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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF EMISSIONS: FOSSIL FUELS AND BIOMASS COMBUSTION IN DOMESTIC HEATING

Ginevra Barbieri
PhD Student, Department of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (DiSA), University of Udine, Via delle Scienze, loc. Rizzi, Udine, Italy

Abstract
Domestic heating contributes significantly to global emissions, with fossil fuels and biomass being the primary energy sources. This study provides a comparative analysis of emissions resulting from the combustion of fossil fuels (coal, natural gas, and oil) and biomass (wood, pellets, and agricultural residues) in domestic heating systems. The research evaluates emission factors, including particulate matter (PM), carbon dioxide (CO2), carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NOx), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs). The analysis reveals that while biomass is often considered a renewable and carbon-neutral source, its combustion can release significant quantities of PM and VOCs. Conversely, fossil fuels, particularly natural gas, emit lower levels of particulate matter but contribute more to CO2 emissions. The study highlights the trade-offs between using biomass and fossil fuels, considering factors such as efficiency, environmental impact, and air quality. These findings aim to inform policymakers and stakeholders in making sustainable energy decisions for domestic heating.

Keywords Domestic heating, Fossil fuels, Biomass combustion, Emissions analysis, Particulate matter, Carbon dioxide, Air qualityM Renewable energy, Environmental impact.

INTRODUCTION

Agricultural The growing demand for energy in domestic heating has led to increased attention on the environmental impacts of various energy sources. Fossil fuels, including coal, natural gas, and oil, have been the dominant sources of energy for decades due to their high energy density and availability. However, their use is associated with significant greenhouse gas emissions and air pollutants, contributing to climate change and health concerns.

In response to these challenges, biomass has gained traction as an alternative energy source, often considered renewable and environmentally friendly. Biomass fuels, such as wood, pellets, and agricultural residues, are perceived as carbon-neutral due to their potential for carbon reabsorption during plant regrowth. Despite this, the combustion of biomass can produce considerable amounts of particulate matter (PM) and other pollutants, raising questions about its overall environmental benefits.

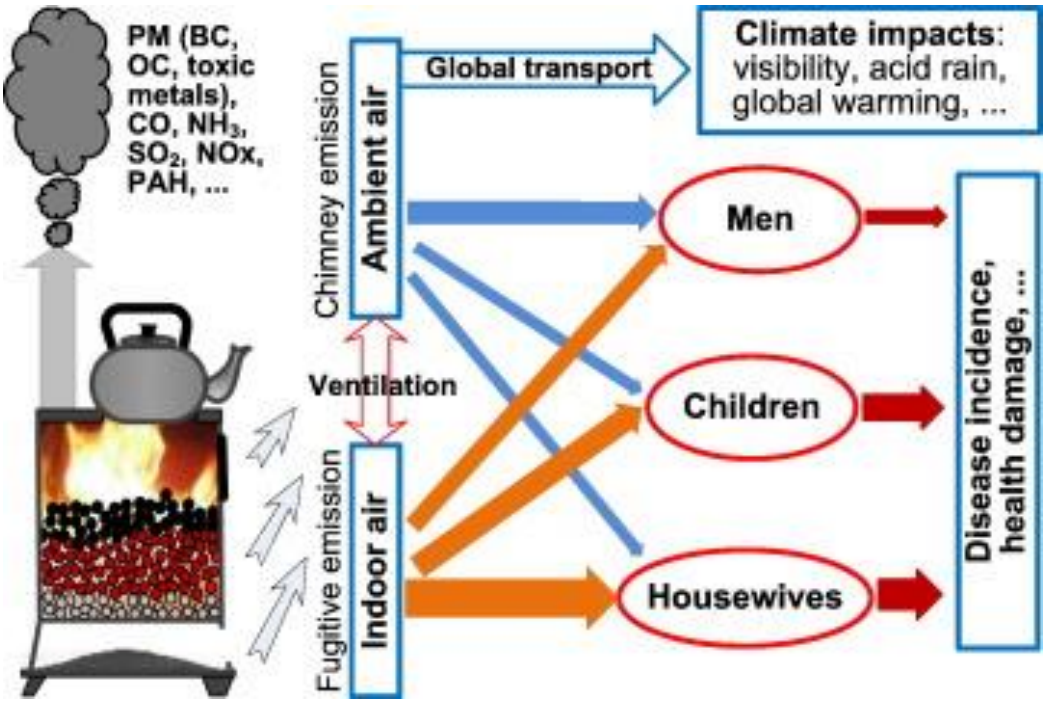
This study investigates the emissions associated with fossil fuel and biomass combustion in domestic heating systems. By comparing emission factors such as PM, carbon dioxide (CO2), carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NOx), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), the analysis aims to provide insights into the trade-offs and implications of choosing between these energy sources. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for making informed decisions that balance energy needs, environmental sustainability, and public

