

## A Kinetic Study on *Tetraselmis chuii* Combustion: The Catalytic Impact of Nanoparticle *Titanium Dioxide* (TiO<sub>2</sub>) Additive

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### ABSTRACT

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Due to the depletion of fossil fuel reserves and the increasing energy demand, biomass is a promising alternative as an alternative energy source. This study aims to investigate the catalytic effect of *Titanium dioxide* (TiO<sub>2</sub>) nanoparticles on the thermal behavior and kinetic parameters of *Tetraselmis chuii* (*T. chuii*) microalgae during the combustion process in the thermal analyzer. TiO<sub>2</sub> amount of 0.05 mg was mixed with 10 mg microalgae biomass. The sample was heated up from room temperature until 900 °C with a heating rate of 15 °C/min and an atmosphere flow rate of 50 mL/min. The results indicated that the sample was decomposed into five stages throughout the escalation temperature. The addition of TiO<sub>2</sub> promoted each stage of decomposition toward the lower temperatures and shorter the combustion time. The activation energy value was analyzed using the *Arrhenius* method. The TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticle impacted in reducing the value of activation energy in stage II from 101.05 kJ/mol to 72.07 kJ/mol, and stage IV from 502.88 kJ/mol to 335.32 kJ/mol. The thermodynamic parameters included entropy, enthalpy and free Gibbs energy of mixed samples in stage II were -0.1396; 67.41 and 146.14 kJ/mol, respectively, and in stage IV were 0.1541; 328.31 and 203.68 kJ/mol, in that order. These results are practically proven that the addition of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles have been shortening the thermal process and reducing the value of activation energy.

#### Keywords:

Microalgae; *Tetraselmis chuii*, *Titanium dioxide*; Kinetic parameters; Thermodynamic parameters

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## 1. Introduction

Along with the rapid expansion of the world industrialization, and the continued growth of the population, the amount of energy consumption is expected to increase quickly by 28% from 2015 until 2040 [1]. Current world energy requirements are completed by fossil fuels, specifically coal, natural gas, and crude oil [2]. The use of conventional energy sources continuously can affect the

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declining amount of reserves which cannot be renewed. This problem has been attracted researchers to look for alternative energy sources that are sustainable and environmentally friendly. According to the International Energy Agency (IEA) 2018 [3], for the power generation sector, the share of renewable energy shows a positive growth rate and is prospective to increase toward 12.4% in 2023 [3]. Among these renewable energy alternatives, biomass has been becoming the most interesting choice due to it globally available. The microalgae biomass offers more beneficial compared to the terrestrial plant biomass, because of microalgae can produce 30-100 times more energy compared to the land plant [4], besides microalgae can absorb a large amount of CO<sub>2</sub> during the process of photosynthesis [5]. Moreover, 1% of the heat generated by a power plant boiler from microalgae biomass can reduce up to 0.48% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the air [6]. Even though microalgae as an alternative fuel do not completely replace fossil fuels, but it can be an essential role in a global energy requirement and security [7].

Biomass thermochemical conversion processes such as torrefaction, pyrolysis, gasification, and combustion are considered as the main utilization techniques to convert biomass into biofuel with a high level of efficiency [8,9]. Direct combustion is a thermochemical technique for converting fuel to energy in the form of heat in the presence of air. This technique is more effective than the chemical extraction of biomass to be biodiesel [4], pyrolysis [10], torrefaction, and gasification [7,11]. The heat generated during the direct combustion is obtained from energy stored in biomass [12]. The direct combustion process has the advantage because it can convert solid fuel into heat directly without converting to another form. However, it has drawback regarding the lower heating value of biomass than the conventional fossil fuel, led to the same amount of energy, a greater volume of biomass will be needed, resulted in relatively high operational costs of biomass combustion [13]. Several studies have been performed for overcoming this drawback, including co-combustion of biomass with coal and utilization of additive as catalysts including zinc oxide, metal oxide, alkaline earth, and alkali metal [10,12,14]. A proper catalyst can reduce the decomposition temperature and activation energy of combustion and can increase the combustion reactivity [15-16].

