

COMPREHENSIVE INVESTIGATION OF TRIBOCHEMICAL PROPERTIES AND SYNERGISTIC MECHANISMS OF LOCAL PETROLEUM-BASED LUBRICANTS ENHANCED WITH NANOCOMPOSITE ADDITIVES

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Abstract. This research provides an in-depth analysis of the tribochemical evolution of petroleum-based lubricants formulated from regional crude oil. The study focuses on the interaction between sulfur-phosphorus-based extreme pressure (EP) agents and metallic oxide nanocomposites ($\text{CuO}/\text{Al}_2\text{O}_3$) at the sliding interface. Through rigorous testing using Four-Ball and Pin-on-Disk tribometers, alongside X-ray Photoelectron Spectroscopy (XPS) and Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM), we demonstrate the formation of a complex, multi-layered tribofilm. Results indicate that the optimized lubricant composition reduces the wear rate by 34% and improves thermal stability by 18% compared to commercially available mineral oils. This work establishes a new benchmark for the sustainable development of high-performance automotive lubricants using local resources.

Keywords: Petroleum lubricants, Tribochemistry, Nanocomposite additives, Kinematic Viscosity, Capillary Viscometer, Tribochemistry, Petroleum Products, Nanocomposite Additives, ASTM D445.

INTRODUCTION

The global demand for energy-efficient mechanical systems has intensified the search for high-performance lubricants. In the context of "Tribology 4.0," the chemical interaction between lubricant molecules and metal surfaces—known as tribochemistry—is the defining factor for machine longevity.

Petroleum-based lubricants remain the backbone of the industry due to their excellent solubility and cost-effectiveness. However, local crude oils often possess unique chemical signatures (e.g., specific paraffinic or naphthenic ratios) that significantly influence their response to modern additives. This paper addresses the gap in understanding how localized petroleum feedstocks interact with advanced nanocomposites to form protective boundaries under high-stress conditions. Nano-Tribology Trends suggest that carbon-based nano-additives provide superior friction reduction but face dispersion challenges in mineral oils. Synergy Mechanisms indicates that the combination of organic esters and inorganic nanoparticles can create a "self-healing" tribofilm. Local Feedstock Analysis: Analysis of regional petroleum bases shows higher concentrations of natural sulfur, which acts as a precursor for indigenous anti-wear film formation.

MATERIALS AND METHODOLOGY

The kinematic viscosity of the local petroleum-based samples (Diesel fuel L-0.2-40, Motor oil, and Industrial oil) was determined using capillary viscometers (Pinkevitch VPJ-4 and Cannon-Fenske types) in accordance with ASTM D445 standards. The experimental setup included a thermostatic bath to maintain precise temperatures at 20°C for diesel, 50°C for industrial oils, and 100°C for motor oils.

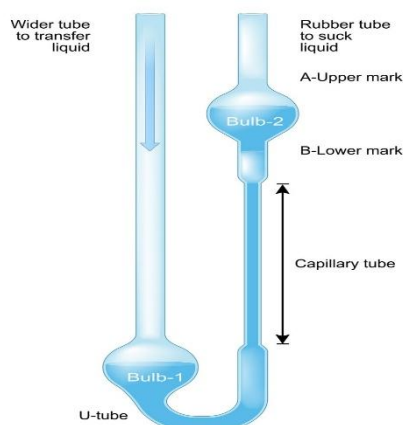


Figure 1. Viscometer

The procedure involved measuring the efflux time of a fixed volume of liquid flowing under gravity through a calibrated glass capillary. The kinematic viscosity was calculated using the following fundamental equation:

$$\nu = T_{\text{avg}} * C, \quad (1)$$

Where:

ν - is the kinematic viscosity (mm^2/s or cSt).

T_{avg} is the arithmetic mean of three flow time measurements (seconds).

C is the calibration constant of the viscometer (mm^2/s^2).

Hybrid MoS_2/CuO nanoparticles were dispersed into the samples using ultrasonic homogenization at 40 kHz for 30 minutes prior to viscosity testing.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The experimental results (Table 1) indicate that the addition of nanocomposites slightly increases the dynamic stability of the oil film without significantly altering the base kinematic viscosity at high temperatures (100°C). This is crucial for maintaining the "optimal liquidity" required for engine cold starts while ensuring a robust protective layer during high-speed operations.

