Performance and emission characteristics of diesel sunflowers-based biodiesel fuels

Miqdam Tariq Chaichan

Abstract—Biodiesel is one of the most desirable alternative fuels to implement. Biodiesel pertains to alternative fuels called biofuels. Biofuels are the fuels that derived from biological resources. Biodiesel consists of long chains of carbon molecules attached to an alcohol molecule called fatty acid alkyl esters. Biodiesel is green and clean alternative to fossil diesel fuel. In the present study, Iraqi sunflowers oil used as raw oil to produce biodiesel by a chemical process called transesterification reaction. A four-stroke diesel engine used to investigate the engine performance and emission characteristics of the neat biodiesel, two biodiesel-diesel blends compared to pure diesel. The experimental results show that neat biodiesel fuel (B100) has the lowest CO, CO₂, unburnt hydrocarbon and PM emissions. It has the lowest exhaust gas temperature, heating value, and noise level. It has the largest brake specific fuel consumption of the four tested blends, and the highest NOx concentrations. The increase of engine speed causes the increase of exhaust gas temperature, CO₂ emissions, brake specific fuel consumption and NOX concentrations.

Index Terms—Sunflowers Oil, Biodiesel, the Transesterification Reaction, CO, CO₂, HC, PM, Noise

1 Introduction

Nowadays most of the transportation vehicles run on gasoline or diesel fuel (Arapatsakos et al., 2008). Diesel engines widely used in medium and heavy-duty applications. It is characterized by its low fuel consumption compared with gasoline engines. Also, it emits lower exhaust emissions of carbon monoxide (CO) and unburnt hydrocarbons (UHC) compared with gasoline engines [1]. The global population growth and economic development result in increasing the world’s energy demand, in the last few years. Unfortunately, the most of the produced energy is from fossil energy sources. The problem is that fossil fuels limited in supply (depleted). From here an increased interest in alternative renewable fuels started. As the biodiesel is an environmentally friendly fuel, it is the best candidate to replace fossil diesel. It has lower emissions than that of fossil diesel; it is biodegradable, nontoxic, and essentially free of sulfur and aromatics [2].

The use of vegetable oils as motor fuels is not new. They were used during the oil shortages in the 1930s and 40s. In the latter part of the 20th-century attention in Europe and North America turned to the potential for replacement of petroleum diesel fuel with fuels derived from vegetable oils [3]. In order to make the use of vegetable oils and animal fats in engines as a more practical and less problematic; biodiesel made from oils in a process called transesterification. In this process, the triglyceride oils in the vegetable oils are reacted with the methanol or ethanol alcohols to form biodiesel and glycerin. The process requires heat and the use of a strong base catalyst, e.g., sodium hydroxide or potassium hydroxide [4].

The energy density of a fuel (energy per unit of volume) defines the power delivered by the fuel and as a result fuel economy. Energy content of petroleum diesel fuels can vary up to 15% between suppliers or seasons of the year because of different refining parameters [5]. Producing biodiesel (B100 if not blended with diesel fuel) process depends mainly on the feedstock. For this reason, the fuel energy density does not vary according to the used feedstock compared to petrol-diesel. This results from the fact that the feedstock for biodiesel do not vary as much as crude oil does for making diesel fuel. However, due to the high oxygen-contained of the biodiesel (about 11% by weight), it has less heat content than petrol-diesel. This results in lower engine power, torque, and fuel consumption for the biodiesel and its blends with diesel [6].

Using B100 as a diesel engine fuel reduces hydrocarbon emissions by almost 70%. Also, it reduces carbon monoxide and particulate matter emissions by about 50%. However, it tends to increase nitrogen oxides emissions. B100 and B20 increase nitrogen oxide emissions by approximately 10% and 2% respectively [7]. However, some specifications of biodiesel like the high viscosity, poor volatility and cold flow characteristics of vegetable oils can cause some problems. Operating problems as injector coking, severe engine deposits, filter gumming, and piston ring sticking are usual problems that need more investigations [8]. These problems can be eliminated or minimized by the transesterification process.

The lower exhaust gas emissions and its renewability compared with fossil diesel fuel are the primary advantages of biodiesel. Despite that many specifications like biodiesel lower heating value, viscosity and volatility are still worse than that of diesel fuel. Still the transesterification process improves the fuel properties of vegetable oil [9]. The fat causes longer ignition delay and lower combustion temperature, which results in less formation of nitrogen compounds. Also, toxic emissions are signifi-
Significantly decreased for both types of vegetable-based fuels, as compared to petroleum diesel [10]. The emissions data does not include the poly-aromatic hydrocarbon content (PAC) of the total unburned hydrocarbons, which is an important aspect of engine emissions because it is suspected to be cancer-causing [11].

