

TRIGLYCERIDES OF CRUDE PALM OIL TO BIOKEROSENE: STUDIES ON ELECTROLYSIS AND ELECTROMAGNETIC EFFECT

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ABSTRACT

Crude Palm Oil (CPO) is a potential feedstock for biokerosene. However, it is problematic when used directly because it is gummy, has a high viscosity and is degradable. Various conversion processes have been conducted that directly convert CPO into biokerosene, but it requires high temperature and pressure. Therefore, as a novelty, this study aims to develop the technology for converting triglycerides into biokerosene under relatively low operating conditions and producing similar petroleum kerosene by electrolysis-assisted and electromagnetic induction. In this study, the conversion technology process was conducted in three steps (i) converting triglycerides to Free Fatty Acids (FFA), (ii) converting FFA to alkanes, and (iii) converting alkanes to biokerosene. Step (ii) is assisted by the electrolysis process, meanwhile, step (iii) is assisted by electromagnetic irradiation. The finding showed that electrolysis obtained 73.47% yield of alkanes and electromagnetic irradiation obtained 78.02% yield of biokerosene. Biokerosene is almost close to kerosene-based petroleum in terms of colour Saybolt, flash point and Net Heating Value. The findings of this study may provide an alternate technology approach for biokerosene synthesis and solution kerosene scarcity.

Keywords: Biofuel, Energy Conversion, Chemical Conversion, Technology

1. Introduction

The more it is realized, the more fossil energy formed over hundreds of years will decrease. The current energy crisis is also due to the world's energy consumption which is experiencing an upward trend. Simultaneously with an increase in consumption, there is also a phenomenon like two sides of a coin where the level of production tends to decrease (Ezzati et al., 2021; Yuvenda, Sudarmanta, Jamaludin, et al., 2022). This shows a difference (deficit gap). The energy crisis is the tension that the supply of energy cannot fulfil the high level of demand and divert to renewable energy (Sani et al., 2023). Crude palm oil (CPO) as a renewable energy source is a vegetable oil that has the highest triglyceride content when compared to oils from other plants such as *Jatropha curcas* (Islam et al., 2017; Yuvenda, Sudarmanta, Wahjudi, et al., 2022).

In responding to the fulfilment of energy needs and saving the use of fossil fuels, it is required to diversify the utilization of alternative/renewable energy sources (Fauza et al., 2023; Setiyo, 2022). It is an effort to increase supply security and reduce the quantity of imported raw materials. This is attempted by diverting dependence on fossil energy sources towards diversifying other alternative energy sources, including biokerosene from CPO. Kerosene is one

of the most important fuels in the world of aviation and is also a fuel for people's cooking (Afisna & Rahadi, 2022; Llamas et al., 2012).

The problems that occur when using CPO directly are gummy, relatively high viscosity, and degradable (Hendri et al., 2023; Primandari et al., 2021). Therefore, vegetable oil cannot be used directly as a substitution for kerosene using an ordinary stove. Various conversion processes have been carried out which directly convert vegetable oil into biokerosene. (Santos et al., 2020) directly cracked palm oil into methyl ester with a lack of selectivity of 0.3-3.5%, with relatively high operating conditions of 550-850°C for 5 hours. It produced a methyl ester which only has physical properties similar to kerosene-based petroleum. (Khan et al., 2022) also carried out catalytic cracking of palm oil in a fixed bed reactor using the HZSM-5 catalyst. The process is carried out within 2.5 hours and at a temperature of 450°C. The yield is relatively high at 56-78%. (Dupain et al., 2007) conducted direct cracking of rapeseed oil under FCC (fluidized catalytic cracking) conditions with operating conditions of 465-585°C. However, the yield is relatively low around 15-34%. This process uses a mixture of Pt and ZSM-5 as a catalyst. (Neves et al., 2020) perform a conversion called BTL, and the biomass becomes liquid. This study used lignocellulosic as feed in a fixed bed-type reactor. This process uses nickel, vanadium, and precious metals as catalysts. The reaction time is slow at 4 days with a temperature of 560°C and a high pressure of 150 atm to produce BTL-kerosene. It has perfect quality where the aromatic content is 8%, free of sulfur. However, the yield of BTL-kerosene is only 12%.

Previous studies conducted the direct cracking of vegetable oil into biokerosene that requires a relatively high operating condition (high pressure, high temperature) (Rahayu et al., 2022). Despite they have succeeded in producing biokerosene, however, biokerosene is a methyl ester that kerosene-like compounds (Gutiérrez et al., 2018; Souza et al., 2018). Thus, it is required to produce biokerosene-based petroleum by moderate operating conditions.