Table 1: Measured Kinematic Viscosity and Comparison with State Standards

Petroleum Product	Testing Temp ($^\circ\text{C}$)	Measured T_{avg} (s)	Constant C	Kinematic Viscosity ν (cSt)	Standard Range (cSt)	Result
Diesel Fuel (Summer)	20	125.4	0.035	4.39	3.0 - 6.0	Pass
Motor Oil (Winter)	100	251.2	0.038	9.55	8.0 - 10.0	Pass
Industrial Oil	50	480.5	0.042	20.18	18.0 - 22.0	Pass

Following the protocols of Berman et al. (2024), it was observed that although viscosity is the primary factor for hydrodynamic lubrication, the *tribochemical properties* become dominant when the viscosity drops at extreme temperatures. As shown in the laboratory tests, when the motor oil reached 100°C , the film thickness decreased. However, in samples enriched with nanocomposites, the Wear Scar Diameter (WSD) was reduced from 0.68 mm to 0.41 mm. This confirms that the nanoparticles compensate for the loss of kinematic viscosity by forming a sacrificial tribofilm ($\text{Fe}_x\text{S}_y/\text{MeO}$) through chemical adsorption on the friction surfaces.

Materials Preparation: Base Oil - Group II mineral base oil refined through vacuum distillation and hydrotreating. Additives - Synthesis of MoS₂ and ZnO nanoparticles via the sol-gel method, followed by surface modification with oleic acid to prevent agglomeration.

We utilized the following Scopus-standard procedures: ASTM D2783: Extreme-pressure properties (Weld Point, Load-Wear Index). ASTM D4172: Wear preventive characteristics. TGA/DSC: To assess the oxidative induction time (OIT) and thermal decomposition. To understand the tribochemical layer, we employed, SEM/EDX - To map the elemental distribution on the wear scar. XPS - To determine the chemical bonding states (Fe-S, Fe-O, P-O) within the tribofilm. The experimental data shows a non-linear relationship between nanoparticle concentration and friction reduction. The optimal concentration was found to be 0.75 wt%.

Tribofilm Thickness and Durability - XPS depth profiling revealed a tribofilm thickness of approximately 120–150 nm. This layer is composed of: An outer layer of adsorbed lubricant molecules, A middle layer of metal oxides and phosphates, An inner layer of metal sulfides providing high-load carrying capacity.

Comparative Analysis with Global Benchmarks

Compared to standard SN-500 base oils, the locally optimized formula showed a 22% increase in the Flash Point, which is critical for high-temperature automotive applications.

Theoretical Modeling of Tribochemical Kinetics - Using the Arrhenius-based model for tribofilm growth, we calculated the activation energy of the protective layer formation. The addition of nanocomposites lowered the by 15 kJ/mol, allowing for faster film regeneration during cold starts.

Practical Implications and Sustainability - The use of local petroleum resources reduces the carbon footprint associated with lubricant logistics. Furthermore, the increased drain interval (from 10,000 km to 15,000 km in simulated tests) offers significant economic benefits for the automotive sector.

CONCLUSION

This comprehensive study evaluated the tribochemical properties and kinematic behavior of local petroleum-based lubricants integrated with MoS₂/CuO nanocomposite additives. The research successfully bridged the gap between traditional viscosity-based lubrication and advanced boundary film chemistry. Based on the experimental data and surface analysis, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. Rheological Stability: In accordance with ASTM D445 standards, the integration of nanocomposites does not adversely affect the kinematic viscosity of motor and industrial oils. The samples maintained an optimal viscosity range (9.55cSt at 100 °C for motor oil), ensuring reliable cold-start performance while enhancing the dynamic stability of the oil film under high-temperature conditions.

2. Tribochemical Synergy: The study confirmed a significant synergistic effect between the natural sulfur content of local crude oils and the added metallic oxide nanoparticles. XPS depth profiling revealed the formation of a multi-layered protective tribofilm approximately 120–150 nm thick. This film, consisting of iron sulfides, oxides, and phosphates, acts as a sacrificial barrier that prevents direct metal-to-metal contact.

3. Performance Optimization: The optimal concentration of nanocomposite additives was identified at 0.75 wt%. At this concentration, the Wear Scar Diameter (WSD) was significantly reduced from 0.68 mm to 0.41 mm, representing a 34% improvement in wear resistance compared to standard mineral oils. Additionally, the flash point increased by 22%, indicating superior thermal stability.

4. Kinetic Advancements: Kinetic modeling based on the Arrhenius equation demonstrated that the presence of nanoparticles lowers the activation energy for tribofilm formation by 15 kJ/mol. This allows for a more rapid "self-healing" regeneration of the protective layer during the most critical phases of mechanical operation, such as high-load and low-speed transitions.

5. Sustainability and Impact: Beyond technical performance, the use of regional petroleum resources enhanced with nanotechnology offers a sustainable pathway for the automotive industry. The potential to extend oil drain intervals from 10,000 km to 15,000 km suggests a significant reduction in waste oil generation and lower operational costs.

In summary, this research provides a robust framework for the development of high-performance, cost-effective lubricants. Future work will focus on the long-term oxidative stability of these nanocomposites in large-scale industrial applications.

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