



Studies on Lignin Degradation Activity by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* Isolated from Kware Lake

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Authors' contributions

This work was carried out in collaboration between both authors. Both authors read and approved the final manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

Background: Wood is naturally degraded by wood degrading microorganisms and modified and partly degraded residual of lignin goes into soil. It is an amorphous and complex aromatic compound. In the plant cells, lignin can be converted via phenylalanine and tyrosine by transamination. Africa generates a huge amount of waste from agricultural and household activities. This huge amount of waste can be exploited as a sustainable raw material for many industrial processes other than just simply burning it as a solid fuel.

Aims: The study aimed at isolating and screening *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* for lignin degradation.

Methods: The bacterium was characterized and identified according to morphological and biochemical characteristics. The bacterial DNA was extracted using DNA isolation kit and used for molecular analysis. Four (4) dyes such as Methylene blue, Congo red, iodine and Malachite green were screened on bacterial isolate for its ability to decolorize the dyes. The effect of some growth parameters such incubation time, temperature, pH and agitation were studied on the isolate for lignin degradation as well as bacterial biomass production.

Results: The effect of some growth parameters such incubation time, temperature, pH and agitation were studied on the isolate for lignin degradation as well as bacterial biomass production. From the results, it was observed that the isolate showed higher zone of inhibition on Congo red (14.00 mm) and Methylene blue (10.00 mm), while no decolorization was observed on Malachite green. The growth parameters studied indicated the optimum condition required for both lignin degradation and

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bacterial biomass production as follows; 48 hours (65%, 0.41g), 40°C (77%, 0.31g), pH 7 (58%, 0.26g) and 100rpm (72%, 0.42). The FTIR revealed two peaks at 3375 cm^{-1} which attributed to O-H stretching while the second peak 1687.5 cm^{-1} corresponded to C=O stretching.

Conclusion: The results of GC-MS detected the presence of 2,5-Hexanediol, 2-Octynoic acid, n-Hexadecanoic acid and i-Propyl9,12-octadecadienoate.

Keywords: Wood; lignin; dyes; Pseudomonas aeruginosa and degradation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Agricultural and wood residues produced after harvesting and processing of plants are abundant biomass on earth, and these biomass resources have remarkable energy capacity [1]. Several tons (estimated to be around 10–50 billion produced annually worldwide of these wastes are produced annually from corn, wheat, soybean, timbers, etc., and are mainly composed of lignin, cellulose and hemicelluloses [2]. The lignocellulose biomass, recognized as the most abundant biopolymer on earth, is a predominant component of the cell wall of plants. It is an inexhaustible raw material for biofuel production. The plant cell wall is a heterogeneous complex of carbohydrate polymers (cellulose and hemicellulose) and an aromatic polymer (lignin) [3,4].

Lignin, among the three major wood components, represents most difficulty for microbial degradation because of its complex structure and because cross linking to hemicellulose makes wood such a compact structure. Nevertheless, wood is naturally degraded by wood degrading microorganisms and modified and partly degraded residual of lignin goes into soil. It is an amorphous and complex aromatic compound with a substantial molecular weight, which is mainly composed of three main lignin precursors (p-hydroxyphenyl, guaiacyl, and syringyl units) linked via C-C or C-O bonds formed by radical coupling reactions. In the plant cells, lignin can be converted via phenylalanine and tyrosine by transamination [5,6]. Lignin gives the plant a rigid structure that provides protection against the hydrolysis of cellulose and hemicellulose. In spite of the plethora of lignocellulose in nature, the expensive cost of hydrolyzing them into smaller monosaccharides has made the cost of using them unappealing. Therefore, this has led to the search for cheaper means of hydrolyzing lignocellulose biologically. Lignocellulose is used in many industrial processes for the production of chemicals, fuels, polymer precursors, paper and pulp, food and flavor compounds [7].

Due to the recalcitrant nature of lignin toward degradation, the conversion of lignocellulose to biofuels and other renewable energy resources involves several pretreatment processes, such as biological, chemical, mechanical and thermal processes. The biological pretreatment process involves using microorganisms for the conversion and degradation of lignocelluloses streams into sugars to produce biofuel [3]. Naturally occurring bacterial species from different niches have developed cellular mechanisms to acquire energy from plant biomass through the production and release of carbohydrate-active enzymes [8]. These enzymes degrade plant cell, which, as a result, synthesize monosaccharides that can be used biofuels and other value-added products [1].

