

UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

MALAYSIAN PINEAPPLE (YANKEE) LEAF FIBER COMPOSITES DAMAGE INVESTIGATION USING NON-DESTRUCTIVE TECHNIQUES

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By

MUHAMMAD IMRAN BIN NAJEEB

Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

April 2022

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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April 2022

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In Malaysia, there are abundant agricultural wastes generated from 15,000 hectares of pineapple plantation. The current study focuses on fully utilising the pineapple leaf fiber (PALF) extracted from the Yankee variant sourced from a plantation in Telok Panglima Garang as a reinforcement material in composite, hence converting the agriculture waste into a potentially useful and sustainable resource. The physical, chemical, thermal, as well as mechanical properties of untreated and silane treated PALF were investigated in this study. Three types of composites, pineapple leaf fiber composite (P), pineapple leaf fiber/glass fiber composite (GPG), glass fiber composite (GGGG) were evaluated for low velocity impact (LVI) properties. Visual inspection, computed tomography (CT) scan, digital detector array (DDA) radiography and infrared (IR) thermography techniques were applied to detect the damage evolution of the impacted composites. The broad peaks at 1317.81 and 1100 cm-1 of the Attenuated Total Reflectance (ATR) analytical graph indicate silane compound bonding with PALF. In addition, there are no significant changes to the configuration of the silane's treated PALF due to its crystallinity. Treated PALF displays thermal stability improvement by 5.9%, with degradation occurring at the temperature of 360°C. The surface area of the treated PALF displays broader peaks, indicating greater surface roughness compared to untreated PALF. The tensile strength test on single fiber shows PALF display highest tensile strength when treated for three hours compared to one and five hours respectively. The untreated PALF composite (UT-PALFC) possess 7.1% higher storage modulus than treated PALF composite (T-PALFC), indicating untreated fiber attribute to high dynamic property in composite. Meanwhile, the thermomechanical analysis shows the sequence of linear coefficient of thermal expansion (CTE) of the treated and untreated fiber composites as follows: T-PALFC > Neat epoxy > UT-PALFC. On the other hand, the low impact analysis shows three varying impact energy ranges at 1-2J, 2-9J and 9-12J for P, GPG, GGGG respectively. The addition of glass fiber in GPG composites further delayed

damage initiation time and propagation throughout the sample by about 8.5% compared to GGGG composite as shown in LVI. Visual inspections as captured in photographic images show different damage modes in the presence of woven fiberglass mat in GPG compared to P. CT-scan images show significant cross-section cracks on impacted GPG and GGGG composites compared to P. Compared to IR thermography technique that only shows the general area of damage, the DDA radiography captures significant surface damages on impacted P, GPG and GGGG composites. For example, the DDA captures significant damage in GPG at 9J with an area of 84% less than IR thermography. However, CT-scan, DDA radiography and IR thermography failed to capture occurrence of surface delamination as observed in visual inspection. This shows that the NDT techniques used in this research need to be complimented with other tools for clearer interpretation of the extent impacted damage in composite. Overall, the newly developed hybrid GPG composite shows great potential in structural applications such as drone because of its favourable impact resistance properties.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