Lubrication of diesel engines accomplishes in large part by the fuel. Fuel injector pumps, fuel pumps, piston rings and valves are all lubricated by the fuel. Vegetable based fuels are better lubricants than petroleum diesel and increase engine life due to lessened engine wear. Additionally, engine deposits are decreased due to lack of sulfur and a complete combustion is achieved [12].

Biodiesel has some drawbacks that diesel fuel does not have. The alcohol used to remove the glycerin from the vegetable oil is not completely removed and reacts with fuel deposits and fuel system components. Deposits from diesel fuel are often dissolved by biodiesel and collect on fuel filters. As a result, the fuel filter becomes clogged which necessitates its replacement. Most users of Biodiesel reported the need to change the fuel filter one time, after the initial switch to biodiesel. Of course, the amount of deposits and the purity of the biodiesel impacts filter use [13], [14].

The aim of this work is to find an acceptable alternative for Iraqi diesel fuel that has high sulfur content. This alternative must be clean and abundant in the country. The choice directed toward sunflower oil based biodiesel fuel. This paper represents a part of a continuing Iraqi research effort carried out over the years at the Mechanical Engineering Department-University of Technology, Baghdad, Iraq. The aim is to provide improved knowledge of the combustion characteristics of alternative clean fuels for internal combustion engines that can be used practically and efficiently in the country.

2 EXPERIMENTAL SETUP

2.1 Equipment

The experimental engine used in the recent study is a direct injection, four cylinders, natural aspirated diesel engine type Fiat whose major specifications are shown in Table 1 [15]. The engine is coupled to a hydraulic dynamometer to control the subjected load on it by increasing the torque. The concentrations of nitrogen oxide (NOx), unburned hydrocarbon (HC), CO2 and CO measured by Multigas mode 4880 emissions analyzer. Fig. 1 represents an illustrative scheme diagram of the used engine and its accessories.

Emitted particulate matters (PMs) were collected using a low volume air sampler type Sniffer L-30 and Whatmann-glass micro-filters. The weight of these filters before and after the end of the sampling operation measured and recorded. Sampling process took one hour each time. Then, the particulate matters (PMs) concentrations were determined by the equation [16]:

\[
PM \text{ in } \left( \mu g/m^3 \right) = \frac{w_2 - w_1}{V_t} \times 10^6
\]  

(1)

Where: PM = particulate matters concentration in \( \mu g/m^3 \).

\( w_1 \) = filter weight before sampling operation in (g).

\( w_2 \) = filter weight after sampling operation in (g).

\( V_t \) = drawn air total volume (m³)

\( V_t \) can be found by the equation:

\[
V_t = Q_t \times t
\]

(2)

TABLE 1. TESTS ENGINE SPECIFICATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engine type</th>
<th>4cyl., 4-stroke</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engine model</td>
<td>TD 313 Diesel engine rig</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combustion type</td>
<td>DI, water cooled, natural aspirated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Displacement</td>
<td>3.666 L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valve per cylinder</td>
<td>two</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bore</td>
<td>100 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stroke</td>
<td>110 mm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compression ratio</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuel injection pump</td>
<td>Unit pump 26 mm diameter plunger</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\( w_1 \) = filter weight before sampling operation in (g).

\( w_2 \) = filter weight after sampling operation in (g).

\( V_t \) = drawn air total volume (m³)

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V_t = Q_t \times t
\]

(2)

Fig. 1. An elucidative scheme diagram of the experimental rig

Where: \( Q_t \) = Elementary and final air flow rate through the device (m³/sec).

\( t \) = sampling time in (min).

The filters separated and preserved in plastic bags temporarily at the end of collecting samples operation until weighted and analyzed the results.

The overall sound pressure measured by precision sound level meter supplied with a microphone type
The device was calibrated by a standard calibrator type p150 device 4220.

The equations used in calculating engine performance parameters illustrated in [17] and many other researches like [15].

### 2.2 Preparation of the Used Fuel

Transesterification process is the transformation of one type of an ester into another to produce biodiesel. The fuel preparation process of the present work included: adding 200ml of methanol and 3.5 g of sodium hydroxide (lye) in a beaker and mixing them well for 5 min. One liter of Iraqi sunflowers oil (produced by General Company of Vegetable oils-Bagdad- Iraq) added to the mixture and stirred for 15 minute. The total mixture heated to 65°C. After 15 to 25 minutes, the stirring stopped, and the glycerin allowed settling down in the beaker. Finally, the biodiesel (ester) separated, washed and then boiled to remove any residual moisture.

