

# Performance of three empirical reference evapotranspiration models under three sky conditions using two solar radiation estimation methods at Ilorin, Nigeria

Chukwuemeka Joachin Ejieji

(Department of Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering, University of Ilorin, Ilorin, Nigeria)

**Abstract:** An existing solar radiation model developed at Ilorin which was found to be more reliable than Angstrom-type and Hargreaves solar radiation equations was used in the FAO Penman-Monteith reference evapotranspiration model (FAOPM) to obtain daily reference crop evapotranspiration ( $ET_0$ ) for a 32-year (1970 to 2001) period. The number of days having all the required input meteorological data was 9335. The sky conditions of the days were classified as clear, partially cloudy or cloudy depending on the cloudiness index, i.e. the ratio of diffuse solar radiation to total solar radiation. The  $ET_0$  values obtained with FAOPM were compared with predictions of three simpler empirical  $ET_0$  models, namely, the Hargreaves (HGRV), Jensen and Haise (JHSE) and Blaney-Morin-Nigeria (BMN) models. When the more reliable solar radiation model was used in HGRV and JHSE, their performances were better than when the solar radiation equation of Hargreaves was used. Generally the three simpler models overpredicted  $ET_0$ . The bias, root mean square difference (RSMD) and absolute error of prediction deteriorated with sky cloudiness when the solar radiation equation of Hargreaves was used. Linear regression equations with zero intercepts were developed for the estimation of FAOPM predictions from those of the simpler  $ET_0$  models. The regression equations relating the predictions of FAOPM to those of HGRV generally yielded the highest coefficients of determination and the lowest standard errors of regression. The predictions of HGRV were also the closest to the corresponding FAOPM predictions under the various sky conditions. Based on the outcome of the regression analysis and the ease of application of HGRV, the FAOPM-versus-HGRV regression equations were recommended for the estimation of FAOPM predictions of daily  $ET_0$  when the use of FAOPM is necessary but not feasible because of incomplete input data.

**Keywords:** evapotranspiration models, reference evapotranspiration, solar radiation clear sky, partially clear sky, cloudy sky

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## 1 Introduction

Knowledge of reference crop evapotranspiration ( $ET_0$ ) is routinely required for the estimation of crop water use in the planning, design and operation of irrigation and soil and water conservation systems. Direct measurement of evapotranspiration is usually not feasible in many field situations because it is expensive and time-consuming. The required instrumentation may also be lacking. Several models, which can be categorized

into temperature-based, radiation, mass transfer and combination models (Igbadun *et. al.*, 2006) have therefore been developed for the estimation of evapotranspiration using weather data. Penman-type combination models (Penman, 1948) based on energy balance and mass transfer principles are considered to most accurately describe the evapotranspiration process. Combination models, however, require more input data compared to the simpler alternatives like the temperature-based models. Originally, in the various categories of models, their estimates of crop evapotranspirative demands were termed potential evapotranspiration which related to the combined soil

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Corresponding author: C. J. Ejieji, Email: [emeka\\_ejieji@yahoo.com](mailto:emeka_ejieji@yahoo.com); [cjejeji@unilorin.edu.ng](mailto:cjejeji@unilorin.edu.ng)

evaporation and canopy transpiration water losses under conditions of the unlimited water supply. Lacking in any standard definition, the estimates of potential evapotranspiration were subject to various interpretations before attempts at standardisation by Doorenbos and Pruitt (1977) and Allen et al. (1998). The current preferred terminology is “reference evapotranspiration” ( $ET_0$ ). This has been defined by Allen et al. (1998) as the evapotranspiration from a hypothetical reference crop with an assumed height of 0.12 m, with a surface resistance of  $70 \text{ sm}^{-1}$  and an albedo of 0.23, closely resembling the evaporation from an extensive surface of green grass of uniform height, actively growing and adequately watered. Igbadun et al. (2006) noted that the temperature-based models, though less accurate than the combination models for periods less than five days, were attractive in many areas especially in sub-Saharan Africa where air temperature data were more readily available than other data required by the other types of models.

At the planning and design stages of irrigation and water conservation schemes, historical average daily values of  $ET_0$  for multi-day periods (e.g. weekly, ten-day and monthly) may be satisfactory for estimation of crop water use (Adeniran *et al.*, 2010). At operational stages however, daily information on  $ET_0$  may be vital to making real-time decisions especially where biophysical simulation of crop water use (Kra and Ofosu-Anim, 2010) or of crop growth and development (Gowing and Ejieji, 2001) are incorporated into the process. The FAO version of the Penman-Monteith combination model (FAOPM) of Allen et al. (1998) is the widely accepted standard model for the estimation of  $ET_0$  (Allen *et al.*, 1998). In daily real-time  $ET_0$  estimation, simpler models such as the temperature-based ones could be valuable substitutes on days when the use of the combination model is not feasible due to incomplete input data. This could arise from the absence from duty of personnel or failure of instrumentations required for direct measurement of essential input data. The shortcoming of employing more than one  $ET_0$  model in such situation has however been highlighted in the work of Earlsa and Dixon (2008) which indicated that the

accuracy of  $ET_0$  estimates could differ significantly across the models. However, where the predictions of a given simpler model had been calibrated for local conditions against corresponding  $ET_0$  estimates of the combination model, the  $ET_0$  predictions of the standard combination model could be estimated from that of the simpler model using the results of such calibration.