health considerations.

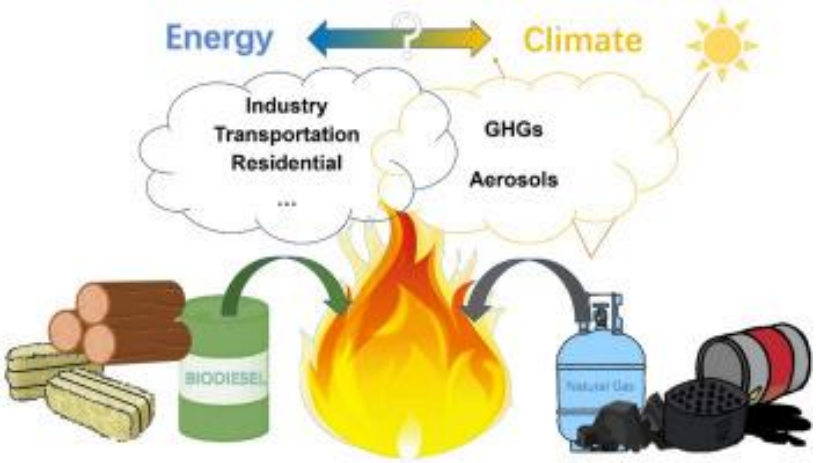
METHOD

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to evaluate the emissions from fossil fuel and biomass combustion in domestic heating systems. The methodology integrates experimental measurements, data analysis, and literature review to ensure comprehensive results.

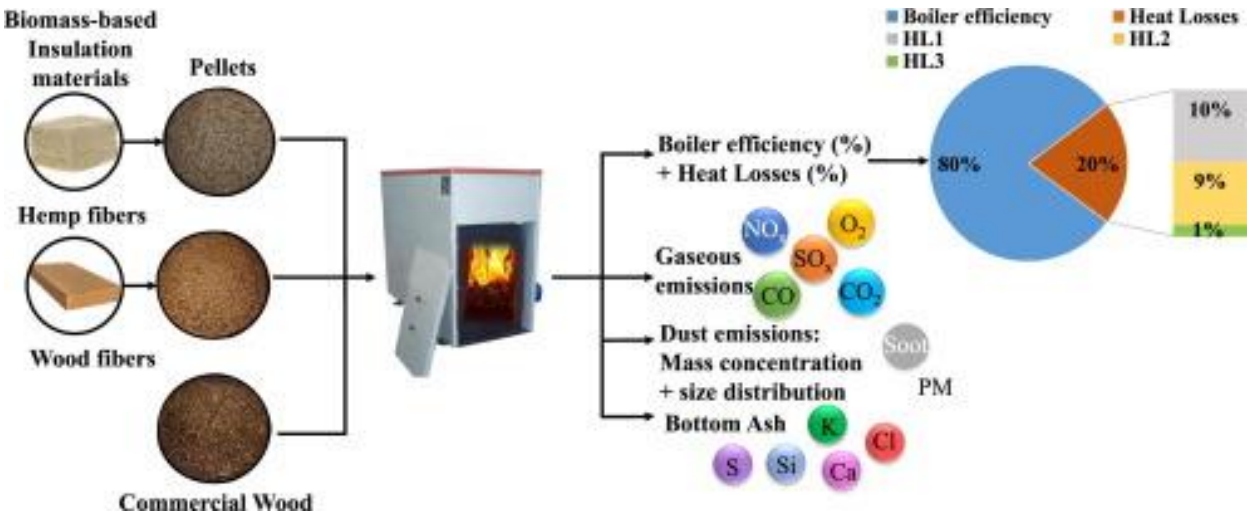
First, experimental measurements were conducted using representative domestic heating appliances, including boilers and stoves designed for fossil fuels (coal, oil, and natural gas) and biomass (wood logs, pellets, and agricultural residues). Emission factors such as particulate matter (PM), carbon dioxide (CO2), carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen oxides (NOx), and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) were quantified using standard emission measurement protocols. The combustion processes were analyzed under controlled conditions to ensure comparability.