The previous research by Jena, Das, and Kastner [17] revealed that utilization of Na<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub>, Ca<sub>3</sub>(PO<sub>4</sub>)<sub>2</sub> and NiO catalysts in the thermochemical liquefaction of *Spirulina platensis* microalgae could be increasing the yield of gas products. Sun, Zhao, and Su [18] studied the catalytic effect of Fe, Fe<sup>2+</sup> and Fe<sup>3+</sup> in the combustion of algal biomass (*Enteromorpha spp*, *Argassum muticum* and *Chlorella sp.*). The result indicated that these additives reduce NO emissions in the combustion process, even though they play as an inhibitor. As so far, the effect of *Titanium dioxide* (TiO<sub>2</sub>) on the combustion process of *Tetraselmis chuii* microalgae has not been explored by the researcher.

This study provides an in-depth understanding of the catalytic effects of TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticle to the combustion process of *Tetraselmis chuii* microalgae. The kinetic analysis is performed using a fitting model of the *Arrhenius* to determine kinetic parameters in the active zone of combustion, including activation energy (E<sub>a</sub>), pre-exponential factor (A) and reaction order (n). In addition, the thermodynamic parameters that are enthalpies (ΔH, kJ/mol), change in free Gibbs energy (ΔG, kJ/mol) and the changes of entropy (ΔS, kJ/mol) are evaluated, as well. To understanding the catalytic impact of TiO<sub>2</sub> during combustion, these kinetic parameters are then compared with the kinetic parameters of pure *Tetraselmis chuii*.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Raw Material

The sample (*Tetraselmis chuii* microalgae) was supplied from BBPBAP Jepara, Indonesia. This sample was cultured within eight days and then harvested by means of filtering through the sieve

and subsequently was deposited. The sediment sample was washing and swamping with distilled water for 6 hours in 2 times and then filtered again. Thereafter, microalgae sediments are dried in an oven at 80 °C for 24 hours to eliminate the water content. The microalgae hunks then were crushed with mortars and filtered in 60 mesh size to obtain the uniform sample.

## 2.2 TiO<sub>2</sub> Nanoparticle

Titanium dioxide (TiO<sub>2</sub>) nanoparticle was used for additive in this study. TiO<sub>2</sub> is a transition metal oxide that has been extensively applied to various uses because it has stability and photoactivity properties [19]. This material obtains from Sigma Aldrich Singapore with a particle size of <25 nm. Around 0.05 mg of TiO<sub>2</sub> was mixed with 10 mg of microalgae by mechanical mixing technique in the mortar to homogenize the mixture. Finally, the sample mixture is dried in an oven at 80 °C for 14 hours.

## 2.3 Thermogravimetric Procedure

A sample of about 10.05 mg was placed in the crucible pan for thermogravimetric analysis (TGA). The experiment was carried out using the Mettler Toledo TG/DSC1. The test was carried out at a heating rate of 15 °C/min under an oxygen air (O<sub>2</sub>) flowrate of 50 mL/min. The combustion experiment was performed from ambient temperature to 900 °C. During the experiment, the mass loss of the sample is recorded and plotted against the temperature to obtain the thermogravimetric (TG) graph. The mass-loss rate is obtained by the derivation of the mass loss to the time and resulted in the Derivative Thermogravimetric (DTG) graph. According to the TG and DTG graphs, the thermal characteristics of combustion can be determined.

## 2.4 Kinetic Analysis Methods

The thermal degradation of biomass during combustion can be modeled mathematically as presented in Eq. (1):

$$\frac{d\alpha}{(1-\alpha)^n} = \left(\frac{A}{\beta}\right) e^{\left(\frac{-E}{RT}\right)} dT \quad (1)$$

where ( $\beta = dT/dt$ ) is the heating rate. The changes in mass conversion due to the temperature escalation is expressed as the following:

$$\frac{d\alpha}{dT} = \frac{\alpha_{T_2} - \alpha_{T_1}}{T_2 - T_1} \quad (2)$$

where,  $\alpha$  is the fractional conversion, given as:

$$\alpha = (m_i - m_t / m_i - m_\infty) \quad (3)$$

where;  $m_\infty$ ,  $m_t$ ,  $m_i$  refer to the final residual amount at each stage, the mass at time t and the mass of biomass at the beginning, respectively. By taking the logarithm of Eq. (1) and rearranging, the final equation of the Arrhenius method is written as follows:

$$\ln\left(\frac{d\alpha}{dT}\right) - n \ln(1 - \alpha) = \ln\left(\frac{A}{\beta}\right) - \frac{E}{RT} \quad (4)$$

where,

n is reaction order,

A is the frequency factor (l/min),

$\beta$  is the heating rate ( $^{\circ}\text{C min}^{-1}$ ),

E is the activation energy (kJ/mol),

R is the universal gas constant ( $8.314 \text{ J/mol } ^{\circ}\text{C}^{-1}$ ) and

T is the absolute temperature (K).

For investigating the catalytic effects during thermal conversion process, the incremental mass loss after additive of  $\text{TiO}_2$  ( $\Delta M$ ) was calculated as follow [14]:

$$\Delta m = m_c - m_w \quad (5)$$

where  $m_c$  is the mass loss of microalgae after  $\text{TiO}_2$  addition and  $m_w$  is the mass loss of pure microalgae at uniform temperatures.

From the kinetics results, thermodynamic parameters such as enthalpies ( $\Delta H$ ) can be evaluated as follow [20] :

$$\Delta H = E_a - RT \quad (6)$$

In accordance with the values of activation energy (E) and the pre-exponential factors (A), the parameter of free Gibbs energy ( $\Delta G$ ) and entropy ( $\Delta S$ ) were calculated by the following Eqs. (7) and (8), respectively [21]:

$$\Delta G = E_a + R \cdot T_m \cdot \ln\left(\frac{K_B \cdot T_m}{h \cdot A}\right) \quad (7)$$

$$\Delta S = \frac{\Delta H - \Delta G}{T_m} \quad (8)$$

where,

$T_m$  is the maximum temperature of DTG peak ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ ),

$K_B$  is the Boltzmann constant ( $1.381 \times 10^{-23} \text{ J.K}^{-1}$ ), and

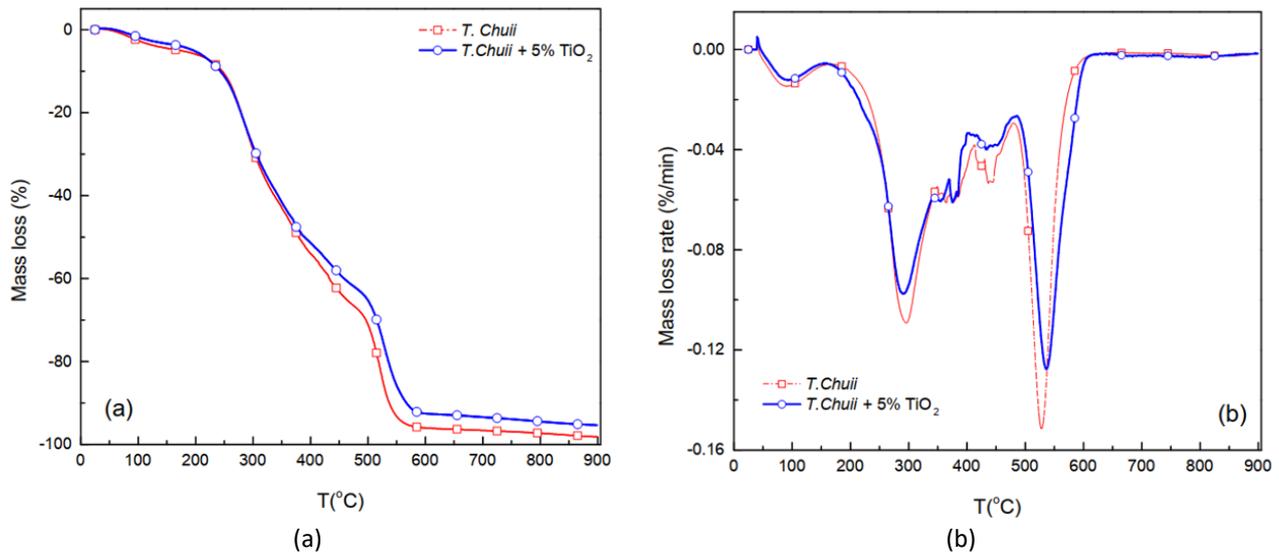
h is planks constant ( $6.626 \times 10^{-34} \text{ J.s}$ ).