PENILAIAN TERHADAP KEROSAKAN KOMPOSIT SERAT DAUN NANAS MALAYSIA (YANKEE) MENGGUNAKAN TEKNIK UJIAN TANPA MUSNAH

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Di Malaysia, terdapat lambakan sisa pertanian yang dihasilkan daripada 15,000 hektar ladang nanas. Penyelidikan ini tertumpu kepada penggunaan serat daun nanas (PALF) daripada variasi Yankee yang diperoleh dari sebuah ladang di Telok Panglima Garang, Selangor. PALF dijadikan sebagai bahan tetulang di dalam pembuatan komposit, dengan ini menjurus ke arah menukarkan sisa pertanian kepada sumber yang berguna dan mampan. Sifat fizikal, kimia, haba dan mekanikal PALF yang tidak dirawat dan yang dirawat dengan silane telah disiasat di dalam kajian ini. Kesan impak halaju rendah (LVI) terhadap tiga jenis komposit iaitu komposit serat daun nanas (P), komposit serat daun nanas/serat kaca (GPG), komposit serat kaca (GGGG) telah diuji. Kerosakan LVI terhadap pelbagai komposit tersebut telah dinilai menggunakan teknik-teknik visual, imbasan komputer tomografi (CT), radiografi pengesan jajaran digital (DDA) dan termografi infra merah (IR). Ikatan kimia antara silane dengan PALF di kesan pada puncak 1317.81 dan 1100 cm-1 di dalam graf analisis jumlah pemantulan terkurang (ATR). Di samping itu, tiada perubahan ketara terhadap konfigurasi PALF yang dirawat dengan silane disebabkan sifat kehablurannya. PALF yang dirawat memaparkan peningkatan kestabilan terma sebanyak 5.9%, dan degradasi berlaku pada suhu 360°C. Luas permukaan PALF yang dirawat terpapar dalam bentuk cerun yang lebih melandai, menunjukkan kewujudan permukaan yang lebih kasar berbanding PALF yang tidak dirawat. Ujian kekuatan tegangan terhadap serat tunggal menunjukkan PALF memaparkan kekuatan tegangan tertinggi apabila dirawat selama tiga jam berbanding dengan serat yang dirawat selama satu dan lima jam. Komposit PALF yang tidak dirawat (UT-PALFC) mempunyai modulus penyimpanan 7.1% lebih tinggi berbanding komposit PALF yang dirawat (T-PALFC), ini menunjukkan serat yang tidak dirawat menyumbang kepada kepada sifat dinamik yang tinggi di dalam komposit. Sementara itu, analisis termomekanikal menunjukkan jujukan pekali linear pengembangan terma (CTE) bagi komposit serat yang dirawat dan tidak

dirawat seperti berikut: T-PALFC > Epoksi > UT-PALFC. Analisa kesan impak halaju rendah terhadap tiga komposit tersebut dijalankan dengan menggunakan julat tenaga yang berbeza-beza iaitu 1-2J, 2-9J dan 9-12J untuk P, GPG, dan GGGG masing-masing. Penambahan serat kaca di dalam komposit GPG melambatkan lagi masa permulaan kerosakan dan penyebarannya ke seluruh sampel sebanyak kira-kira 8.5% berbanding dengan komposit GGGG seperti yang ditunjukkan di dalam analisis LVI. Pemeriksaan visual seperti yang dipapar dalam imej fotografi menunjukkan mod kerosakan yang berbeza dengan kewujudan kain serat kaca tenunan dalam GPG berbanding dengan P. Imej keratan rentas menggunakan imbasan CT menunjukkan kewujudan retakan yang lebih ketara di dalam komposit GPG dan GGGG berbanding dengan P. Berbanding dengan teknik termografi IR yang hanya menunjukkan kawasan kerosakan secara umum, alat radiografi DDA membuktikan kerosakan yang ketara pada permukaan komposit P, GPG dan GGGG selepas hentaman halaju rendah. Sebagai contoh, ujian DDA menunjukkan kerosakan yang ketara terhadap GPG pada 9J dengan keluasan kawasan kerosakan sebanyak 84% lebih rendah berbanding yang dikesan menggunakan teknik termografi IR. Walaubagaimanapun, imbasan CT, radiografi DDA dan termografi IR gagal mengesan ketidaksamaan pada permukaan seperti yang diperhatikan di dalam pemeriksaan visual. Ini menunjukkan bahawa teknik NDT yang digunakan di dalam penyelidikan ini perlu digandingkan dengan peralatan-peralatan lain untuk memberi tafsiran yang lebih jelas terhadap kerosakan yang berlaku kepada komposit yang terjejas. Secara keseluruhannya, komposit hibrid GPG yang baru dibangunkan menunjukkan potensi yang besar di dalam aplikasi struktur seperti dron memandangkan ianya menunjukkan daya ketahanan rintangan yang baik terhadap impak.