In the tropical environment of the present study, radiation component has been shown to predominate over the aerodynamic component during the cloudy humid season with the contribution of the radiation component to potential evapotranspiration ranging from over 50% to 97% (Bashir, 1991). Reliable estimation of solar radiation is therefore essential in such environment for accurate  $ET_0$  estimation. Solar radiation estimation using parameterised Angstrom-type empirical equation (Angstrom, 1924) has been found to overpredict daily incoming solar radiation by 38%, 12% and 9% under cloudy, partially cloudy and, partially clear sky conditions respectively in the locality (Babatunde, 1989). This leads to unreasonably high  $ET_0$  predictions by the FAOPM combination model on cloudy days in a study by Ejieji (2002). Babatunde (1989) also reported an 11% underprediction of incoming radiation by the parameterised Angstrom equation under clear sky conditions. He therefore proposed a solar radiation model (BSRM) which improved solar radiation estimation by incorporating visibility and day-time temperature as input data. Among the solar radiation estimation methods recommended by Allen et al. (1998), only the Angstrom equation and the Hargreaves equation (Hargreaves and Samani, 1982) incorporated surrogate variables for sky cloudiness condition. The Hargreaves equation is simple and easy to apply requiring daily maximum and minimum temperatures as the only measured input data.

Reliability of solar radiation estimation routines was not considered in the past studies which compared the  $ET_0$  predictions of some empirical evapotranspiration models (including temperature-based ones) with those of Penman-type combinations models in Nigeria. Furthermore, the studies considered either average

monthly total  $ET_0$  (Mbagwu, 1988) or monthly average daily  $ET_0$  (Fapohunda, 2001; Adeboye *et al.*, 2009). The results of such studies may therefore not be suitable for use at daily time steps because of smoothing effect of the averaging process. Local information applicable to daily time steps is therefore lacking for calibrating the predictions of the simpler  $ET_0$  models against those of the standard combination model.

The objectives of this study were therefore to (a) compare the reliability of the solar radiation models of Hargreaves (Allen *et al.*, 1998) (HSRM) and Babatunde (1989) as basis for determining the more suitable one for use in the standard FAOPM, (b) compare, under three sky conditions, the daily  $ET_0$  predictions of FAOPM with the predictions of three simpler empirical  $ET_0$  models in order to determine the relative accuracies of the simpler models under the sky conditions and (c) to develop regression relationships for estimating the predictions of FAOPM from the  $ET_0$  predictions of three simpler empirical models.

Two of the simpler  $ET_0$  models were the temperature-based models of Hargreaves (Allen *et al.*, 1998; Hargreaves, 1994) (HGRV) and, Jensen and Haise (1963) (JHSE). The third is the Blaney-Morin-Nigeria model of Duru (1984) (BMN) which considers both temperature and relative humidity. The sky conditions considered in this study were cloudy, partially cloudy and clear skies. The focus of this study was the facilitation of the use of simpler temperature-based models to obtain daily  $ET_0$  estimates which are sufficiently close to those of the standard FAOPM when complete input data for the latter are unavailable in the stated area. This was addressed through the development of regression equations with relating FAOPM predictions to those of the respective simpler models. Since the radiation component over-predominates the aerodynamic component of  $ET_0$  in the study area, it was vital that a reliable solar radiation model be employed in FAOPM for meaningful result. Angstrom-type equations have been shown to perform poorly under the sky cloud conditions of the area (Babatunde, 1989), therefore the suitability of BSRM and HSRM for use in FAOPM was also investigated.

## 2 Materials and methods

### 2.1 Location of the study

The study location Ilorin is approximately on latitude  $8^{\circ}28'$  N and longitude  $4^{\circ}40'$  E at an elevation of about 340 m above mean sea level. It is the capital of Kwara State, Nigeria and is within the Southern Guinea Savannah ecological zone of Nigeria (Agboola, 1979) which corresponds to the tropical hinterland zone described by Fapohunda (2001). The wet season begins towards the end of March and ends in October. The dry season which starts in November and ends about the middle of March is generally hotter than the wet season. The exception for the dry period is November to January when the cool, dry and dusty Harmattan wind blows from the Sahara desert.

### 2.2 Collection of meteorological data and estimation of some missing data

Meteorological data from the Ilorin airport for the years 1970 to 2001 were obtained from the Nigerian Meteorological Agency, Oshodi, Lagos. They consisted of daily records of maximum and minimum temperatures, wind run (at 2 m height), sunshine hours and rainfall. The data also included three-hourly records of wet and dry bulb temperatures, relative humidity, wind speed (at 5.78 m height), visibility and rainfall. For the purpose of filling missing records, daily records of sunshine hours and, the maximum and minimum temperatures for the years 1992 to 2001 were also obtained from National Centre for Agricultural Mechanization (NCAM), Idofian located about 25 km southeast of the airport. The inception of records at the NCAM weather station was the year of 1992. Both meteorological stations were not irrigated so the ground surface was covered by dry grass in the dry season. The fetch in the prevailing wind directions was greater than 200 m.

