

## ENZYMES ACTIVITIES AS BIO INDICATOR OF SOIL CONTAMINATED WITH PETROLEUM HYDROCARBON

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### ABSTRACT

The study evaluates the changes in the soil dehydrogenase and urease contaminated with hydrocarbon. Soil dehydrogenase and urease activity were investigated by contaminating soils at five loading rates (1.0, 5.0, 10, 15, 20 %) volume of oil/weight of soil and monitoring activity at 7 days interval. The highest level of the dehydrogenase activity observed at 21 days of incubation in crude oil contaminated soil was  $1.19 \pm 0.01$  and at 7 days in kerosene contaminated soil was  $0.78 \pm 0.01$ . The highest level of the urease activity observed at 21 days of incubation in crude oil contaminated soil was  $1.34 \pm 0.01$  and at 7 days in kerosene contaminated soil was  $1.25 \pm 0.01$ . The increase in dehydrogenase and urease activity was in proportion to the rate of oil application, as it increases with increasing loading rates. Analysis of variance of dehydrogenase activity and urease activity showed a high significant difference between the control and the oil treated soils at  $p < 0.05$  level. The study demonstrated that soil contaminated with crude oil and kerosene disturbed the biochemical equilibrium of soil. Dehydrogenase and urease activity may be employed as suitable tools for predicting, assessing and remediating effect of crude oil and kerosene on the soil.

**KEYWORDS:** Dehydrogenase, Urease, Crude Oil, Kerosene, Bioindicator, Pollution

### INTRODUCTION

Despite the several usefulness of crude oil and its products, it also constitutes major environmental concern, globally (Hentatiet *al.*, 2013; Sarataleet *al.*, 2007). Environmental Pollution caused by crude and refined oils is a threat to the environment and its inhabitants (Xuet *al.*, 2018). Assessment and remediation of the effects are major challenges to environmental researchers. The occurrence of oil spillage mostly put farmers at a disadvantaged position because changes in the chemical and biological properties of the soil either affect yield positively or negatively (Ikpemeet *al.*, 2007; Kalmeet *al.*, 2000). The effect of this pollution varies due to the difficulty in assessing it due to limited knowledge of the additive, synergistic or antagonistic effects of mixtures involved (Saterbacaet *al.*, 2000). The chemical composition of crude oil and kerosene varies significantly and can have diverse effects on soil (Houet *al.*, 2018). There is a need to have suitable tools for predicting, assessing and remediating effect of crude oil and kerosene on soil (Guerra *et al.*, 2018).

A bioindicator is an organism, part of an organism, the product of an organism (enzyme), collection of organisms or biological process which can be used to obtain information on the quality of all or part of the environment (Killham, 2002 ; Zornozaet *al.*, 2015). Bioindicators are very important for resource managers in order to understand ecological changes within the soil ecosystem (Dale *et al.*, 2008). Soil biological activity, including enzymatic activity, is influenced

by a range of physiochemical, environmental parameters and perturbations. Therefore, soil enzymatic activity may be used to assess disturbed soil (Labud *et al.*, 2007). Soil enzymes are a group of enzymes found in the soil and are continuously playing important roles in maintaining soil ecology, physical and chemical properties, fertility, and soil health. These enzymes play key biochemical functions in the overall process of organic matter decomposition in the soil system (Zahir *et al.*, 2001; Tejada, 2009). Alteration or toxicity of soil enzymes activity affect soil quality (Lopes, 2011), soil fertility (Abii and Nwosu, 2009), lead to ecological stress (Tejada, 2009), increase in organic carbon of the soil with a concomitant decrease in soil nitrate (Okolo *et al.*, 2005). Soil enzymes have been used to assess soil quality and health as affected by agricultural practices (Gianfreda *et al.*, 2005; Truu *et al.*, 2008; Garcia-Ruiz *et al.*, 2009) and as potential soil quality indicators because they are sensitive to ecological stress and land management practices (Tejada, 2009). It has been shown that enzymes react to changes in soil management more quickly than other variables and therefore may be useful as early indicators of biological changes (Zabaloy *et al.*, 2008). The use of soil enzyme in the evaluation of soil quality becomes a more valuable tool since culturable and unculturable, even extra-cellular and intracellular enzyme activities are estimated in the process. The enzymes that can be investigated in polluted soils include dehydrogenase, urease, polyphenol oxidase, hydrogen peroxidase, acid and alkaline phosphatase (Oliveira and Pampulha, 2006; Li *et al.*, 2005; Nwaugo *et al.*, 2008).