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This thesis was submitted to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia and has been accepted as fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. The members of the Supervisory Committee were as follows:

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT	i
ABSTRAK	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
APPROVAL	vii
DECLARATION	viii
LIST OF TABLES	xiv
LIST OF FIGURES	xvi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	xx

CHAPTER

6

1	INTE 1.1 1.2 1.3 1.4 1.5	RODUCTION Background Problem Statement Research Objectives Research Scope Thesis Organisation	1 1 5 6 7 7
2	LITE	RATURE REVIEW	8
	2.1	Fiber Extractor Machine	8
		2.1.1 Problem Solving Method -TRIZ	10
		Methodology	
		2.1.2 Finite Element Analysis	12
		2.1.3 Fiber Extraction Method	15
	2.2	Characterisation of Natural Fiber	16
		2.2.1 Chemical and Elemental Composition	16
		2.2.2 Mechanical and Thermal Properties of	18
		Plant fiber	
		2.2.3 Importance of fiber treatment	19
	2.3	Characterisation of pineapple leaf fiber	20
		composite	
		2.3.1 Mechanical properties of composite	20
		2.3.2 Thermal properties of composite	21
	2.4	Damage evaluation of impacted composite	22
		2.4.1 Low velocity impact of composite	25
		2.4.2 Non-destructive test of composite	26
	2.5	Summary and research gap	30
3	мет	HODOLOGY	35
	3.1	Overview	35
	3.2	Fiber Extractor Blade Design Analysis	37
	-	3.2.1 TRIZ	37
		3.2.2 Finite Element Analysis : Explicit	38
		Dynamic Simulations	
		3.2.3 Drafting and fabrication of fiber	42
		extractor blade	
		3.2.4 Validation	42
	3.3	Preparation of Pineapple Leaf Fiber (PALF)	42

	3.3.1	Extraction of PALF	42
	3.3.2	Chemical treatment on PALF	43
3.4	Charac	cterisation of PALF	44
	3.4.1	Chemical Composition	44
	3.4.2	Attenuated Total Reflection (ATR)	44
	343	Thermogravimetric Analysis (TGA)	45
	311	Atomic Force Microscope (AFM)	10
	245	Seepping Electron Microscope (AI M)	40
	3.4.5	Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM)	40
	240	Ellergy-dispersive X-ray (EDX)	10
	3.4.0	X-Ray Dillractor (XRD)	40
	3.4.7	Diameter Analysis	46
	3.4.8		47
3.5	Prepar	ration of PALF Composites	47
	3.5.1	Hot compression molding	48
	3.5.2	Room temperature curing	49
3.6	Charac	cterisation of PALF Composites	49
	3.6.1	Flexural test	49
	3.6.2	Scanning electron microscope (SEM)	50
	3.6.3	Dynamic Mechanical Analysis (DMA)	50
	3.6.4	Thermomechanical Analysis (TMA)	50
3.7	Low v	elocity impact and post-impact damage	50
	analys	is	
	3.7.1	Low velocity impact test	50
	3.7.2	Visual inspection	51
	373	X-ray Computed Tomography	51
	374	Infrared (IR) Thermography	52
	375	Digital Detector Array (DDA)	52
	0.1.0	Badiography (DDA)	52
38	Summ	arv	52
0.0	Carrin		02
RES		ND DISCUSSION	53
4 1	Overvi		53
12		esign of Fiber Extractor Blade	53
4.2	121	TPIZ Method to enhance Plade Design	50
	4.2.1	Finite Element Analysis: Evaluation	55
	4.2.2	Dimemie	50
	400		
4.0	4.2.3	validation of results	57
4.3	Charac	cterisation of Pineappie Leat Fiber	59
	(PALF) from Yankee variant	
	4.3.1	Physical Properties of Yankee PALF	60
	4.3.2	Chemical Properties of Yankee PALF	63
	4.3.3	Thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) of	67
		Yankee PALF	
	4.3.4	Single fiber test of Yankee PALF	68
4.4	The e	effects of silane soaking hour on the	70
	proper	ties of Pineapple Leaf fiber (PALF)	
	4.4.1	Physical properties of Silane treated	70
		PALF	
	4.4.2	Chemical properties of Silane treated	74
		PALF	
	4.4.3	Thermogravimetric analysis (TGA) of	77
		. , , , ,	