Daily wind run was used to estimate average daily wind speed. In case of missing record, the average of the 3-hourly wind speeds for the day was computed and used to estimate the average wind speed at 2 m height by the application of the power law relationship (Jensen, 1974). Corresponding records of the maximum temperature from the airport and NCAM respectively

were used to develop a linear regression equation forced through the origin. The airport daily maximum temperature was the dependent variable. For any day, within 1992 to 2001, that the maximum temperature record for the airport was missing, the regression equation used to estimate the missing record provided the corresponding NCAM record was available. The same process was carried out in estimating missing airport records of minimum temperature and sunshine hours from corresponding NCAM records for the period 1992 to 2001. The approach adopted for estimating missing records was predicated on a prior analysis of the plots of corresponding data sets of the two stations. The plots of corresponding data sets generally yielded slopes not significantly different from unity and intercepts and not significantly different from zero.

### 2.3 Solar radiation models used

The Hargreaves equation for estimation of solar radiation could be expressed as (Allen *et al.*, 1998)

$$R_s = K_R (T_{\max} - T_{\min})^{0.5} R_a \quad (1)$$

where,  $R_a$  is extraterrestrial radiation ( $\text{MJ m}^{-2} \text{d}^{-1}$ );  $T_{\max}$  and  $T_{\min}$  are, respectively, the maximum and minimum temperatures ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) and  $K_R$  is an empirical adjustment coefficient in the range of 0.16 to 0.19.

The model of Babatunde (1989) is given as

$$\frac{H}{H_0} = 0.0189 + 0.2599 \frac{S}{S_m} + 0.0027V + 0.0101T \quad (2)$$

where,  $H_0$  is the radiation at the top of the atmosphere ( $\text{W h m}^{-2}$ );  $H$  is the incoming solar radiation, ( $\text{W h m}^{-2}$ );  $S$  is the hours of bright sunshine;  $S_m$  is the maximum possible hours of sunshine;  $V$  is visibility (km) and  $T$  is average day-time temperature ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ ).

### 2.4 Reference evapotranspiration models and adaptations employed

The main equations of the FAO-Penman-Monteith, Blaney-Morin-Nigeria, Hargreaves, and Jensen-Haise models; and specific adaptations for their application for this work are presented in this subsection. The detailed equations of the sub-units of the models may be found in the related references.

The FAO Penman-Monteith model (FAOPM) as described by Allen *et al.* (1998) is stated as

$$ET_0 = \frac{0.408\Delta(R_n - G) + \gamma[900 / (T + 273)]U_2(e_a - e_d)}{\Delta + \gamma(1 + 0.34U_2)} \quad (3)$$

where,  $ET_0$  is the reference crop evapotranspiration ( $\text{mm d}^{-1}$ );  $R_n$  is the net radiation at the crop surface ( $\text{MJ m}^{-2} \text{d}^{-1}$ );  $G$  is the soil heat flux ( $\text{MJ m}^{-2} \text{d}^{-1}$ );  $T$  is the average air temperature ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ );  $U_2$  is the wind speed measured at 2 m height ( $\text{m s}^{-1}$ );  $(e_a - e_d)$  is the vapour pressure deficit (kPa) i.e. the difference between saturation vapour pressure,  $e_a$  and the actual vapour pressure,  $e_d$ . The symbol  $\gamma$  denotes the psychrometric constant ( $\text{kPa}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) and  $\Delta$  the slope of the vapour pressure versus temperature curve ( $\text{kPa}/^{\circ}\text{C}$ ).

Further references on the standard computations for  $R_n$  and other parameters used in the FAOPM equation are given Allen *et al.* (1988) and were mainly employed in this study.

The Blaney-Morin-Nigeria model (BMN) of Duru (1984) could be stated as follows for the estimation of daily potential evapotranspiration over monthly periods:

$$ETp = r_f (0.45T + 8)(520 - R^{1.31}) / 100 \quad (4)$$

where,  $ETp$  is the potential evapotranspiration ( $\text{mm d}^{-1}$ );  $T$  is the mean daily temperature for the month ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) estimated as the average of the daily maximum and minimum temperatures;  $R$  is the mean daily relative humidity (%) obtained by averaging the daily relative humidities at 09.00 h and 15.00 h GMT, and  $r_f$  is the radiation factor evaluated as the ratio of the radiation at the top of the atmosphere in the month to that for the whole year.

In order to adapt the model for  $ET_p$  estimation over one-day periods, actual daily values of  $T$  and  $R$  were used in place of their average daily values for the month. To obtain the  $r_f$ -value for each day, the  $H_0$  for the day and those of 29 preceding days were summed and divided by the total  $H_0$  for the year. It should be noted that in the case of dates earlier than January 30, the 29 preceding days included December Julian days. For example, in the case of January 1, the 29 preceding Julian days were taken to be Julian days 237 to 365 in a non-leap year.

Computation of  $H_0$  for each day of the year was carried out as described by Babatunde (1989).

The Hargreaves model (HGRV) as presented by Allen et al. (1998) is given as

$$ET_0 = 0.0023(T_{mean} + 17.8)(T_{max} - T_{min})^{0.5} R_a \quad (5)$$

where,  $ET_0$  is reference crop evapotranspiration ( $MJ\ m^{-2}\ d^{-1}$ );  $R_a$  is extraterrestrial radiation ( $MJ\ m^{-2}\ d^{-1}$ );  $T_{mean}$ ,  $T_{max}$  and  $T_{min}$ , are, respectively, average, maximum and minimum temperatures ( $^{\circ}C$ ).  $T_{mean}$  is evaluated as half the sum of  $T_{max}$  and  $T_{min}$ .