Electrolysis, as a method involving the use of electricity to drive chemical reactions, can potentially contribute to the breakdown of complex organic molecules found in biomass, including triglycerides (as main compound in CPO), into simpler compounds (hydrocarbon). Through electrolytic processes, some complex organic compounds can be disassembled into smaller molecules or intermediates, such as hydrogen, carbon monoxide, or other hydrocarbons (Rosa et al., 2024). The free fatty acids resulting from the hydrolysis of triglycerides might undergo further electrolytic processes (Chen et al., 2022). These fatty acids could potentially be converted into simpler hydrocarbon compounds, such as alkanes or other hydrocarbons resembling components of kerosene.

Electromagnetic irradiation or induction is primarily known for inducing electric currents or voltage in conductors through a changing magnetic field (Angrainy et al., 2022; Basar et al., 2023). Induction heating enables precise and localized heating within reaction vessels or equipment, potentially improving the efficiency and selectivity of certain chemical reactions involved in biofuel production processes. Electromagnetic fields can potentially influence the behaviour of catalysts used in the conversion process (Kim et al., 2020). The electromagnetic field could influence the catalyst's surface or activation energy, potentially improving catalyst performance or selectivity in the desired reactions. Electromagnetic induction heating is often considered more energy-efficient than conventional heating methods. Utilizing this technology in the refining or upgrading steps of the process could contribute to energy savings and process optimization, indirectly impacting the overall efficiency of biofuel production (Ponomarev, 2023). However, electrolysis and electromagnetic irradiation are limited in biomass conversion to biofuel.

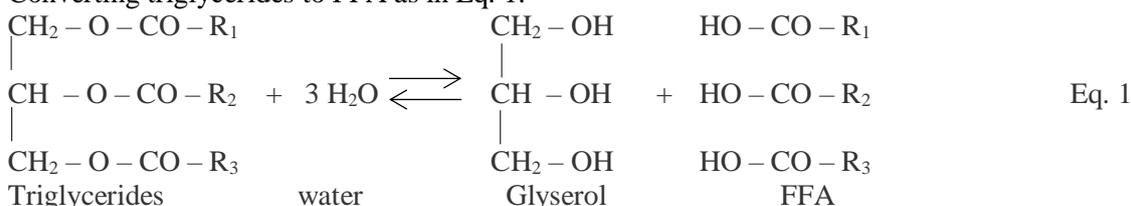
Thus, as a novelty, this study aims to develop a technological design for converting triglycerides into biokerosene through a process step that requires relatively low operating conditions prior to cracking directly. It has a carbon content equivalent to petroleum kerosene by considering technical aspects such as lower temperature and pressure. As a hypothesis, electrolysis and electromagnetic irradiation have significant effects on triglycerides of crude palm oil conversion to biokerosene.

2. Research Methods

This study is focused on the conversion of Crude Palm Oil triglycerides to biokerosene as a research object experimentally. The conversion of triglycerides to biokerosene was conducted in three steps; (i) converting triglycerides to Free Fatty Acids (FFA); (2) converting FFA to hydrocarbons; (3) converting hydrocarbon to biokerosene.

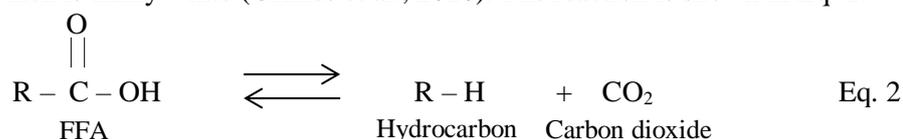
2.1 Converting triglyceride to FFA

This step is hydrolysis by H_2SO_4 solution as a catalyst. CPO was mixed by H_2SO_4 in a certain ratio and heated up to $120^\circ C$. Subsequently, hot water ($80^\circ C$) was added and stirred in a Continuous Stirred Tank Reactor (CSTR) for 2 hours of reaction. This reaction produced three layers; FFA, glycerol and water (Jaya et al., 2021; Shehu et al., 2019). The bottom layer (glycerol and water) was drained from the reactor and the upper layer (FFA) was processed to the next step. Converting triglycerides to FFA as in Eq. 1.



2.2 Converting FFA to Hydrocarbon (Electrolysis Assisted)

This step is conducted by electrolysis assisted with acetic acid as an electrolyte, Cu and Ag rods as electrodes. The conductivity controller and AC/DC Converter are set at various voltages. Record the value of changes in the increase in electrons (mS) and also the decrease in acidity (pH) in the solution every 20 minutes. Under certain conditions, the solution will reach the saturation stage so that the numbers on the measuring instrument indicate a stable or steady state (constant). The conditions obtained at this initial condition were used for the conditions in this step. FFA and CH_3COOH solution were mixed at a certain molarity and heated up to $130^\circ C$ for 2 hours with various voltages. Due to this decarboxylation process is a reaction that releases CO_2 from the carboxyl group, it is examined by flowing it into a colourless $Ca(OH)_2$ solution. If the solution turns cloudy, it shows that there is CO_2 occurs since the reaction between CO_2 and $Ca(OH)_2$ will produce $CaCO_3(s)$ which is milky white (Grimes et al., 2020). The reaction is shown in Eq. 2.