4

 \bigcirc

			Silane treated PALF	
		4.4.4	Single Fiber Test of Silane treated PALF	78
	4.5	Effect of and the	f treated fiber on composite mechanical rmal properties	79
		4.5.1	Flexural properties of PALF Composite	79
		4.5.2	Scanning electron microscope (SEM) of	80
		1 5 2	PALF Composite	01
		4.5.3	Composite	81
		454	Thermomechanical analysis (TMA) of	87
		1.0.1	PALF Composite	0,
	4.6	Low ve	locity impact and damage investigation	90
		of impa	acted composite using non-destructive	
		testings		
		4.6.1	Flexural properties of PALF (P),	90
			PALF/GLASS (GPG) and GLASS	
		162	(GGGG) composite	02
		4.0.2	PALE/GLASS (GPG) and GLASS	52
			(GGGG) Composite	
		4.6.3	Visual Inspection of PALF (P),	98
			PALF/GLASS (GPG) and GLASS	
			(GGGG) Composite	
		4.6.4	Computed Tomography (CT) Scan	101
			(GPG) and GLASS (GGGG) Composite	
		465	Infrared (IR) thermography of PALE (P)	104
		1.0.0	PALF/GLASS (GPG) and GLASS	101
			(GGGG) Composite	
		4.6.6	Digital detector array radiography of	106
			PALF (P), PALF/GLASS (GPG) and	
			GLASS (GGGG) Composite	
5	SUM	MARY,	CONCLUSION AND	114
	REC	OMMEN	DATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH	
	5.1	Conclus	sion	114
	5.2	The pro	operties of Pineapple Leaf Fiber (PALF)	114
	5.2	The off	Inkee variant	115
	5.3 5.4		ffect of silane treatment on PALF	115
	5.4	compos		115
	5.5	The Lo	w velocity Impact and Post Impact	115
		Analysi	s of PALF/Glass Hybrid Composite	
	5.6	Summa	ry of conclusion	116
	5.7	Recom	mendations for future work	117
	E6			112
BIODATA	DF ST			134
LIST OF PU	BLIC	ATIONS		135
LIST OF PA	TENT	-		136

 \mathbf{G}

xii

LIST OF AWARDS LIST OF WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS

136 139



LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1.1	Pineapple variety in market	3
2.1	A List of Pineapple Leaf Fiber Machine	8
2.2	Prior art search related pineapple leaf fiber machine.	10
2.3	Summary of TRIZ application in industry	11
2.4	Application of FEA in multi-application	13
2.5	Fiber extraction method for pineapple leaf	16
2.6	The chemical composition variation of different PALF variant and leaf fibers from other plants	16
2.7	Comparison of atomic and weight percentage of other types of natural leaf fibers.	17
2.8	Tensile and thermal decomposition of fiber	18
2.9	Effect of treatment of fiber tensile strength	19
2.10	Low velocity impact of polymer composite	23
2.11	Damage mode of impacted polymer composite	25
2.12	Damage evaluation of impacted composite using infrared thermography	26
2.13	Damage evaluation of impacted composite	28
2.14	Research Gap	31
3.1	Material properties for each component	39
3.2	Number of Element and Equivalent Stress of leaf model	40
3.3	Properties and specification of Ethanol and Silane solution	43
3.4	Epoxy and hardener specifications	48
3.5	Fiber composition	49
4.1	The contradiction matrix	55

6

4.2	Inventive Principles for machine problem	55
4.3	Description of blade ratio used in parametric study.	56
4.4	Comparison of atomic and weight percentage of other type & variety natural leaf fibers	65
4.5	Yankee's PALF Surface Roughness	72
4.6	Crystal Size and Index of Yankee's PALF	74
4.7	Storage modulus of PALF composites and neat epoxy at different temperature	82
4.8	Loss modulus and tan delta of PALF composites and neat epoxy	84
4.9	Total shrinkage, total expansion and CTE of PALF composites and neat epoxy	88
4.10	NDT evaluation of impacted composite	111