Numerous microorganisms such as bacteria, fungi, actinomycetes, and cyanobacteria have been reported which are capable to degrade lignocellulosic waste and other wood containing fibers. There is a growing concern among researchers to isolate bacteria and fungi directly from lignocellulosic waste contaminated sites due to acclimatized microbial genome pool with degrading enzyme-producing capabilities [9]. Culture-dependent screening detects lignin-degrading prokaryotes by their growth on lignin model substrates and lignin derived molecules. Inoculation of lignin-rich media with environmental samples enables the enrichment of ligninolytic strains, hence facilitating their isolation and characterization [10]. Soils, waste water from the paper industry, and decaying lignocellulosic materials have frequently been chosen as original ecosystems for ligninolytic strains [11,12]. While some other interesting environments remain to be explored, such as waterlogged archaeological wood that suffers from microbial degradation by uncharacterized erosion, cavitation, and tunneling bacteria [13].

Africa generates a huge amount of waste from agricultural and household activities. This waste can be exploited as a sustainable raw material for many industrial processes other than just

simply burning it as a solid fuel. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate whether *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* isolated from Kware Lake could be used for degradation of lignin.

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

2.1 Sample Collection

Soil sediment sample was collected from Kware Lake in the morning. Ten grams (10 grams) of the soil sediments was collected each from five different locations at the deep bottom of Lake using polyethene bags. The samples were immediately transported to Laboratory for further analysis.

2.2 Isolation of Lignin Degrading Bacteria

The isolation of lignin degrading bacteria was done using minimal salt medium as described by Hassan and El-hannafy [14]. After serial dilution, 0.5% soil suspension was inoculated in mineral salt media (MSM). One gram of wood powdered was added to 50 mL and incubated at 30°C with shaking for Ten days. After incubation, the isolates were sub-culture into freshly prepared nutrient agar. Bacterial colonies was selected according to their shape, growth and sub cultured again using Luria Bertani medium and incubated at 30°C for 48 hours to achieved maximum growth rate and subsequently used for selection of bacterial isolates capable to utilize lignin as a sole carbon source.

2.3 Morphological and Biochemical Identification of Bacteria Isolate

Macroscopic observation on the nature of color, shape, size, elevation and surfaces of the isolates were observed. The characterizations of isolates were done using standard procedure described by Cheesbrough [14]; Oyeleke and Manga [15]. The bacterial isolates were characterized based on the biochemical reactions. The tests employed in this study were motility, gas production, starch hydrolysis Methyl Red, Vogues Proskauer, catalase, and urease. Morphological characterization for bacterial and fungal isolate was carried out through gram staining.

2.4 Molecular Identification of Bacteria

The genomic DNA of bacteria was extracted by the DNA Isolation Kit according to the protocol described by Aiya [16]. PCR reaction was carried out in 200 µl reaction containing template DNA,

primers, dNTPs and Taq polymerase. The reaction was cycled 35 times as 94°C for 30 seconds, 58°C for 30 seconds and 72°C for 1 minute 30 seconds, followed by final extension at 72°C for 10 minutes. The PCR products were analyzed on 1% agarose gel in 1x TBE buffer, run at 100V for 45 hours. Gels were stained with ethidium bromide and photographed. The sequence was aligned with corresponding sequences of 16SrDNA from the database using BLAST from the website <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/blast> (Altschul *et al.*, 1997). Multiple alignments were generated by the CLUSTAL W program and phylogenetic tree was constructed by neighbor-joining algorithm using MEGA 6 Software [17].

2.5 Effect of Some Growth Parameters on Crude Lignin Degradation and Bacterial Biomass Production

The effect of growth parameters were determined as in one factor one time method as described by Murugesan and Vembu [18] with slight modification. The growth parameters include incubation time (24 hours, 48 hours, 72 hours, 96 hours, 120 hours, 144 hours), temperature (25°C, 30°C, 35°C, 40°C and 45°C), pH (6, 6.5, 7, 7.5, 8, 8.5, 9, 9.5 and 10) and agitation rate (50rpm, 100rpm, 150rpm and 200rpm). The lignin degradation rate was expressed in percentage and bacterial biomass was estimated. All the experiments were carried out in triplicates and the results were expressed as mean ± standard deviation

2.6 Degradation of Lignin by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* under Optimum Growth Conditions

A twenty four (48) hours old culture of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* was inoculated into 50 ml of mineral salt medium (MSA) incorporated with 5% lignin extract from plant. The growth conditions such as incubation time, temperature, pH and agitation whose show highest activity were chosen and used in this study. After the period of incubation, the preparation was centrifuge at 5,000 rpm and filtered using Whatman filter 12. The supernatant was used for FTIR and GC-MS analysis.

