

# CFD Prediction of B-Series Propeller Performance in Open Water


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## ABSTRACT

In presence of hydrodynamics interactions between propeller and velocity fields, it may lead to inaccurate prediction of the propeller's quantities such as thrust, torque, and its efficiency. This paper presents a Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulation approach to predict the thrust ( $K_T$ ), torque ( $K_Q$ ) and efficiency ( $\eta$ ) coefficients in open-water condition. The scale model of propeller with various blade numbers ( $Z$ ) have been appropriately taken into account within the range of advance number  $0.1 \leq J \leq 1.05$ . Here, B-series model propeller has been employed in computational simulation. In general, the results revealed that the subsequent increase of blade numbers has been proportional with the magnitude of  $K_T$  and  $K_Q$  of the propeller. However, it was inversely proportional to the propeller efficiency coefficient ( $\eta$ ); where the highest efficiency value was 89% occurred at  $Z=3$ . This CFD simulation provides a preliminary prediction of the propeller characteristics.

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## 1. Introduction

The marine propeller has the characteristics of a complex structure consisting of the hub and the blades. As the main component, the propeller blade is composed of irregular surfaces such as the suction and pressure side; which is greatly affects the propeller performance. Since almost 70% of the power from the engine was delivered to the propulsion system, the proper propeller design may contribute to increased propeller efficiency and directly reduced the power consumption [1]. Accordingly, a reliable approach of the propeller's prediction should be firmly proposed quantifying the accurate properties of thrust, torque and efficiency coefficients with respect to the ship's speed during sailing.

Several researchers have conducted both theoretical and experimental approaches to predict the propeller characteristics in open water. Referring to Epps, Ketcham [2], Ekinci [3] and Rahman, Ullah

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[4], the theoretical prediction of propeller performance was conducted according to circulation or lifting line theory. However, this theoretical approach has some inaccurate prediction where a few parameters were omitted. Meanwhile, some researchers [5-7] have carried out experimental approach at towing tank at various configurations test model; in fact, it is relatively expensive, time-consuming, and have a complex procedure. To overcome such problem, a reliable solution through applying Computational Fluid Dynamics (CFD) simulation can be an alternative approach as well as have good agreement as compared to experimental results [8-12].

This paper presents a CFD simulation as the extension work from Fitriadhy and Adam [13] and Fitriadhy, Razali [14] to assess the propeller performance quantified by thrust ( $K_T$ ) and torque ( $K_Q$ ) and its efficiency ( $\eta$ ) coefficients. In this computational simulation, several numbers of blades have been considered where the result of  $K_T$ ,  $K_Q$  and  $\eta$  have been comprehensively discussed and presented through the magnitude of scalar torque and static pressure. The type of B-series model has been appropriately taken into account within the range of advance ratio  $0.1 \leq J \leq 1.05$ . Here, CFD software of Fine<sup>TM</sup>/Turbo is utilized in the current simulation. The package of CFD including Autogrid5<sup>TM</sup> to generate fully hexahedral grid generation, 3D Reynolds Averaged Euler and Navier Stokes flow solver EURANUS and CFView<sup>TM</sup> as a post-processing module to visualize the results [15].

## 2. Theoretical Background

### 2.1 Governing Equation

The cornerstone of computational fluid dynamics application, there is consist of fundamental mathematical equations such as continuity, momentum and energy conservation equation. CFD flow solver (ISIS-CFD) on Numeca Fine<sup>TM</sup>/Turbo was based on the incompressible unsteady Reynolds-Averaged Navier-Stokes equation (URANSE) in which the solver applied the Finite Volume Method (FVM) for representing the inflow and outflow areas, where the fluid flow is well behaved.

### 2.2 Conservation Equation

To carry out the application of general conservation form of the Navier-Stokes equation using FVM, the model of a finite volume has been considered fixed in space and the fluid element is moving. The mass continuity equation in conservation form is based on steady and constant density of incompressible flows was presented in Eq. (1). Here, the  $\rho$  is the density,  $U_i$  is the averaged Cartesian components of the velocity-vector in  $i^{\text{th}}$  direction ( $i=1,2,3$ ) [16].