Dehydrogenases are enzymes which catalyze the removal of the hydrogen atom from different metabolites (Nelson and Cox, 2000). Active dehydrogenases are considered to exist in the soil as an integral part of intact cells and conduct a broad range of oxidative activities that are responsible for the degradation of soil organic matter (Margesinet *et al.*, 1997). Dehydrogenase activity (DHA) has been proposed as a sensitive indicator for evaluating microbial oxidative activity in soils (Turgay *et al.*, 2010; Serrano *et al.*, 2009; Dawson *et al.*, 2007). It can also indicate the type and significance of pollutant on the microbiological quality of soils (Xie *et al.*, 2009; Tejada *et al.*, 2010). Compounds such as soluble tetrazolium salts are reduced to red colored formazans, which can be extracted and measured colorimetrically (Tabatabaie *et al.*, 1997; Shaw and Burns, 2006). Soil dehydrogenase activity reflects changes in the respiratory activity of given population size in response to changes in the soil environment (Schinner *et al.*, 1996).

In evaluating changes in soil quality as it relates to management, the enzyme urease has been widely used (Saviozziet *et al.*, 2001). This enzyme, in most cases, is an extra-cellular enzyme representing up to 63% of total activity in the soil (Martinez-Salgado *et al.*, 2010). It has been shown that urease activity depends on the microbial community, physical, and chemical properties of soil (Corstanje *et al.*, 2007). Dehydrogenases, catalases, and urease have been found to be useful for indicating the onset of the biodegradation process, as their activities decline rapidly after the rate of biodegradation have decreased (Margesin and Schinner, 1997). The increase in soil dehydrogenase and urease activity in hydrocarbon contaminated soil has been found to be in proportion to the rates of oil application, in which activity increased with increasing loading rates. In addition, any influence that oils may have on soil dehydrogenase and urease activity is dependent on chemical composition. The objective of this study was to investigate dehydrogenase and urease activity in soil contaminated with crude oil and kerosene.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Bonny light crude oil was collected from Exxon Mobil, Eket in Akwa Ibom State. Soil samples were randomly collected with the aid of auger from the University of Nigeria, Nsukka agricultural farmland. The soil samples collected were bulked, air dried and sieved to remove coarse fragments. Soil sample (100 g) was weighed into a conical flask and

amended with crude oil and kerosene oil ( 0%, 1%, 5%, 10%, 15% and 20%, volume per weight), respectively. The oil was thoroughly mixed with the soil in the conical flask. Soil sample amended with crude oil (0%, 1%, 5%, 10%, 15%, and 20 %, v/w) and kerosene oil (0%, 1.0%, 5.0%, 10%, 15%, and 20 %, v/w), in conical flasks were plugged with cotton wool. Each set up was arranged in triplicate, incubated at 28<sup>0</sup>C, analyzed at 0, 7, 14, 21 and 28 days respectively for enzyme activity.

### **Analysis of Soil Enzymes Activities**

The activities of enzymes dehydrogenase and urease were assessed by evaluating the dehydrogenase and urease activity.

### **Evaluation of Dehydrogenase Activity in the Soil**

Dehydrogenase activity was determined using the method described Casida (1977) modify by Tabatabai (1997).

A 0.5-gram portion of the soil was placed in a test tube (15x100 mm) and mixed with 0.5 ml of 3 % (w/v) aqueous 2, 3,5 –triphenyl tetrazolium chloride (TTC), stirred with a glass rod and incubated. After 24 hours of incubation, 5 ml of ethanol was added to the test tube and the suspension was vortexed for 30 seconds. The tube was incubated for 1 hour to allow suspended soil to settle. The resulting supernatant (5ml) was carefully transferred to the clean test tube using Pasteur pipette. Absorbance was read spectrophotometrically at 485 nm. The unit of dehydrogenase activity was reported as mg triphenyltetrazoliumformazan (TPF) released/g soil per 24 hrs (Ohlinger, 1996).

