustion. A major concern related to the reduction of emission products is addressed in order to achieve better performance towards a greener environment.

## 1.5 Thesis Outline

This thesis contains six chapters. Chapter 1 presents the introduction and highlights the problem statement of this study. It also contains the objectives and scope of the study followed by the thesis outline. Two methods are used in this study include experimental work and numerical simulation to evaluate the diesel and biodiesel fuel blends in a liquid fuel burner, which will be described in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 2 reviews the literature from other researches involving numerical and experimental studies. In the numerical analysis, many researchers have employed simulation methods using CFD solvers, ANSYS Fluent with different models of RANS, swirler application, and turbulent swirling flow characterization. In this study, the appropriate swirl angle was identified in order to achieve better performance for the liquid fuel burner. Furthermore, various feedstocks were used to produce biodiesel fuel via the transesterification method with the presence of a catalyst. The biodiesel fuel blend emission products were evaluated using combustion testing as part of the experimental works of this study.

Chapter 3 explains the numerical simulation method and experimental works used in this research. First, a description of the numerical simulation method involving the design of the liquid fuel burner, swirler used, and suitable model applied are presented. The numerical method in this research is based on Reynolds-Averaged Navier Stokes (RANS). Implementation of the RANS model is explained in detail for different types of RANS models such as standard  $k-\varepsilon$  and further discussed in the next chapter. In addition, the major framework for experimental works are described about biodiesel from the beginning of the biodiesel production processes; characterization of fuel properties; and up to the combustion rig set up including collection of emissions data throughout the flue gases from the gas analyzer.

The results obtained from the numerical simulation of the non-reacting flow are presented in Chapter 4. These are analysed and discussed in different sub-

sections accordingly. Earlier in the chapter, the steps of the numerical study with inlet mass flow rate on the axial swirler to determine the effect of swirling flow are presented. Then, the isothermal studies are conducted with different RANS models,  $S_N$ , and  $Re$ .

The combustion performance of the biodiesel fuel and diesel based on different parameters are presented in Chapter 5. In this chapter, a few parameters are varied to determine the combustion performance of the two types of fuel. In this case, a liquid fuel burner was used. The parameters include effect of  $S_N$  on diesel and biodiesel blends, various neat biodiesels, and different blend percentages on various feedstock.

Finally, the conclusions are summarized in Chapter 6, together with the recommendations for future work regarding the development of biodiesel fuel production and suggestions for the design of a new liquid fuel combustor.

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