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial x_i}(\rho u_i) = 0 \quad (1)$$

Newton's 2<sup>nd</sup> law has been applied in FVM to a model of the fluid flow. When the fluid element moving, the net force on the fluid element equals its mass times the acceleration of the element. Therefore, the global Navier-Stokes equation applied the principle of the linear momentum conservation to solve the problem as expressed in Eq. (2).

$$\frac{\partial}{\partial x_i}(\rho u_i) + \frac{\partial}{\partial x_j}(\rho u_j \rho u_i) = -\frac{\partial p}{\partial x_i} + \frac{\partial \tau_{ij}}{\partial x_i} + \rho g_i + F_i \quad (2)$$

where  $p$  is the static pressure,  $g_i$  is the gravitational acceleration,  $F_i$  is an external body force in an averaged Cartesian component of the velocity-vector in  $i^{\text{th}}$  direction ( $i=1,2,3$ ) and  $\delta_{ij}$  is the Kroneker delta and is equal to unity  $i = j$  and zero when  $i \neq j$ .

### 2.3 Turbulence Model

During the simulation, a simple one-equation model has relatively applied to compute rotating motions of propeller. The Spalart-Allmaras transports equation model made for eddy viscosity and not required finer grid resolution to capture the velocity field gradients with algebraic models [17-20]. For external flow application, the kinematic turbulent  $\nu_t (m^2/s)$  in this model can be specified and estimate based on the assumptions,  $\nu_t/\nu = 1$  [15]. Here, the transport model for the working variable is shown in Eq. (3).

$$\frac{\partial \rho \tilde{\nu}}{\partial t} + \frac{\partial \rho u_j \tilde{\nu}}{\partial x_j} = \frac{\partial}{\partial x_j} \left[ \left( \mu + \frac{\mu_\tau}{\sigma} \right) \frac{\partial \tilde{\nu}}{\partial x_j} \right] + c_{b2} \frac{\partial \tilde{\nu}}{\partial x_j} \frac{\partial \rho \tilde{\nu}}{\partial x_j} + c_{b1} \rho \tilde{\omega} \tilde{\nu} - c_{w1} f_w \rho \left( \frac{\tilde{\nu}}{y} \right) \quad (3)$$

The eddy viscosity and damping function is defined as Eq. (4) and (5) respectively. Where,  $X = \frac{\tilde{\nu}}{\nu}$  and the kinematic viscosity  $\nu = \mu/\rho$ .

$$\mu_\tau = f_{v1} \rho \tilde{\nu} \quad (4)$$

$$f_{v1} = \frac{X^3}{X^3 + c_{v1}^3} \quad (5)$$

It should be noted here that the best practice in turbulence model quantities by considering an appropriate grid to estimate the cell meshing size,  $y_{wall}$  as written in Eq. (6) below.

$$y_{wall} = 6 \left( \frac{V_{ref}}{\nu} \right)^{\frac{7}{8}} \left( \frac{L_{ref}}{2} \right)^{\frac{1}{8}} y_1 \quad (6)$$

Note that the reference velocity,  $V_{ref}$ , can be taken from the body velocity. The reference length,  $L_{ref}$ , should be based on the body length since an estimation of the boundary layer thickness is implied in this calculation.

### 2.4 Hydrodynamics Theory of Propeller

The propeller model has been tested in open water to determine the intrinsic propeller performance. The computed result from CFD usually refers to thrust (T), torque (Q) and efficiency ( $\eta$ ). Thus, the performance data are given as form dimensionless thrust ( $K_T$ ) and torque ( $K_Q$ ) coefficients to plotted against the advance ratio (J). The dimensionless quantities are defined as Eq. (7)-(10).

$$J = \frac{v_a}{n.D} \quad (7)$$

$$K_T = \frac{T}{\rho n^2 D^4} \quad (8)$$

$$K_Q = \frac{Q}{\rho n^2 D^5} \quad (9)$$

$$\eta = \frac{J K_T}{2\pi K_Q} \quad (10)$$

where  $\rho$  is the water density,  $n$  the number of propeller rotations per second (RPS),  $D$  the propeller diameter and  $v_a$  represents for water advance velocity ( $m/s$ ).