### **Evaluation of Urease Activity in the Soil**

Urease activity was measured as described by Tabatabai (1997). A 0.5gram portion of the soil was placed in a test tube, with 0.5 ml of 10%, urea substrate solution added subsequently and mixed thoroughly. The contents were allowed to stand for approximately 24 hrs. After 24 hrs of incubation, 4.5 ml of saturated calcium sulphate (CaSO<sub>4</sub>) solution was added, shaken for 30 minutes and allowed to settle for 10 minutes. Three ml of the supernatant was transferred into another test tube and 2 ml of the color reagent (a mixture of p-dimethylamino-benzaldehyde (2.0g), 95% ethyl alcohol (100 mL) and concentrated HCl (10 ml)) added, mixed and allowed to stand for 10 minutes. The absorbance was read at 420 nm. The unit of urease activity was reported as mg Urease (NH<sup>4</sup>+N) released/g of soil / 24 hrs.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Physicochemical Properties of Soil**

The results of physicochemical properties of the soil sample determined are presented on Table 1. The soil was identified and classed as sandy loam. The pH of the soil was acidic: 4.55 ± 0.49; moisture content: 23.97%; organic carbon: 0.99% ; organic matter: 1.17% ; nitrogen: 0.098%; clay and silt: 32%; fine sand: 36%; coarse sand: 40%; saturated base: 32.82%; Phosphorus: 31.71 ppm; cation exchange capacity: 14.80 (meq/100 g); exchangeable acid: 2.80 (meq/100 g) and exchangeable base meq /100 g; sodium, 0.028; potassium: 0.230; calcium: 2.80 and magnesium: 1.80 (meq /100 g).

**Table 1: Physiochemical Properties of Soil Sample**

Parameter	Values(0- 15cm depth)
Texture class	Sandy loamy
Particle size (Clay & Silt)	32 %
Particle size (Fine sand)	36 %
Coarse sand	40 %
pH value	4.55±0.49
Moisture content	23.97 %;
Carbon	0.99 %
Organic matter	1.72 %
Nitrogen	0.098 %
Exchangeable bases: Sodium	0.028 (meq /100 g)
Potassium	0.230 (meq /100 g)
Calcium	2.80 (meq /100 g)
Magnesium	1.80 (meq /100 g)
Cation exchange capacity	14.80 (meq /100 g)
Saturated base	32.82 %
Exchangeable acidity	2.80 (meq/100 g)
Phosphorus	31.71 ppm

#### Effect of Crude Oil on Soil Dehydrogenase Activity

The concentration of crude oil on the activity of soil dehydrogenase is shown in Figure 1. The dehydrogenase activity at 0 % crude oil treatment ranged from  $0.35 \pm 0.01$  to  $0.36 \pm 0.01$ ;  $0.35 \pm 0.01$  to  $0.59 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $0.44 \pm 0.01$  for 1.0 %;  $0.35 \pm 0.00$  to  $0.76 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $0.49 \pm 0.01$  for 5 %;  $0.36 \pm 0.00$  to  $0.92 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $0.56 \pm 0.01$  for 10%;  $0.36 \pm 0.00$  to  $1.05 \pm 0.011$  and decrease to  $0.62 \pm 0.01$  for 15% and  $0.37 \pm 0.01$  to  $1.19 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $0.75 \pm 0.02$  for 20 %.

#### Effect of Kerosene on Soil Dehydrogenase Activity

Figure 2 shows the dehydrogenase activity in the soil treated with various concentrations of kerosene. The dehydrogenase activity at 0 % kerosene treatment ranged from  $0.35 \pm 0.00$  to  $0.38 \pm 0.01$  decrease to  $0.37 \pm 0.01$ ;  $0.35 \pm 0.01$  to  $0.42 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $0.39 \pm 0.01$  for 1.0 %;  $0.35 \pm 0.01$  to  $0.49 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $0.41 \pm 0.01$  for 5 %;  $0.35 \pm 0.00$  to  $0.57 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $0.47 \pm 0.01$  for 10%;  $0.35 \pm 0.01$  to  $0.63 \pm 0.02$  and decrease to  $0.48 \pm 0.01$  for 15% and  $0.36 \pm 0.00$  to  $0.78 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $0.54 \pm 0.00$  for 20 %.The comparative effects of both crude oil and kerosene on soil dehydrogenase activity are shown in Table 2.