The best result of this step is chosen for the next step determined based on viscosity, $^\circ API$ gravity, and characteristics factor (K).

2.3 Converting Hydrocarbon to Biokerosene (Electromagnetic Induction)

This step is conducted by electromagnetic induction. Since this step is catalytic cracking, activated zeolite is applied as a catalyst. Hydrocarbon from the previous step is mixed with methanol at a certain ratio (6:0.2; 6:0.4; 6:0.6). This mixed solution then flowed into the reactor and an electromagnet process was carried out for 30 minutes with an electromagnetic field strength varying from $2.89E+18$ N/C to $7.24E+20$ N/C. Next, it is heated up to $180^\circ C$ at atmospheric pressure for hours. Crude biokerosene is purified by degumming and bleaching (Dinul et al., 2023). Then, purified biokerosene is analyzed to determine the yield (Mahdi et al., 2021; Pujan et al., 2017). The flow step is shown in Fig. 1.

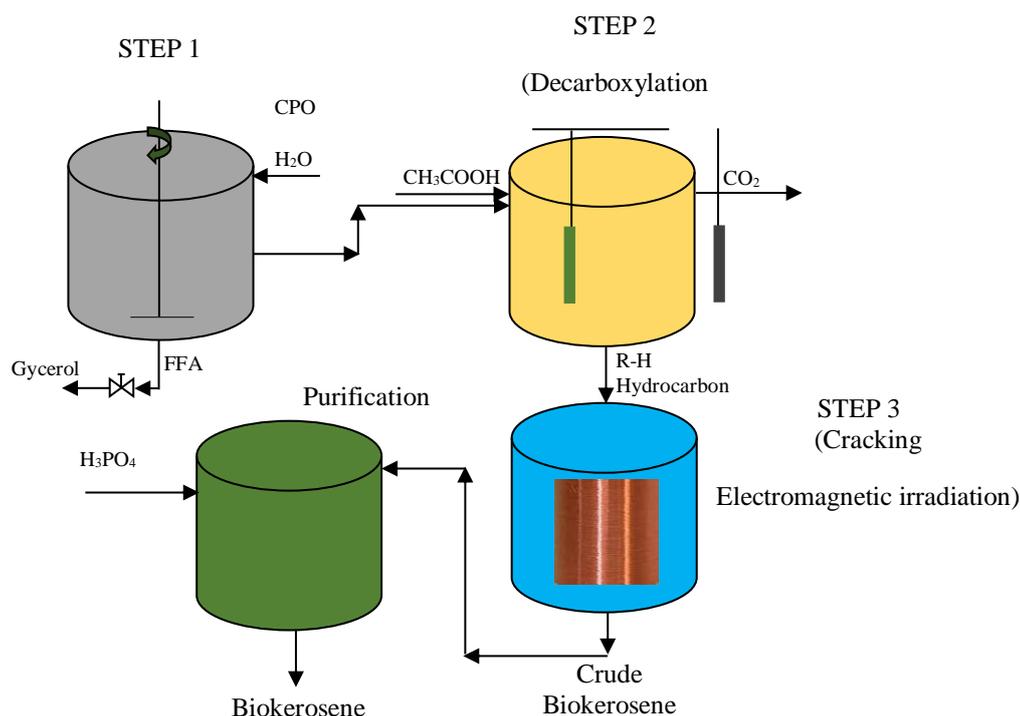


Fig. 1. Steps In CPO Conversion to Kerosene

2.4 Data Analysis

This study focuses on electrolysis and the electromagnetics effect on the conversion of triglycerides to biokerosene. Thus, data analysis was done on steps 2 (decarboxylation-electrolysis assisted) and 3 (Catalytic cracking-electromagnetic induction). The effect of electrolysis is determined by the molarity of concentration [FFA] in mol/L (0.5mol/L, 1mol/L, 1.5mol/L) and voltage on °API gravity, characteristics factor (K factor), Net Heating Value (NHV), and yield of hydrocarbon. Meanwhile, the effect of electromagnetic induction is determined by the ratio of hydrocarbon and methanol (L), electromagnetic field on °API gravity, characteristics factor (K factor), Net Heating Value (NHV), and yield of biokerosene. Further, biokerosene from this study is analyzed for its characteristics and compared to commercial kerosene from PT Pertamina (Indonesian Oil and Gas Company). The characteristics are specific gravity 60/60°F, colour Saybolt, flash point, and NHV. The specific gravity analysis was based on ASTM D-1298, the colour Saybolt was based on ASTM D-156, and the flash point was based on ASTM D-56.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 Converting Triglycerides to Free Fatty Acids (FFA)