2.7 Fourier Transform Infrared Analysis

For the structural characterization, Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy (FTIR) was performed. The pigments obtained were concentrated using a vacuum concentrator for 24

hours and the powder was mixed with small amount of KBr and mixed thoroughly. The preparation was then pressed in a sample holder and analyzed by computerized Fourier Transform Infrared Spectroscopy system, which generated the absorbance spectra showing the unique chemical bonds and the molecular structure of the sample material [19].

2.8 Gas Chromatography- Mass Spectroscopy (GC-MS) Analysis

GC-MS analysis was performed using GC-MSQP2010 Plus (Shimadzu, Japan) and Gas chromatograph interfaced to a mass spectrometer (GC-MS) instrument employing the following; Column Elite-1 fused silica capillary column (30m x 0.25mm 1D x μ l df, composed of 100% Trisil). For GC-MS detection, an electron ionization system with ionization energy of 70eV was used. Helium gas (99.999%) was used as the carrier gas at constant flow rate 1ml/min and an injection volume of 2 μ L was employed (Split ratio of 20:0) injector temperature 250°C; ionsource temperature 200°C. the oven temperature was programmed from 60.0 (for 0.00 minute) with an increase of 160°C (Isothermal for 2.00 minutes) ending with a 2.00 minutes isothermal at 280°C. Mass spectra were taken at 70eV; a scan interval of 0.5s and fragments from 45 to 700Da. Total GC running time was 19 minutes. The relative percentage amount of each component was calculated, by comparing its average peak area to the total areas, Software adopted to handle mass spectra and chromatogram was a turbomass. The detection employed the NIST Ver.2.0 year 2009 library [20].

2.9 Statistical Analysis

Data obtained were analyzing using SPSS (Version 20) statistical package. Descriptive statistic through simple graphs, tables and charts were used for presentation of data.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A bacterium with potential to degrade the lignin was isolated from Kware Lake. The isolate was screened based on the colonial, morphological and biochemical characterization and identified as *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* according to Bergey's Manual of Determinative Bacteriology. Soil served as a potential source for isolation of lignin degradation bacteria as plant biomass decomposed and releasing intermediates which

served as a carbon source for growth and metabolisms. Jiang-Hao et al. [13] reported that soils, waste water from the paper industry, and decaying lignocellulosic materials have frequently been chosen as original ecosystems for ligninolytic strain of bacteria.

Table 1. Morphological biochemical characterization of bacteria isolate

Characteristics	Isolate
Colonial characteristics	
Gram reaction	Negative Bacillus
Pigmentation	Green
Shape	Irregular
Elevation	Flat
Surface	Smooth
Biochemical characterization	
Catalase	+
Coagulase	-
Methyl Red	-
Voges-Proskauer	-
Indole	-
Urease	+
Citrate	-
Glucose	-
Lactose	-
Sucrose	+
Gas	-
H ₂ S Production	-

Table 2 presented the result of screening of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* and its ability to decolorized dyes thereby producing clearing zone of inhibition. Four dyes including Congo red, methylene blue, iodine and malachite green were used in this study. It was observed that the isolate effectively decolorized Congo red, producing 14.00 mm zone of inhibition than the other dyes used. Similarly, 10.00 mm inhibition zone was observed on Methylene blue while no zone of inhibition was observed on Malachite green. Decolorization of dyes with aromatic chromophores has been used as an indicator of aromatic-degrading activity, because of its closed structure to that of lignin fragments which is reasonably simple to use and also time saving [13,21]. Patel et al. [22] screened laccase-producing bacteria on the different dye containing agar plate. The isolates PHP7 and PKD5 were showing clear zone in toluidine blue, methylene blue and congo red, while the isolates PHP6, PSG3, PSG9, PPS1 and PPS10 were showing clear zone in only two, toluidine blue and methylene blue. The isolates PHP8 and

PPS4 were showing clear zone in only toluidine blue and PKD9 shows clear zone in only toluidine blue. None isolates showed clear zone in malachite green.

