RESEARCH ARTICLE

CONCENTRATION OF FINE PARTICULATE MATTER (PM$_{2.5}$) AND BLACK CARBON (BC) IN AEROSOL SAMPLES IN AL-ZUBAIRY AREA IN SANA’A, YEMEN

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Received: 04 September 2022 / Accepted: 20 September 2022 / Published online: 30 September 2022

Abstract

This research aims to study the air pollution due to fine Particulate Matter of radius less than 2.5µm (PM$_{2.5}$) and Black Carbon concentration (BC) in air samples. Aerosol PM$_{2.5}$ samples were collected from the rooftop of the National Oncology Center site in Al-Zubairy area in Sana’a Yemen. A Microprocessor Controlled Aerosol Sampling device ISAP1050e (Gerhard Schulze Automation Engineering, Germany company) was used to collect samples. The mass concentration of PM$_{2.5}$ of collected samples ranged from 14.27 to 159.09 µg/m$^3$ with an average of 32.66µg/m$^3$. The PM$_{2.5}$ results were compared with the World Health Organization (WHO) 2005 guideline of PM$_{2.5}$ concentration in air. Statistical analysis showed a positive correlation between PM$_{2.5}$ concentrations and temperature for both fall and summer samples. However, analysis showed a positive correlation between PM$_{2.5}$ concentrations and relative humidity for fall samples and a negative correlation for summer samples. The black carbon (BC) concentrations in PM$_{2.5}$ samples were measured using a Smoke Stain Reflectometer (SSR) device. The BC concentration ranged from 1.84 to 3.90 µg/m$^3$ with an average of 2.90 µg/m$^3$. The BC results were compared with some international reported results. The Air Quality Index (AQI) of 78.95% of PM$_{2.5}$ concentrations was higher than the standard limit (AQI < 100) developed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Keywords: Particulate Matter, Black carbon, Concentration, Air Quality Index, Correlation.

Introduction

Air Pollution is considered to be one of the biggest challenges in the world. It represents a high-risk factor for human health, climate and the environment [1]. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that air pollution causes seven million deaths every year [2]. Air Pollution occurs when high concentrations of air components exceed the normal ratio of the naturally existing components of air. It also occurs when the abnormal or toxic components of elements are present in the air. Volcanos, dust storms, and forest fires are natural sources of air pollution. Fossil and wood fuel, exhaust emission from vehicles, construction activities, industrial manufacturing and oil refineries are anthropogenic sources that contribute seriously to air pollution [3, 4]. EPA classified the air pollutants into six common groups: ground-level ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, nitrogen dioxide, lead and particulate matter [5]. Fine Particulate Matter PM$_{2.5}$ are particles of radius less than 2.5µm. PM$_{2.5}$ particles are an atmospheric aerosol that consist of a mixture of tiny particles or liquid droplets suspended in the atmosphere. Particulate Matter may contain sulfate, ammonium nitrate, sodium, chloride, trace metals, carbonaceous, crustal elements [2]. Primary Particulate matter such as fly ash and dust are emitted directly into the atmosphere whereas secondary Particulate matter are formed in the atmosphere by the reaction of the primary particulate and gases [6, 7]. The lifetime of PM$_{2.5}$ can be several days to months and they can be transported hundreds or thousands of kilometers from their source of origin [8]. Domestic and global pollutant emission sources, and the meteorological conditions have various effects on PM$_{2.5}$ mass concentration [9]. Particulate matter PM$_{2.5}$ may cause some serious health complications in respiratory
and cardiovascular systems since they can get deep into the lung and may get into the bloodstream [10]. The black carbon (BC) is one constituent of PM$_{2.5}$ [11]. It is a solid form of pure carbon that absorbs sunlight at all wavelengths. BC warms the air, and it is considered to be the second contributor of global warming after CO$_2$ [12]. BC is emitted directly into the atmosphere due to the incomplete combustion of fossil fuels, biofuels and biomass [13, 14]. It was reported that the global emissions of BC are due to various causes such as house activities, transportation, industrial production, and fossil fuels [13]. In this study, mass concentrations of PM$_{2.5}$ collected from the study area were measured and compared with the guideline of WHO of PM$_{2.5}$ concentrations. The limiting values stated by WHO (2005) guideline for PM$_{2.5}$ concentration in air are 10 µg/m$^3$ as annual limit and 25 µg/m$^3$ as twenty-four hours limit [1, 15]. Furthermore, our study measured the black carbon concentrations in PM$_{2.5}$ samples and results were compared with some international studies. Finally, the study investigated the air quality of the study area through finding the Air Quality Index (AQI) for collected samples.