Triglycerides are the main compound in crude palm oil. They consist of three fatty acid molecules bound to one glycerol molecule. With H_2SO_4 solution as a catalyst, it can cause hydrolysis of triglyceride, which is the breakdown of triglycerides into free fatty acids and glycerol. In this study, the hydrolysis process occurs with the formation of three layers: FFA, glycerol and water (Jaya et al., 2021; Shehu et al., 2019). FFA is on upper layer, meanwhile, glycerol and water are in bottom layer. The separation of these components into layers occurs due to their differing polarities and densities. FFA is on the upper layer due to being less polar and more soluble in nonpolar substances, which tend to accumulate in the upper layer. This layer consists mainly of the less polar-free fatty acids resulting from the hydrolysis process. Meanwhile, glycerol and water are on the bottom layer, being more polar and hydrophilic, forming a separate bottom layer due to their higher affinity for each other and for water. They are less soluble in nonpolar substances, causing them to settle at the bottom. This separation into distinct layers

happens because of the differing chemical properties of the substances produced during hydrolysis. Free fatty acids, being less polar, tend to remain in the upper layer where nonpolar substances accumulate, while glycerol and water, being more polar, form a separate layer at the bottom due to their higher affinity for water and less solubility in the upper nonpolar layer.

3.2 Converting FFA to alkanes

The qualitative variable in this study is the voltage variation applied during the electrolysis process. Its influences on hydrocarbon quality include °API gravity, characteristics factor (K factor), and NHV. Meanwhile, the quantitative variable is the molarity of concentration [FFA] that affects the increase in the percentage yield of hydrocarbon. The result of the effect of voltage and [FFA] on the yield of hydrocarbon is depicted in Fig. 2.

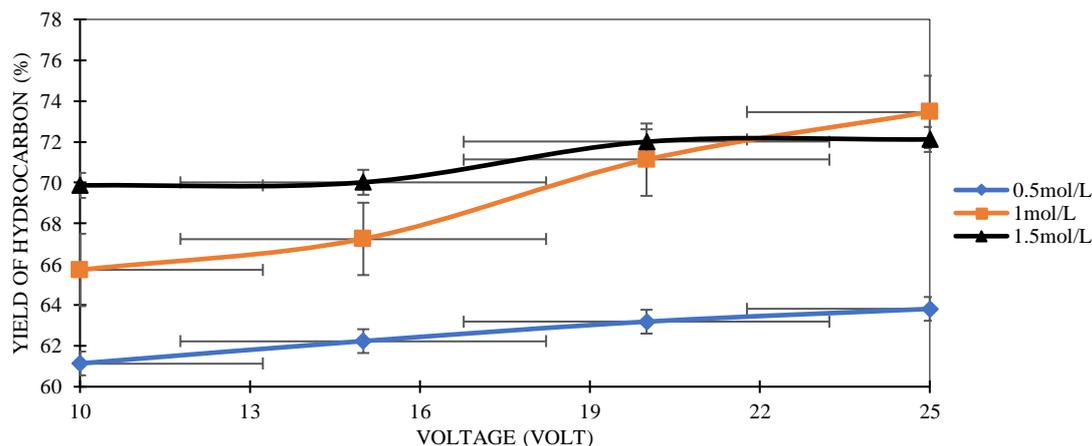


Fig. 2. Effect of Voltage and Molarity Concentration On Yield Of Hydrocarbon

Fig. 2 showed that molarity concentration [FFA] affects the amount of yield of hydrocarbon produced. The more concentrated the solution, the higher the yield is obtained (Rahmadiawan et al., 2022). It aligned with (Primo et al., 2021) and (Razak & Zulfia, 2023), the more concentrated the solution, the greater the amount of acetic acid, and the higher the voltage, the higher the ability to conduct electricity (Alves et al., 2021). When there are more ionized FFA, the acyloxy anions to be oxidized also increase, thus impacting the increasing hydrocarbon production.

The highest yield of 73.47% was produced from a molarity concentration of 1.5mol/L with a voltage of 25 Volts. The result of the effect of voltage and [FFA] on °API gravity is depicted in Fig. 3.