The Jensen-Haise model (JHSE) for calculating grass reference evapotranspiration (Jensen and Haise, 1963) was stated as follows by Burman and Pochop (1994):

$$\lambda ET_0 = C_T(T_{mean} - T_x)R_s \quad (6)$$

where,  $ET_0$  is reference evapotranspiration ( $mm\ d^{-1}$ );  $\lambda$  is the latent heat of vaporisation  $kJ\ kg^{-1}$ ;  $R_s$  is solar radiation ( $MJ\ m^{-2}\ d^{-1}$ );  $T_{mean}$  is as previously defined while  $C_T$  and  $T_x$  are station constants obtained as follows

$$C_T = \left[ \left( 38 - \frac{z}{152.5} \right) + 7.3 \left( \frac{5.0}{es_{max} - es_{min}} \right) \right]^{-1} \quad (7)$$

$$T_x = -2.5 - 1.4(es_{max} - es_{min}) - \frac{z}{550} \quad (8)$$

where,  $z$  is the altitude of the location, m;  $es_{max}$  and  $es_{min}$  are saturation vapour pressures (kPa) at the average monthly maximum air temperature and monthly minimum temperature ( $^{\circ}C$ ), respectively, for the warmest of the month of the year based on long-term weather data.

The Jensen-Haise model has been recommended for estimating  $ET_0$  for periods of five days to one month (Burman et al., 1980). The use of the model for periods ranging from one day to a month has however been reported (Burman and Popchop, 1994). It was therefore applied in this work to one-day-period without further adaptations. However, for the purpose of converting, in Equations (5) and (6), the energy values of  $ET_0$  to  $mm\ d^{-1}$ , both sides of the equations were divided by the latent of vaporisation value at the average daily temperature as outlined by Burman and Popchop (1994).

## 2.5 Estimation of solar radiation

In all the  $ET_0$  models except BMN, solar radiation was estimated with Hargreaves formula i.e. Equation (1) and with the equation of Babatunde, i.e. Equation (2) for comparison. In the application of Equation (1), consideration was given to the fact that the location of study was inland, therefore, a  $K_R$ -value of 0.16, recommended for interior locations (Allen et al., 1998), was adopted. Explicit estimation of solar radiation is not required in BMN.

In the case of Equation (2), the computation of  $H_0$  and

$S_m$  were carried out as outlined by Babatunde (1989). For conversion of the units from  $W h m^{-2}$  to  $MJ m^{-2} d^{-1}$ , the computed  $H$  was multiplied by 3600 s and divided by  $10^6$ ;  $R_a$  (in Equations (1) and (5)) was evaluated from  $H_0$  converted from  $W h m^{-2}$  to  $MJ m^{-2} d^{-1}$  as already described. The values of  $T$  and  $V$  required in Equation (2) were obtained from the averages of 3-hourly records from 6 h to 18 h GMT.

## 2.6 Correction for aridity

Because the weather station of the study location was not irrigated, non-ideal conditions for  $ET_0$  computation prevailed in the dry season. The  $ET_0$  estimates of the models were therefore corrected for aridity by applying a correction for bias to daily mean temperature. The temperature bias was estimated as follows (Jensen *et al.*, 1997):

$$T_{bias} = K \left( 1 - \frac{P}{\sqrt{ETH}} \right) \quad (9)$$

where,  $T_{bias}$  is the bias in temperature relative to a well-watered environment ( $^{\circ}C$ );  $K$  is a coefficient ranging from 0 to 4 depending on the degree of site aridity;  $P$  is total precipitation for 10-day period (mm) and  $ETH$  is the uncorrected  $ET_0$  estimate of HGRV for 10-day period (mm). A  $K$ -value of 3 was used for this study.

In the application of Equation (9), the year was divided into 10-day time periods with the last (i.e. 37<sup>th</sup>) period being five days (or six days for a leap year). For each of the time periods, the value of  $T_{bias}$  was calculated. Each day of the year was thereafter assigned to the appropriate time period for the purpose determining the  $T_{bias}$ -value applicable to the particular day.

In the case of FAOPM, estimation of vapour pressure deficit ( $e_a - e_d$ ) using daily maximum and minimum temperatures was employed in order to address the nonstandard conditions (Jensen *et al.*, 1997).

## 2.7 Estimation of sky cloudiness condition

Following the study of Babatunde and Aro (2001), cloudiness index, i.e. the ratio of diffuse solar radiation ( $H_d$ ) to total solar radiation ( $H$ ) was used for estimating the sky condition. They established the following as thresholds for delineating the states of sky cloudiness

referred to as “clear”, “partially cloudy” and “cloudy” conditions respectively:

$$0 < \frac{H_d}{H} \leq 0.4 \Rightarrow \text{Clear sky} \quad (10a)$$

$$0.4 < \frac{H_d}{H} \leq 0.5 \Rightarrow \text{Partially cloudy sky} \quad (10b)$$

$$\frac{H_d}{H} > 0.5 \Rightarrow \text{Cloudy or turbid sky} \quad (10c)$$

where  $\frac{H_d}{H}$  is the cloudiness index.

The estimation of cloudiness index was carried out using the following empirical relationship (Babatunde and Aro, 1995)

$$\frac{H_d}{H} = 0.945 - 0.971 \frac{H}{H_0} \quad (11)$$

where  $\frac{H}{H_0}$  is referred to as the clearness index and was obtained as explained for Equation (2).