**Methodology**

Aerosol PM$_{2.5}$ samples were collected during summer and fall seasons of 2017. Samples were collected using Teflon filters employing the Microprocessor Controlled Aerosol Sampling device ISAP1050e (model 1050e PKPM 10& 2.5& 1.0/2.3, I S A P Gerhard Schulze Automation Engineering, Germany). For each sample, the total mass, in microgram, was weighed using a sensitive balance with a sensitivity of 10µg. The black carbon content in the each sample was measured using Smoke Stain Reflectometer EEI (Model 43D(Diffusion Systems Ltd., London).

**Sampling and PM2.5 mass concentration analysis:**

The sampler was located on the rooftop of the National Oncology Center building at the Republican Hospital in Al-Zubairy area in Sana’a, the capital of Yemen. The sampling inlet was set 2 meters above the ground to avoid the re-suspension of dust in the samples [16]. After downloading the filter on the sampler, the aerosols were deposited on the Teflon filters. The air in the sampling inlet is drawn through a slit, which is directed towards a collecting plate (impaction plate). Higher diameter particles deviate from the sampler streamlines and impact on the first plate (PM >10). Smaller particles move to the next impaction plate (PM 2.5-10), and finally the smallest particles continue moving to the last impaction plate (PM$_{2.5}$).

The procedure of collection of samples includes four steps [17]; preparation of filters before sampling, pre-weighing the filters before sampling, filters loading and un loading on the ISAP1050e sampler, and finally post-weighing of the filters after sampling. Before sampling, the filters are inspected visually for any defects such as holes, dirt and those defected filters were discarded. One day prior to pre-and post-weighing, the filters were left in a clean hood or box for equilibrium. After pre-weighing, the filter is loaded on the ISAP1050e sampler and the sampler is programed to start at midnight of sampling day and stop at midnight of next day. When the period of sampling is completed, the filter is unloaded from the ISAP1050e sampler and then the filter is post-weighed. Furthermore, simultaneously with sampling, the meteorological conditions are measured using a temperature, relative humidity and pressure sensor (model ISAP® TP-P/I SAP®TPHsP Gerhard Schulze Automation Engineering, Germany) which measures temperature, pressure and relative humidity every five minutes during the sampling process just as the device was set up by the manufacturer.
The samples were weighed before and after sampling using Sartorius/CP225D sensitive balance as demonstrated in figure (3) with a sensitivity of 10µg. Before and after 24 hours of the weighing process, the samples (filters) were conditioned in a desiccator. The mass concentration of PM$_{2.5}$ is calculated as follows:

Mass concentration ($\mu g/m^3$) = (final mass – initial mass)/volume

The volume of the air in the filter (sample) was corrected to take into account metrological conditions of pressure and temperature compared to standard conditions as follows [18]:

If $Q_a$ is the average sampler flow rate (2.3 m$^3$/h), $T_a$ is the average actual temperature in K, $P_a$ is the average actual pressure in KPa, $t$ is the total elapsed sampling time, then the corrected average flow and the corrected volume are calculated as follows:

$Q_{corrected} = Q_a(P_{std}T_a/P_{a}T_{std})$

And the corrected volume is given by:

$V_{corrected} = Q_{corrected} \times t$

where: $T_{std} = 298.15$ K and $P_{std} = 101.3$ KPa

**Black Carbon Analysis:**

A Smoke Stain Reflectometer (SSR) was used for Black Carbon measurements such that measurements were performed three times for each sample and the average value was used in the calculations. In the SSR, the light from a tungsten lamp shines its light on the filter, and it is reflected back to a photodetector located in a black housing (head). The reflectance of the exposed filter (aerosol sample) is obtained directly from the digital readout which is represented by $R$ (in percentage) and the Reflectance of a clean filter (blank) is represented by $R_o$ [100% [14].