### 3. Simulation Condition

#### 3.1 Principal Data of Propeller

The principal dimensions of the scale model propeller are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1**

Principle dimensions of propeller

Geometrical parameters	Full Scale	Model Scale
Diameter (mm)	3650	119.25
AE/AO	0.695	0.695
P/D	1.013	1.013
Pitch (mm)	3697.45	120.83
Scale	1:30.6	
Propeller Orientation	Right-hand rotation	

#### 3.2 Parametric Studies

As mentioned earlier, several blade numbers ( $Z$ ) associated with various advance ratios from 0.10 up to 1.05 have been taken into consideration. The details of simulation parameters are completely summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2**

The simulation conditions

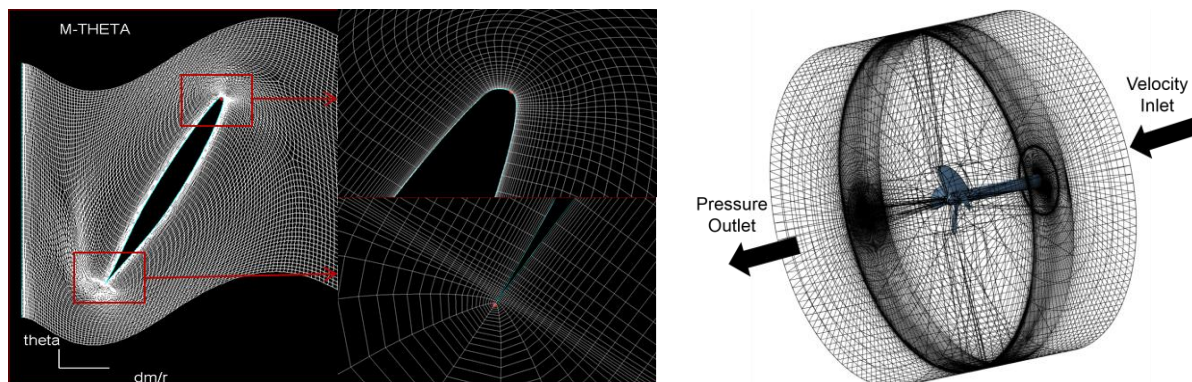
Propeller revolution (RPM)	Blade Number ( $Z$ )		
	Z=3	Z=4	Z=5
1200	√	√	√

### 4. Computational Domain and Mesh Generation

The CFD simulation of propeller performance in open-water condition has been developed at Numeca Fine™/Turbo software. The geometry of propeller required to define the blade and hub structure to generate an automatic mesh. This simulation only considered a single blade of the propeller and another blades are performed by using a rotational periodicity (blade numbers) to save the computational time [21].

During this meshing process, the rounded streamwise O4H grid topology type with 97 grid points in the pitchwise direction has been selected according to the geometry configuration and grid level [15]. The grid generated in meshing phase are using 2.8 million nodes number for this scale model and the first cell size is set with  $1.0\mu m$  for the blades and hub surface. Therefore, the grid generated able to maintain the non-dimensional wall distance  $y^+$  as below 1.5 for all solid surface. To increase the computation accuracy, a local mesh refinement is required by decreases the grid size when the cell near the blades walls to capture a large pressure gradient occurs near to the wall as displayed in Figure 1 (left) [22]. The velocity inlet was specified as having a constant velocity of the flow model and a static pressure has been imposed at outlet boundary as shown in Figure 1 (right). The value for rotational speed of the solid boundary condition types (blades and hub) was set as negative value to indicates a propeller rotational in negative  $\theta$ -direction according to a right handed propeller orientation [15]. Since this computational have complex fluid problem, the Merkle preconditioner

has been selected to increase the convergence rate and computation efficiency at very low flow speed [21, 23].



**Fig. 1.** Local refinement of the block structured (left) and inlet and outlet location in domain (right) for Z=4 mesh model

Four different of the propellers meshes are summarized in Table 3, was created in AutoGrid5™. This mesh independency has been generated in order to ensure an adequate number of cells meshing that were sufficiently used for all simulation to obtain an accuracy and steadiness in the computational result regardless of the longer CPU time. Here, the total number of cells meshing with 2,817,090 was selected for all simulation due reliability mesh result to capturing the flow field and pressure distribution on blade's surface. The increase of the total number of cells meshing up to 4,000,666 was unnecessary due to insufficient impact with longer computation time. In the final stage of the CFD simulation, a graphical result will be generated using CFView™ to visualize the scalar torque and static pressure for all various configurations of the propeller as displayed in Figure 2. Having considered the proper total number of the meshes, the initial CFD simulation has been successfully performed. Here, the result has well agreements with experimental model test as completely presented in Table 4, where the percentage discrepancy error of  $K_T$ ,  $K_Q$  and  $\eta$  between the experimental and CFD results in acceptable range were about 1.04%, 2.24% and 1.23%, respectively.