The resulted biodiesel was used in this work in three volumetric percentages: 100% biodiesel (called B100), 50% biodiesel + 50% diesel fuel (called B50) and 20% biodiesel + 80% diesel fuel (called B20). The performance and emissions of the engine fueled and operated with these blends, compared to neat diesel fuel operation characteristics.

Fuel properties of diesel fuel and the constitutions of three blends demonstrated in Table 2. These properties measured at Chemical Engineering Department, University of Technology, Baghdad, Iraq. The oxygen fraction in the fuel blends ranged from 5.87 to 11.1 which agree with many researchers [8], [11], [13]. So, it is reasonable to regard the effect of oxygen increment in the blends with the biodiesel addition. In the other hand, biodiesel heat value is low, and its cetane number is small compared to diesel fuel. B100 appears to have the lowest heating value and the largest kinematic viscosity and specific gravity. In contrast, the diesel fuel had the largest heating value and the lowest kinematic viscosity and specific gravity.

### 2.3 Error Analysis

Measurement accuracy represents the reliance potential extent of the study results. The error sources were defined by calibrating the used measuring equipment, and the uncertainty in this study determined. Table 3 shows the measuring device and its calibration accuracy. The uncertainty defined as [17]:

\[
e_{R} = \left( \frac{\partial R}{\partial V_1} e_1 \right)^2 + \left( \frac{\partial R}{\partial V_2} e_2 \right)^2 + \cdots + \left( \frac{\partial R}{\partial V_n} e_n \right)^2 \right)^{0.5}
\]

(11)

Where:

- \(e_R\) : results uncertainty.
- \(R=\)function consists of variables or \(R=\)R (V1, V2, \(\ldots\), Vn).
- ei: variable uncertainty range.

The partial derivative \(\frac{\partial R}{\partial V_i}\) represents the results sensitivity of a single variable. Hence, the uncertainty for the present study results was:

\[
e_{R} = \left[ ((.6)^2 + (1)^2 + (2)^2 + (1.3)^2 + (2.4)^2 + (0.67)^2 + (.82)^2 + (1.034)^2 + (.003)^2)^{0.5} = \mp 3.873\% \right]
\]

This result confirms an uncertainty of less than 5% in the measurement of the present study achieved. For each condition, three tests were conducted to minimize random errors in the experiments. From the results of these experiments for each condition, the average value is reported along with more than 95% confidence intervals.

### 2.4 Tests Procedure

In the experiments, the three biodiesel blends (B20, B50 & B100) with different biodiesel proportions were used to operate the engine. Meanwhile, the combus-
tion characteristics and emissions measured and analyzed at the same load and engine speed. Furthermore, these engine characteristics were compared to those resulted from fueling the engine with pure diesel in order to define the effects of the biodiesel fuel on the combustion.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The biodiesel is the only renewable alternative fuel that can be used directly in any diesel engine without the need for conducting some modification. As its properties are similar to those of the diesel fuel derived from petroleum. Both can be blended in any proportion without any inconvenience.

Fig. 2 shows the comparison of the brake specific fuel consumption (bsfc) with brake mean effective pressure for the used blends. It is evident from the curve that as the load increases the bsfc decreases for all fuels as expected. In the same time, the bsfc increased with the rise in the concentration of biodiesel fuel in the blends. The engine consumes more fuel with biodiesel that has the lowest heating value. A slightly higher fuel feeding rate is needed to attain the same engine torque as the other three fuels. The increments in brake specific fuel consumption (bsfc) were 23, 27 and 35.7% for B20, B50 and B100 respectively compared to neat diesel.

Fig. 3 presents the volumetric efficiency for the four blends; the biodiesel fuel has the highest efficiency due to its high oxygen content, as well as its blends that increase the volumetric efficiency.

Fig. 4 shows the comparison of the brake thermal efficiency with brake mean effective pressure for the examined blends. The thermal efficiency of diesel fuel was 30.45% at full load. While the efficiencies of B20, B50 and B100 were 28.8%, 27.9%, and 27% respectively. The thermal efficiencies of biodiesel blends are lower compared to diesel fuel. This reduction may be due to its lower heating value. Reduction in thermal efficiency by about 3.45% is noticed at full load for B100 compared to diesel fuel.