To calculate the concentration of BC in PM$_{2.5}$, we used the following equation [14]:

$$BC\left(\frac{\mu g}{m^3}\right) = \frac{100A}{2eV} \ln \left(\frac{R_o}{R}\right)$$

Where:

- $A$ is the filter area in cm$^2$.
- $V$ is the volume of air in the filter in m$^3$.
- $\varepsilon$ is the mass absorption coefficient and equals 7 m$^2$/g at the given wavelength 520nm,
- $R_o (=100\%)$ is the reading of the light reflection using the clean filter (blank filter), and
- $R$ is the reading of the light reflection using the exposed filter (aerosol samples).

**Air Quality Index (AQI):**

Air Quality Index (AQI) is defined as an index for reporting the quality of the ambient air and it is an indicator to how the air pollution affects the human health. The Air Quality Index (AQI) has been developed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The AQI is mainly categorized into six zones as summarized in table 1.

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**Fig. 3:** Sartorius/CP225D sensitive balance

**Fig. 4:** EEL43M Smoke Stain Reflectometer (SSR)
Table (1): Air Quality Index Categories

| Group Icon | AQI Values(range) | Descriptor | Color Code | Health Advisory |
|------------|-------------------|------------|------------|----------------|
| A          | 0-50              | Good       | Green      | None           |
| B          | 51-100            | Moderate   | Yellow     | The air quality is acceptable; however, for some pollutants there may be a moderate health concern for a very few/specific number of people who are unusually sensitive to air pollution |
| C          | 101-150           | Unhealthy  for Sensitive Groups | Orange | People with heart or lung diseases, older adults, and children should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion |
| D          | 151-200           | Unhealthy  | Red        | People with heart or lung diseases, older adults, and children should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. Everyone else should reduce prolonged or heavy exertion. |
| E          | 201-300           | Very Unhealthy | Purple | People with heart or lung diseases, older adults, and children should avoid all physical activity outdoors. Everyone else should avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. |
| F          | 301 and above      | Hazardous  | Maroon     | Everyone should avoid all outdoor exertion |

EPA has set the air quality standard limit of 100 to protect public health. If AQI values were at or below 100 (AQI < 100), the air quality is acceptable and if AQI values were above 100 (AQI >100), the air quality is considered to be unhealthy for everyone [19, 20].

Results and Discussion

The mass concentration of PM$_{2.5}$ in the study region during the sampling period was in the range 14.27-159.09 µg/m$^3$ with an average of 32.66 µg/m$^3$. Referring to tables (2) and (3) for PM$_{2.5}$, it was found that the mass concentration of PM$_{2.5}$ in summer season was higher than in fall season. As shown in figure (6), the mass concentration in summer season was in the range 16.91-159.09 µg/m$^3$ with an average of 45.50 µg/m$^3$. On the other hand, the mass concentration of PM$_{2.5}$ in fall season was in the range 14.27-35.48 µg/m$^3$ with an average of 20.75 µg/m$^3$ as shown in figure (5)