#### Effect of Crude Oil on Soil Urease Activity

The concentration of crude oil on the activity of soil urease is shown in Figure 3. The urease activity at 0 % crude oil treatment ranged from  $1.14 \pm 0.00$  to  $1.14 \pm 0.00$ ;  $1.16 \pm 0.01$  to  $1.22 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $1.21 \pm 0.01$  for 1.0 %;  $1.16 \pm 0.01$  to  $1.25 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $1.22 \pm 0.01$  for 5 %;  $1.16 \pm 0.30$  to  $1.28 \pm 0.01$  and decrease  $1.27 \pm 0.01$  for 10%;  $1.17 \pm 0.01$  to  $1.30 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $1.28 \pm 0.01$  for 15% and  $1.18 \pm 0.00$  to  $1.34 \pm 0.013$  and decrease to  $1.32 \pm 0.01$  for 20 %.

#### Effect of Kerosene on Soil Urease Activity

The concentration of kerosene on the activity of soil urease is shown in Figure 4. The urease activity at 0 % kerosene treatment ranged from  $1.14 \pm 0.01$  to  $1.16 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $1.14 \pm 0.01$  ;  $1.15 \pm 0.01$  to  $1.17 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $1.15 \pm 0.01$  for 1.0 %;  $1.15 \pm 0.01$  to  $1.18 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $1.15 \pm 0.01$  for 5 %;  $1.16 \pm 0.01$  to  $1.20 \pm$

0.00 and decrease to  $1.16 \pm 0.01$  for 10%;  $1.16 \pm 0.006$  to  $1.22 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $1.17 \pm 0.01$  for 15% ;  $1.17 \pm 0.00$  to  $1.25 \pm 0.01$  and decrease to  $1.18 \pm 0.01$  for 20 %.The comparative effects of both crude oil and kerosene on soil urease activity are shown in Table 3.