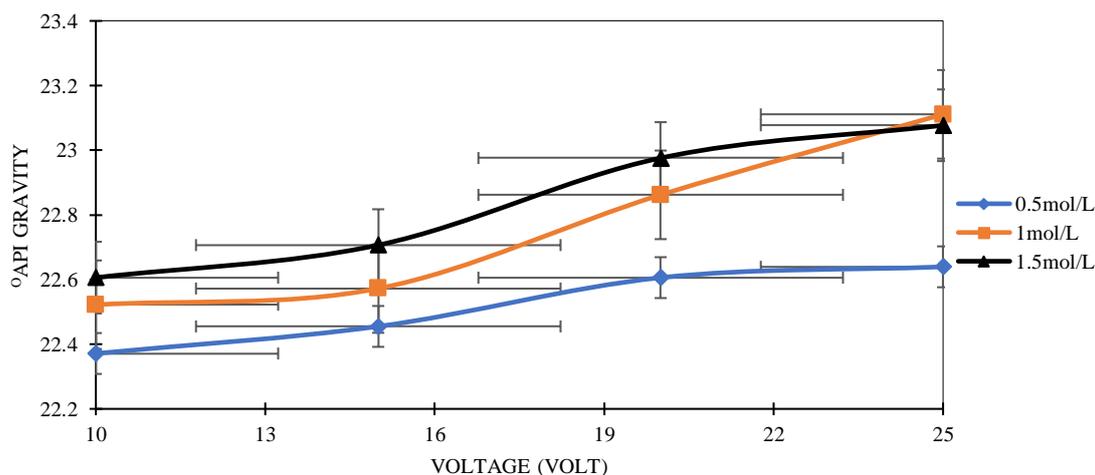


Fig. 3. Effect of Voltage and Molarity Concentration On °API gravity

An increase in concentration means an increase in methyl radicals so the possibility of forming short-chain alkanes also increases. The formation of a shorter alkane compound is characterized by a decrease in density which results in an increase in the °API gravity of the product (Baidoo et al., 2022). °API gravity can predict the characteristics of other fuel oils, including K factor, and Net Heating Value (NHV) (Yamamoto et al., 2006). The highest °API

gravity (23.11) was obtained on a molarity concentration of 1mol/L and a voltage of 25 Volts. The result of the effect of voltage and [FFA] on K factor is depicted in Fig. 4.

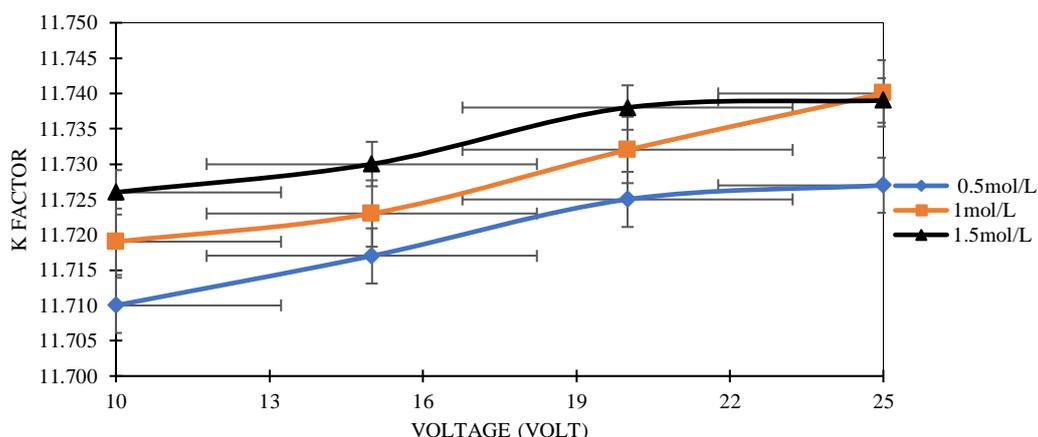


Fig. 4. Effect Of Voltage and Molarity Concentration on K Factor

By obtaining the °API gravity, it can predict a similar trend in the graphs for the K factor and Net Heating Value (NHV) since °API gravity has an associated relationship among NHV, and K factor (Nuridin et al., 2022; Yamamoto et al., 2006). The K factor in fuel cells represents the sensitivity of the cell's voltage output to changes in the current density. Higher K factors indicate better performance and efficiency, meaning that the cell can maintain higher voltages across various current densities. Voltage and molarity concentration play crucial roles in determining the K factor by affecting the kinetics of the electrochemical reactions and the cell's overall efficiency. The K factor is the characteristic value of the oil. It has been explained previously that the more concentrated the concentration, the more acetic acid ions and the greater the voltage, the greater the ability of electrons to disrupt bonds so the number of alkanes in this is paraffin as well. This is indicated by the higher K value. Where the best K value is 11.751 and the highest NHV is 17960.4083 btu/lb at a molarity concentration of 1mol/L and a voltage of 25 V.

The result of the effect of voltage and [FFA] on NHV is depicted in Fig. 5.