Second, a detailed review of existing literature was undertaken to supplement experimental findings. Peer-reviewed studies, technical reports, and industry data were reviewed to identify trends and validate the emission factors observed in the experiments. This step provided additional insights into the performance of different heating systems under varied operational settings.



Third, the data collected from experiments and literature were subjected to comparative analysis. Statistical methods were employed to evaluate differences in emissions between fossil fuels and biomass, considering factors such as fuel type, combustion efficiency, and appliance design. Life-cycle emissions were also assessed to account for indirect emissions, such as those arising from fuel production and transportation.



Finally, the environmental impact of emissions was evaluated using established frameworks. Air quality models and health risk assessment tools were employed to estimate the potential impacts of PM, NOx, and VOC emissions on local air quality and human health. The trade-offs between carbon neutrality and pollutant emissions in biomass combustion were critically analyzed to provide a balanced perspective.

RESULTS

The analysis revealed distinct emission patterns for fossil fuels and biomass. Natural gas demonstrated the lowest particulate matter (PM) emissions among the fossil fuels, while coal produced the highest levels of PM and other pollutants such as sulfur dioxide (SO2). Oil-based heating systems emitted moderate levels of PM and carbon dioxide (CO2).

For biomass, wood logs and agricultural residues were associated with significant PM emissions, primarily due to incomplete combustion in

traditional stoves. Biomass pellets showed improved combustion efficiency and lower PM emissions, though VOC and CO emissions remained notable. Across all biomass types, emissions were highly dependent on appliance design and operational practices.

Carbon dioxide emissions were markedly higher for fossil fuels, especially coal and oil, when considering direct emissions. Biomass, while releasing CO2 during combustion, is often considered carbon-neutral due to the carbon uptake during plant growth. However, the carbon neutrality assumption depends on sustainable sourcing and regrowth practices.

Nitrogen oxides (NOx) emissions were comparable across both energy sources, influenced by combustion temperatures and fuel composition. Volatile organic compound (VOC) emissions were significantly higher in biomass combustion, particularly in systems lacking advanced emission controls.

DISCUSSION

The results highlight critical trade-offs between fossil fuels and biomass in domestic heating. Fossil fuels, particularly natural gas, offer advantages in terms of lower particulate emissions and operational consistency but contribute substantially to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change. In contrast, biomass, while renewable, poses challenges due to elevated particulate matter and VOC emissions, which can impact local air quality and public health.

The study underscores the importance of improving combustion efficiency and implementing emission control technologies in biomass systems to mitigate air quality impacts. Additionally, sustainable biomass sourcing is crucial to ensuring the carbon-neutrality of this energy source. Policies incentivizing cleaner technologies, such as advanced stoves and boilers, are essential for minimizing emissions.

Fossil fuel systems, while currently more consistent in performance, face increasing scrutiny due to their long-term climate impacts. Transitioning to cleaner fuels and integrating renewable energy sources into domestic heating could provide a pathway to balancing environmental and energy needs.

CONCLUSION

This study provides a comparative perspective on the emissions from fossil fuels and biomass in domestic heating systems. While biomass offers the potential for renewable energy, its environmental benefits are contingent on factors such as combustion efficiency and sustainable sourcing. Fossil fuels, though more predictable in emission profiles, pose significant climate risks.

Policymakers and stakeholders must weigh these trade-offs when developing strategies for sustainable domestic heating. Advancing cleaner technologies, improving fuel efficiency, and promoting renewable energy adoption will be pivotal in addressing the dual challenges of climate change and air quality improvement.

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