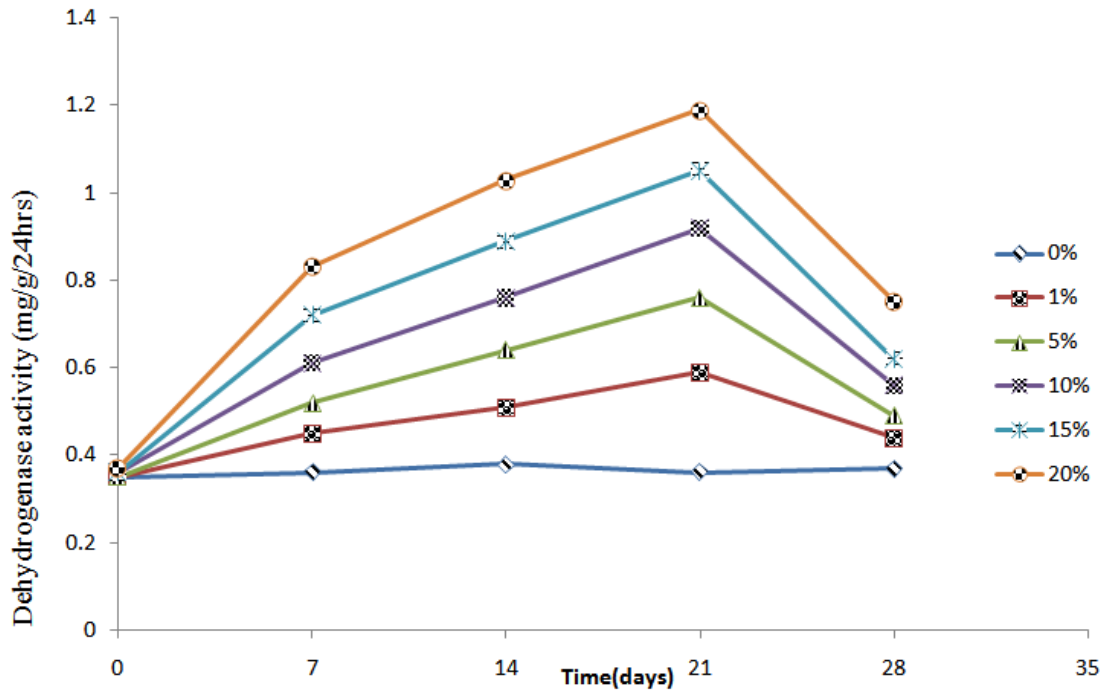


Figure 1: Effect of Crude Oil on Dehydrogenase Activity in the Soil

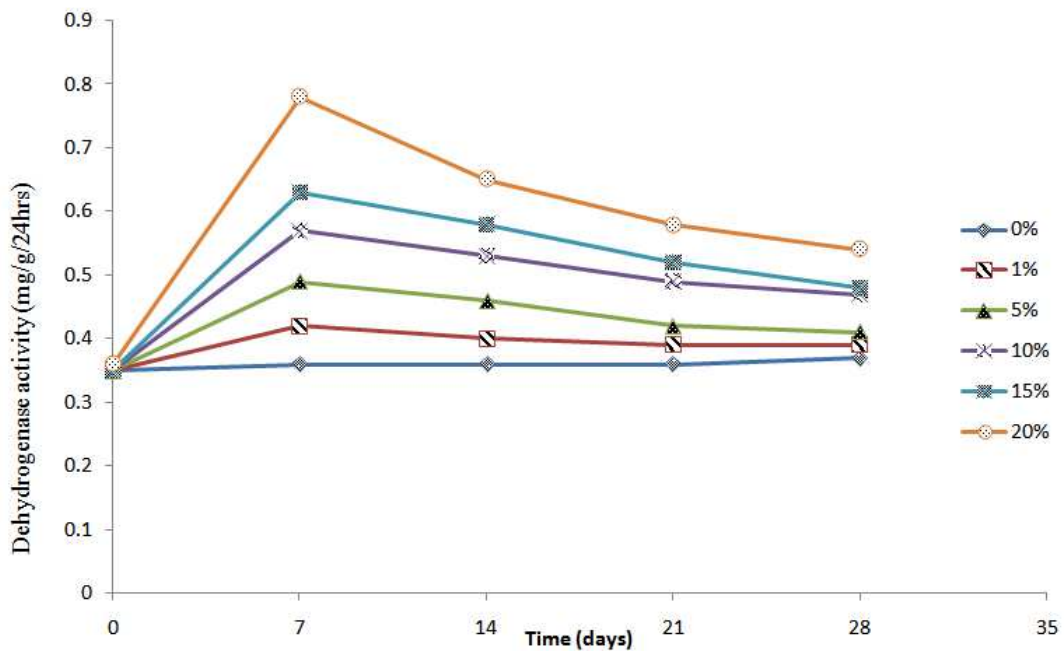


Figure 2: Effect of Kerosene on Dehydrogenase Activity in the Soil

Table 2: Dehydrogenase Activity in Soil Contaminated with Crude Oil and Kerosene (mg/g/24hrs)

Day	0.0%	1.0%	5.0%	10.0%	15.0%	20%
0 Cr	0.35 ± 0.01	0.35 ± 0.01	0.35 ± 0.00	0.36 ± 0.00	0.36 ± 0.00	0.37 ± 0.00
Kr	0.35 ± 0.00	0.35 ± 0.01	0.35 ± 0.01	0.35 ± 0.01	0.35 ± 0.01	0.36 ± 0.00
7 Cr	0.35 ± 0.01	0.45 ± 0.01	0.52 ± 0.00	0.61 ± 0.00	0.72 ± 0.05	0.83 ± 0.00
Kr	0.36 ± 0.00	0.42 ± 0.00	0.49 ± 0.01	0.57 ± 0.00	0.63 ± 0.01	0.78 ± 0.00
14 Cr	0.36 ± 0.00	0.51 ± 0.01	0.64 ± 0.00	0.76 ± 0.00	0.89 ± 0.00	1.03 ± 0.02
Kr	0.38 ± 0.01	0.40 ± 0.00	0.46 ± 0.01	0.53 ± 0.00	0.58 ± 0.00	0.65 ± 0.00
21 Cr	0.36 ± 0.00	0.59 ± 0.00	0.76 ± 0.01	0.92 ± 0.01	1.05 ± 0.01	1.19 ± 0.00
Kr	0.36 ± 0.00	0.39 ± 0.01	0.42 ± 0.00	0.49 ± 0.01	0.52 ± 0.03	0.58 ± 0.02
28 Cr	0.36 ± 0.00	0.44 ± 0.00	0.49 ± 0.00	0.56 ± 0.01	0.62 ± 0.00	0.75 ± 0.01
Kr	0.37 ± 0.00	0.39 ± 0.01	0.41 ± 0.01	0.47 ± 0.00	0.48 ± 0.01	0.54 ± 0.01