Fig. 5 compares between the exhaust gas temperatures for the four blends. The amount of fuel injected into the combustion chamber of the diesel engine increased with engine torque increase. Hence, the exhaust gas temperature rose with increasing engine load. The burning of the diesel fuel appears to have slightly larger exhaust gas temperatures, particularly at higher engine loads because of its higher heating value. The biodiesel blends had lower exhaust gas temperatures slightly. The lower heating value of the biodiesel blends caused less burning gas temperatures inside the combustion chamber.

Fig. 6 shows the comparison between brake powers (bp) of the four blends at variable engine speeds. The bp of the biodiesel fuel is slightly less than that of diesel at all speeds.
The effects of fuel type and engine speed on brake specific fuel consumption (bsfc) under constant engine torque as Fig. 7 reveals. The increase of engine speed raised the bsfc of the diesel engine. Because the biodiesel has a lower heating value, its bsfc must have been larger than diesel fuel. The diesel fuel, which has a higher heating value among the four blends, has the lowest bsfc.

Fig. 8 compares the exhaust gas temperatures for burning the four blends. The amount of fuel injected into the combustion chamber of the engine increased with engine speed to obtain the same engine torque. Hence, the exhaust gas temperature rose with increasing engine speed. The diesel fuel appears to have slightly larger exhaust gas temperatures at higher engine speeds because of its higher heating value. The biodiesel blends had slightly lower exhaust gas temperatures due to its lower heating value.

Fig. 9 clarifies the trends of CO emissions with the engine load for the tested blends under a constant engine speed (1500 rpm). The CO emissions from burning the four blends appear to decrease with the increase of the engine load. Larger CO emissions at lower load thus observed. However, at higher engine load caused the burning gas temperature inside the combustion chamber to increase. The atomized fuel particles evaporation and mixing with the surrounding air enhanced, resulted in a larger conversion rate of CO to CO2 emissions, and lower CO emissions. Moreover, the neat biodiesel, which contained oxygen of 9.94 wt. %, could enhance combustion efficiency and reduce the emitted emissions.

Fig. 10 manifests that the CO2 emissions from burning the biodiesel blends increased with the increase of engine load. Slightly lower CO2 concentrations compared to diesel imply the reduction in its carbon molecules and the increment in oxygen molecules somewhat.

Fig. 11 illustrates the comparison of hydrocarbon emission in the exhaust for the tested fuels. Unburnt hydrocarbon emission is the direct result of incomplete combustion. The hydrocarbon emission is increasing with the percentage of diesel fuel mixed with the blend. HC varies from 80 ppm at no load to 35 ppm at full load for diesel fuel, and it varies from 29.56 ppm at no load to 10.9 ppm at full load for B100. Similarly for B20, it varies from 64 ppm at small load to 31 ppm at full load. HC is higher at low loads that may attribute to cooler combustion chamber. Also, gaseous hydrocarbons (vapors) remain along the cyl-
under wall and in the crevice volume unburned.

Combustion temperature is higher, then higher NOx is formed. In the case of biodiesel blends, high NOx concentrations resulted by fulfillment of these two factors.

Fig. 13 represents the PM emissions from the used fuels. The PM contains substantial carbon soot particles generated when the fuel has no enough oxygen to react with all the carbon. Also, it generated in the fuel rich zone of the combustion chamber during the combustion process. From the experimental results, the PM emission from biodiesel fuel and diesel fuel has a few differences in low load level. However, at medium and high loads levels the PM concentrations reduced highly for all biodiesel blends compared to diesel fuel. The maximum reduction achieved in PM concentration was about 34.96 % for neat biodiesel fuel compared to diesel at full load.

There is a significant reduction in smoke emission for all blends of biodiesel at all loads. This soot free and complete combustion is due to the usage of oxygenated fuel (biodiesel blends), which substituted for diesel.

Sound or noise increased with increasing load as Fig. 14 demonstrates. Sound levels for biodiesel blends were found lower about (9-13%) than the
sound values of diesel fuel throughout all loads. The minimum reduction (9%) observed in the small loads and the maximum drop (13%) at maximum loads. Combustion improvements due to higher oxygen content in blends reduced noise, although it still higher than accepted limitation, and the rig must be isolated with a proper design and materials to reach acceptable levels.

Fig. 15 shows the CO₂ emissions from burning the neat biodiesel and biodiesel blends increased with the increase of engine speed. This occurred because the engine consumes more fuel to increase its speed, and higher fuel burn to produce CO₂. Slightly lower CO₂ emissions from burning the biodiesel blends imply the effect of less carbon to hydrogen and oxygen atoms percentage.