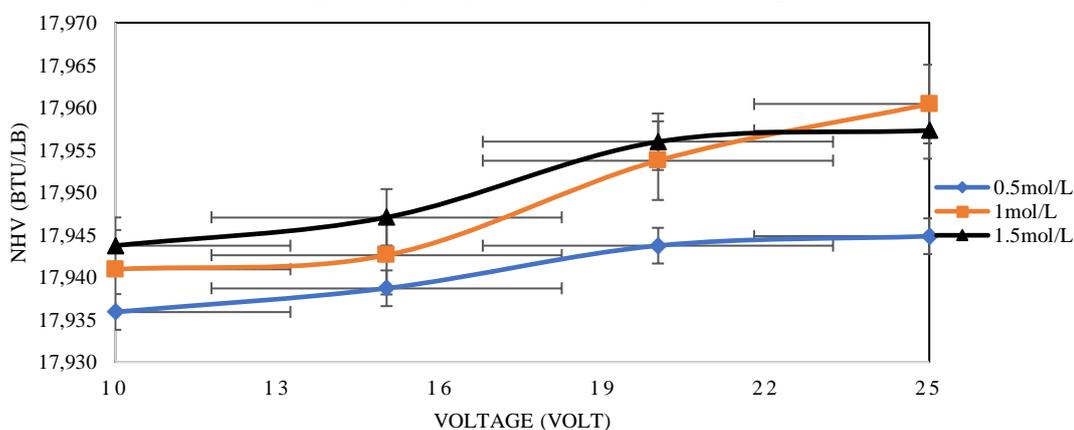


Fig. 5. Effect of Voltage and Molarity Concentration On NHV

The Net Heating Value (NHV) of a fuel refers to the amount of heat released when a fuel is completely combusted and is typically measured in energy per unit mass (e.g., joules per kilogram or BTUs per pound). Free Fatty Acids (FFA) in fuels, particularly in biodiesel or certain biofuels derived from natural sources, can affect the combustion properties and consequently the Net Heating Value. Higher FFA concentrations in biodiesel, for example, can lead to increased levels of impurities and contaminants in the fuel. This can affect the combustion process, potentially lowering the Net Heating Value due to incomplete combustion or the formation of byproducts that reduce the released energy.

Considering the result of electrolysis that includes yield, °API gravity, K factor, and NHV as parameters, thus an optimum condition for electrolysis assisted are molarity of concentration

1 mol/L, and voltage 25V. Further, the product from the optimum condition proceeded to the next step.

3.3 Converting Alkanes to Biokerosene

The qualitative variables in this step are the electromagnetic field variation applied during the electromagnetic induction process. It influences on biokerosene quality include °API gravity, characteristics factor (K factor), and NHV (Purwanto et al., 2023). Meanwhile, the quantitative variable is the ratio of hydrocarbon and methanol that affects the increase in the percentage yield of biokerosene. The result of the effect of the electromagnetic field and the ratio of hydrocarbon and methanol on the yield of biokerosene is depicted in Fig. 6.

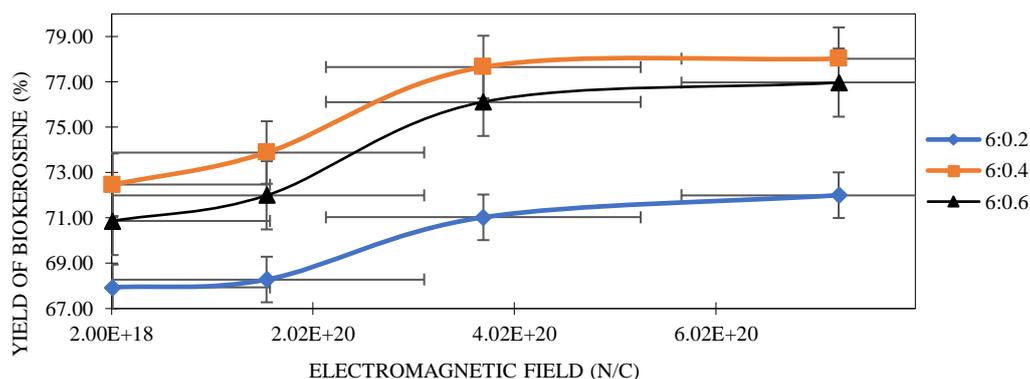


Fig. 6. Effect of Ratio of Hydrocarbon: Methanol And Electromagnetic Field on Yield of Biokerosene

Fig. 6 showed that yield increased aligned with electromagnetic field strength (Ayesha et al., 2023). The electromagnetic field has a significant effect on the yield of biokerosene. Abdel-Rehim (2019) reported that the higher the strength of the electromagnetic field, the greater the energy given to destabilize the C-C bonds in alkane compounds so that the yield is increased. Where the electromagnetic field strength of 7.24E+20 N/C obtained the highest yield. However, this did not happen due to the influence of the ratio of hydrocarbon and methanol, where the ratio was 6:0.6, the yield produced was on average lower than the ratio 6:0.4. It was due to the high mixing ratio resulting in the formation of short-chain alkanes resulting in a lot of alkane gas coming out of the reactor vent and resulting in the bottom product obtained containing more heavy oil (Guan et al., 2023). The oil produced at a ratio of 6:0.6 is thicker and darker in colour when compared to the product ratio of 6:0.4. The highest yield percentage of 78.023% was produced by an electromagnetic field strength of 7.24E+20 N/C with a ratio of 6:0.4. The result of the effect of the electromagnetic field and the ratio of hydrocarbon and methanol on °API gravity is depicted in Fig. 7.