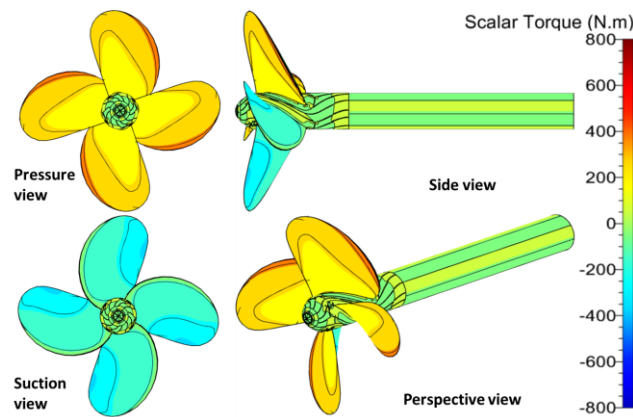
**Table 3**  
Mesh Independent study on propeller geometry

Case	J	Total number of cell meshing	$10K_Q$	$K_T$	$\eta$
A	0.5	1,789,042	0.44371	0.27545	0.49402
B		2,559,546	0.44223	0.27628	0.49715
C		2,817,090	0.43853	0.27450	0.49821
D		4,000,666	0.43875	0.27616	0.50089

**Table 4**  
CFD and experimental results associated with Z=4 and RPM=1200

J	$10K_Q$			$K_T$			$\eta$		
	CFD	EXP	(%)	CFD	EXP	(%)	CFD	EXP	(%)
0.50	0.4385	0.4485	-2.238	0.2745	0.2774	-1.040	0.4982	0.4920	1.226

\*Negative sign (-) means that the CFD result is lower than the experimental result



**Fig. 2.** Magnitude of scalar torque for pressure (left) and suction (right) side at  $J=0.5$  and 1200 RPM

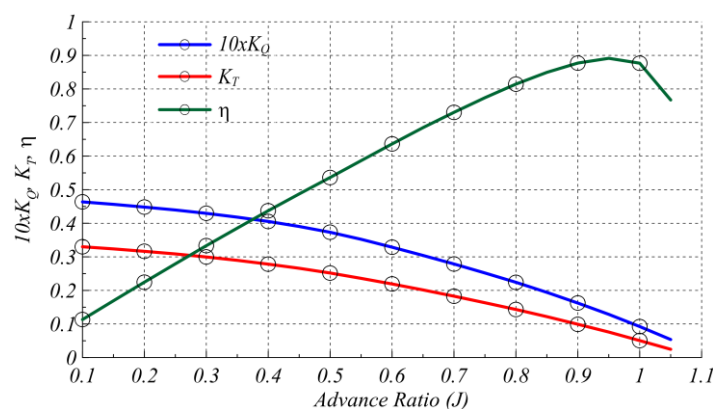
## 5. Results and Discussion

The analysis for thrust ( $K_T$ ), torque ( $K_Q$ ) and efficiency ( $\eta$ ) coefficients of the propeller in the various blade numbers have been presented and appropriately discussed. In this study, the Computational Fluid Dynamics was adopted to obtain the propeller performance.

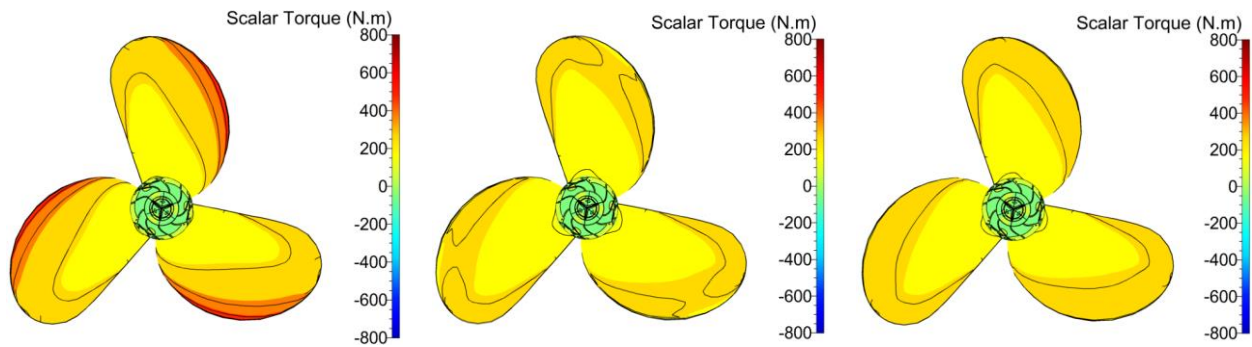
### 5.1 Effect of Various Blade Numbers ( $Z$ )