Table 2. Screening of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* for Laccase Production

Dyes	Zones of Inhibition (mm)
Methylene blue	10.00
Congo red	14.00
Iodine	4.00
Malachite green	0.00

The sequence results of isolate showed 100 percent identity to *Pseudomonas* sp. The phylogenetic tree constructed by MEGA 6 showed that the isolate use in this study was closely related to the *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* strain NR_114471.

The effect of some growth parameters such as incubation time, temperature, pH, agitation played significant role in lignin degradation and bacterial biomass production. The rate of lignin degradation by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* was affected by incubation time, temperature, pH, agitation. The effects of incubation time on lignin degradation revealed that at 48 hours, the degradation of lignin by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* was 65% and produced highest biomass of 0.41 gram. The variation of degradation rate and biomass production by the isolate in relation with incubation time might be attributed to nature of growth of organisms, as some bacteria have shorter generation time than others. It was also observed that the rate of lignin degradation increases as the days increases and gradually declined as the organisms reached the maximum degradation and biomass productions. This implies that as the numbers of days increased, the number of bacteria also increased which would increase the growth and lignin degradation.

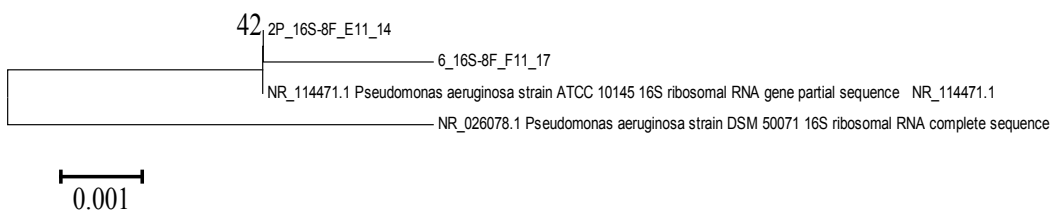


Fig. 1. The phylogenetic tree by neighbor joining of *Pseudomonas* sp.

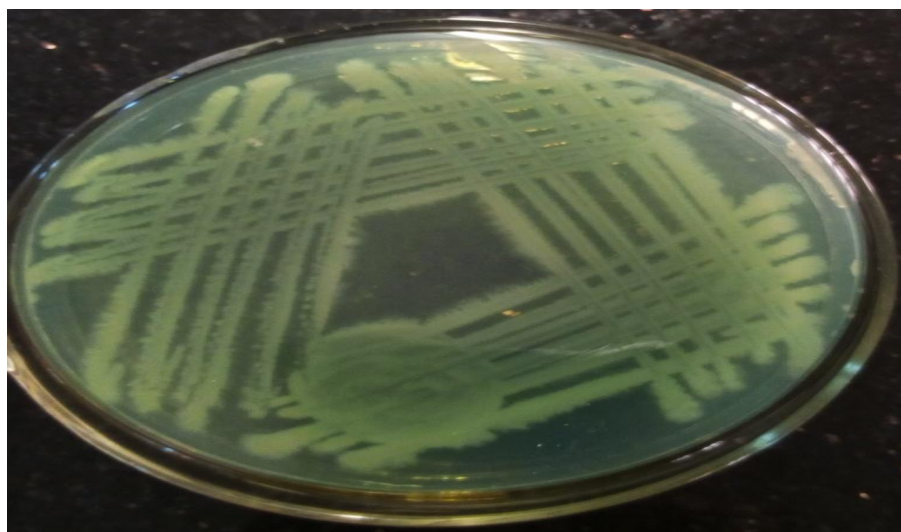


Fig. 2. Growth of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* on nutrient agar plate