 \bigcirc

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure		Page
1.1	Pineapple plantation morphological structure	1
1.2	Pineapple plantation area across Malaysia	2
1.3	Yankee Pineapple fruit	3
3.1	Thesis flow chart	36
3.2	Steps taken in TRIZ	37
3.3	The equivalent stress vs number of element graph	40
3.4	7000 element number on leaf body	41
3.5	Fiber preparation process	43
3.6	ATR sample set-up	44
3.7	TGA sample set-up	45
3.8	Fiber alignment in the composite	48
3.9	(a) the distance between X-Ray source and detector (b) Horizontal sample setup.	51
4.1	Contradiction from the solution	54
4.2	Applying Inventive Principle to resolve fiber extractor blade	55
4.3	Von Mises stress on leaf body corresponding to blade ratio used.	57
4.4	Fiber produced from existing machine (left) vs new machine (right)	58
4.5	Binomial Distribution of fiber	59
4.6	Surface morphology of fiber at 300x magnification	60
4.7	Surface morphology of fiber at 650x magnification	60
4.8	2-Dimensional surface structure of Yankee's PALF	61
4.9	3-Dimensional surface structure of Yankee's PALF	61

4.10	XRD pattern of Yankee's PALF	62
4.11	Natural leaf fiber's crystallinity	63
4.12	Composition of natural fibers from different varieties of PALF and type of leaf from other plants	64
4.13	(a). Scanning area of PALF (b) Spectrum processing graph	65
4.14	Yankee's PALF IR Spectrum	66
4.15	TG curve of Yankee's PALF	67
4.16	DTG curve of Yankee's PALF	68
4.17	Comparison of other Malaysian Pineapple's PALF	69
4.18	Pull out properties of Yankee's PALF	69
4.19	SEM image of untreated and treated fiber	70
4.20	Si element mapping through EDX	71
4.21	3-Dimensional presentation of the fiber surface texture	72
4.22	XRD pattern of treated and raw PALF	73
4.23	Element's weight composition	74
4.24	Element's atomic composition	75
4.25	Possible silane reaction with the fiber surface	75
4.26	The results of FTIR(ATR) on treated and untreated PALF	76
4.27	TG Curve of Yankee's PALF	77
4.28	DTG Curve of Yankee's PALF	78
4.29	Tensile strength of Yankee's PALF	79
4.30	Flexural modulus and strength of PALF composites and neat epoxy	80
4.31	Morphological images of composite with SEM, a. Neat epoxy surface, b. UT-PALFC cross-section, c. T-PALFC cross-section.	81
4.32	Storage modulus of PALF composites and neat epoxy	82

4.33	Statistical distribution of single fiber diameter for untreated and treated PALF	83
4.34	Loss modulus of PALF composites and neat epoxy	84
4.35	Tan delta of PALF composites and neat epoxy	86
4.36	Cole-cole plot of PALF composites and neat epoxy	87
4.37	TMA graphs for PALF composites and neat epoxy: (a)Neat Epoxy, (b)UT-PALFC, (c)T-PALFC	89
4.38	Flexural strength and young modulus of composites.	91
4.39	Stress-strain curve of composites.	92
4.40	Force — Displacement curve of maximum impact energy prior to composites perforation.	93
4.41	Force – Displacement curve of impact energy prior to P perforation.	94
4.42	Force — Displacement curve of impact energy prior to GPG perforation.	95
4.43	Force — Displacement curve of impact energy prior to GGGG perforation.	95
4.44	Peak force of composites.	96
4.45	Energy-time of P.	97
4.46	Energy-time of GPG.	97
4.47	Energy-time of GGGG.	98
4.48	Visual damage of impacted P and GPG.	99
4.49	Close-up view of impacted composites: (a) GPG 9.0J, (b) GGGG 12.0J	100
4.50	Visual damage of impacted GGGG: (a) GGGG 9.0J, (b) GGGG 9.0J, (c) GGGG 10.5J, (d) GGGG 10.5J, (e) GGGG 12.0J and (f) GGGG 12.0J	101
4.51	CT scan of composite horizontal cross-section: (a)P 1.0J, (b) P 2.0J, (c) GPG 2.0J, (d) GPG 3.0J, (e) GPG 6.0J, (f) GPG 9.0J, (g) GGGG 9.0J, (h) GGGG 10.5J and (i) GGGG 12.0J	103