## 2.7 Evaluation of the models

The  $ET_0$  predictions of each of the three simpler models were compared with the corresponding outputs of FAOPM. The performances of the simpler models were evaluated using bias, root mean square difference (RSMD) and mean absolute prediction error as indices. The regression equations developed for the purpose of estimating FAOPM predictions from those of the simpler models were also evaluated on the basis of the coefficients of determination and standard errors of regression. The bias of each of the simpler models was obtained with the expression

$$B = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (EM_i - EPM_i) \quad (12)$$

where,  $B$  is the bias ( $mm d^{-1}$ );  $EM_i$  and  $EPM_i$  are, respectively, the corresponding  $ET_0$  predictions of the simpler model and FAOPM ( $mm d^{-1}$ ) while  $n$  is the number of paired comparisons. The root mean square difference was estimated from

$$RMSD = \sqrt{\frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n (EM_i - EPM_i)^2} \quad (13)$$

where,  $RMSD$  is the root mean square difference ( $mm d^{-1}$ ). The mean absolute prediction error was estimated using the following equation

$$Err = \frac{1}{n} \sum_{i=1}^n \left| \frac{100(EM_i - EPM_i)}{EPM_i} \right| \quad (14)$$

where, *Err* is the mean absolute prediction error (%) and all other terms are as previously defined.

In order to evaluate the reliability of Equations (1) and (2) for estimating solar radiation, their daily predictions were compared with measured solar radiation data for year 2000. The measured daily solar radiation data, i.e. incoming shortwave radiation, were collected from Department of Physics, University of Ilorin. The data which were measured with an Eppley precision spectral pyranometer, with a calibration constant of  $8.2 \times 10^{-6} \text{ V/W m}^{-2}$ , were logged at one-minute-interval. The daily total incoming short wave radiation values used for this study were obtained from the logged data by numerical integration.

#### 4 Results and discussion

The mean annual precipitation for the 26-year period of 1976 to 2001 was about 1166 mm. The warmest month was March (Table 1). The maximum value of temperature bias was 3 °C and it occurred in the first and

in the last decades (i.e. 10-day periods) of the year. Temperature bias was negligible in the decades falling within the time when the rainy season was well-established (Figure 1.). Out of the 11688 days in the years 1970 to 2001, required weather data for simultaneous comparison of all the *ET*<sub>0</sub> models were available for 9335 days. More recent (i.e. post 2001) data had more missing records especially of sunshine hours and NCAM records were not available for their estimation. The relative frequencies of clear, partially cloudy and cloudy sky conditions were 0.159, 0.522 and 0.319 respectively, indicating that the sky was not clear for 84.1% of the time. The relatively low relative frequency of clear sky conditions agrees with the finding of Akpabio, Udo and Etuk (2005) in a similar environment that only four months of the year which excludes the hazy dusty Harmattan period and the rainy season experienced clear sky conditions. The values of daily *ET*<sub>0</sub> computed with FAOPM using BSRM averaged  $5.00 \pm 0.61$ ,  $4.43 \pm 0.56$  and  $3.48 \pm 0.50$  mm for clear, partially cloudy and cloudy sky conditions respectively.

**Table 1 Monthly means of some daily weather data at Ilorin (1976 – 2001)**

Month	Max. temp/°C	Min. temp/°C	Max. Rel. humidity/%	Min. Rel. humidity/%	Wind speed/m · s <sup>-1</sup>	Sunshine/hr
Jan.	33.8	19.0	73.5	26.4	1.0	6.6
Feb.	35.7	21.8	78.5	27.3	1.2	7.3
Mar.	35.9	23.4	85.3	36.0	1.5	6.8
Apr.	34.5	23.5	89.8	48.3	1.7	6.9
May	32.4	22.5	93.1	58.4	1.6	7.0
Jun.	30.6	21.7	94.6	64.0	1.4	6.2
Jul.	29.0	21.4	94.5	66.8	1.5	4.4
Aug.	28.7	21.3	94.9	68.9	1.5	3.6
Sep.	29.7	21.1	95.9	66.7	1.2	4.4
Oct.	31.3	21.4	95.5	59.2	1.1	6.1
Nov.	33.8	20.5	91.7	37.1	1.0	7.5
Dec.	33.6	19.1	83.9	30.0	0.9	7.3

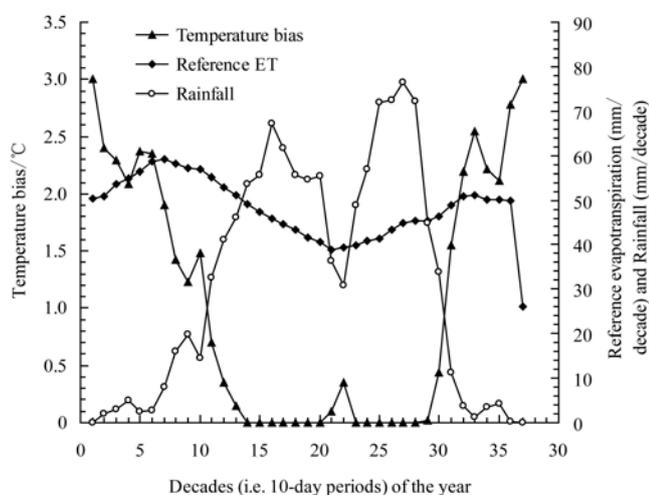


Figure 1 Estimated temperature bias relative to well-watered environment, reference evapotranspiration and rainfall at the various decades (i.e. 10-day periods) of the year (plotted reference evaporation values were estimated using the Hargreaves model of Allen *et al.* (1998) without correction for aridity; the last period is five days or six days in a leap year)