Referring to the CFD results, the torque and thrust coefficients relatively decreases as increases the advance ratio from 0.10 to 1.05 (see Figure 3). This can be explained through the change of the water velocity between the solid surface and fluid flow. The lowest axial velocity surrounding the propeller blade will be accelerated from low velocity a generate the significant changes of the water velocity [24]. The deduction of drag force on the blade surface has been formed at the higher advance ratio. Here, the propeller characteristics quantified by the dark yellow colour (high scalar torque) contour region on the pressure surface as presented in Figure 4 (left), (middle) and (right).

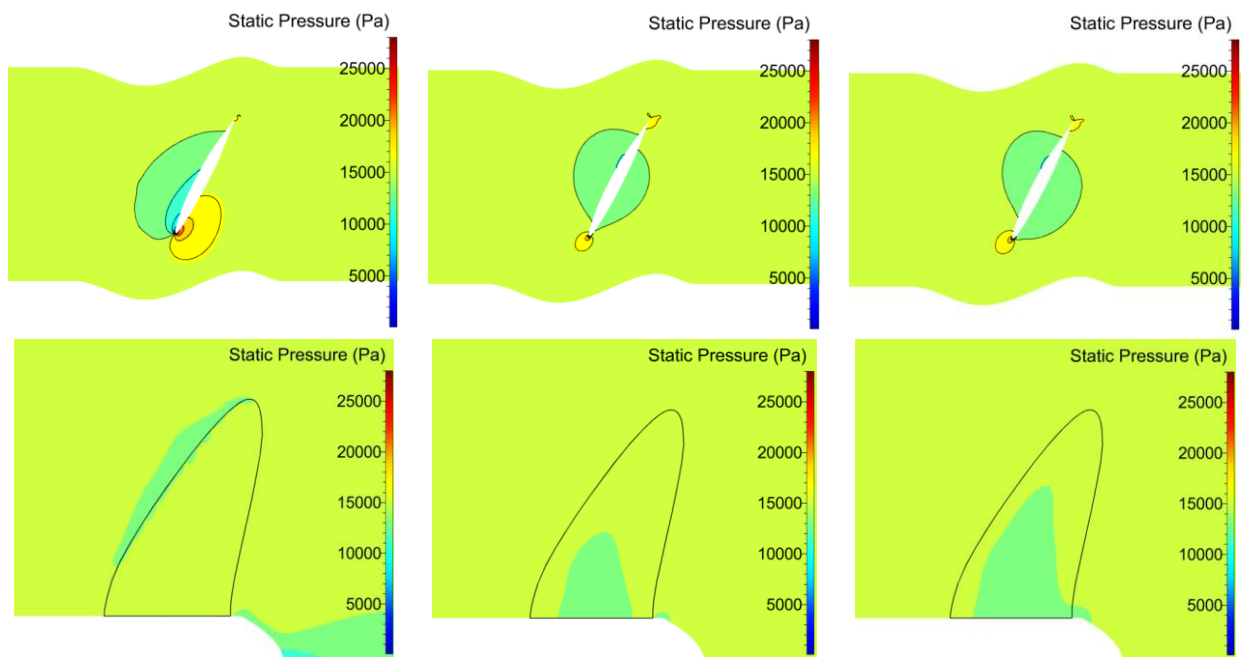
Furthermore, the propeller efficiency increases steadily at lower advance ratio ( $J=0.10$ ) up to propeller optimum value ( $J=0.95$ ) and it will be prone to decrease at higher at advance ratio ( $J=1.00$  and 1.05) as shown in Table 5. This is occurred due to the reduction of blue colour contour region (low-pressure drag) at the pressure side of the blade surface. This is similar to what was reported by Colley [25] and Yeo, Sabatly [26], the blue colour region has been expanded at the suction side which led to decrease the propeller efficiency as displayed in Figure 5 (left), (middle) and (right).