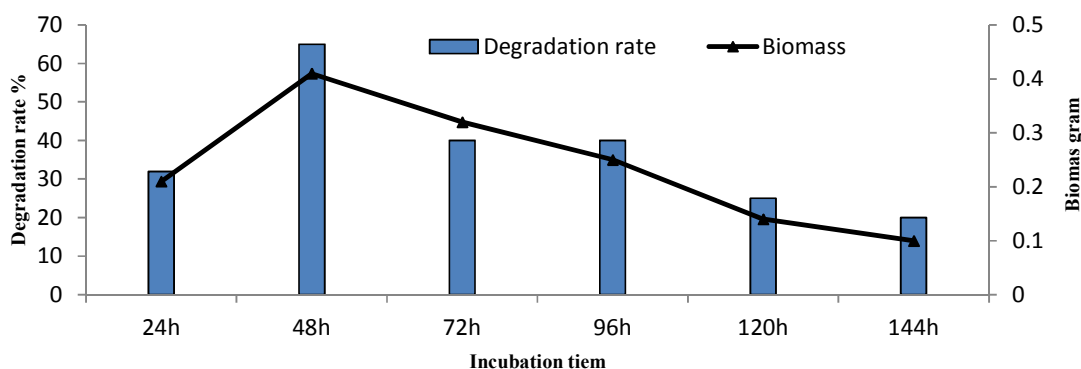


Fig. 3. Effect of incubation time on lignin degradation and biomass production by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*

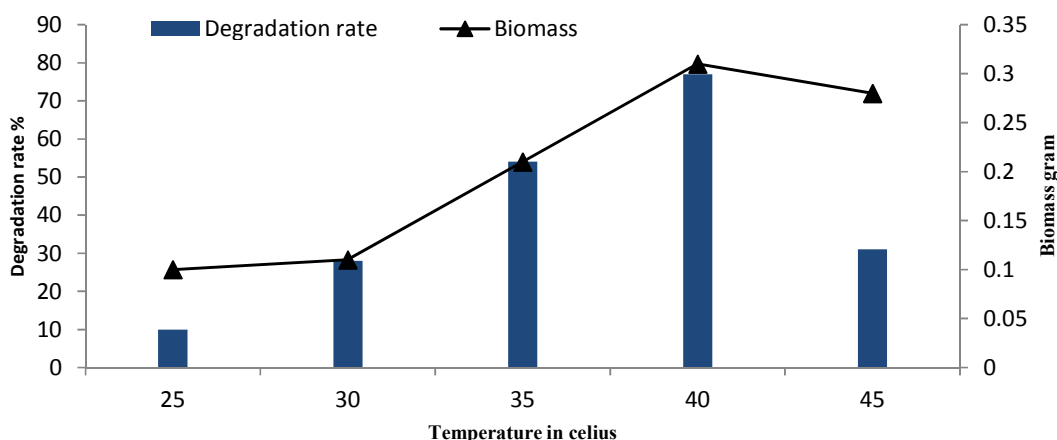


Fig. 4. Effect of incubation temperature on lignin degradation and biomass production by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*

The rate of lignin degradation and biomass production by the bacterial isolated is also affected by changing in temperature. It was observed that *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* reached highest peak of 82% lignin degradation at 35°C. The difference of temperature on lignin degradation and biomass production might be attributed to enzymes activities during growth, as highest activities of enzymes occur at optimum temperature. It was reported that the optimum temperature of laccase production by bacteria such as *B. subtilis* occurred at mesophilic character thereby showing maximum enzyme production at 40°C [23].

The effect of pH on lignin degradation and biomass production is presented on Figure 3. It was observed that the rate of degradation and biomass production was slow at pH 6.0 and 6.5. As pH increase to 7.0, 7.5 and rising toward

alkalinity there was gradual increase of lignin degradation and biomass production. This is similar with the finding of Murugesan and Vembu [18] who reported that *Bacillus* sp. produced high laccase activity at pH 7.5 and gradually decrease from 7.5 to 10.0. However, they noted that the ability of the isolate to produce enzymes at alkaline pH makes it suitable for bioremediation and various industrial applications.

The effect of agitation on the growth and lignin degradation by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* was determined and the results are shown in Figure 6. It was observed that the growth of the isolated strain increased with increase in speed of agitation as higher degradation was achieved at 100 rpm and gradually declined as agitation rate increase. The increase in agitation rate up to 200 rpm did not increase the degradation, but gave the maximum bacterial growth. This is probably

at higher agitation rate the enzyme structure might be changed [18]. However, at lower agitation rate there was both reduction of both degradation and growth of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, this indicated that mixing of growth media and supply of oxygen was insufficient. The amount of dissolved oxygen in the fermentation medium is greatly influenced by the speed of agitation. Excessive agitation results in a higher mechanical force, which may produce the cell

destruction and uptake of nutrients, thereby lowering the enzyme production [24]. Therefore, optimizing the agitation of fermentation media is a very important factor to provide sufficient oxygen, mixing and uptake of nutrients by the microbe [18]. This is similar with the finding of Mahmoud et al. [25] who reported that the maximum laccase production by the strains *Streptomyces lydicus* was achieved at 150 rpm under shaking condition.