Table (2): PM$_{2.5}$ mass and Black Carbon concentrations for summer samples

| Sample No. | Date of sampling | PM$_{2.5}$ (µg/m$^3$) | BC (µg/m$^3$) | BC/PM$_{2.5}$ (%) | Meteorological Conditions | AQI (µg/m$^3$) | AQI Rate |
|------------|------------------|------------------------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------------|----------------|----------|
| 1          | 11-Jun           | 36.55                  | 3.90         | 10.66             | T(K) 297.33               | 77.26          | 24.66    | 152.31 | D       |
| 2          | 18-Jun           | 43.52                  | 2.81         | 6.46              | T(K) 299.14               | 77.24          | 32.44    | 181.35 | D       |
| 3          | 21-Jun           | 25.68                  | 2.84         | 11.07             | T(K) 298.55               | 77.27          | 37.67    | 107.01 | C       |
| 4          | 25-Jun           | 37.30                  | 1.84         | 4.93              | T(K) 296.88               | 77.26          | 41.58    | 155.43 | D       |
| 5          | 28-Jun           | 21.86                  | 2.15         | 9.84              | T(K) 297.46               | 77.30          | 31.86    | 91.09  | B       |
| 6          | 2-Jul            | 25.74                  | 2.46         | 9.57              | T(K) 299.13               | 77.17          | 22.84    | 107.26 | C       |
| 7          | 5-Jul            | 69.32                  | 1.85         | 2.67              | T(K) 297.77               | 77.27          | 42.60    | 171.33 | D       |
| 8          | 12-Jul           | 45.51                  | 2.06         | 4.54              | T(K) 299.26               | 77.22          | 30.38    | 189.64 | D       |
| 9          | 16-Jul           | 42.93                  | 2.71         | 6.31              | T(K) 298.96               | 77.22          | 31.85    | 178.87 | D       |
| 10         | 19-Jul           | 39.48                  | 2.31         | 5.86              | T(K) 294.86               | 77.25          | 55.81    | 164.50 | D       |
| 11         | 23-Jul           | 36.24                  | 3.02         | 8.33              | T(K) 297.60               | 77.13          | 43.12    | 150.99 | D       |
| 12         | 30-Jul           | 35.65                  | 2.83         | 7.93              | T(K) 297.01               | 77.17          | 45.33    | 148.55 | C       |
| 13         | 02-Aug           | 123.65                 | 3.24         | 2.62              | T(K) 296.09               | 77.41          | 54.43    | 318.05 | F       |
| 14         | 06-Aug           | 159.09                 | 3.77         | 19.52             | T(K) 297.09               | 77.11          | 47.51    | 204.49 | E       |
| 15         | 09-Aug           | 19.32                  | 3.28         | 2.01              | T(K) 291.80               | 77.37          | 72.83    | 80.50  | B       |
| 16         | 13-Aug           | 22.96                  | 3.90         | 17.01             | T(K) 293.00               | 77.27          | 69.15    | 95.65  | B       |
| 17         | 16-Aug           | 16.91                  | 3.70         | 21.87             | T(K) 293.47               | 77.25          | 65.38    | 70.45  | B       |
| 18         | 20-Aug           | 30.76                  | 3.57         | 11.61             | T(K) 296.10               | 77.23          | 49.14    | 128.18 | C       |
| 19         | 23-Aug           | 31.98                  | 3.49         | 10.92             | T(K) 298.54               | 77.02          | 33.00    | 133.26 | C       |
Table (3): PM$_{2.5}$ mass and Black Carbon concentrations for fall samples