**Fig. 3.** Thrust, torque and efficiency coefficients for  $Z=3$  at the various advance ratio ( $J$ ), RPM=1200

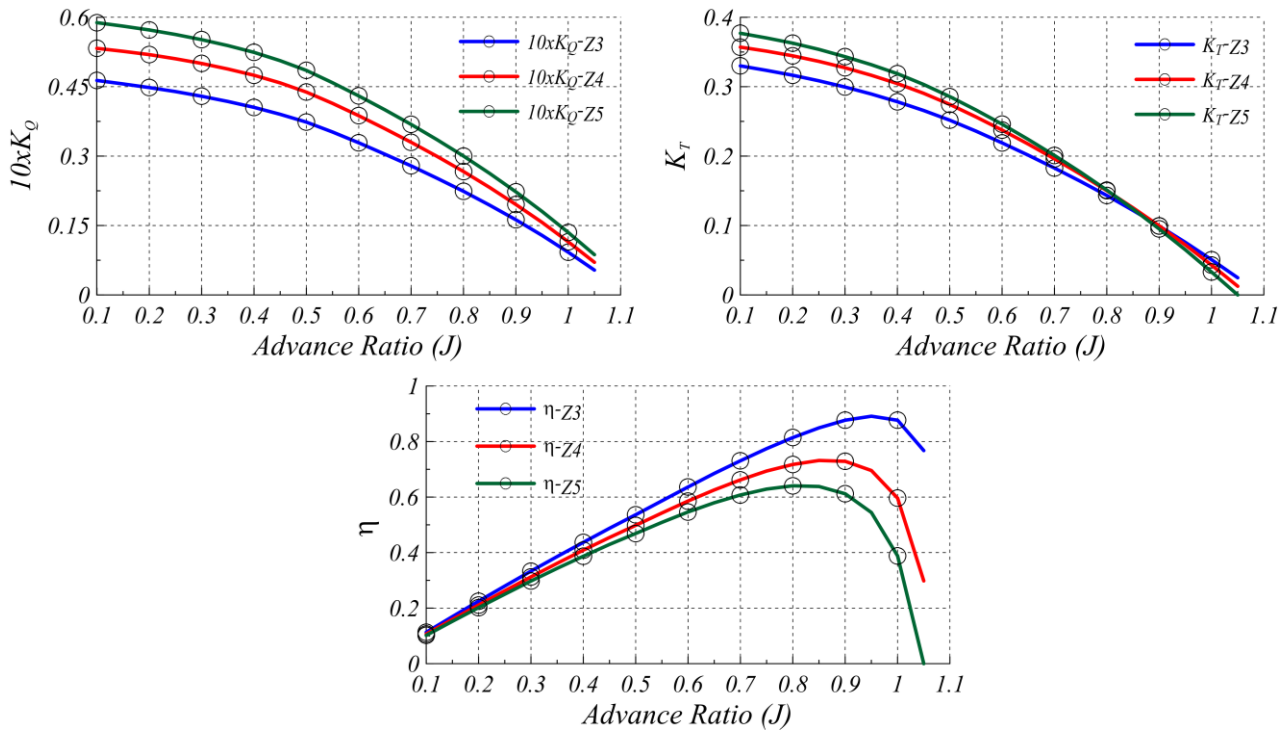


**Fig. 4.** Scalar torque at various advance ratio for 1200 RPM for  $J=0.10$  (left),  $J=0.95$  (middle) and  $J=1.05$  (right)