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Thermal Characteristic

Figure 1 shows the TG and DTG graphs of *Tetraselmis chuii* with and without  $\text{TiO}_2$  during combustion at a heating rate of  $15 \text{ }^{\circ}\text{C/min}$ . It can be seen from Figure 1 (TG and DTG graphs) that the thermal degradation of the sample has occurred in five stages. Stage I was taken place in the temperature range of  $25\text{-}158 \text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ . In this stage, the first basin of the DTG graph was observed, indicated the release of moisture content and light volatile. Stage II was occurred in the temperature range of  $158\text{-}343 \text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ , marked by the second basin of the DTG graph, indicated the release of volatile matter. This stage was followed by the transition of the char combustion process in stage III, at the temperature range of  $343\text{-}478 \text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Stage IV was stretched at the temperature range of  $478\text{-}625 \text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$ ,

indicated the char combustion process and decomposition of fixed carbon. Stage V was the decomposition process of ash, appeared in the temperature range of 625-900 °C.

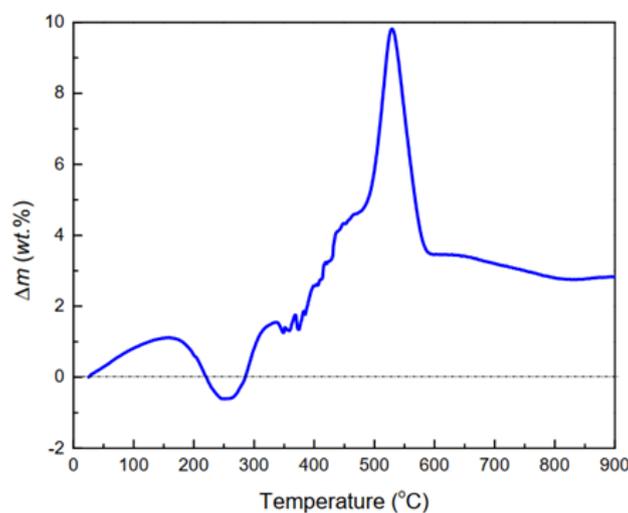


**Fig. 1.** (a) TG and (b) DTG graph of *Tetraselmis chuii* with and without TiO<sub>2</sub>

### 3.2 The Catalytic Effect of TiO<sub>2</sub> On *Tetraselmis Chuii* Combustion

The catalytic effect of TiO<sub>2</sub> on the combustion of *Tetraselmis chuii* microalgae is shown in the form of a  $\Delta M$  graph in Figure 2.

It can be seen from Figure 2, the addition of TiO<sub>2</sub> to the *Tetraselmis chuii* microalgae shows a positive effect on the mass loss during the sample combustion. The initial influence process of TiO<sub>2</sub> started at a temperature range of 25 to 163 °C, in which the  $\Delta M$  graph shows the upward direction, indicated that TiO<sub>2</sub> could promote the release of moisture content and light volatile in stage I. Then exceeding the temperature 163 °C, the graph declined up to temperature 241 °C, this indicated that the TiO<sub>2</sub> was played as an inhibitor for volatile matter decomposition process. This result is similar to the study of Liu *et al.*, [22], in which the addition of Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> and CaO in the thermal process of coal showed occurrence a decrease of  $\Delta M$  at the temperature range of 400-480 °C, then the additive affected the rising  $\Delta M$  until to 800 °C, indicated that the additive promoted the conversion of organic matter in the thermal process by 7-11%.