| Sample # | Date of sampling | PM$_{2.5}$ (µg/m$^3$) | BC (µg/m$^3$) | BC/PM$_{2.5}$ (%) | Meteorological Conditions | AQI (µg/m$^3$) | AQI Rate |
|----------|------------------|------------------------|---------------|------------------|--------------------------|----------------|----------|
| 1        | 3-Sep            | 28.34                  | 3.17          | 11.20            | 295.57                   | 77.23          | 54.52    | 118.06 | C   |
| 2        | 6-Sep            | 24.44                  | 3.12          | 12.78            | 296.71                   | 77.38          | 44.37    | 101.84 | C   |
| 3        | 10-Sep           | 21.68                  | 2.78          | 12.84            | 296.25                   | 77.32          | 26.40    | 90.33  | B   |
| 4        | 13-Sep           | 35.48                  | 1.86          | 5.24             | 296.91                   | 77.41          | 28.80    | 147.82 | C   |
| 5        | 17-Sep           | 16.12                  | 3.19          | 19.81            | 295.89                   | 77.46          | 24.32    | 67.15  | B   |
| 6        | 24-Sep           | 18.98                  | 3.02          | 15.92            | 295.16                   | 77.49          | 20.27    | 79.08  | B   |
| 7        | 1-Oct            | 14.28                  | 2.96          | 20.71            | 293.70                   | 77.56          | 25.07    | 83.04  | B   |
| 8        | 4-Oct            | 19.93                  | 3.65          | 18.30            | 292.36                   | 77.48          | 33.72    | 62.40  | B   |
| 9        | 8-Oct            | 14.98                  | 2.49          | 16.65            | 293.18                   | 77.49          | 25.78    | 89.23  | B   |
| 10       | 18-Oct           | 21.42                  | 2.83          | 13.21            | 290.72                   | 77.58          | 27.26    | 59.44  | B   |
| 11       | 22-Oct           | 23.76                  | 2.84          | 11.94            | 292.69                   | 77.58          | 28.73    | 98.99  | B   |
| 12       | 25-Oct           | 21.03                  | 2.70          | 12.83            | 291.44                   | 77.74          | 28.34    | 87.61  | B   |
| 13       | 1-Nov            | 14.27                  | 2.94          | 20.58            | 290.48                   | 77.52          | 31.64    | 71.39  | B   |
| 14       | 5-Nov            | 17.13                  | 3.10          | 18.10            | 289.61                   | 77.61          | 32.87    | 93.04  | B   |
| 15       | 8-Nov            | 22.33                  | 3.26          | 14.58            | 289.12                   | 77.61          | 32.87    | 93.04  | B   |
| 16       | 12-Nov           | 17.72                  | 2.86          | 16.14            | 292.30                   | 76.98          | 31.19    | 73.84  | B   |
| 17       | 15-Nov           | 23.75                  | 2.84          | 11.97            | 288.03                   | 77.60          | 31.69    | 98.97  | B   |
| 18       | 26-Nov           | 21.83                  | 2.78          | 12.72            | 289.79                   | 77.86          | 52.92    | 90.98  | B   |
| 19       | 29-Nov           | 16.84                  | 2.58          | 15.34            | 289.30                   | 78.82          | 38.80    | 70.16  | B   |

BC: Black Carbon, T: Temperature in Kelvin, P: Pressure in Kpa, RH: Relative humidity, AQI: Air Quality Index
B: Good, C: Unhealthy for sensitive groups, D: Unhealthy, E: Very unhealthy, F: Hazardous

Fig. 5: mass concentration for Fall samples
Fig. 6: mass concentration for Summer samples
Fig. 7: The Black Carbon Concentration in Summer
Fig. 8: The Black Carbon concentration in Fall
Results showed that 68.4% of the samples in summer season had higher PM$_{2.5}$ concentrations than the (2005) guideline of WHO, 25µg/m$^3$, while 89.47% of the samples in fall season had lower PM$_{2.5}$ concentrations than WHO guideline. Furthermore, the Air Quality Index (AQI) for about half of the samples was acceptable. Monthly average of Air Quality Index of PM$_{2.5}$ showed that AQI in July was the highest due to dust storms and that AQI in October and November were the lowest. It was noted that, in summer the AQI of 78.95% of PM$_{2.5}$ concentrations was higher than the standard limit, <100, in which 26.31% of the cases AQI was found to be “unhealthy for sensitive people level”, 42.11% “unhealthy level”, 5.26% “very unhealthy level”, and 5.26% “Hazardous level”. In fall season, the AQI of 84.21% of PM$_{2.5}$ concentrations was moderate level whereas the AQI of 15.79% was higher than the standard limit and classified as “unhealthy for sensitive groups level”. Moreover, results show that black carbon concentration in the study area during the sampling period was in the range (1.84-3.90) µg/m$^3$ with an average 2.90 µg/m$^3$. Black carbon concentration in summer ranged from 1.84 µg/m$^3$ to 3.90 µg/m$^3$ with an average of 2.91 µg/m$^3$ and it ranged from 1.86 µg/m$^3$ to 3.65 µg/m$^3$ with an average of 2.89 µg/m$^3$ in fall season. The lowest monthly average of concentration of black carbon (BC) was 1.84 µg/m$^3$ in June and the highest concentration of Black Carbon (BC) was 3.90 µg/m$^3$ in August. Moreover, the percentage of BC in PM$_{2.5}$ varied from 2.01% to 21.87% during the period of study.