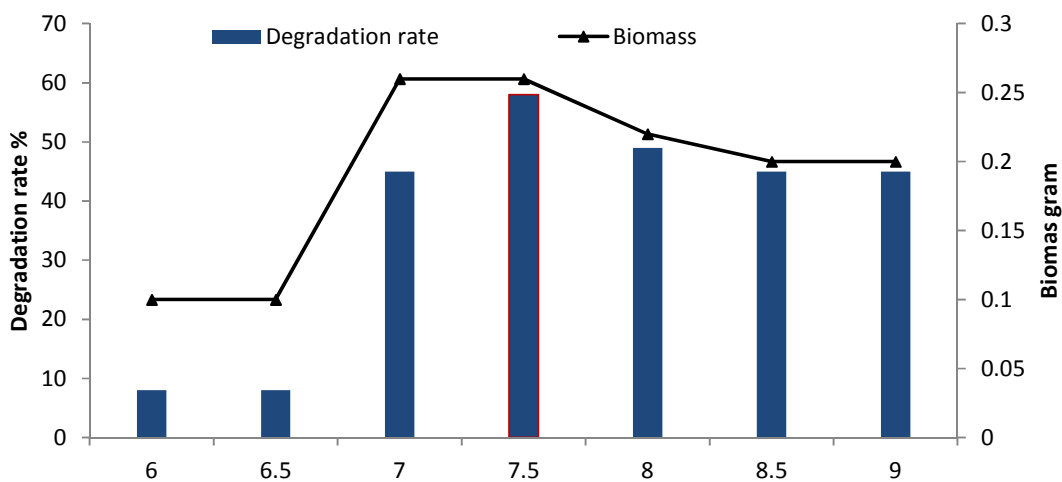


Fig. 5. Effect of pH on lignin degradation and biomass production by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*

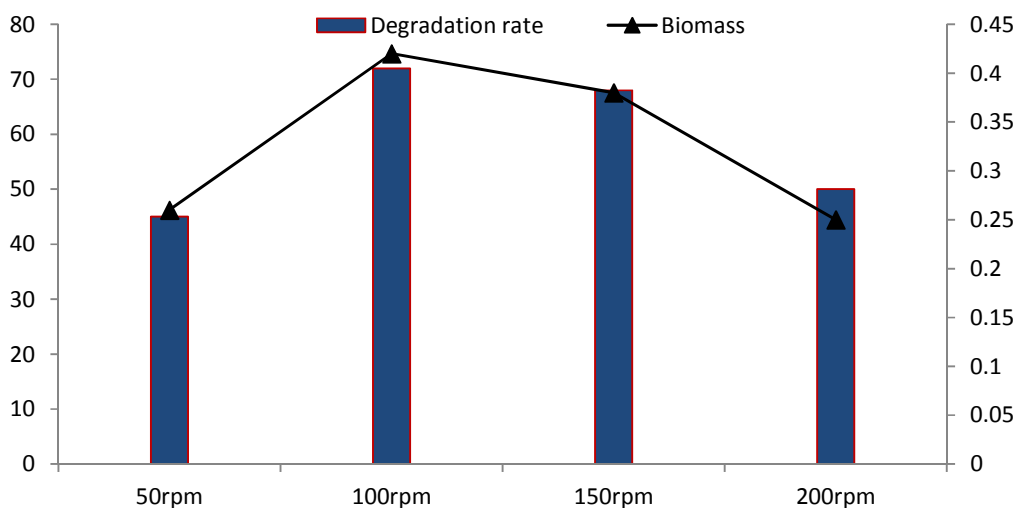


Fig. 6. Effect of agitation on lignin degradation and biomass production *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*

The result of Fourier transformed infrared spectroscopy of lignin degradation revealed two absorption peaks. The peak at 3375 cm^{-1} is attributed to O-H stretching while the second peak 1687.5 cm^{-1} corresponded to C=O stretching. Some compounds detected by GC-MS includes the following 2,5-Hexanediol, 2-Octynoic acid, n-Hexadecanoic acid, i-Propyl9,12-octadecenadienoate and (R)-(-)-(Z)-14-Methyl-8-hexadecen-1-ol. The Hexanediol and have been widely used in the production of bread, dairy products, and alcoholic beverages. Hexanediol is a versatile building block for the synthesis of various chiral phosphine ligands. Also hexanediol is used as intermediate in the preparation of optically active tetrahydrofurans used in biodegradable polymers, perfumes and

medicines [26]. Hemalatha et al. [26] reported to used yeast *Pichia farinose* MTCC *246 for the production of Hexanediol using batch production.