Key: Cr crude oil

Kr: kerosene

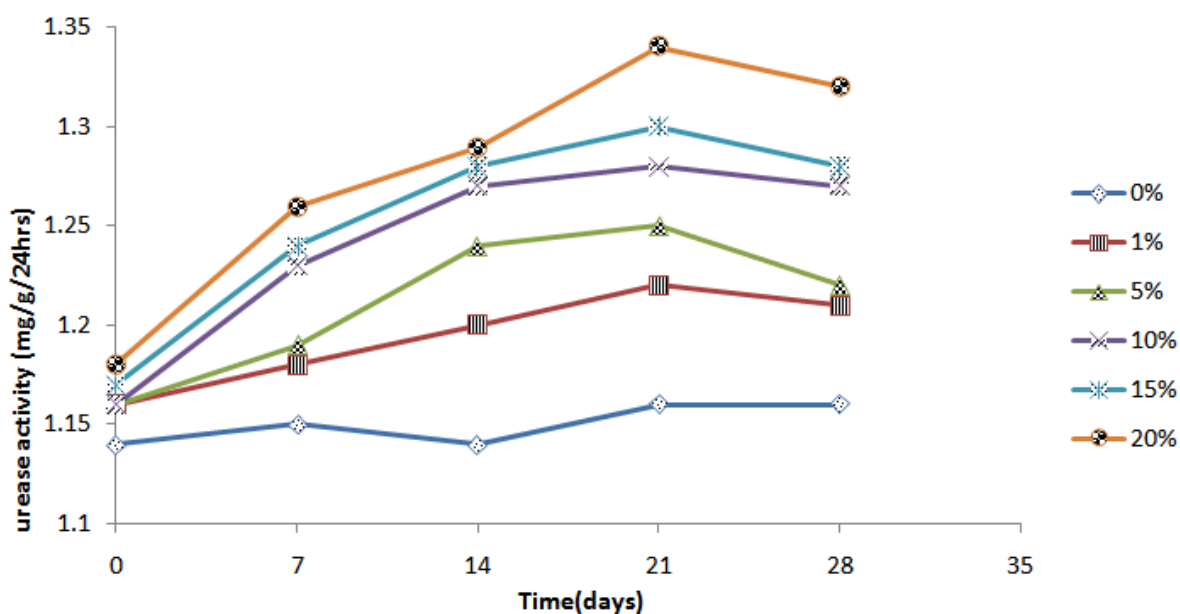


Figure 3: Effect of Crude Oil Contaminated Soil on Urease Activity in the Soil

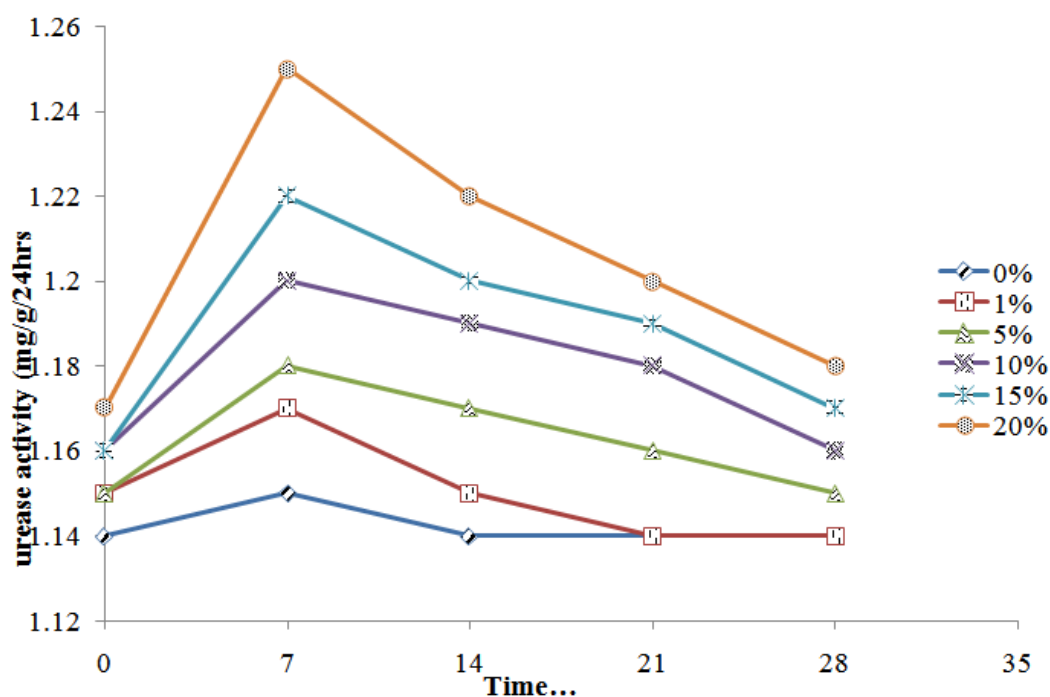


Figure 4: Effect of Kerosene Contaminated on Urease Activity in the Soil

Table 3: Urease Activity on Soil Contaminated with Crude Oil and Kerosene (mg/g/24hrs)

Day	0.0%	1.0%	5.0%	10.0%	15.0%	20%
0 Cr	1.14 ± 0.00	1.16 ± 0.00	1.16 ± 0.01	1.16 ± 0.00	1.17 ± 0.00	1.18 ± 0.00
Kr	1.14 ± 0.00	1.15 ± 0.00	1.15 ± 0.00	1.16 ± 0.01	1.16 ± 0.01	1.17 ± 0.00
7 Cr	1.15 ± 0.00	1.18 ± 0.01	1.19 ± 0.00	1.23 ± 0.01	1.24 ± 0.01	1.26 ± 0.00
Kr	1.15 ± 0.00	1.17 ± 0.00	1.18 ± 0.01	1.20 ± 0.00	1.22 ± 0.01	1.25 ± 0.00
14 Cr	1.14 ± 0.00	1.20 ± 0.01	1.24 ± 0.02	1.27 ± 0.01	1.28 ± 0.01	1.29 ± 0.01
Kr	1.16 ± 0.00	1.15 ± 0.01	1.17 ± 0.00	1.19 ± 0.01	1.20 ± 0.00	1.22 ± 0.00