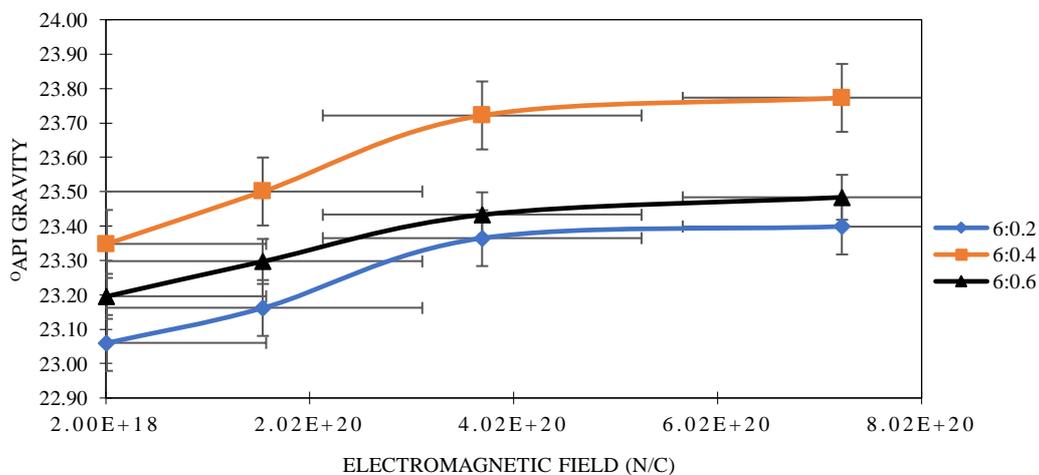


Fig. 7. Effect of Ratio of Hydrocarbon : Methanol and Electromagnetic Field on °API Gravity

Result showed that the electromagnetic field and the ratio of hydrocarbon and methanol has a significant effect on °API gravity of biokerosene. The highest °API gravity is obtained at a

ratio of hydrocarbon and methanol 6:0.4 and an electromagnetic field strength of $7.24E+20$. It is due to the electromagnetic field weakening the C-C bond making it easier to break the C-C bond. So that more alkanes with short chains can be obtained. If there are more short-chain alkanes, the product will have a lower density resulting in an increase in the °API gravity of the product (Khodadadi Azadboni, 2021). The effect of the ratio of hydrocarbon and methanol and electromagnetic field on K factor and NHV have the same tendency on °API gravity.

Fig. 8 describes the effect of the electromagnetic field and the ratio of hydrocarbon and methanol on K factor.

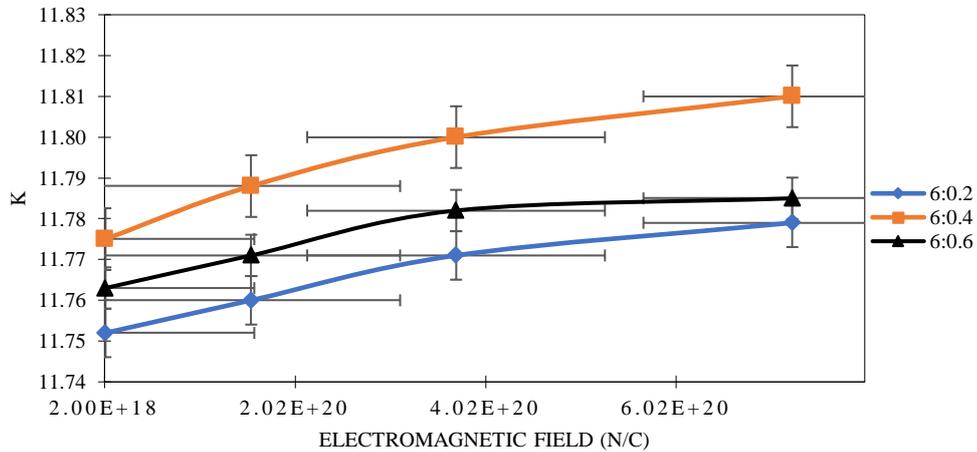


Fig. 8. Effect of Ratio of Hydrocarbon : Methanol and Electromagnetic Field on K Factor

Altering the ratio of hydrocarbon to methanol in a fuel mixture can change its overall composition and combustion characteristics. Methanol is a type of alcohol often used as an additive or as a primary fuel in certain applications due to its high octane rating and clean-burning properties. Changes in the combustion characteristics due to different ratios of hydrocarbon to methanol can lead to variations in the K factor. The K factor is a measure of a fuel cell's performance, specifically the relationship between voltage and current density. If the combustion characteristics change, it might affect the efficiency of energy conversion in fuel cells, thus impacting the K factor. Application of an electromagnetic field can influence the behavior of fuel molecules, potentially affecting their orientation, distribution, and reactivity.