A comparison of observed year 2000 daily solar radiation with the predictions of the models of Hargreaves (Allen *et al.*, 1998) i.e. Equation (1) (HSRM) and Babatunde (1989) i.e. Equation (2) (BSRM) is presented in Figure 2 as a plot of the absolute values of the prediction errors against the actual values of observed daily solar radiation. Generally, the prediction errors of both models increased as daily solar radiation decreased indicating reduced reliability with increasing sky cloudiness. However, BSRM performed better than HSRM over the entire range of observed values. The bias, RMSD and mean absolute prediction error for BSRM were  $0.007 \text{ MJ m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$ ,  $1.967 \text{ MJ m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$  and  $9.84\%$

respectively. In the case of HSRM, the corresponding values were  $2.282 \text{ MJ m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$ ,  $3.599 \text{ MJ m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$  and  $19.51\%$  for bias, RMSD and mean absolute prediction error respectively.

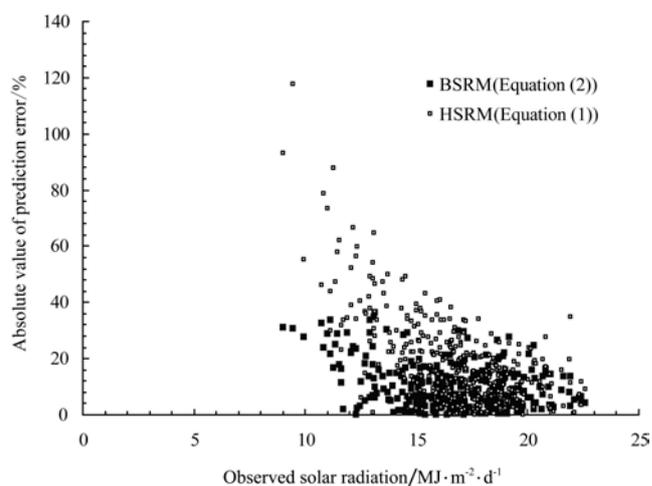


Figure 2 Absolute values of prediction errors of solar radiation estimation models of Babatunde (1989), BSRM, and Hargreaves (Allen *et al.*, 1998), HSRM, at the observed daily solar radiation values in the year 2000

When expressed in  $\text{kWh m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$  the bias and RMSD for BSRM became  $1.944 \times 10^{-3}$  and  $0.546 \text{ kWh m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$  respectively. Expressed as absolute values, the bias for BSRM was less than the  $2.30 \times 10^{-3}$  to  $42.9 \times 10^{-3} \text{ kWh m}^{-2} \text{ d}^{-1}$  reported for a temperature-based radiation model proposed for Nigerian conditions by Okundamiya and Nzeako (2001). However, RMSD for BSRM was on the average double of their reported values. This is to be expected since its model which predicts monthly average daily radiation was therefore tested against

averages of measured data which are smoother than actual observed daily data considered in BSRM. Strictly considered, their model may not be appropriate for application at daily time-steps since monthly average daily data rather than actually observed daily data were used in their derivation. This shortcoming also applies to a proposed solar radiation model by Akpabio, Udo and Etuk (2004) for which prediction errors ranging from 3.85 to 3.91% was reported. Another limitation of the model of Akpabio, Udo and Etuk (2004) is that it requires eight meteorological input parameters. It is therefore not parsimonious and would be difficult to use with limited data.

When daily  $ET_0$  values obtained for year 2000 with FAOPM using measured solar radiation were linearly regressed against those obtained using FAOPM with solar radiation estimated with BSRM, a slope of 1.014 statistically not different from unity and an intercept of 0.009 statistically zero (at .05 level of significance) were obtained. The standard error of regression was 0.45 mm  $d^{-1}$ . When the regression was forced through the origin, the standard error was virtually unchanged, the slope increased insignificantly to 1.016 while the coefficient of determination improved from 72.90 to 98.99%. When solar radiation estimated with HSRM was used, and the linear regression carried out, the corresponding values for slope, intercept and standard error were 0.732, 1.457 and 0.47 mm/day respectively. The slope was however statistically less than unity and the intercept greater than zero at 0.05 level of significance. The coefficient of determination was also lower at 65.01%. In the light of the results of the comparisons it was concluded that using BSRM with FAPOM better reproduced the results obtainable from FAOPM when all the input data were actual observed values. The solar radiation model BSRM is therefore to be preferred for  $ET_0$  computation with FAOPM in the study area when the required input data except observed solar radiation are available.

The result of the comparisons of the daily  $ET_0$  estimations of the three simpler models with those of FAOPM when BSRM was used in solar radiation estimation in FAOPM, HGRV and JHSE is presented in

Table 2. That of when BSRM was used in FAOPM and HSRM in HGRV and JHSE is presented in Table 3. The performance of BMN deteriorated consistently with sky cloudiness. This behaviour did not change between the two cases because BMN does not require explicit estimation of solar radiation. In the case of HGRV and JHSE their performance deteriorated in all the indices of performance when HSRM was used (Table 3) except under clear sky condition indicating the importance of improved solar radiation estimation under the cloudy and partially cloudy sky conditions more prevalent in the locality.