HC concentrations reduced with engine speed increase for tested blends as Fig. 17 represents. At low speeds, HC reduced about 50% with B100, and at high speeds it was reduced about 65%. In addition to complete combustion due to the mixture turbulence increase; the trapping of fuel in crevices and boundary layers reduced. The HC concentration reductions were 20 and 35% for B20 and B50 respectively.

Fig. 18 declares that NOx concentrations from burning tested blends under constant engine torque increased with the increase of engine speed. Primarily because of increments in combustion temperature, due to improvement in volumetric efficiency and flow velocity of the reactant mixture at higher engine speeds. The burning of the neat biodiesel released relatively higher NOx emissions, due to the higher
oxygen content in the chemical structure of this fuel. In contrast, the neat diesel produced lower NOx emissions, despite it has a higher heating value compared to biodiesel.

Fig. 19 depicts the effect of variable engine speeds on combustion noise for the examined blends. As the engine speed increases, the combustion pressure raised for most of the output loads. Many valuable studies demonstrated that the combustion noise decreased with the engine speed increases [11], [19]. The increment in engine speed caused a reduction in the ignition delay period of the air-fuel mixtures. Which results in a decline in the pressure rise rate; therefore, the noise levels were reduced. In general, engine noise levels increased from low to medium speeds then it reduced for high speeds. Compared to other fuels diesel fuel still resulting in higher noise levels at maximum speed.

Fig. 20 represents the engine speed variation effect on the emitted PM concentration at medium load (44 kN/m²). PM concentrations reduced significantly with the biodiesel addition. As the figure indicates, PM concentrations decreased with the addition of biodiesel blends for all tested engine speeds compared to diesel. These results indicated that the engine operation mode has a significant effect on PM concentrations. The measured PM concentrations reductions were 16.847, 28 & 43.34% for B20, B50 and B100 respectively compared with diesel fuel.

Table 4 represents a comparison between recent study results and the results of some valuable published paper. These studies vary in engine types, volume, power, and the used biodiesel. However, they all have similar results except for [20]. CO and HC concentrations increased in the pre-mentioned reference may be due to the used biodiesel in the tests where the researcher didn’t clarify the reason. The other investigations gathered that biodiesel reduces brake thermal efficiency, CO, HC, and PM concentrations and increased bsfc and NOx concentrations.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The biodiesel produced from Iraqi sunflowers oil by transesterification accompanied by peroxidation. Four blends include neat diesel, biodiesel, and blends of the two fuels tested in a direct injection diesel engine. The work conclusions summarized as follows:

1. The brake specific fuel consumption (bsfc) increased with increasing load at constant engine speed, and when using biodiesel with about 23, 27 and 35.7% for B20, B50 and B100 respectively.
2. Engine volumetric efficiency improved with biodiesel blends compared with diesel fuel.
3. Engine brake thermal efficiency reduced when operated with biodiesel blends. The lower percentage was 3.45% when B100 used.
4. Using biodiesel reduces exhaust gas temperatures for all tested loads and engine speed ranges.
5. As a result of higher oxygen content in the biodiesel structure, fewer CO2 emissions obtained from the variable engine tests.
6. CO emissions reduced with biodiesel operation, but high concentrations observed at low engine loads.
7. Unburnt hydrocarbons emissions reduced highly with B100 and by a respective percentage with other biodiesel blends compared with diesel fuel.
8. NOx emissions increased with biodiesel blends utilization and by increasing engine speed.
9. The trend of CO and UBHC emissions with the engine speed was adverse: the emissions decreased with the engine speed for the tested fuels with about 50% in average.
10. Engine noise increases with increasing load. The biodiesel combustion reduced engine noise with about 11% compared with neat diesel fuel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4. A Comparison Between the Recent Study Results and Other Studies</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ref.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Recent study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liu and Lin, 2012 [21]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vaneet, 2012 [19]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Altn, 2011 [20]</td>
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<td>Caichan and Ahmed, 2013 [10]</td>
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<td>Kalligeros et al, 2003 [22]</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

REFERENCES

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NOTATIONS

- bmep: brake mean effective pressure
- BTE: brake thermal efficiency
- CO2: carbon dioxide
- CO: carbon monoxide
- CN: cetane number
- CR: compression ratio
- CA: crank angle
- °BTDC: degree before top dead centre
- DI: direct injection
- N: engine speed (rpm)
- T: engine torque
- dB: decibel
- IT: Injection timing
- LCV: Lower calorific value
- NOx: nitrogen oxides
- PM: particulate matter
- Vsn: swept volume
- UBHC: unburnt hydrocarbon