**Fig. 1.** The effect of TiO<sub>2</sub> in the combustion of microalgae

Referring back to Figure 2, it was observed that exceeding 241 °C, the  $\Delta M$  value gradually increase until the temperature of 336 °C and significantly rises up until temperature 530 °C, which indicated that TiO<sub>2</sub> supported faster degradation of hemicellulose [23]. It means that TiO<sub>2</sub> to be an accelerator up to the temperature of 530 °C [24]. This overall result indicated that the addition of TiO<sub>2</sub> during the combustion of *Tetraselmis chuii* accelerated the decomposition process.

### 3.3 Kinetic Parameters

Table 1 presented the combustion parameters of *Tetraselmis chuii* with and without [25] TiO<sub>2</sub>. It can be seen in Table 1 that the combustion of the sample with TiO<sub>2</sub> shifted to a lower temperature at each stage compare with the parent sample. Stage II was related to the decomposition of volatile matter, which was observed that the final combustion temperature shifted to the left (earlier) by 6 °C from 349 to 343 °C. Stage III was related to the transition process toward the char combustion, which was experiencing the shifted temperature from 480 to 478 °C. Stage IV was related to the char combustion process and fixed carbon decomposition, its final temperature shifted faster than pure microalgae by 15 °C from 640 to 625 °C.

Based on Table 1, the *Arrhenius* method was used for calculating the activation energy in this experiment. The evaluation was carried out on the active combustion zone in stages II, III and IV. Nevertheless, in stage III, the value of  $n$  cannot be determined, because, at every selected  $n$ , the value of  $R^2$  was always rising up.

The biomass combustion can be described as a single step of the  $n$ th order reaction, which experiences thermal degradation in a certain temperature zone. The kinetic evaluation was performed at the conversion ( $\alpha$ ) range of 0.05-0.95. The *Arrhenius* expression was shown in Eq. (4) [26]:

$$\ln\left(\frac{d\alpha}{dT}\right) - n \ln(1 - \alpha) = \ln\left(\frac{A}{\beta}\right) - \frac{E}{RT} \quad (4)$$

According to Eq. (4), plot  $\ln(d\alpha/dT) - n \ln(1 - \alpha)$  vs  $1/T$  must provide a straight line for each  $n$  selected. To determine the appropriate  $n$  value in the active combustion zone (stages II and IV), several  $n$  values were selected, then used to determine the value of  $\ln(d\alpha/dT) - n \ln(1 - \alpha)$ . The results were plotted with  $1/T$  resulted in the value of the correlation coefficient ( $R^2$ ). Plotted  $n$  vs  $R^2$  helped to determine the most appropriate  $n$  value, which correlated with the highest  $R^2$  as presented in Figure 3.

**Table 1**

The combustion parameters of *Tetraselmis chuii* with and without [25] TiO<sub>2</sub>

Sample	Zone	Characteristic Temperature			$M_{max}$ (°C)	Mass loss (%)
		$T_s$ (°C)	$T_p$ (°C)	$T_f$ (°C)		
<i>Tetraselmis chuii</i>	II	174	296	349	-0.10923	-42.61
	III	349	375	480	-0.06116	-67.12
	IV	480	528	640	-0.15157	-96.29
<i>Tetraselmis chuii</i> + 5% TiO <sub>2</sub>	II	158	291	343	-0.09753	-39.89
	III	343	375	478	-0.06099	-62.19
	IV	478	536	625	-0.12766	-92.76

$T_s$ : Started Temperature;  $T_p$ : Maximum Peak Temperature;  $T_f$ : Ended Temperature;  $M_{max}$ : Maximum Mass Loss Temperature