For the case presented in Table 3, all the performance indices, i.e. bias, root mean square difference and mean absolute prediction error generally deteriorated with cloudiness with their magnitudes increasing under partially cloudy and cloudy conditions compared with clear sky condition. The positive bias exhibited by all the simpler models under all the sky conditions (Tables 2 and 3) indicate that they generally overpredicted daily  $ET_0$  relative to FAOPM. For HGRV the overprediction is consistent with the findings of Smith, Allen and Pereira

**Table 2 Bias, root mean square difference and mean absolute error of reference evapotranspiration predictions of the simpler three models under three sky conditions. (The models were compared with the FAO Penman-Monteith model. The model of Babatunde (1989) was used in solar radiation estimation in the FAO Penman-Monteith, Hargreaves and Jensen-Haise models)**

Models and Sky conditions	*Bias /mm · d <sup>-1</sup>	Root mean square difference/mm · d <sup>-1</sup>	Mean absolute prediction error/%
Cloudy sky			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.61	1.20	23.69
Hargreaves	0.00	0.35	7.48
Jensen-Haise	0.35	0.52	13.73
Partly cloudy sky			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.47	0.91	15.57
Hargreaves	0.13	0.40	7.86
Jensen-Haise	0.64	0.77	16.12
Clear sky			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.34	0.74	11.82
Hargreaves	0.40	0.55	9.93
Jensen-Haise	1.08	1.15	22.23
Pooled data for the three sky conditions			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.49	0.99	17.57
Hargreaves	0.13	0.41	8.07

Jensen-Haise	0.62	0.78	16.33
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Note: \* Positive bias-value denotes over-prediction.

**Table 3 Bias, root mean square difference and mean absolute error of reference evapotranspiration predictions of the simpler three models under three sky conditions. (The models were compared with the FAO Penman-Monteith model. The model of Babatunde (1989) was used in solar radiation estimation in the FAO Penman-Monteith model and that of Hargreaves (Allen *et al.*, 1998) in the Hargreaves and Jensen-Haise models)**

Models and Sky conditions	*Bias /mm · d <sup>-1</sup>	Root mean square difference /mm · d <sup>-1</sup>	Mean absolute prediction error /%
Cloudy sky			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.61	1.20	23.69
Hargreaves	0.73	0.90	21.93
Jensen-Haise	1.15	1.29	33.85
Partly cloudy sky			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.47	0.91	15.57
Hargreaves	0.42	0.67	11.90
Jensen-Haise	0.96	1.10	22.59
Clear sky			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.34	0.74	11.82
Hargreaves	0.06	0.47	7.34
Jensen-Haise	0.70	0.86	15.01
Pooled data for the three sky conditions			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.49	0.99	17.57
Hargreaves	0.46	0.72	14.38
Jensen-Haise	0.98	1.13	24.98

Note: \* Positive bias-value denotes over-prediction.

(1996) for humid regions although they compared the model predictions with lysimeter-determined  $ET_0$ . Underprediction was however reported for JHSE in their own case. Underprediction by HGRV has been reported by Wang, Traore and Kerh (2007) for a less humid tropical environment. Adebayo *et al.* (2009) compared simpler  $ET_0$  models with FAOPM for three locations in a similar tropical environment. They reported that when the parameterised Angstrom equation was employed for solar radiation in FAOPM and JHSE but HSRM in HGRV the RSMD were 1.03 mm d<sup>-1</sup> and 1.79 mm d<sup>-1</sup> for JHSE and HGRV respectively for one of the stations having required meteorological data. When HSRM employed in all the models, the corresponding values of RMSD were 2.51 mm d<sup>-1</sup> and 2.50 mm d<sup>-1</sup> for JHSE, and

2.50 mm d<sup>-1</sup> and 0.89 mm d<sup>-1</sup> for HGRV for the remaining two stations having limited meteorological data. Their results therefore showed that the comparison outcomes were dependent on the method of estimation of solar radiation.

Linear regression of the daily  $ET_0$  predictions of FAOPM against those of the simpler models assuming non-zero intercept yielded lower coefficients of determination than when the regression line was forced through the origin. The proposed regression model for estimating the  $ET_0$  predictions of FAOPM from those of the simpler models is therefore as follows

$$ET_{0PM} = \alpha ET_{SM} \quad (15)$$

where,  $ET_{0PM}$  is the estimated prediction of FAOPM (mm d<sup>-1</sup>);  $ET_{SM}$  is the prediction of the simpler model (mm d<sup>-1</sup>); and  $\alpha$  is the slope of the regression line forced through the origin.

The results of the linear regression including the slope ( $\alpha$ ), coefficient of determination and standard error of regression are presented in Table 4 for the case where BSRM was used for solar radiation estimation in FAOPM, HGRV and JHSE. The corresponding result for the case where BSRM was used in FAOPM with HSRM used in HGRV and JHSE are presented in Table 5.