21 Cr	1.14 ± 0.01	1.22 ± 0.00	1.25 ± 0.04	1.28 ± 0.00	1.30 ± 0.01	1.34 ± 0.01
Kr	1.14 ± 0.00	1.14 ± 0.01	1.16 ± 0.00	1.18 ± 0.01	1.19 ± 0.00	1.20 ± 0.00
28 Cr	1.14 ± 0.00	1.21 ± 0.00	1.22 ± 0.02	1.27 ± 0.011	1.28 ± 0.013	1.32 ± 0.006
Kr	1.14 ± 0.00	1.14 ± 0.01	1.15 ± 0.01	1.16 ± 0.003	1.17 ± 0.006	1.18 ± 0.001

Key: Cr crude oil

Kr: kerosene

The highest level of dehydrogenase activity observed at 21 days of incubation in crude oil contaminated soil was  $1.19 \pm 0.01$  (mg/g/24hrs), while it was at 7 days in kerosene contaminated soil it was  $0.78 \pm 0.01$  (mg/g/24hrs). The highest level of the urease activity observed at 21 days of incubation in crude oil contaminated soil was  $1.34 \pm 0.01$  (mg/g/24hrs) and at 7 days in kerosene contaminated soil, it was observed to be  $1.25 \pm 0.01$  (mg/g/24hrs).