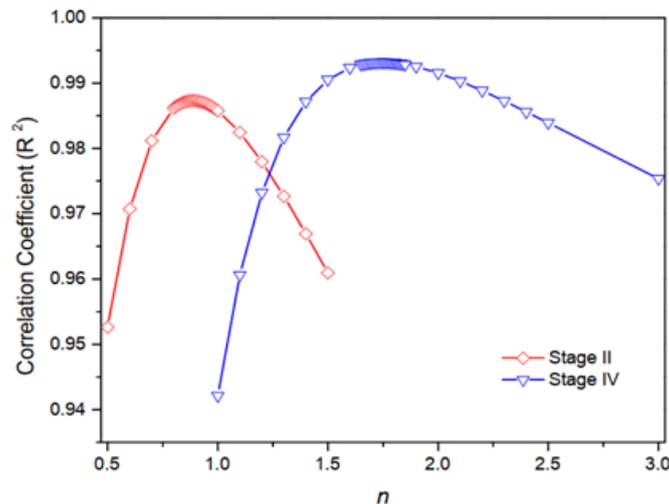


Fig. 2. The R<sup>2</sup>-n curve for stage II and IV

Figure 3 indicated that the highest R<sup>2</sup> values in stage II and stage IV were 0.9873 and 0.9932 in correlation with the most appropriate n values of 0.89 and 1.75, respectively. These n values were subsequently used for determining the final plot of  $\ln(d\alpha/dT) - n \ln(1 - \alpha)$  vs  $1/T$ , for producing a slope of  $\left(\frac{-E}{R}\right)$  and intercept of  $\left(\ln\left(\frac{A}{\beta}\right)\right)$  as presented in Figure 4. After obtaining slope  $\left(\frac{-E}{R}\right)$  and intercept  $\left(\ln\left(\frac{A}{\beta}\right)\right)$ , activation energy ( $E_a$ ) and pre-exponential factor (A) can be calculated for each stage, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2 shown the kinetics parameters of *Tetraselmis chuii* [25] and *Tetraselmis chuii* with TiO<sub>2</sub>. The respective value of n, A and E for stage II were 0.89; 6.20/min and 72.075 kJ/mol, and for stage IV were 1.75; 21.21/min and 335.35 kJ/mol. The activation energy value in stage II that was 72,075 kJ/mol lower than *Spirulina platensis* at around 178-251 kJ/mol [27], lower than corn silk land plants that was 207.37 kJ/mol [28], but the value was greater than *Victorian brown* coal at around 30-34 kJ/mol [29], camellia shell at around 55-77 kJ/mol [30] and comparable to *T.suecica* microalgae that was at around 70.09 - 76.96 kJ/mol [29].

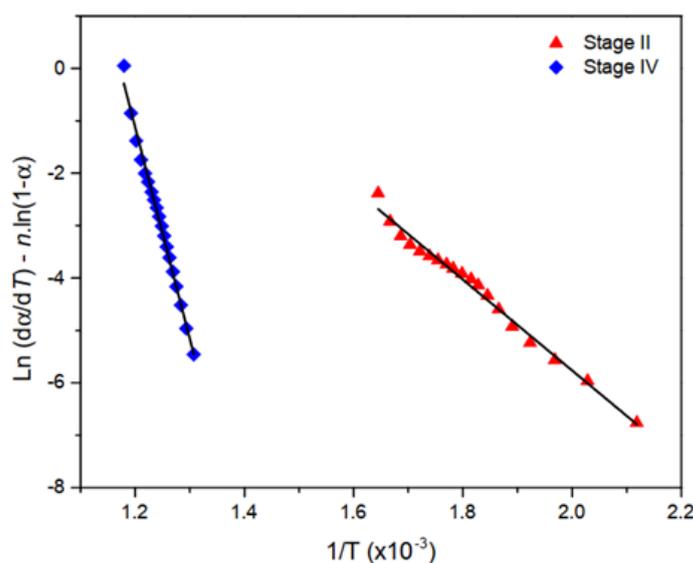


Fig. 3. The slope resulted in stage II and IV

**Table 2**

The kinetic parameters of *Tetraselmis chuii* with and without TiO<sub>2</sub>

$\beta$ (°C/min)	Sample	Zone	Trendline equation	R <sup>2</sup>	Kinetics Parameters		
					E (kJ mol <sup>-1</sup> )	Log A (min <sup>-1</sup> )	n
15	<i>Tetraselmis chuii</i>	II	$y = -12155x + 18.017$	0.9819	101.05	9.00	1.24
		IV	$y = -60486x + 73.985$	0.9989	502.88	33.31	2.38
	<i>Tetraselmis chuii</i> + 5% TiO <sub>2</sub>	II	$y = -8669.1x + 11.575$	0.9873	72.075	6.20	0.89
		IV	$y = -40332x + 47.272$	0.9932	335.32	21.71	1.75

The activation energy value in stage IV was 335.32 kJ/mol. This value is comparable to *C. vulgaris* microalgae that were 335.69 kJ/mol [31], but the value was greater than the sewage sludge that was 168.94 kJ/mol [32]. From the previous study observed that the value of the activation energy varied significantly in line with the different studied sample. These differences might be related to several factors including differences in various species of microalgae and biomass, culture time, harvest conditions, testing parameters such as heating rate, carrier gas flow rate, and sample weight.