Moreover, It was noted that 66% of the monthly Black Carbon (BC) percentage in PM$_{2.5}$ had higher value than twelve percent. Those values of relatively high percentage of BC in PM$_{2.5}$ may cause significant health risk to the public and the long-term average BC exposure could be associated with a variety of health effects [22]. Figure (9) shows a comparison between Black Carbon (BC) concentrations in this study and some other reported studies such as Ashaiman-Ghana, Minneapolis-USA, Riyadh-Saudi Arabia, Punyanaagara-India, Wuhan-PRC, Urban Hong Kong, and Beijing-China. Details of these international studies were referred in [23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29].

**Statistical analysis**

The Pearson correlation method was used in our statistical analysis. As demonstrated in figures (10 to 15). Results show that there were correlations between PM$_{2.5}$ concentrations with temperature and relative humidity during the study period. However, there was no correlation between PM$_{2.5}$ concentrations and pressure. Specifically, there was a moderate significant positive correlation between PM$_{2.5}$ concentration and temperature with $r = 0.638$ and $P = 0.003$ in summer and $r = 0.50$ and $P = 0.02$ in fall. For relative humidity there was a moderate significant positive correlation with $r = 0.52$ and $P = 0.013$ in fall; however, there was a moderate significant negative correlation in summer with $r = 0.513$ and $P = 0.042$. Analysis may be interpreted as a temperature increases, the PM$_{2.5}$ concentration increases in both fall and summer seasons. The statistical analysis gives us some suggestions to explain the variation of PM$_{2.5}$ concentration during the sampling period, however we should not ignore other main reasons such as dust concentration in the atmosphere and dust storms.
Conclusion

The concentrations of PM$_{2.5}$ of aerosol samples and Black Carbon content in PM$_{2.5}$ of the study area were studied. We concluded that, most of aerosol PM$_{2.5}$ concentrations in summer were above the WHO 2005 guideline. The PM$_{2.5}$ concentrations in summer were higher than in fall season due to the dust storms in June and July. Additionally, it was concluded that the Air Quality Index (AQI) of PM$_{2.5}$ concentrations for about half of the samples were higher than the EPA standard limit and ranged from “unhealthy for sensitive groups level” to “hazardous level”. The Air Quality Index (AQI) for about half of the samples was acceptable. The monthly average of Air Quality Index of PM$_{2.5}$ showed that AQI in July was the highest and that AQI in October and November were the lowest. Furthermore, it was found that the air pollution due to PM$_{2.5}$ in the summer is more than in the fall because of dust storms in summer season. Moreover, it was found that the percentage of BC in PM$_{2.5}$ in fall was higher than the percentage in summer season. The reason could be explained as: the more usage of wood and coal in fall season causes the high percentage of BC occurrence. Furthermore, even though our study region is urban and is not industrial, the black carbon concentrations were relatively high. This suggests that the source of black carbon in our study is local pollution sources such as kerosene fuel, charcoal,
firewood, diesel generator etc. Compared with some other international studies, the BC concentrations in PM$_{2.5}$ in our study were higher than twelve international studies.

Funding

This work was supported by the National Atomic Energy Commission of Yemen.

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How to cite this article:

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