The statistical analysis of dehydrogenase and urease activity in the control and crude oil-polluted soils showed that there was a significant difference ( $P < 0.05$ ) at the oil contaminated soils (1%, 5%, 10%, 15%, and 20%) in the enzymes activity and the control. The statistical analysis of dehydrogenase and urease activity in the control and kerosene-polluted soils showed that there was a significant difference ( $P < 0.05$ ) at the oil contaminated soils (1%, 5%, 10%, 15%, and 20%) in the enzymes activity and the control. The order of decreasing average concentration of dehydrogenase and urease in the soils treated with various concentrations of crude oil and kerosene was 20 % > 15% > 10% > 5 % > 1 % > 0 %

From the dehydrogenase and urease, it was found that the crude oil could destabilize the dehydrogenase and urease activity, by a rapid increase from 7 days to 21 days and decreases after 21 days. Kerosene could also destabilize the dehydrogenase and urease at initial phase followed by a rapid increase in 7 days and decreases after 14 days. After 24 hours of pollution, the concentration of crude oil had a significant effect on the activity of soil dehydrogenase and urease. The result also revealed that soil enzyme activity at higher levels of pollution was significantly higher compared to the control and the 1% crude oil treatment. The soil dehydrogenase and urease activities from the sample polluted with the crude oil of higher concentration were higher than those polluted by lower concentration. This is due to some organic material in petroleum which could increase the concentration of hydrogen ion, which led to an increase in the value of dehydrogenase and urease activity.

The contamination of crude oil and kerosene tends to make the soil enzymes unstable and the different effects of hydrocarbons on soil enzyme activity were depending on the composition of the crude oil and kerosene, and the quantity reaching the soil, which agree with the results of Andreson and Khaziev (1981); Kaigorodova (1996); Zimenka and Kartyzhova (1986); Serrano, (2009); Kiss (1998), Li, (2005); Arezo and Vanid, (2013) in their studies.

The level of dehydrogenase activity was dependent on the amount and type of oil added. This corresponds with Mikkonen *et al.* (2011) who reported that the stimulation of dehydrogenase and urease activity on petroleum hydrocarbon contaminated soil occurs immediately after the contamination event and then decreases gradually over time. Margesinet *et al.* (2000) and Ueno, (2007) also reported that the addition of petroleum hydrocarbon to soil causes an increase in all enzyme activities as a result of the development of heterotrophic microorganisms in contaminated soil (Chen *et al.*, 2017; Mukherjee *et al.*, 2017; Song *et al.*, 2017). The increase in soil enzymatic activities suggests the availability of the high quantity of biodegradable substrates (Bacosa *et al.*, 2018; Wanapaisan *et al.*, 2018; Tejada *et al.*, 2007).

The presence of petroleum aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs) was said to destabilize the activity of dehydrogenase and most hydrolases. More specifically, the microorganisms involved in C, N, P and S cycling were almost totally decimated, that is, the metabolic capacity of the soil was almost totally paralyzed (Houet *et al.*, 2018). The decrease in soil enzymatic activity in response to contamination may also be caused by non-polar organic compounds covering both organic-mineral and cell surfaces, thus hindering the interaction between enzyme active sites and soluble substrates, with adverse effects on the expression of enzyme activity (Kiss, 1998; Andreoni, 2004; Wang *et al.*, 2018; Zhao *et al.*, 2017). It was observed that the enzyme activity (dehydrogenase and urease) reached similar values with those measured in uncontaminated soils (Serrano, 2009). This suggests that the contaminants undergo some type of transformation that reduces the degree of toxicity to the soil.

Contamination of soil is a particularly serious problem because of the impact that it has on soil functioning, and on the whole ecosystem. Agricultural soils, which are continually exploited to produce food and fodder, are particularly



sensitive to contamination as agricultural soils generally display poor resilience, that is they are incapable of recovering from any type of aggression, and any type of contamination, The effect of crude oil and kerosene brought about alterations to soil functioning.

## CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study show that increased in the concentration of crude oil and kerosene, increases the activity of enzymes and thus alters the biochemical functions in the soil system and affects the soil quality, soil stability, soil property, microbial activities, and agricultural production. It may be a good option for study of contaminated soil.

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