6

4.52	(a) P 1J - front (b) P 1J - back (c) P 2J - front (d) P 2J- back (e) GPG 2J - front (f) GPG 2J – back	104
4.53	(a) GPG 3J - front (b) GPG 3J - back (c) GPG 6J - front (d) GPG 6J - back (e) GPG 9J - front (f) GPG 9J - back	105
4.54	(a) GGGG 9J - front (b) GGGG 9J - back (c) GGGG 10.5J - front (d) GGGG 10.5J - back (e) GGGG 12J - front (f) GGGG 12J – back	105
4.55	(a) P 1J - front (b) P 1J - back (c) P 2J - front (d) P 2J- back (e) GPG 2J - front (f) GPG 2J - back	107
4.56	(a) GPG 3J - front (b) GPG 3J - back (c) GPG 6J - front (d) GPG 6J - back (e) GPG 9J - front (f) GPG 9J - back	108
4.57	(a) GGGG 9J - front (b) GGGG 9J - back (c) GGGG 10.5J - front (d) GGGG 10.5J - back (e) GGGG 12J - front (f) GGGG 12J - back	110
4.58	GGGG 12J (a) DDA (b) visual-photography	113

C

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UPM	Universiti Putra Malaysia
• C	Degree celsius
hð	Microgram
AC	Ananas Comosus
ASTM	ASTM American Society for Testing and Materials
At%	Atomic percentage
ATR	Attenuated Total Reflection
С	Carbon (chemical element)
CTE	Coefficient of thermal expansion
DDA	Digital Detector Array
DMA	Dynamic Mechanical Analysis
DTG	Derivative Thermogravimetry
EDX	Energy-dispersive X-ray
GGGG	Four layer woven glass fiber epoxy composite cure at room temperature
GPG	Two layer of woven glass fiber and 5wt% pineapple leaf fiber hybrid epoxy composite cure at room temperature
н	Hydrogen (chemical element)
IR	Infrared
J	Joule (unit of energy)
К	Potassium (chemical element)
m	Meter (unit of length)
mm	Milimeter
MPa	Megapascal
Ν	Nitrogen (chemical element)

- NFPC Natural fiber polymer composite
- NDT Non-Destructive Testing
- O Oxygen (chemical element)
- P 10wt% pineapple leaf fiber epoxy composite cure at room temperature
- Pa Pascal (unit of pressure)
- PALF Pineapple leaf fiber
- SEM Scanning Electron Microscopy
- TRIZ Theory of Inventive Problem Solving
- TG Thermogravimetric
- TGA Thermogravimetric Analysis
- T-PALFC 10wt% treated pineapple leaf fiber epoxy composite cure using hot press
- UT-PALFC 10wt% pineapple leaf fiber epoxy composite cure using hot press
- Wt% Weightage percentage
- XRD X-Ray Diffractor

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the research background, the introduction of natural fiber and its composites, research problem statement, objectives, research questions and scopes of the study.

1.1 Background

Pineapple (*Ananas comosus (L.) Merr.*) an exotic plant of South American origin is currently a much treasured commercial crop in Malaysia. The Portuguese colonials introduced the pineapple plant to Malaya (now known as Malaysia) in the 16th century, and tapped into its commercial viability. Malaysia eventually became one of the main global exporters of pineapple fruit, and stands to be a leading player in the sector if it succeeds in tapping into the commercial viability of every part of the plant from its roots to shoots; hence reducing wastage and promoting sustainability. The height and width of a typical mature pineapple plant range between 1m - 2m. The main morphological structures of a pineapple plant include crown, fruit, leaf, aerial sucker and roots, as shown in Figure 1.1.



Figure 1.1: Pineapple plant morphological structure

Pineapple plantations are found in almost all the states in Malaysia, with Johor recording the largest total area (8639 hectares), followed by Sarawak (1780 hectares) and Pahang (1100 hectares) in the year 2018 (Lembaga Perindustrian Nanas Malaysia, 2018), as in Figure 1.2



Figure 1.2: Pineapple plantation area across Malaysia

Data from the Jabatan Pertanian Malaysia plant varieties registry indicates at least 12 pineapple plants varieties are grown in Malaysia. Table 1.1 shows a list of commercially grown pineapple varieties (Lembaga Perindustrian Nanas Malaysia, 2021; Lembaga Perindustrian Nanas Malaysia - Negeri Kedah/Perlis, 2021). Among all the pineapple variants grown in Malaysia, the Yankee variant posses the longest leaf. The sweet-tasting fruit is aptly nicknamed "Sweet Selangor", as this variant is widely grown in the state, including Telok Panglima Garang in the district of Kuala Langat. The light geen-coloured tapered shaped fruit of the Yankee variant bears between 100 and 120 diagonally positioned eye dots, and weighs between 1kg and 2.1kg each shown in Figure 1.3. This particular plant variant produces juicy and sweet-tasting fruits, hence attributing to its high demand in the local market.