Effect of ratio of hydrocarbon and methanol and electromagnetic field on NHV is depicted in Fig. 9.

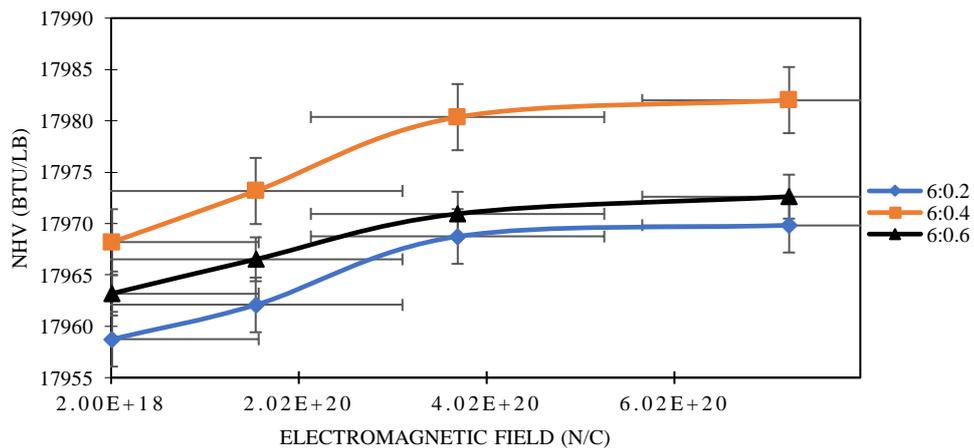


Fig. 9. Effect of Ratio of Hydrocarbon : Methanol and Electromagnetic Field on NHV

Fig. 9 showed that the K factor increased aligned with electromagnetic field strength. The electromagnetic field has a significant effect on the K factor of biokerosene production. (Zhang et al., 2023) reported that this tendency is caused by the associated relationship between these parameters. Changes in the hydrocarbon to methanol ratio can alter the composition and properties of the biokerosene produced. Higher ratios of hydrocarbons may lead to higher energy content in the biokerosene. The highest K value was 11.810 and the highest NHV was 17982.02

btu/lb which was obtained at an electromagnetic field strength of 7.24×10^{20} N/C with a ratio of the added ratio of hydrocarbon and methanol of 6:0.4.

3.3 Comparison Between Biokerosene and Commercial Kerosene-based Petroleum

Biokerosene from this study is analyzed for its characteristics and compared to commercial kerosene from PT Pertamina (Indonesian Oil and Gas Company). The results are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 – Comparison Of Biokerosene and Kerosene-Based Petroleum PT Pertamina

No.	Characteristic	Biokerosene	Kerosene-based petroleum
1.	Specific gravity 60/60°F	0.9107	0.835
2.	Colour ASTM	3.5	2.5
3.	Flashpoint, °F	> 160	100
4.	Net Heating Value (Btu/lb)	17995	18500

Table 1 showed that a higher specific gravity generally implies greater density. Biokerosene has a higher specific gravity compared to kerosene-based petroleum. The ASTM color scale measures the color of petroleum products. A higher number indicates a darker color. Biokerosene has a darker color compared to kerosene-based petroleum. A higher flashpoint suggests greater resistance to ignition. Biokerosene has a much higher flashpoint compared to kerosene-based petroleum. Kerosene-based petroleum has a slightly higher net heating value compared to biokerosene. This comparison demonstrates some differences between biokerosene and kerosene-based petroleum in terms of density, color, flashpoint, and net heating value. However, biokerosene from this study has characteristics almost close to kerosene-based petroleum.

4. Conclusion

Biokerosene has been produced by three steps at lower temperatures and pressures. The steps are (i) converting triglycerides to Free Fatty Acids (FFA), (ii) converting FFA to alkanes, and (iii) converting alkanes to biokerosene. Electrolysis and electromagnetic induction influence the conversion of triglycerides to biokerosene positively. This study obtains the optimum yield of hydrocarbon at a molarity concentration of 1mol/L, voltage of 25Volts, temperature of 130°C, and atmospheric pressure for 2 hours. It produces a yield of hydrocarbon 73.468%, °API gravity of 23.110, NHV of 17960.4083 btu/lb, and K factor 11.740. Meanwhile, the optimum yield of biokerosene is obtained at ratio of hydrocarbon and methanol of 6:0.4, the electromagnetic field strength of 7.24×10^{20} N/C, temperature of 180°C, and atmospheric pressure for 2 hours. The optimum yield of biokerosene is 78.023%, °API gravity 23.7727, NHV of 17982.02 btu/lb, and K factor of 11.81. Despite the characteristics of biokerosene almost close to kerosene-based petroleum, this study has limitations such as unstable biokerosene and higher flashpoint. Further study is required to improve biokerosene quantitative and qualitative

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