It was reported that n-hexadecanoic acid (C₁₆H₃₂O₂) possess Anti-inflammatory, antioxidant, hypocholesterolemic, nematocide, pesticide, antiandrogenic flavor, hemolytic, 5-Alpha reductase inhibitor, potent mosquito larvicide [27]. 2-octynoic acid (2-OA) is widely used in the environment including perfumes, lipstick and many common food avorings [28]. It has been reported that 2-OA may be associated with fatty acid pathway [29]. Darong *et al.* [30] reported that 2-OA inhibits HCV RNA replication, viral protein expression, and infectious virus production in human hepatocytes.

Table 3. GC-MS peak for lignin degradation by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*

Peak #	R.Time	Height%	Molecular Formular	Name
1	3.311	1.67	C ₆ H ₁₄ O ₂	2,5-Hexanediol
2	4.069	2.14	C ₈ H ₁₂ O ₂	2-Octynoic acid
3	13.734	24.10	C ₁₆ H ₃₂ O ₂	n-Hexadecanoic acid
4	15.207	66.40	C ₂₁ H ₃₈ O ₂	i-Propyl9,12-octadecenadienoate
5	15.844	2.85	C ₁₇ H ₃₄ O	(R)-(-)-(Z)-14-Methyl-8-hexadecen-1-ol

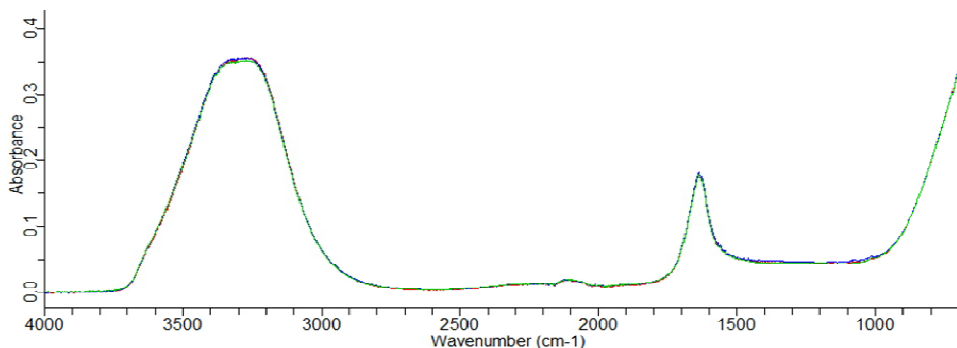


Fig. 7. FTIR Spezctra of lignin degradation by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* Isolated from Kware Lake

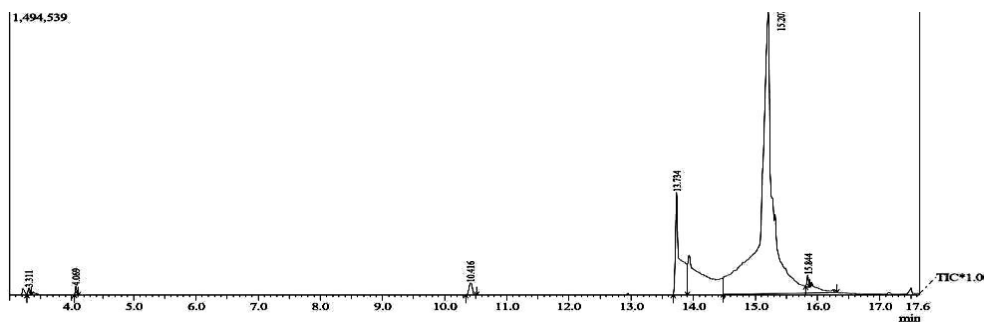


Fig. 8. GC-MS chromatogram of crude lignin degradation by *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrated the ability of *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* for lignin degradation. From the results it clearly proving that growth condition affect lignin degradation and biomass production by the bacterium. The results of GC-MS detected the presence of 2, 5-Hexanediol, 2-Octynoic acid, n-Hexadecanoic acid and i-Propyl 9, 12-octadecenadienoate.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Authors have declared that no competing interests exist.

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