The Malaysian authorities are supportive of the pineapple industry development, and have incorporated it as part of the national agenda as outlined in the 12th Malaysian Plan (RMK12). This sector can potentially grow to much greater heights if relevant parties, including researchers and industry players, tapped into the commercial viability of every part of the plant from roots to shoots.



Figure 1.3: Yankee pineapple fruit (Lembaga Perindustrian Nanas Malaysia, 2018)

Pineapple Variety	Registration code	Category
Moris	AC 1	Queen
Sarawak	AC 2	Cayenne
Gandul	AC 3	Spanish
Maspine	AC 4	Hybrid
Josapine	AC 5	Hybrid
Yankee	AC 6	Queen

Table 1.1: Pineapple variety in market

Table 1.1: Continued

Pineapple Variety	Registration code	Category
Moris Gajah	AC 7	Queen
N36	AC 8	Hybrid
MD2	AC 9	Hybrid
View of Sunset	AC 10	-
Madu Kaca	AC 11	Cayenne
Keningau Diamond	AC 12	Cayenne

The harvesting season for pineapple plants can differ, depending on the variants. Generally, the harvesting period varies from 12 to 24 months. During harvesting, the pineapple stem is cut just below the fruit using gardening shears. The fruits are valued according to variant and size, while the rest of the plant parts are generally disposed of as waste. The leaf is rich in fiber compared to the other parts of the pineapple plant. The fibers can be extracted using various processes including manual scraping, retting or degumming, and application of mechanical instruments. In some cases, the combination of multiple methods are required to extract the fibers.

The application of fiber in the fabric production sector has long been established in the textile industry. In the Philippines, fabric made of woven pineapple leaf fibers are used to make traditional clothes as well as high-end fashionable attire (Richard, 2020). A United Kingdom-based company, uses pineapple leaf fiber as a base material for its leather products (Ananas Anam - About Us, n.d.). These examples proved the fact that pineapple fibers are in high demand in such high-end revenue-generating industries.

The interest in using plant fibers in composites for structural application has been growing in recent years. For example, automotive giant Ford Motor utilises rice husk, wheat straw, and many other renewable resources as reinforcement material for its car components (Austin, 2017). On average, the total weight of bio-based or renewable material content in Ford cars varies between 9–18 kilogrammes. Porsche had since 2019 been utilising natural fiber mix sourced primarily from renewable raw materials to make its 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport MR's double door and rear wing (Racing cars with body parts made from renewable raw materials, 2020; Bio-composites for cars, n.d).

Innovation in natural fiber-based composites is made possible due to the growing database of characterisation of natural fibers and their structural properties in polymers. Such data is useful for ongoing research and development in the search for fiber composites with desired characteristics and strength in primary and secondary structure applications.

1.2 **Problem Statement**

In Telok Panglima Garang, Selangor, the existing practice of burning and disposing of agricultural waste in pineapple plantations poses a serious environmental concern. Some farmers are unaware that they can swap the agriculture waste for cash if they can find the right stakeholders banking on commercially viable wastes. Disposing the fiber-rich pineapple leaves as agricultural wastes equals loss of additional earning for farmers.

Unfortunately the interest in extracting pineapple leaf fibers is generally lacking because of the tedious and inefficient extraction process using existing machines. Additional processes are required, as the fibers extracted from the leaves are irregular in size and are not fine enough. The entire process is time-consuming and labour-intensive, rendering it inefficient. Therefore, it is critical to make the necessary improvisation to the existing machine to enhance productivity.