**Table 4 Results of linear regression of FAO Penman-Monteith model predictions against those of the three models for the various sky conditions with the regression lines forced through the origin. (The model of Babatunde (1989) was used in solar radiation estimation in the FAO Penman-Monteith, Hargreaves and Jensen-Haise models)**

Models and Sky conditions	Slope	Coefficient of determination	Standard error of regression/mm · d <sup>-1</sup>
Cloudy sky			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.803	0.939	0.87
Hargreaves	0.995	0.990	0.35
Jensen-Haise	0.902	0.990	0.36
Partly cloudy sky			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.885	0.975	0.71
Hargreaves	0.969	0.993	0.38
Jensen-Haise	0.870	0.992	0.40
Clear sky			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.927	0.985	0.63
Hargreaves	0.926	0.995	0.37
Jensen-Haise	0.823	0.995	0.37

Pooled data for the three sky conditions			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.873	0.948	0.78
Hargreaves	0.964	0.978	0.38
Jensen-Haise	0.865	0.980	0.41

**Table 5 Results of linear regression of FAO Penman-Monteith model predictions against those of the three models for the various sky conditions with the regression lines forced through the origin. ( The model of Babatunde (1989) was used in solar radiation estimation in the FAO Penman-Monteith model and that of Hargreaves (Allen *et al.*, 1998) in the Hargreaves and Jensen-Haise models)**

Models and Sky conditions	Slope	Coefficient of determination/%	Standard error of regression/mm · d <sup>-1</sup>
Cloudy sky			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.803	0.939	0.87
Hargreaves	0.817	0.984	0.45
Jensen-Haise	0.742	0.984	0.45
Partly cloudy sky			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.885	0.975	0.71
Hargreaves	0.908	0.988	0.49
Jensen-Haise	0.817	0.988	0.48
Clear sky			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.927	0.985	0.63
Hargreaves	0.984	0.992	0.46
Jensen-Haise	0.874	0.991	0.47
Pooled data for the three sky conditions			
Blaney-Morin-Nigeria	0.873	0.968	0.78
Hargreaves	0.898	0.984	0.54
Jensen-Haise	0.807	0.985	0.52

In both cases, the coefficients of determination and standard errors of regression were comparable. The differences in standard errors of prediction in the two cases were, at most, 0.11 mm d<sup>-1</sup> under the various sky conditions and 0.16 mm d<sup>-1</sup> for the pooled data. The relatively high coefficients of determination for all the models and sky conditions in both cases reflect the adequacy of Equation (15) as a predictive tool. The closer the slope (i.e.  $\alpha$ ) is to unity, the better the fit manifesting in reduction in the standard error of prediction. It can therefore be inferred from the  $\alpha$ -values in Tables 4 and 5 that the FAOPM-versus-HGRV regression equations constitute the best estimation tools under the conditions studied because, generally, their  $\alpha$ -values are the ones closest to unity.

In the light of the results of the regression analysis and in view of the relatively easier availability of input data for HSRM it should be more practically expedient to be estimating the  $ET_0$  predictions of FAOPM from the simpler models using Equation (15) with the  $\alpha$ -values (i.e. slopes) presented in Table 5 when any of the required input data for using FAOPM with BSRM is unavailable. In effect, the  $\alpha$ -values could be regarded as calibration constants. The preferred simpler  $ET_0$  model for the purpose of estimating FAOPM predictions should however be HGRV because it performed best of the three simpler models (Table 3). Although nearly similar prediction errors could be achieved using JHSE (Table 5), HGRV is easier to apply than JHSE.

## 5 Conclusions

The solar radiation model BSRM has been shown to be more reliable than HSRM in predicting solar radiation at Ilorin, Nigeria. The model also showed to be the better one to use in FAOPM because it yield practically identical daily  $ET_0$  estimates with the case when measured solar radiation data was used. This was not the case with HSRM. Furthermore, the reported performances of recently proposed models for estimating solar radiation under the tropical conditions of Nigeria were not better than obtained for BSRM in this study. Lower bias was obtained for BSRM. The model is more appropriate for application at daily time-steps because the other proposed models estimate monthly average daily solar radiation.

The comparisons of the predictions of the simpler  $ET_0$  models with those of FAOPM highlighted the influence of the solar radiation estimation methods on the outcomes. Generally the performances of HGRV and JHSE improved with the reliability of the solar radiation method. The reliability of the solar radiation models decreased with increasing sky cloudiness. As a consequence, the performance of the simpler models was generally better under clear than partly cloudy or cloudy sky conditions when the less reliable HSRM was used to estimate solar radiation in HGRV and JHSE.

On the basis of the relative performance of the simpler models and ease of application, HGRV was recommended for use in the regression equation (i.e. Equation (15)) for estimating FAOPM predictions when the application of FAOPM is necessary but not feasible. Provided the appropriate value of  $\alpha$  is selected (see Tables 4 and 5),  $ET_0$  obtained with HGRV using HSRM or BSRM could be used with practically the same outcome. Employing  $ET_0$  obtained with HGRV using HSRM and the appropriate  $\alpha$ -value may however be more expedient. The  $\alpha$ -values specific to sky conditions are

to be preferred to those for pooled data since the former would yield lower standard errors of estimation. Penman-type combination equations are wind-sensitive (Fischer *et al.*, 2005; Schneider *et al.*, 2007). It should therefore be noted that the calibration results reported in this study may be limited in application to tropical environments where the radiation component predominates over the aerodynamic component of the evapotranspiration process.

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