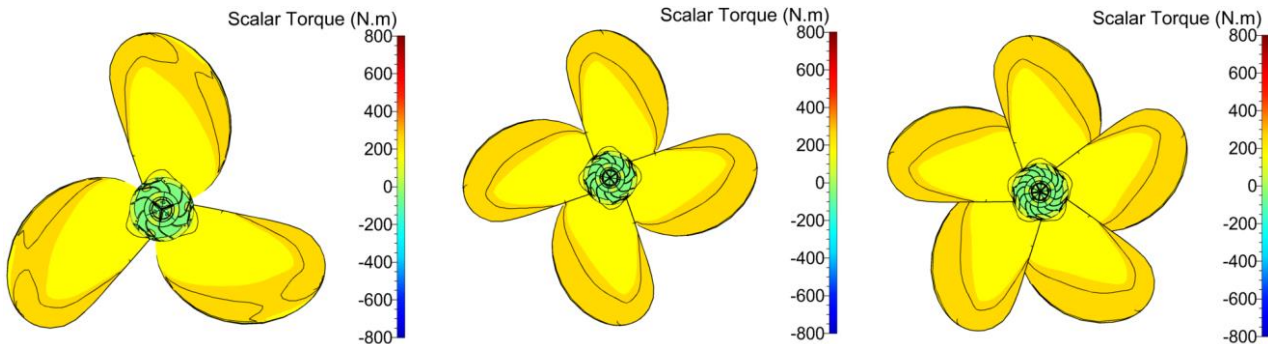


**Fig. 5.** Blade-to-Blade view (top) and meridional view (bottom) of static pressure at 1200 RPM for  $J=0.10$  (left),  $J=0.85$  (middle) and  $J=1.05$  (right)

In order to discuss the propeller performance for various blade numbers from 3 to 4 and 4 to 5, the simulation results show a significant influence on the torque, thrust and efficiency coefficients. Referring to Figure 6, the subsequent increases of blade number was proportional to the torque and thrust coefficients. This is also can be defined by the maximum percentage increments of  $10K_Q$  and  $K_T$ ; where the  $10K_Q$  was 23.9 % ( $J=1.05$ ) and 18.39% ( $J=1.05$ ); while  $K_T$  was 92.3% ( $J=1.05$ ) and 30.3% ( $J=1.0$ ). The possible reason is due to the increase of the blade numbers will create more total blades area and produce high drag force, which is represented by dark-yellow (high scalar torque) colour regions as shown in Figure 7 (left), (middle) and (right) [24].



**Fig. 6.** Thrust coefficient, torque coefficient and efficiency for propeller at various number of blades ( $Z$ ), RPM=1200

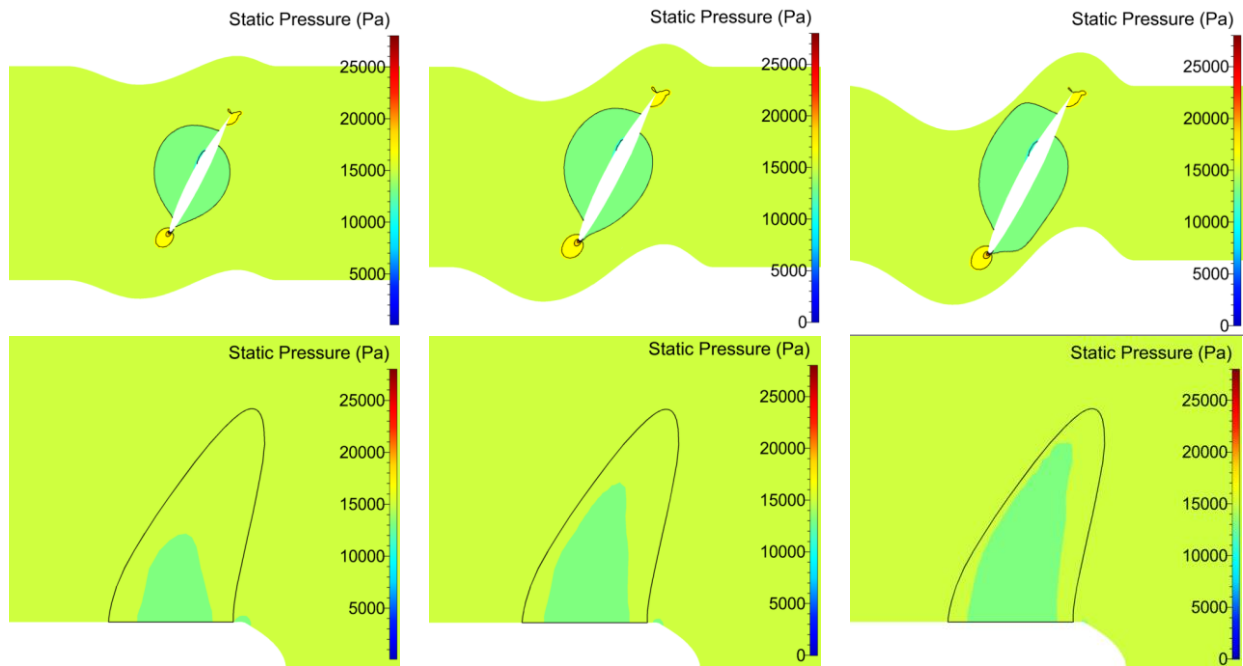


**Fig. 7.** Scalar torque of  $Z=3$  (left),  $Z=4$  (middle) and  $Z=5$  (right) at  $J=0.95$

However, the subsequent increase of blade number has produced a reduction of propeller efficiency with maximum percentage decrements 157.4% ( $J=1.05$ ) and 53.6% ( $J=1.0$ ), respectively. Since the additional surface area and drag force has been formed at higher blade number, it generates more low-pressure region around blade represented by green colour contour as displayed in Figure 8 (left), (middle) and (right) [27].