For the same species and treatment, such as in this work, the addition of TiO<sub>2</sub> influenced the significant decreasing activation energy. In stage II, the activation energy value decreased from 101.05 kJ/mol (*Tetraselmis chuii*) to 72.075 kJ/mol (*Tetraselmis chuii* with TiO<sub>2</sub>), decreased by 28.67 %. In stage IV, the activation energy value of *Tetraselmis chuii* was 502.88 kJ/mol declined by 33.32 % became 335.32 kJ/mol. In general, the addition of TiO<sub>2</sub> provides the ability to decrease the value of activation energy in the main combustion process. Thus, the smaller the value of the activation energy, the smaller the energy needed for a material to start a new reaction [27].

### 3.4 Thermodynamic Parameters

Table 3 presented the thermodynamic parameters of *Tetraselmis chuii* with and without TiO<sub>2</sub>. As shown in Table 3, the entropy value  $\Delta S$  stage II has a negative value of -0.1396 kJ/mol; which demonstrated that the initial substance was less organized compared to the activated complex [33]. The addition of 5% TiO<sub>2</sub> resulted in the positive value of  $\Delta S$  in stage IV, indicated that TiO<sub>2</sub> promoted the initial substance more organized.

Table 3 also revealed that stage II requires enthalpy  $\Delta H$  that was 67.41 kJ/mol lower than stage IV that was 328.31 kJ/mol. Stage IV that has large enthalpy value indicated more energy at each mass conversion is needed to decompose the sample [20].

Free Gibbs energy  $\Delta G$  in stages II and IV were 146.15 and 203.68 kJ/mol, respectively. This value is higher than the red pepper waste that varied in the ranging of 71.77-207.03 kJ/mol [34]. The change in free Gibbs energy shows an increase in the energy of the total system in the reactants [20].

**Table 3**

The parameters of thermodynamic of *Tetraselmis chuii* with and without TiO<sub>2</sub>

Sample	Zone	Ea (kJ/mol)	A (1/min)	$\Delta H$ (kJ/mol)	$\Delta G$ (kJ/mol)	$\Delta S$ (kJ/mol)
<i>Tetraselmis chuii</i>	II	101.05	1.00+08	96.34	175.85	-0.1397
	IV	502.88	2.03+33	496.38	610.64	-0.1426
<i>Tetraselmis chuii</i> + 5% TiO <sub>2</sub>	II	72.075	1.59E+06	67.41	146.15	-0.1396
	IV	335.32	5.08E+21	328.31	203.68	0.1541

#### 4. Conclusions

*Tetraselmis chuii* combustion with and without TiO<sub>2</sub> has been studied under the thermogravimetric analyzer. The stages of decomposition in the active combustion zone occurred in stages II, III and IV from the whole of five stages. The addition of TiO<sub>2</sub> influenced the significant decreasing activation energy. In stage II, TiO<sub>2</sub> decreased the activation energy by 28.67 %. In stage IV, TiO<sub>2</sub> also declined the activation energy value of *Tetraselmis chuii* by 33.32 %. The thermodynamic parameters of *Tetraselmis chuii* with TiO<sub>2</sub>, include entropy  $\Delta S$ , enthalpy  $\Delta H$  and free Gibbs energy  $\Delta G$  for stage II were -0.1396; 67.41 and 146.15 kJ/mol and stage IV were 0.1541; 328.31 and 203.68 kJ/mol, respectively. The overall result indicated that TiO<sub>2</sub> played key role in accelerating the combustion process of *Tetraselmis chuii* microalgae.

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