The great potentials of pineapple leaf fibers in diverse applications ranging from craft to advanced material in the composite applications are well documented in literature. The utilisation of renewable resources in various applications is fast gaining traction globally, as the trend is shifting in favour of environment-friendly products, particularly agro-based products. The newly discovered fiber extracted from the Yankee variant pineapple leaf warrants the need to further analyse its physical, mechanical and thermal properties (Shah, 2018). Further investigations are critical because chemical compositions differ from one variant to another (Faruk et al. 2012).

Fibers in their natural form are known to exhibit poor interfacial bonding in a polymer matrix. Previous studies have shown that surface treatment of natural fiber is essential to enhance its bonding with the polymer matrix (Sahu & Gupta 2020). However, the effect of the surface treatment on the fiber and composite varied, depending on the type of chemical used and the characteristics of the fiber (Sood & Dwivedi 2018). Therefore it is vital to carry out investigations into the compatibility of the fiber post chemical treatment by carrying out tests to ascertain its chemical, mechanical and thermal properties.

Materials are vulnerable to impact in any applications, especially in composite applications. Impact damage can adversely affect the performance and compromise the reliability of composite materials. Therefore, it is critical to assess post impact properties of composites. Impact damage can occur either during in-service applications or handling during the manufacturing process. Most studies showed impact resistance of composites are further enhanced when plant fibers are hybridised with a synthetic fibers (Chapman & Dhakal, 2019; Sarasini et al., 2013).

Furthermore, it is difficult to detect composite damage in natural fiber because of its non-homogeneous nature. It is even more challenging to detect and analyse the damage where natural fibers are used as composite reinforcement. This is attributable to the inconsistent properties of natural fibers due to age, geographical location and climate conditions (Sahu & Gupta 2020). In-depth investigations using various non-destructive testing (NDT) applications are needed to ascertain compatibility of composites post impact.

Currently there is no available literature focusing on damage characterisation of composites subjected to low-velocity impact, indicating a gap found in this area of research. Hence, this research focuses on the characterisation of Malaysian pineapple (Yankee) leaf fiber composites and evaluating composite damages post low-velocity impact aimed at establishing compatibility of such composites in engineering applications, including in making light-weight drone structures.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main objective of this research work is to study the low-velocity impact properties of pineapple leaf fiber composites from the Yankee variant and to evaluate the damage of the impacted composites using non-destructive testing (NDT). To address the main objective, several specific objectives were conducted as follows:

- i. To carry out pioneering evaluation into the properties of pineapple leaf fiber from Yankee variant.
- ii. To investigate the effect of variable silane treatment hours on the physical, chemical, thermal and mechanical properties of pineapple leaf fiber.
- iii. To determine the flexural, dynamic and thermo-mechanical properties of both silane-treated and untreated pineapple leaf fiber composites.
- iv. To carry out a novel study on the damage propagation and properties of Yankee pineapple leaf fiber subjected to low velocity impact using NDT techniques.

1.4 Research Scope

The research scope in this study is listed as follows, stating the limitations and boundaries:

- i. The design process approach in developing only the improvised machine blade through the Theory of Inventive Problem-solving (TRIZ) method and computational software of ANSYS Explicit Dynamics.
- ii. The detailed machine blade design is not disclosed in the thesis because patent application is in progress at material time.
- iii. The pineapple leaf fiber was sourced from the Yankee variant grown in Telok Panglima Garang, Selangor.

1.5 Thesis Organisation

This thesis is divided into five chapters, detailing research of pineapple leaf fiber composite using Malaysian Yankee variant pineapple plant.

- i. Chapter 1 outlines the research background, introduction of natural fiber and composites, research problem statement, objectives, questions and scopes.
- ii. Chapter 2 focuses on literature review on fiber extractor machines, TRIZ methodology, and finite element analysis. This chapter also presents previous studies on the properties of natural fibers and pineapple leaf fiber composite; and summary of non-destructive evaluation techniques applied on composites ii.to assess post impact characteristics.
- iii. Chapter 3 details the entire process applied in this research work.
- iv. Chapter 4 presents critical discussions based on research findings in the current study.
- v. Chapter 5 presents specific conclusions drawn for each objective, summary of the overall findings, and suggestions for improvement in future research.

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