Consequently, it should be noted here the propeller with three blade number has provided the highest propeller efficiency by 89.1% at  $J=0.95$  as compared to four ( $\eta = 73.2\%$  at  $J=0.85$ ) and five ( $\eta = 64.1\%$  at  $J=0.80$ ) blade numbers. In summary, it can be concluded that the torque and thrust coefficients were directly proportional to the blade numbers; while, the propeller efficiency was inversely proportional to the blade numbers. The maximum efficiency of the propeller generally occurred within the range of  $0.8 \leq J \leq 0.95$  regardless of the various blade numbers.





**Fig. 8.** Blade-to-Blade view (top) and meridional view (bottom) of static pressure at  $J=0.95$  for  $Z=3$  (left),  $Z=4$  (middle) and  $Z=5$  (right)

**Table 5**

Magnitude of thrust, torque and efficiency coefficients of propeller for  $Z=3$ ,  $Z=4$  and  $Z=5$

J	Z = 3			Z = 4			Z = 5		
	$10K_Q$	$K_T$	$\eta$	$10K_Q$	$K_T$	$\eta$	$10K_Q$	$K_T$	$\eta$
0.10	0.463	0.330	0.113	0.533	0.357	0.107	0.588	0.377	0.102
0.15	0.456	0.323	0.169	0.526	0.351	0.159	0.581	0.370	0.152
0.20	0.448	0.316	0.225	0.519	0.345	0.211	0.573	0.363	0.202
0.25	0.439	0.309	0.279	0.511	0.337	0.262	0.563	0.354	0.250
0.30	0.429	0.300	0.333	0.500	0.327	0.312	0.552	0.343	0.297
0.35	0.418	0.289	0.386	0.488	0.317	0.361	0.539	0.332	0.343
0.40	0.405	0.278	0.437	0.475	0.305	0.408	0.524	0.319	0.387
0.45	0.390	0.266	0.487	0.458	0.291	0.454	0.506	0.303	0.429
0.50	0.373	0.252	0.536	0.438	0.275	0.498	0.485	0.286	0.469
0.55	0.352	0.236	0.586	0.414	0.257	0.543	0.459	0.266	0.509
0.60	0.329	0.219	0.637	0.387	0.238	0.586	0.430	0.246	0.546
0.65	0.304	0.201	0.685	0.359	0.217	0.626	0.400	0.224	0.579
0.70	0.279	0.183	0.730	0.330	0.196	0.662	0.369	0.201	0.607
0.75	0.252	0.163	0.774	0.299	0.174	0.693	0.335	0.177	0.629
0.80	0.224	0.143	0.814	0.267	0.150	0.717	0.300	0.151	0.641
0.85	0.194	0.122	0.849	0.232	0.125	0.732	0.262	0.124	0.638
0.90	0.162	0.099	0.877	0.195	0.099	0.729	0.223	0.095	0.612
0.95	0.129	0.076	0.891	0.157	0.072	0.696	0.180	0.065	0.545
1.00	0.092	0.051	0.877	0.115	0.043	0.596	0.135	0.033	0.388
1.05	0.054	0.025	0.767	0.071	0.013	0.298	0.087	0.000	0.000

## 6. Conclusion

The CFD simulation was successfully carried out using B-series model in open water condition where the effect of various blade numbers within the range of advance number  $0.10 \leq J \leq 1.05$  have been considered. The results have been drawn as follow

- The higher value of  $J$  leads to decrease the value of  $K_T$  and  $K_Q$  coefficients. Meanwhile, the value of propeller efficiency is prone to reduce at higher value of its advance number .
- The increase of blade number was proportional with the value of thrust and torque coefficients, but it reduces the efficiency as increase the blade numbers.
- The highest efficiency of the propeller incorporated with  $Z=3$  is 89% with advance ratio  $J=0.95$ .

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